



Service in Canada

circa 1795 - 1816

Bulger's Company

Bulger's Company is an independent group of men and women who interpret and re-enact the activities of the original Royal Newfoundland Regiment (RNR) during the period 1795 - 1816.

Our aim is to present a living history to the public by means of re-enacting historic events, talks, and demonstrations. All possible measures are taken to make things as historically accurate as possible. Uniforms and accoutrements are made using authentic patterns and materials. Encampments are set up employing utensils, tents, cooking methods etc. of the times. Military drills follow the standing orders of the British Army of 1811.

To heighten interest in the group we participate in parades, local heritage activities, school presentations, and special events. We are funded by donations from special events.

THE UNIFORM

The uniform of a Royal Newfoundland Regiment redcoat after 1808 consists of: (a) Red wool coatee (a snug fitting, waist length tunic with short turned-back tails) with ten regimental buttons down the front. It is faced in dark blue at the stiff upturned collar, the epaulettes, and the cuffs. The buttonholes are trimmed with red, white and blue lace particular to the regiment. White wool tufts are worn at the epaulettes.

- (b) A tall black felt shako topped by a red and white plume (signifying a battalion company), and carrying a large brass plate engraved with the Royal emblems.
- (c) White canvas trousers for summer, grey wool trousers for winter. High waisted with a buttoned flap in front which folds downwards when loosened.
- (d) White or striped cotton shirt.
- (e) Black knee length gaiters buttoned to the knee, and were worn over the trousers.
- (f) Black leather boots, with the rough side out (sometimes they were called "beef boots").
- (g) Accoutrements consisting of a round wooden water canteen, painted blue; a white leather cross belt carrying a black leather cartouche (cartridge) box; a white canvas bread bag (haversack) to which is attached a tin or pewter drinking mug; a brass regimental plate covering the point where the cross belts overlap.
- (h) Slung from a tunic button is a brass chain holding a pick and whisk (musket cleaning tools)
- (i) A Brown Bess flintlock breech loading musket, 42 inches in length equipped with a white leather carrying sling. This is a smoothbore firearm of .75 calibre used in various forms from 1720 to 1840.
- (j) A rectangular wood-framed backpack made of black canvas, carried on the back just below the shoulders and secured by white straps, and topped by a rolled grey blanket.
- (k) A long grey overcoat with double cape for winter use.
- (l) A wide, heavy leather neckstock used to keep the chin up. (worn over the shirt collar, and under the tunic collar).
- (m) A white wool fatigue jacket, waistlength with blue epaulettes.
- (n) A round red and blue wool forage cap with a red tuft which is worn plumb and ugly on top of the head as part of the fatigue uniform.

THE EARLY YEARS

1795, April 25th - Major Thomas Skinner authorized to raise the Newfoundland Regiment of Fencible Infantry.

1800, July - Royal Newfoundland Regiment posted to Halifax

1802, July 31st - Disbanded under the Treat of Amiens.

1803, June 7th - Brigadier-General John Skerrett authorized to raise the Royal Newfoundland Regiment composed of one Grenadier Company, one Light Company, and eight Battalion Companies. (The uniforms were of the Revolutionary War period consisting of a black three cornered (tricorn) hat, and the long red coat turned back to show a white waistcoat, tight white breeches and gaiters over buckled black shoes).

1803, December - 385 in the Regiment

1805, June - 683 in the Regiment

1805, June 19 - Exchanged stations with the Nova Scotia Fencibles at Fort Anne, Nova Scotia.

1806, August - Stationed at Halifax.

1807, September - stationed at Quebec City in order to strengthen the forces in Lower Canada.

1812, May 9 - Five companies sent for service as seamen and marines aboard ships of the Provincial Marine on the Great Lakes. In late May, stationed in Kingston, Upper Canada, and served aboard the "Royal George", and the warships "General Hunter" and "Queen Charlotte". The remainder of the regiment was scattered to serve in Quebec City, Prescott, Kingston, Fort George and York.

1812, June 18th - War on Canada declared by US President James Madison. At this time the Regiment's strength had fallen to 536 all ranks and therefore recruitment was initiated in Newfoundland to augment its numbers.

1812, August 16 - Attacked Detroit, and the Regiment received commendation from General Brock.

1812, September 16 - Thirty Newfoundlanders, commanded by Major Heathcote, were involved in fighting off a strong American force which was lying in ambush for a convoy of 40 craft ferrying valuable British supplies near Prescott. Only one wounded casualty was sustained.

1814, February to April - Six officers and 130 men of the RNR (virtually all that remained fit for service) accompanied by 11 artillerymen and a naval party of 21 marched overland during the winter from Kingston to the Nottawasaga River with relief supplies. The RNR erected earthworks to protect themselves and constructed huts for shelter in what became the Willow Creek Depot or Fort Willow. They built 30 boats in the wilderness, loaded them with supplies, launched them into the Nottawasaga River, and rowed 360 miles to resupply Fort Michilimackinac.

1814, August 4 - The RNR force at Michilimackinac participated with no losses in repulsing an attack by outnumbering American forces.

1814, September 1 to 5 - Fifty Newfoundlanders, 3 of their officers (Lieutenants Bulger, Armstrong and Radenhurst) all in 3 small boats, and Lt. Miller Worsley, R.N., with a party of sailors in a fourth, succeeded in capturing the American warships the "Tigress" and "Scorpion". Seven of the Newfoundlanders, including Lt. Andrew Bulger, were wounded (3 sailors and one artilleryman were killed in the action).

1814, December - Treaty of Ghent ended the war.

1816, June - By this time the RNR was on Manitoulin Island (Michilimackinac having been handed back to the Americans under terms of the peace treaty). From there they returned to St. John's by way of Quebec, reaching home in September 1815 where they rejoined the badly treated prisoners-of-war who had been captured at Put-in-Bay, but released in July 1814.

1816, June 24 - The RNR was disbanded, and a gallant fighting force passed into history.

War of 1812 Key Points

1812, April - In anticipation of a war. At the request of Major-General Brock, five companies (360 all ranks) of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment proceeded to Upper Canada for service as marines to help overcome the shortage of manpower in the Provincial Marine.

1812, June 18 - Onset of the War of 1812. War against Britain declared by the U.S. President Madison.

1812, July 1 - The headquarters of the marine wing were at Kingston under the command of Major Heathcote. He had 19 officers, 18 sergeants, 14 drummers, and 317 rank and file. They were assigned to such vessels as the Royal George, the Gloucester, the Earl Moira, the Prince Regent, as well as smaller boats on Lake Ontario. On Lake Erie they were employed on the Hunter, the Queen Charlotte, and the brig Detroit. The light company formed part of the garrison at Fort Erie.

1812, August 16 - Fall of Detroit. A detachment of Newfoundlanders under Captain Mockler, serving as seamen aboard the Hunter and the Queen Charlotte intercepted and captured in the Detroit River 11 batteaux carrying wounded American soldiers. The Newfoundlanders were then brought ashore to form a core of regulars for the militia element of the force attacking Detroit. The Newfoundlanders won a special commendation from General Brock for their service in the fall of Detroit.

1812, October 1 - Marines seize a prize. Rochester, N.Y. Boats from the 22 gun Royal George (which was manned mainly by Newfoundlanders) entered the mouth of the Genesee River and seized the schooner Lady Murray as well as a smaller revenue cutter. A few days later, they took another prize.

1812, October 9 - An American raid. An American raid was launched from Black Rock, N.Y. to capture an unarmed prize vessel, the Detroit lying at anchor under the protection of the guns at Fort Erie. Among the prize crew of 12, were 10 Newfoundlanders. Of these, one was killed, while 18-year old Ensign Thomas Kerr, and four others were wounded.

1812, November 28 - Defence of Fort Erie. A light company of 50 Newfoundlanders under the command of Captain John Whelan were responsible for holding Fort Erie against attack during the second major attempt to cross the Niagara at Frenchman's Creek.

1812, December 21 - Regimental Strength. Twenty-eight officers and 515 men on strength, (150 aboard various naval vessels). Since the commencement of hostilities, 13 Newfoundlanders had died or been killed.

1813, January 22 - Battle of the River Raisin. Captain Robert Mockler and 60 Newfoundlanders (all ranks) were among a British and Indian force which crossed the ice at the end of Lake Erie and engaged in a bitter fight to capture Frenchtown, Michigan. All but 50 of the nearly 1000 Americans were either killed or captured. One third of the British were casualties, and the Newfoundlanders in particular suffered 1 killed and 18 wounded. A few days later, Ensign Kerr died of his wounds.

1813, February 22 - Capture of Ogdensburg. After crossing the ice from Prescott, 40 Newfoundlanders were in the van of a bayonet assault which captured Ogdensburg, N.Y. They, along with the other troops of the line received praise for their "conspicuous bravery". Their officer, Captain Tito Lelievre was specially commended for his active leadership. The Newfoundlanders suffered 1 killed and 4 wounded.

1813, April 26 to May 9 - Fort Meigs Expedition. Captain Mockler and all the surviving Newfoundlanders from the battle of Frenchtown sailed from Amherstburg aboard the Nancy as part of a British expedition against Fort Meigs, Ohio.

1813, April 27 - Battle of Fort York. An Infantry company of 92 Newfoundlanders under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Heathcote were involved in the defence of York. A greatly outnumbered force of British regulars, militia and native allies put up a stout resistance before being driven back or taken prisoner.

1813, May 26 to 27 - Prelude to the Battle of Fort George. The RNR grenadier company under the command of Captain William Winter was among 200 defenders who were attacked in assault landings at the mouth of the Niagara River, the prelude to an attack on Fort George by General Dearborn's army of 6000. In the thick of the fighting, the grenadiers lost 21 killed, 12 wounded, and 5 taken prisoner.

1813, May 29 - Expedition against Sackets Harbor. A flotilla of 33 boats crammed with 700 troops, including RNR marines, sailed from Kingston to Sackets Harbor, N.Y. in an inconclusive venture to take the enemy's main naval base. In the fight to take the fort, the RNR lost 4 killed, 13 wounded and 1 missing.

1813, September 10 - Battle of Lake Erie at Put-in-Bay. In this naval battle, 100 marines of the Regiment suffered the loss of 39 (28% of the total British casualties) during close-in fighting where volleys of musket fire swept the decks on both sides. One of the first to fall was an RNR officer, Lieutenant James Garden. The bodies of 14 RNR marines were committed to the waters of Lake Erie. The remaining 25 wounded were taken prisoner to Sandusky to begin a painful march to Chillicothe, Ohio and thence to Frankfort, Kentucky where they were held captive until the end of the war.

1813 - Reduced by Casualties. Seriously reduced by casualties, the RNR did not participate in any of the land actions at Moraviantown, Chateaugay, Chrysler's Farm, nor at Lundy's Lane the following July. However, Lt. Andrew Bulger of the RNR received a clasp for the action at Chrysler's Farm while serving under Captain Mulcaster of the Royal Navy.

1814, February to April - Relief of Michilimackinac. Six officers and 130 men of the RNR (virtually all who remained fit for service) accompanied by 11 artillerymen, and a naval party of 21, marched overland with supplies during the winter from Kingston to the Nottawasaga River. Moving to re-supply the starving garrison at Michilimackinac, in a remarkable operation that demonstrated their capability and determination both ashore, and on the water, they felled trees to build 30 batteaux, and then rowed from the Nottawasaga River across Lake Huron to the fort at Michilimackinac (some 360 miles) losing only one boat crushed in the ice choked waters.

1814, August 4 - Battle of Fort Michilimackinac. The Royal Newfoundlanders at Michilimackinac participated with no losses in repulsing an attack by outnumbering American forces.

1814, September 1 to 5 - Capture of the Tigress and Scorpion. Fifty-four Newfoundlanders, 3 of their officers (Lieutenants Bulger, Armstrong, and Radenhurst) all in 3 small boats, and Lt. Miller Worsley RN., with a party of sailors in a fourth, plus a small number of native allies, succeeded in capturing the American warships Tigress and Scorpion. Seven of the Newfoundlanders, including Lt. Bulger, were wounded (3 sailors and one artilleryman were killed in the action).

1814 - Bulger to Fort McKay. Lt. Andrew Bulger was dispatched to Fort McKay at Prairie du Chien on the Mississippi River to oversee destruction of the fort, and removal of supplies. During this operation, Bulger was appointed as an acting Captain.

1814, December 24 - Treaty of Ghent. The War of 1812 between the U.S and Britain was over. Neither side achieved its war aims, and none of the issues over which the nations fought was included in the treaty. It was agreed simply to return to the pre-war status quo. Despite this apparent stalemate, the Royal Newfoundland Regiment played an important role in helping to defend Canada against American expansionism, and against an outcome that may well have changed Canada's present day boundaries if the Americans had been successful.