



Fort Fraser Despatches – September 2018

In the Beginning:

“At Killiecrankie, 27 July 1689, it can be said that the legend of the Highlander was born, and their sprint pell-mell down the hill was a rehearsal for world-conquering charges in the following centuries.

When the recruitment of Highlanders by the British Army began in earnest, the echoes of this battle would resonate on every battlefield where the British soldier stood.”

Tim Newark in “Highlander - The History of the Highland Soldier” 2009

The Black Watch (1739) was raised in an unique way. In the wake of the 1715 Jacobite rebellion companies of trustworthy Highlanders were raised from loyal clans, Campbells, Grants, Frasers, Munros.

Six companies were formed from 1725 and stationed in small detachments across the Highlands to prevent fighting between the clans, deter raiding and assist in enforcing the laws against the carrying of weapons.

In 1739 King George II authorised the raising of four additional companies. These combined companies were to be formed into a Regiment of the Line, designated the 42nd, with the Earl of Crawford as Colonel.

The men were to be *“natives of that country and none other to be taken”*.

The first muster of the new Regiment took place near Aberfeldy the following year (1740) and is commemorated by a monument in the form of a soldier dressed in the uniform of those days.

The title “The Black Watch” (*Am Freiceadan Dubh*) was derived from the dark colour of the tartan and the original role of the Regiment to “watch” the Highlands. The name has remained and is now incorporated in the official name of the Regiment.

<https://www.theblackwatch.co.uk/history-and-research/black-watch-history/early-years/>



The Plan:

William Pitt, 1st Earl of Chatham: (15 November 1708 – 11 May 1778)

Chatham claimed in his famous eulogy: *"I sought for merit wherever it was to be found, and I found it in the mountains of the North, I called it forth and drew into your service a hardy and intrepid race of men. They served with fidelity and they fought with valour..."*

Maj. Gen. James Wolfe: (02 January 1741 – 13 September 1759)

Wolfe, stationed in Banff, Scotland in June 1751, wrote to his friend Rickson in Nova Scotia: *"I should imagine that two or three independent Highland companies might be of use; they are hardy, intrepid, accustomed to a rough country and no great mischief if they fall. How can you better employ a secret enemy than by making his end conducive to the common good? If this sentiment should take wind, what an execrable and bloody being should I be considered here in the midst of Popery and Jacobitism."*

*From the collection of Wolfe's letters in possession of the Wolfe Society, Westerham, Kent, U.K.

The Result:

Although the government had been trying to stamp out the barbaric habits and customs of the wild *hielandmen*, Pitt approached both the Hon. Archibald Montgomerie and the Hon. Simon Fraser of Lovat to raise a regiment from within their Clans to fight in North America. Fraser's regiment was originally planned as the 63rd Highland Regiment of Foot, but was changed to 78th soon after arrival in America.

The Hon. Archibald Montgomerie (later Earl of Eglinton) raised the 77th Regiment, Montgomerie Highlanders.

Simon Fraser, without estate, money, or influence beyond the hereditary attachment of his clan, raised 800 men within a few weeks, and his gentlemen friends of the district soon raised another 700 hundred during 1757.

Simon Fraser was commissioned Lieutenant Colonel Commandant of the 78th Regiment or 2nd Highland Battalion of Foot on 5 January 1757.

* from *The Fraser Highlanders*, J.R. Harper



The 78th at Sea:

01 July 1757 - After marching all the way from Scotland, the Regiment sailed in transport ships from Cork, Eire, in convoy, under escort of the sloops HMS FALKLAND, HMS ENTERPRISE and HMS STORK, for service "somewhere in North America"- the destination was not disclosed to the troops until they were halfway across the Atlantic. The Grenadier Company was aboard the transport MARTELLO, a new ship on her maiden voyage. Sergeant Thompson wrote that "the ship was so tight, that she did not require pumping, the whole voyage."



02 June 1758 - With Adm. Boscawen at Louisbourg, his flag was in HMS NAMUR. The fleet consisted of 150 transport ships and 40 men-of-war. Housed in these ships were almost 14,000 soldiers, almost all of whom were regulars (with the exception of four companies of American rangers). The force was divided into three divisions: *Red*, commanded by James Wolfe, *Blue*, commanded by Charles Lawrence and *White*, commanded by Edward Whitmore.

On 02 June the British force anchored in Gabarus Bay, 3 miles (4.8 km) from Louisbourg.

12 September, 1759 - with Adm. Saunders in the St. Lawrence, his flag was in HMS NEPTUNE, 90 guns. Saunders' force consisted of 23 ships of the line and 13 frigates and a total of 12,500 sailors; there were 9,200 British regulars under Wolfe.



Not to be missed:

- Plains of Abraham Dinner: 22 Sep 2018
- Feast of Saint Andrew Dinner: 24 Nov 2018
- Robbie Burns Dinner: 19 January, 2019
- Annual General Meeting: 16 March, 2019
- Ste Foy Dinner: 20 April, 2019
- Victoria Highland Games: 18 &19 May, 2019
- Siege of Louisbourg Barbecue: 02 June, 2019 at OC's

*be kind to one another,
it's mean out there*

