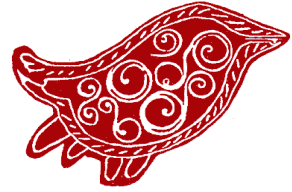


Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society



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Journal of the Cork Historical and Archæological Society.

A Short Sketch of the North Cork Regiment of Militia, 9th Bn. K.R.R.

Raised 1793. Disbanded March 31st, 1908.

BY ROBERT DAY, PRESIDENT.



THE North Cork Regiment, No. 34 on the Irish Establishment, was raised by Government levy in the North Riding of the County Cork in the months of April, May and June, 1793. It numbered 26 officers, 24 sergeants, 16 drummers, 12 fifers, and 446 rank and file, under the command of Viscount Kingsborough, with John de Courcey, 26th Baron Kingsale, as Lieut.-Colonel. Its Major was John Newenham; Captains, John Wallis, David Franks, James Lombard, Richard Foote, and Edward Heard; Captain Lieutenant Honble. William de Courcey; Lieutenants, Charles Vinters, Stephen O'Hea, John Norcott, David Williams, John O'Hea, William Johnston, Michael Stewart, James Glover; Chaplain, Rev. T. Barry; Adjutant, Hon. Wm. de Courcey; Quarter Master, Charles Vinters; Surgeon, Daniel Williams; Agents Armit, Burrough & Co. Uniform red, facings yellow.

The regiment, after its embodiment, was moved to Limerick, and broken up into detachments to various parts of that county. In 1796 its headquarters were at Naas, Co. Kildare, and in '98 the regiment, 432 strong, was in Dublin when the rebellion of that year broke out. The garrison was then almost drained of regular troops, and the defence of the city was largely entrusted to the militia and yeomanry. From the small number of troops in the country it was the custom to break up regiments into small parties for detachment duty. One fatal example of the evil attendant on such a practice occurred to a company of the North Cork at Prosperous, a small town which was the centre of the cotton industry of Ireland. It had been garrisoned by fifty of the North Cork, under Captain Swayne, and twenty of Wynn's Ancient Britons Dragoons. In the deadeast hour of the early morning the sentinels on guard were surprised and killed, some soldiers were slaughtered in their beds in the houses on which they were billeted, while the barracks was surrounded and set on fire. Many of the men perished in the flames or by suffocation; some sprang from the windows and were caught upon the pikes of the assailants. The remainder tried to cut their way through, but nearly all perished.

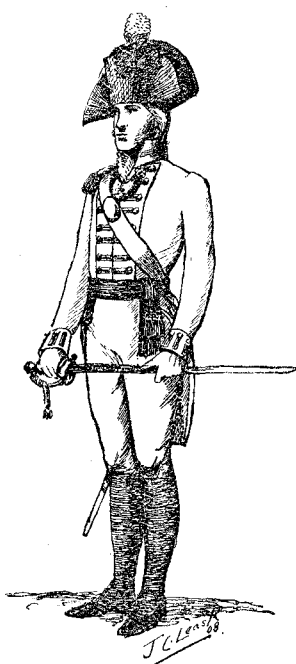
The news that the country had risen had been brought early in the day

to Wexford. The garrison in the town was scanty, but Lieut.-Colonel Foote was sent out after breakfast with 110 men of his regiment, the North Cork, and 30 or 40 mounted yeomanry of Lehunt's, a force considered amply sufficient to subdue any resistance which they were likely to meet with, and supposing he had to deal only with a mob of undisciplined peasants, he flung himself on a body of men fifty times his number, mad with the excitement of a religious war, and armed with pikes, which in determined hands were gradually discovered to be most formidable weapons. The Irish were under the command of the Rev. Father John Murphy, who, seeing he was to be attacked, had divided his force with extemporised generalship. Finding the enemy were standing better than they had anticipated, the troops fell back to re-form, when they found they were surrounded and their retreat cut off; most of the yeomen deserted their comrades, and the North Cork were cut down almost to a man. There was no wounded in these encounters; every man that fell was despatched. The Colonel only, with a sergeant and three privates, made their way back to Wexford. Major Lombard, Captain de Courcey, and four other officers had been killed, namely, Lieut. Williams, Lieuts. Ware and Barry, and Ensign Keogh. The effect of Foote's defeat was frightful. The widows and children of the North Corkmen who had fallen at Oulart rushed about the streets of Wexford wringing their hands and shrieking, and the panic spread through the country. Father John, reposing for the night on the battlefield, at once sent out his scouts calling on all the peasants to shoulder their pikes and join him on the following morning.

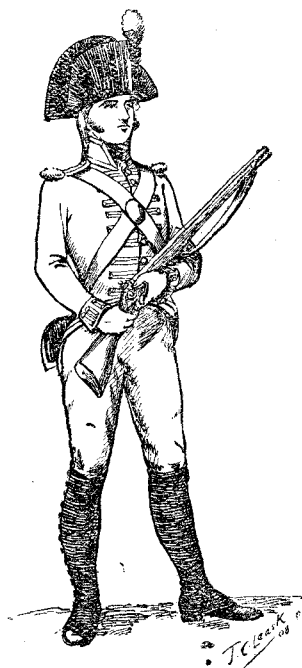
Twelve miles above Wexford on the River Slaney stands the town of Enniscorthy, where the river is spanned by a bridge. The garrison consisted of 80 men of the North Cork and 220 yeomen. Captain Snowe, of the North Cork, was in command. These he posted on the bridge, with the yeomen in reserve. On the next morning, Whit Monday, Father John Murphy was early astir. The news of his triumph had rung a peal through every parish. He had secured the muskets and pouches of the dead soldiers, and found himself with 800 men, possessed of firearms, besides five thousand pikemen. It was a hot and brilliant morning. Father John was a born general; he threw out scouts on either side, who availed themselves of the natural cover and pressed on from bank to bank. The soldiers, raw hands, gave way, outnumbered twenty to one, fighting desperately inch by inch. As the enemy advanced they set fire to the houses on each side of the street, and the battle went on under an arch of flame. Father Murphy, seeing he could make no further progress and was throwing away lives unnecessarily, fell back to the fields outside and prepared to try again at nightfall. Meanwhile Captain Snowe, with his company of the North Cork, had held his ground gallantly. Foiled at the bridge, where the Irish had fallen in scores, they had twice attempted to force a passage above and below it, but were driven back at both points, and by two o'clock the town was cleared, and Enniscorthy was still in possession of Loyalists, although half the town was on fire, and of the garrison a third had been killed, beside the wounded. The North Cork had suffered severely; one detachment had been destroyed at Prosperous, another at Oulart. At Enniscorthy they fought with signal bravery, and had retreated only before superior numbers. On June the

5th, 1798, they were engaged at New Ross, which was then enclosed by a wall that had once resisted Cromwell. It had four gates—two at the lower part of the town by the waterside, through which the high road passed from Dublin to Waterford, and two at the upper.

General Johnstone had been sent to take charge of it with some English artillery, a squadron of dragoons, a Scotch fencible regiment, and the Antrim, Meath, Co. Dublin, and North Cork Militia Regiments. The North Cork, the Antrim, and dragoons were drawn up outside the three-bullet gate on open ground. It was now a little after 3 o'clock a.m., when the Irish bore down the hill towards them, and the conflict began by their



No. 1.—OFFICER, 1798.



No. 2.—PRIVATE, 1798.

lines opening, and between them came herds of wild cattle rushing on, urged forward by the rebel pikes. The pikemen formed behind the cattle, and charged with the fierceness of resolution for which the English and Scotch officers present were quite unprepared. They rushed upon the Dublin Regiment, commanded by Colonel Luke Gardiner, Viscount Mountjoy, and drove it back through the gate. He was mortally wounded and carried into the enemy's lines. The dragoons charged, but without effect, and recoiled with loss. A gun was captured, and the pikemen pouring into the town, fired the houses. Cannon had been placed in the long straight street which leads from the market place to the Bullet Gate, and poured round shot and grape into their dense masses. Multitudes fell. One entire column was annihilated. Brave as they were, they fell back for a while, and the troops had time to rally and re-form. But soon the enemy returned to the charge through smoke and flame, their courage

and their overwhelming numbers compensating for want of discipline and inferiority in arms. Johnstone's advantage was in the heavy guns, but the daring of the Irish defied artillery; four guns were taken, the troops forced backwards and downwards to the river, where the stone buildings became a fortress. At one time the Irish seemed to have won the day, but behind the river the broken troops had re-formed. Johnstone led them back at the bayonet's point, the guns were recovered and again worked havoc in the disordered crowds. Maxwell describes the carnage as so awful that it became too hideous to describe. In this action the North Cork lost 200 officers and men.

At Arklow, June 10, 1798, the North Cork Regiment was again engaged, and on June 24th one hundred of its men and a like number of yeomanry, under command of General Dunn, successfully defended the town of Athy in a night attack upon it.

During the six years (1808-1814) of the Peninsular War, the North Cork contributed 510 officers and men to swell the ranks of Wellington's victorious army, and well may this great General have said "that some of his best soldiers were raw recruits from the Irish Militia."¹ After Waterloo the standing army was much reduced, and on April 1st, 1816, the regiment was disembodied.

By the Act of June 30, 1852, for the re-organisation of the Militia, the entire construction of the force was materially altered, and by the subsequent Act of August, 1854, the numbers and the uniforms of the regiments underwent a complete change. To the North Cork was given the number 116, and their uniform changed to that of Rifles.

The list of officers, January, 1855, were:—

Colonel William H. Moore Hodder, late 88th Foot.

Lieut.-Col. Wm. St. Leger Alcock Stawell, late Capt. 23rd Foot.

Major Robert Atkins, late Capt. 60th Foot.

Captains—Robert Aldworth, Richard Lane Warren, John Robert Stawell, Frederic J. Rawlins, Edwd. Braddell, St. Leger Barry, Spencer G. Walsh, Poole Gabbett, J. Martin, Edward Hoare.

Lieutenants—Charles Lyster, Dominick Sarsfield, F. J. Blackburne, Robert Perry, Jas. E. F. Aylmer, Cornelius O'Callaghan, Chas. F. Knolles, John Foote, Thos. McCarthy.

Ensigns—Miles O'Reilly, Herbert Coghlan, Richd. G. Creagh, Js. Geo. Anderson, Wm. L. Howe, Rd. W. Stokes.

Adjutant—F. M. Callaghan. Surgeon—Js. F. Uniacke, M.D. Asst.-Surgeon—F. L'Estrange.

The regiment, after the war with Russia, was disembodied at Fermoy on August 29th, 1856. The number of volunteers given to the regular army during embodiment was 271.

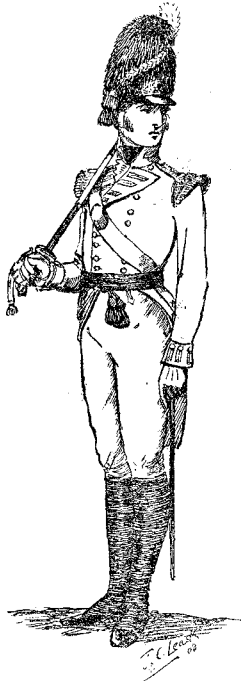
The North Cork were again selected for embodiment during the India Mutiny War, and assembled at Mallow on September 15th, 1857. During the continuance of the India trouble the regiment was ordered to England, and sailed from Queenstown to Portsmouth for the camp at Shornecliff, where it arrived on June 14, 1858. Here it remained until ordered for service in Scotland, and while quartered at Ayr the regiment experienced a sad loss in the death of its commanding officer, Colonel William Moore Hodder, who, while dismounting from his horse in the barrack yard, fell

¹ Napier.

backwards on his head and never recovered consciousness. He died on Nov. 20th, 1859.

The route for Ireland having arrived, the regiment sailed for Queens-town, and was disembodied at Mallow, Feb. 28, 1860. The number of volunteers during the Indian Mutiny was 317, many of whom fought and bled in the Royal Artillery, the 64th and 84th Regiments, with Havelock's victorious column.

Under the Army Act of 1881 the name "North Cork Rifles" was abolished, and henceforth the regiment became the 9th Battalion of the King's Royal Rifle Corps.



No. 3.—OFFICER, 1814.



No. 4.—OFFICER, 1857.

On the 3rd of February, 1899, Colonel R. W. Aldworth died, and was succeeded by Sir Robert Unthank Penrose-Fitzgerald, Bart., who was appointed to the Hon. Colonelcy of the battalion on March 8th, 1899.

By Special Army Order of May the 10th, 1899, authority was given for a new section to be formed in the Militia, and to be styled "The Special Service Section." The enrolment for this branch of the service took place at Kilworth Camp (during the training) in June, 1899, when the following numbers were enrolled, viz. :—4 sergeants, 5 corporals, and 94 privates.

Owing to the action of the South African Republics in October, '99, it was deemed necessary to embody a portion of the Militia, and by Royal Proclamation, dated 3rd Nov., 1899, the 9th Batt. King's Royal Rifles, having volunteered for foreign service, was one of the units selected, and the embodiment took place at Mallow on December 5, 1899, when the

battalion was found to number 765 officers, non-commissioned officers and men. On the 13th of January following orders were received directing the embarkation for South Africa to take place at Queenstown in the R.M.S.S. Nile—Transport “82”—and the following is a list of the officers that accompanied the regiment:—

Colonel William Cooke-Collis.

Majors—William Stopford, L. A. de V. Maunsell.

Captains—R. S. Brasier-Creagh, J. C. O. Aldworth, E. W. C. Dillon, A. W. Clerke, J. E. Martin, T. W. M. Fuge.

Lieutenants—J. Creagh, W. M. Percival Maxwell, W. J. N. Cooke-Collis, J. S. Hunt, T. Montgomery.

2nd Lieutenants—J. M. McKenzie, E. W. M. Maydwell, R. F. Guy, S. Hutchins.

Captain and Adjutant—R. Byron.

Captain and Quartermaster—W. Holmes.

Surgeon Lieut.-Colonel J. Creagh, and E. D. F. Gee (attached from Waterford Artillery).

On January 20, 1900, the Nile anchored at St. Vincent, and on the fourth day after leaving it Major Maunsell died from pneumonia, and was buried at sea on the 25th inst.

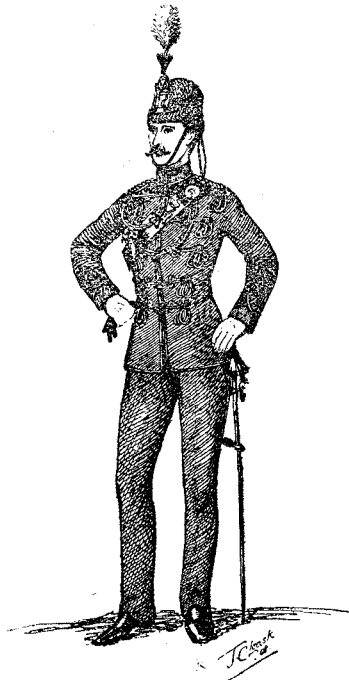
On February 1, Cape Town was reached, and upon the same day that the battalion disembarked it entrained for Nauwport, where the militia units encamped and were brigaded under Colonel Wm. Cooke-Collis. The following extract gives a condensed history of the regiment during its stay in South Africa:—

Morning Order by Brigadier-General G. G. Cunningham, Commanding at Vereeniging:—

“Head Quarters, Vereeniging, June 12, 1901. 9th K.R.R. Corps leave this command on their departure for home, without placing on record the good work they have done. The first Irish Militia battalion to respond to the call to arms and volunteer for active service in South Africa, the 9th K.R.R. Corps landed at Capetown on 1st February, 1900, and at once proceeded to the front, joining the force in the Colesburg district, and being engaged in the action of February 14th, 1900. When the general advance took place the battalion was employed in guarding the railway, and at Railhead, in the beginning of May, were visited by F. M. Lord Roberts, when the Commander-in-Chief expressed his satisfaction with the battalion. From the month of June onwards the guarding of the railway from Vaal to Wolenock fell to the lot of the 9th K.R.R. Corps—arduous and anxious work when the efforts of the Boers under De Wet to wreck the railway in the Orange River Colony during this period are remembered. A mounted infantry company was formed, which has rendered good service. The state in which the horses are being left behind reflect great credit on all concerned. The G.O.C. wishes Colonel Cooke-Collis and all ranks of the 9th K.R.R.C. a safe and prosperous journey home, and that the welcome there may be as warm as it is well deserved. By Order.”

On July 6th, 1901, the battalion embarked at Cape Town in the ss. *Pinemore*, and arrived in Queenstown on the 31st of the same month. At 12.30 the disembarkation was complete, and the battalion was drawn up in line and inspected by H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, K.G., &c.,

who shortly afterwards personally presented the South Africa Queen's medals, with four bars, to the officers, N.C.O.'s and men, and in addressing the battalion referred at great length to their praiseworthy conduct, and to the excellent manner in which they had answered to the call to arms and had upheld the standard of the old North Cork Regiment. The Lord Lieutenant of the County, the Right Hon. Jas. Francis, Earl of Bandon, presented, on behalf of the citizens of Cork, an illuminated address, and after suitable replies by Colonel Wm. Cooke-Collis, the battalion entrained for Mallow, where the disembodiment took place on that evening,



No. 5.—OFFICER, 1908.

all leaving for their homes in a quiet and orderly manner. The last and final embodiment of this old and well-tried battalion was at Bere Island, Bantry Bay, in the summer months of 1906. On the 7th of July, the battalion having left Bere Island on the 5th, arrived at Mallow, where they were dismissed to their homes, little thinking that in a few months their regiment would have its name obliterated, the roll of the officers wiped out, and the faithful service and lifeblood so freely shed consigned to oblivion. Upon the 31st of March, 1908, this historic regiment, after a record of 105 years, was disbanded for what the Government were pleased to term "economic" reasons.

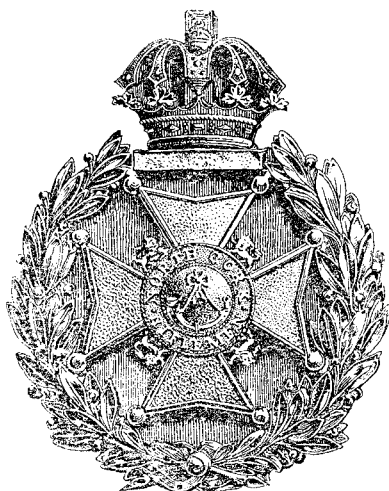
The Regimental and King's Colours of the regiment are preserved in the hall at Castle Cooke, Kilworth, having been given by Mr. William Moore Hodder, of Hoddersfield, to Colonel Wm. Cooke-Collis, C.M.G., D.L., the last colonel of the battalion.

For its services in South Africa the battalion was awarded the Queen's medal, with four clasps, namely, "Cape Colony," "Orange Free State," "Transvaal," and the date clasp of "1901."

Our Society is deeply indebted to J. C. Leask, Esq., of Dundrum, Co. Dublin, for the five original pen and ink sketches which he has so artistically and accurately drawn, the better to illustrate the changes of uniform that had taken place in the North Cork during the nineteenth century. These drawings are numbered from one to five.

No. 1 represents an Officer of the Battalion Company of the regiment, 1798, scarlet, bound deep yellow and silver lace.

No. 2. A Private. Uniform red, faced yellow, white lace, with a black worm or dotted line, 1798.



SILVER CROSS BELT PLATE, 1850.

No. 3. Officer of the Grenadier Company, circa 1814, shortly after the Peninsular campaign and Waterloo.

No. 4. Officer, N. C. Rifles, green faced black velvet, 1857, during the Russian War and India Mutiny.

No. 5. Officer of the 9th Batt. King's Royal Rifles, before disbandment, March 31st, 1908.

Prior to 1830 the uniform worn by the line regiments was closely followed by the militia, who were then not restricted to silver lace, and some of the militia were better turned out and more fully equipped than the regulars.

After 1830 the uniform of militia regiments was precisely similar to the line, but with silver lace (vide King's Regulations). After 1846 the Rifle Brigade uniform was followed, and after 1881 that of the King's Royal Rifles, when it became the 9th Battalion of that distinguished corps.

The silver cross belt plate here illustrated dates from 1850. It has within a laurel wreath, a Maltese Cross of eight points, with lions passant guardant in the angles, as in the Order of the Bath, with a circular riband inscribed "North Cork Riflemen," and in the centre a bugle horn.