

History of the
16th Battalion
The Highland Light Infantry
(CITY OF GLASGOW REGIMENT)



*This History has been approved as an Official
Record by the Committee of Imperial Defence
(Historical Section, Military Branch)*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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A SAGA OF SCOTLAND

History of the
16th Battalion
The Highland Light Infantry
(CITY OF GLASGOW REGIMENT)

Edited by
THOMAS CHALMERS

With a Foreword by
Principal R. S. RAIT, C.B.E., LL.D.
UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Dedication

To the Memory of those who
did not come back this Volume
is reverently dedicated.

FOREWORD

BY

PRINCIPAL R. S. RAIT, C.B.E., LL.D.

GLASGOW UNIVERSITY

THIS record of "Glasgow at War" preserves what the citizens of Glasgow will cherish while courage, devotion, and love of country continue to be honoured among us. It is the story of a Battalion recruited in Glasgow and equipped at the expense of the Common Good of the City, a body of Civic soldiers for whom, in the years of torture and conflict, Glasgow was the homeland, and who in fiercely contested fights brought fresh honour to their ancient city—many of them by the sacrifice of their own lives.

A narrative of the embodiment, the training, the effort, and the achievement of the 16th Highland Light Infantry, the City of Glasgow Regiment, cannot fail to make its own appeal to us, and the story as it is here told by Mr. Chalmers and his contributors seems to me to possess a power of inspiring and sustaining interest even in days when such books are numerous. The graphic recital of actual incidents and experiences, the illustrations of the humour which availed to make life tolerable in circumstances of tragic misery, the simple record of heroic sacrifice, are here combined into a well-knit tale. This book will preserve for future generations, as it to-day recreates for the survivors of the Battalion, the spirit of the Glasgow citizens who fought or who fell in the latest—may it be the last—Great War.

PREFACE

BY

THE 16TH H.L.I. ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE



1914—THE WAR—GLASGOW!

This assembly of words has not the sparkle of yesteryear. Their power to kindle, once so compelling, is fading fast. Soon they will be ashes and dust of history

Sixteen years and more have passed since the red tide that engulfed Europe swept the teeming shores of Clyde. Memories of great events are losing their sharp outlines, growing misty and dim. The post-war life has been so desperately crowded with hard realities that moods of remembrance are apt to be stifled. The epic of youth and sacrifice has been embarrassed by those economic struggles and problems, more immediate in their effect upon existence. War friendships have mellowed; their origins are blurred in our consciousness. Once we thought it impossible that 1914 could ever be uttered with the composure of familiarity. To-day it is almost so. It was inevitable!

This history confines itself largely to the individual experiences of one battalion which, recruited from the complex peoples of a great city, went to war in 1914. But the humanity of its story is a universal possession and belongs to all time. It is written for this generation—the War generation—that it may recall to the soldier the days of his manhood, their surge as well as their sadness; that it may bring to the war-bereaved the solace that if loss was bitter it was suffered in glorious company; that it may inform the children, who will be the citizens of to-morrow, of the strength of their kin

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in the fierce fires of the crucible. And, first and last, that it may serve as an abiding memorial to the dead, they who died and found their graves in lands forever Scotland, whose legacy is the unblemished name of race.

It is obvious that many must share in the making of such a history. Events, even within the experience of a single battalion, were so numerous and bewildering as to be beyond the capacity of any individual recollection. Therefore, many sources of information have been tapped, and contributions, large and small, have been received from all ranks of the Battalion who served overseas. By this means it has been possible to produce a history which is confidently presented by the Committee, not only as being as accurate as care and research will grant, but as capturing, to some extent at least, the spirit of personalities and events of other days.

* * * * *

In order to shape and fashion all the contributed material into a consecutive narrative, it was decided by the Committee to appoint an editor. The Committee was fortunate in securing the services of Mr. Thomas Chalmers, of *The Bulletin*. Mr. Chalmers proved himself to be the ideal man for the work. His literary gifts and overseas war experience as a soldier well qualified him for the task. The result of his labours speaks for itself.

The individual contributors were numerous and the services which have gone towards the finished history various. But the Committee desires first to acknowledge the assistance of Lieut.-Col. Kyle, C.M.G., D.S.O., the Commander of the 16th H.L.I. from the Battle of the Somme until the disbandment of the unit in England in 1919, who has ungrudgingly given his pen and his leisure to provide a vast amount of valuable data and colourful detail. Without his large contributions, the history, all through, would have been immeasurably poorer; indeed, he is the author of the interesting portion of the book that deals with the post-Armistice career of the unit in Belgium, Germany, and Britain.

Colonel W. D. Scott, D.S.O., M.C., Second-in-Command of the Battalion for almost its entire fighting life, also earns the warm appreciation of the Committee for many willing services performed to establish the success of the work; and for the

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wealth of maps and documents he unreservedly placed at the disposal of the compilers, including the papers of the late Colonel David Laidlaw, T.D., who commanded the Battalion from its recruitment till he was wounded in the first Battle of the Somme on July 1, 1916. Colonel Laidlaw's death, on March 24, 1930, was keenly felt by his comrades of the 16th, who held him ever in high esteem.

*"Memories, images and precious thoughts,
That shall not die and cannot be destroyed."*

Before his death Colonel Laidlaw spent much time and labour in collecting material for this book of memories in which he was so deeply interested.

* * * * *

There are several others whose help the Committee is desirous of cordially acknowledging—Pte. R. K. Manson, D.C.M., for his valuable notes on the episode of the Frankfurt Trench ; Major A. Macfarlane, M.C., the Battalion Adjutant, for his account of events at the time of the German Retreat of 1917 ; Captain A. Fraser M.C., for his contribution on the moonlight attack at Westroosebeke ; Mr. A. M. Burnie for the admirable line drawings that adorn this volume as well as for his craftsmanship and advice in the scheme of illustration ; and all the many others who, at one time or another and in numerous ways, have loyally given their time and energies to further the object in hand.

GLASGOW, *October*, 1930.



*Those valiant souls who set themselves with pride
To hold the ways, and fought—and fought—and died—
They rest with Thee.*

*But, to the end of time,
The virtue of their valiance shall remain,
To pulse a nobler life through every vein
Of our humanity.*

JOHN OXENHAM



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