

The Queen's Own Rifles



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The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada is the country's longest continuously serving infantry regiment and one of its most honoured. Founded on April 26, 1860, the regiment was established by the fusion of six existing rifle companies: Barrie Volunteer Militia Rifle Company; 1st and 3rd Toronto Volunteer Militia Rifle Companies; Toronto Highland Volunteer Rifle Company; Toronto Volunteer Militia Foot Artillery Company, and the Whitby Volunteer Highland Rifle Company. It was formed as the 2nd Battalion, Volunteer Militia Rifles of Canada, a designation which has been perpetuated by the '2' in the regimental cap badge. The 1st Battalion was formed in Montreal and no longer exists. Although they were volunteers, there was no shortage of military expertise. The regiment's first Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel W.S. Durie, was a Sandhurst graduate and British Army veteran; while Capt H. Goodwin, the adjutant, had fought in the Battle of Waterloo as a member of the Royal Horse Artillery.

The Queen's Own has taken part in every Canadian military campaign, sustaining its first casualties "seven killed in action, two dead of wounds and 21 wounded" fighting the Fenians in the Battle of Ridgeway, June 2, 1866. Since then, in the Red River Expedition, Northwest Rebellion, South African War, two World Wars and the Korean War, the regiment had served and fought with great distinction, losing almost 2,000 men in battle and many thousand wounded. Seven of its soldiers have been awarded the Victoria Cross.

Reading the list of Regimental battle honours from the two World Wars is to revisit valorous history: St. Julien, Somme, Vimy, Passchendaele, Normandy Landing, Le Mesnil Patry, Caen, Falasie, The Scheldt, The Rhineland, The Hochwald, The Rhine. The regiment sent six battalions overseas as part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force in the First World War, losing 1,254 officers and men. The Queen's Own was the only Toronto regiment in the D-Day landings,

June 6, 1944, landing at Bernieres-sur-Mer as the right assault battalion of the 3rd Canadian Division, sustaining heavy losses in the process. The Queen's Own fought through Northwest Europe until May, 1945, losing 449 dead.

In October, 1953, the regiment was made part of the Regular Canadian Army with two full-strength battalions. The following year, the 2nd Battalion went to Korea and in 1955, as part of Canada's contribution to NATO, to Germany. From 1960 to 1963 the 1st Battalion relieved it. From 1963 to 1968 both battalions were stationed in Western Canada, members serving periodically with UN forces in Cyprus. Until 1968, the regiment consisted of two battalions of Regulars and one of Militia, plus the Regimental Depot in Calgary.

Unification resulted in the Regular units being reduced to nil strength, the Depot closing and the Militia battalion in Toronto remaining to carry on the traditions of The Queen's Own. From 1982 to 1995, the Regiment was operationally tasked to provide most of an Airborne Company to the Canadian Airborne Regiment.

Today, The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada train as an infantry battalion as part of 32 Canadian Brigade Group. They are the only Reserve unit to have a parachute tasking and members of the regiment proudly maintain their parachute skills.

The regiment has sent soldiers to Bosnia to serve with NATO's Stabilization Force and it participated in Operation Recuperation, assisting citizens of eastern Ontario during the Ice Storms in January 1998. More recently, many members of the regiment have served in Afghanistan with the International Security Assistance Force. The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, with its home station at Moss Park Armoury, Toronto Garrison, remains true to its Regimental Motto: In Pace Paratus "In Peace Prepared"□.