



### **1st Cadet Battalion, The King's Royal Rifle Corps**

The 1st Cadet Battalion owes its foundation to the Reverend Freeman Wills, who was commissioned into the Volunteer Army in the rank of Captain on 26 July 1890. He was also Vicar of St Agatha's just behind Sun Street, Finsbury Square. On receiving his commission he decided to form a cadet company within the 1st Cadet Battalion, The Royal West Surrey Regiment. The Company quickly expanded to become the 2nd Cadet Battalion, The Royal West Surrey Regiment, at which point he moved the Battalion Headquarters to No. 2 Finsbury Square (and in 1904 to 42 Sun Street, which he had specially built for the purpose). In 1894 he applied to HRH Prince George, Duke of Cambridge, Colonel-in-Chief, to affiliate to the Regiment, with the title of 1st Cadet Battalion, The King's Royal Rifle Corps. Consent was granted on 8 November 1894 and the Battalion has remained a part of the Regiment ever since.

In the days of its foundation Cadet battalions were privately organized and funded. On becoming a part of The King's Royal Rifle Corps subscriptions began to flow in and after the commanding officer had spent nearly £1,000, the Battalion was placed on a financial basis, which many Volunteer Corps would have envied. There were to be many ups and down in later years, especially when recognition of the Cadet Force was withdrawn between the two World Wars, but fortunately the enthusiasm and commitment of those involved consistently triumphed over the parsimony of Governments.

This brief history of the KRRC Cadets does not provide space for a detailed coverage of the Battalion's record, which may be found elsewhere. Remarkably, however, in 1900, when volunteers were urgently needed for the South African War, the Reverend Wills persuaded the War Office to accept a company of the older cadets, principally NCOs, to enrol in the City Imperial Volunteers. Over 100 did so, with others joining other units. Four were killed. As a result, the Battalion was awarded the Battle Honour "South Africa, 1900-1902", the only Cadet battalion ever to receive a battle honour. It was also permitted to call its cadets 'Riflemen'.

### **The Battle Honour of 1st Cadet Bn KRRC**

In 1900, when volunteers were urgently needed for the South African War, the Commanding Officer, Colonel Freeman Croft-Wills persuaded the War Office to accept a Company of the older Cadets, principally N.C.O.s (Non-Commissioned Officers), the company being enrolled in the City Imperial Volunteers. Around 100 cadets thus served in South Africa with this unit, whilst other Cadets and ex-Cadets served in the R.A.M.C. (Royal Army Medical Corps), and other units.

Four were killed in action, one serving with the 1st KRRC at the battle of Dundee, and the others with units of the C.I.V.s. Their comrades erected brass plaques in their memory in the Drill Hall at Sun Street. These are now displayed in the Cadet Company Office here at Davies Street.

In recognition of this service, King Edward VII granted the Battalion the honour of wearing on its accoutrements the Battle Honour "South Africa 1900-1902" (Army Order 151 of 1905). The announcement of this privilege was made to the Battalion by His late Majesty, King George V, then Prince of Wales, when, accompanied by Her Majesty Queen Mary, he distributed the prizes at the Guild Hall in the City of London.

The 1st Cadet Battalion KRRC are the only Cadet Unit in the United Kingdom to have been granted such an honour and are permitted to wear the miniature 60th Cap Badge with the single Battle Honour, and call their Cadets "Riflemen".

At the outbreak of the First World War, nearly all the cadets over 18 years old enlisted immediately, with 400 enrolling in the City of London Rifles. In total, over 8,000 former members of the 1st Cadet Battalion served during the course of the War, three of whom were awarded a Victoria Cross, including Lieutenant J.H.S. Dimmer, serving with the 2nd Battalion in Belgium in 1914. Former cadets also served distinction during the Second World War, including with the battalions of the Regiment in North Africa, Italy and North West Europe.

### **2nd Cadet Battalion, The King's Royal Rifle Corps**

In 1942 a Home Guard instruction was issued ordering each Home Guard battalion to raise a cadet unit. Lieutenant-Colonel R.L. Clark of Queen Victoria's Rifles was given the task and on 15 May the Queen Victoria's Rifles Cadet Corps was born. Over the next three years the unit expanded to five companies, which in April 1945 led to it being re-titled the 2nd Cadet Battalion, The King's Royal Rifle Corps. In 1951 the 1st and 2nd Cadet Battalion were amalgamated. This resulted in the disposal of the Headquarters of the 1st Cadet Battalion at 42 Sun Street. In 1954 the Battalion office of the 'new' 1st Cadet Battalion was established at 56 Davies Street, where it remains to this day.

Over the years large numbers of cadets have been associated with the Regiment, some through membership of the 1st and 2nd Battalion and others through membership of army or school forces affiliated to the Regiment. Many subsequently joined the Regular and Territorial Army, and especially the battalions of The King's Rifle Corps. The link with public school cadet forces was especially important in ensuring a steady stream of able officers, while the others provided some of the Regiment's best NCOs, a good proportion of whom were subsequently commissioned. An especially close liaison was established with Eton College by which a 60th officer alternated with a Guardsman as Adjutant of the Officer Training Corps.

However, of all the Regiment's cadet units, the 1st Cadet Battalion is the one that has most jealously guarded, through thick and thin, its links with its parent Regiment. Since 1894 it has proudly promoted and upheld the history heritage and traditions of the Regiment amongst its members. It has often excelled on the range and at sport. Its record of service and the dedication of its instructors have long been an inspiration and an example to others. Today, forty years after Regiment became a part of The Royal Green Jackets, the 1st Battalion continues to flourish as the last in the line, retaining its line and proudly wearing the cap badge of The King's Royal Rifle Corps.