

## **Scottish Soldiers in the Seven Years War**

by Andrew Patterson

After Culloden, in 1745, the Scottish people suffered enormously under British rule. The Proclamation Act removed the right of all Scottish people to bear arms and banned their traditional dress. The British army plundered Scottish villages, slaughtering the people and destroyed their houses. Land was confiscated and put to use raising sheep and cattle for the king. The aim was to suppress the Scottish people once and for all.

The years 1755 and 1756 were particularly difficult. In addition to the continued persecution by the British, crops had failed and making the winters very tough. Officers of the British Army toured Scotland offering young men the opportunity to go to war carrying arms and wearing their traditional highland dress. Additionally they were promised generous land grants in exchange for their service.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to these offers, several underhanded tactics were used to entice young men into the army. In some shires 1.5 guineas were offered to new recruits, and often while they were intoxicated. Thus in the late 1750's a large number of Scottish youngsters agreed to fight in the name of the king, some willingly but many tricked into signing up over a bottle of whisky. Many of these recruits were only boys, between 16 to 20 years of age.

The officers were used to fighting in Europe where certain standards were adhered to and the terrain was familiar. North American warfare proved to be quite different. Regiments were rarely prepared for the obstacles which confronted them. To quote Stephen Brumwell, "In an American campaign everything is terrible; the face of the country, the climate, the enemy. There is no refreshment for the healthy, nor relief for the sick. A vast inhospitable desert, unsafe and treacherous, surrounds them, where victories are not decisive, but defeats are ruinous; and Simple death is the least misfortune, which can happen to them. This forms a service truly critical, in which all the firmness of the body of the mind is put to the severest trial; and all the exertions of courage and address are called up."<sup>2</sup> Traveling in such a formidable land presented its own difficulties. "The obstacles which we had to surmount were immense, 200 miles of wild and unknown country to cross; obliged to open the road through rough woods, mountains, and swamps; to build forts along our lines of march for the security of our convoys; with an active and enterprising enemy in front of us, elated by his previous successes, and superior in this type of war. It was on my infinite trouble that we were able to transport provisions artillery ammunitions."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ian MacPherson McCulloch, "Sons of the Mountains."

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Brumwell, "Redcoats, The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755-1763," p. 139

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Brumwell, "Redcoats, The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755-1763," p. 141

Life for the troops in North America could be especially miserable while traveling, as highlighted in the following quote from James Grant; "The officers and men I believe are most heartily tired of the service... the Fatigues and Hardships have been considerable, 33 days without tents, heavy rains frequently during that time, short allowance of bread, long marches, bad roads, hard duty and what the men thought worst of all, no rum." Governor Murray noted that the winter of 1759 was especially difficult. During the week before Christmas 153 men near Québec city had been frostbitten gathering firewood. Around the same time during a march from Crown Point to Ticonderoga 166 men froze their feet, and the surgeon was obliged to cut off over 100 toes.<sup>4</sup> In addition to the rugged landscape and the climate, food was terrible, medical assistance was almost non-existent and soldiers lived in constant fear of attack by the natives.

In the following sections I have outlined the whereabouts of each of the three Highland Regiments during the Seven Years War. However, any attempt to track individual highlanders during this era is extremely difficult. Firstly individual companies of a regiment frequently are stationed in very different areas. Secondly privates and commissioned officers alike were often transferred from one regiment to another. Finally it must be remembered that there were Scottish soldiers serving in many regiments other than the "Highland Regiments," that is the 42nd, 77th and 78th. This is demonstrated in the table below.

Scots serving in the British Army units in North America, summer of 1757 <sup>5</sup>			
Regiment	Scots	Total Enlistment	% highlanders
2nd battalion of the 1st	462	1124	41%
17th	73	740	10%
22nd	183	1030	17.7%
27th	30	742	4%
28th	46	746	6.1%
35th	84	954	8.8%
40th	112	838	13.3%
42nd	1059	1059	100%
47th	71	1051	6.7%
48th	83	847	9.7%
55th	421	754	55.8%
60th	168	2871	5.8%
1st Highland battalion	1060	1060	100%

<sup>4</sup> Brumwell, Stephen, "Redcoats, The British Soldier in the America, 1755-1763," page 149

<sup>5</sup> Brumwell, Stephen, "Redcoats, The British Soldier in the America, 1755-1763," page 318-319.