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Tim Newark, *Highlander: The History of the Legendary Highland Soldier*, (Constable, London, 2009), ISBN: 978-1-84529-898-2, £20.00.

The Highland soldier has, at least since the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, occupied an important place in the British Army and continues to do so, even though the character of the individual Highland regiments has been gradually subsumed. In this tribute to him Tim Newark has explored regimental and other archives to produce a lively and interesting account.

He begins by defining the nature of the Highlander, showing how the harsh landscape and isolation developed a warrior 'physically tough, quick to attack, savage in close combat.' His clan gave him his sense of belonging, with the chief operating as a feudal lord. The Highlander had scant regard for the Lowlander and *vice versa*, an early 16<sup>th</sup> century Lowland historian describing the two peoples as 'Wild Scots' and 'householding Scots'. While Lauderdale, appointed by Charles II to run Scotland, recruited Highlanders to help crush discontent among more extreme Presbyterian Lowlanders and both Highlanders and Lowlanders and fought under General Mackay against Claverhouse's Jacobite Highlanders in 1689, it was not until Wade's pacification of the Highlands beginning in the mid 1720s that the Highland contribution to the British Army, as we know it today, originated. This was through the ever scheming Lord Lovat's proposal, backed by General Wade, to raise indigenous companies to police the Highlands. The Highland Watches, as they were originally called, became the 43<sup>rd</sup> (later 42<sup>nd</sup>) Foot, The Black Watch.

The Black Watch's first overseas action was at Fontenoy in May 1745, where under their gallant but obese colonel they displayed their ferocity with the broadsword, the traditional Highland weapon. The author then goes on to describe the Forty-Five and the eventual defeat of the Jacobites at Culloden, after which Highlanders were forbidden to bear arms, unless as soldiers serving the monarch. Consequently more Highland regiments were raised, although some had only a short existence. Thereafter we see the Highlanders in action in North America, India, at Waterloo, the Thin Red Line in the Crimea, and Sudan, the part they played often described by soldiers who were present. Then there is Black Week during the South African War and the Western Front, as seen through the eyes of the 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division. Newark also recounts the experience of the same division during World War 2. In this context he also addresses the Salerno Mutiny, pointing out that many of those who took part were from other divisions. Indeed he cites the case of one Highlander who had enlisted in the Argylls, but been transferred to the Durham Light Infantry, won an MM with them in North Africa and objected being transferred from 50<sup>th</sup> to 46<sup>th</sup> Division. Newark describes the Argylls in Korea, as well as Speakman's VC action. This, however, is rather stretching a point since the KOSB were, of course, a Lowland regiment and Speakman himself came from Cheshire, as the author admits. Malaya, the Argylls in Aden's Crater, and the Black Watch in Iraq in 2004 are also covered.

Tim Newark does not devote himself entirely to Highlanders in the British Army. Scots in the Dominions were keen to form their own local military units. Thus in South Africa pride of place goes to the Cape Town Highlanders, who were formed in 1885 and are still going strong. Canada, with its very large ethnic Scots population, formed a significant number of Canadian Scottish regiments. Some Scottish militia units were created in Australia, but, and in contrast to the Canadian Army, neither the First or Second AIF nor the contingents which



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fought in Korea and Vietnam had identifiable Scottish units. The same applied to Scottish battalions in New Zealand. There was, however, one Scottish unit outside the British Empire. This was the 79<sup>th</sup> New York State Militia, which was created in 1859 with all the trappings of a Highland regiment. Mobilised in June 1861 it had a grim baptism of fire at First Manassas, losing its colonel and suffering nearly 200 other casualties.

There is also an interesting chapter on Hollywood's portrayal of Highland soldiers. Even film buffs might be surprised to learn that a youthful John Wayne played the part of a 42<sup>nd</sup> Highlander in the 1929 John Ford film *The Black Watch*. Indeed, films about the British Empire, and the Scottish contribution, were very popular in pre-war Hollywood. The situation changed in 1942 when the US Office of War Information concluded that the American public largely believed that Britain was fighting the war solely to protect its empire and that cinema audiences in strategically important countries like India resented films glorifying imperialism. Consequently postwar Hollywood films concerning Scotland have dwelt largely on the nationalist aspect, *Braveheart* being a prime example.

The book concludes with the formation of the Royal Regiment of Scotland in the face of fierce public opposition, and a reminder that Highland soldiers in Afghanistan are still laying down their lives in service of the monarch. All in all, this is a very readable book and a fitting tribute.

**Charles Messenger**

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