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Part 5 of Australian Frontier Wars

First Military Forces

The British Army in Australia

After the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, the colony of New South Wales was initially defended by a force of three companies of marines. *(Interestingly the Royal Marines remained in Australia until 1913).*

In 1790 this force was relieved by a specially raised corps, known as the New South Wales Corps, which provided colonial defence until 1810 when they were returned to England following the events of the Rum Rebellion. After this, regular British Army regiments were dispatched to the Australian colonies on a rotational basis, to serve as a colonial garrison for the next 60 years. The first regiment to arrive was the 73rd, who were brought to colony to replace the New South Wales Corps by Lachlan Macquarie.

The size of these forces varied over time and they were dispersed over a number geographically diverse locations, including Van Diemen's Land (later known as Tasmania), Port Phillip District (later Victoria), the Swan River Colony (later known as Western Australia), South Australia, Moreton Bay and Cape York in what later became Queensland, and Melville Island and other places in modern-day Northern Territory. Initially the garrison was formed by only one regiment (battalion equivalent), however, in 1824 it rose to three. At its peak, in the 1840s, there were between four and six, although this fell to two in the early 1850s and then to one by the end of the decade. In the 1860s, British forces were limited to mainly garrison artillery, although a force of 15 companies of British infantry remained until 1870 when the last British regiment was withdrawn.

Ultimately, between 1810 and 1870 a total of 24 British Army infantry regiments served in Australia, along with detachments of the Royal Engineers and the Royal Artillery. No cavalry units were deployed, although detachments of infantry served as ad hoc mounted units when required. Royal Marines were also sent a number of times. The length of each regiment's service varied, with the average being around seven years. Nevertheless, some regiments, such as the 73rd and 46th served as little as three or four years, while others such as 99th served a total of 13. Two regiments, the 40th and the 50th, served two tours. The last regiment to leave was the 18th, which served the shortest tour, under a year, leaving in 1870. They were not, however, the last British troops to leave Australia. The Royal Marines remained in Australia until 1913, serving on the ships of the Royal Navy's Australia Squadron, which was based in Sydney until the Royal Australian Navy was strong enough to take full responsibility for Australian waters.

While deployed, British Army regiments undertook a variety of duties. This included guarding convict settlements, hunting down bushrangers, suppressing armed resistance by Indigenous Australians, providing security on the goldfields, assisting local police to maintain public order, undertaking ceremonial duties and developing the nation's military defences.

*List of British Regiments serving in Australia Page 3

Establishment of the New South Wales Mounted Police (Mounted Infantry)

After the Bathurst War between the British and the Wiradjuri people concluded in 1824, it was deemed necessary that a mounted infantry division be formed in New South Wales. In 1825, the British Colonial Office approved the idea and agreed to finance the troopers for the mounted force who were to be recruited from the British Army stationed in the colony. The New South Wales government provided funding for the cost of the horses and equipment. Colonel William Stewart of the 3rd Regiment organised the first detachment by selecting 28 soldiers from his force. This first detachment of mounted troopers, which was based at Bathurst, became

active on 4 November 1825. The second detachment was formed in February 1826 and was based at Wallis Plains which is now called Maitland.

While the Bathurst division were quickly utilised to capture escaped convicts, the Wallis Plains unit were deployed in the repression of Aboriginal resistance along the newly colonised area of the Hunter Valley. Lieutenant Nathaniel Lowe, who volunteered for the Mounted Police from the 40th Regiment, ordered multiple executions of Aboriginal prisoners as part of the campaign. Reinforcements of mounted infantry under Ensign Archibald Robertson of the 57th Regiment were required from Sydney and Newcastle throughout the latter half of 1826 to force the local Wonnarua people to submit to British rule. With the aid of armed settlers such as Robert Scott of Glendon, the Mounted Police conducted raids of local Aboriginal camps and by early 1827 resistance in the area ended. Lieutenant Lowe was brought before a court to face charges of extrajudicial murder but was acquitted and reinstated to his position.

Lieutenant Lachlan Macalister

By 1829 the force was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Snodgrass. There were four areas of operation, the main detachment of the unit, incorporating the Governor's guard, was stationed in Sydney at the Belmore Barracks (located on the present site of the Central railway station). There were three country divisions based at Bathurst, Goulburn and Maitland. Lieutenant Lachlan Macalister, who was also a prominent pastoral capitalist in the colony, was placed in charge of the Argyle Division and later commanded the Bathurst Division. Capturing outlaw gangs of escaped convicts, commonly referred to as bushrangers, was the main employment of the Mounted Police at this time. The Bushranging Act of 1830 which enabled the arrest without warrant of anyone suspected of being a criminal aided the force in their duties.

The Mounted Police absorbed the Mounted Orderlies (established as a replacement for the Governor's Body Guard of Light Horse) in 1836. This unit existed as a separate component of the mounted police until at least 1860.

Establishment of the Border Police

The Border Police of New South Wales was a frontier policing body introduced by the New South Wales colonial government with the passing of the *Crown Lands Unauthorised Occupation Act 1839*.

The British colony of New South Wales was expanding rapidly in the late 1830s and the Government was concerned with the illegal occupation of lands and the rights of the Aboriginal people. The Government of New South Wales in 1839 legislated for a new policing body that would control these issues. This force was called the Border Police.

The Border Police was organised into a number of sections and these were deployed to the various districts along the frontier. Each section was under the authority of the Commissioner of Crown Lands for that particular district and each commissioner had about 10 troopers. In order to reduce the cost of the force as much as possible, the troopers were taken from the population of convicts that existed in the colony at that time. The convicts assigned were usually ex-soldiers who had been transported to Australia due to crimes of military indiscipline. They were supplied with horses, equipment and rations, but were otherwise unpaid and had to construct their own barracks. The force was funded by a levy imposed on the squatters who were grazing their livestock on the Crown Lands in the frontier regions. The Border Police was largely disbanded by the late 1840s and was replaced in the expanding frontier regions by detachments of the Native Police.

In 1836, Governor Bourke passed the "Squatting Act" to allow pastoralists or "squatters" as they were colloquially known, to run their sheep and cattle on New South Wales Crown Lands beyond the limits of British settlement for a small fee. However, the problem of managing the often bloody and violent dispossession of the Aboriginal people was not addressed. From 1788 up to the time of the Squatting Act, the British Army, the New South Wales Mounted Police or posses of armed settlers were the main instruments of suppressing Aboriginal resistance to British colonization. In 1838, two large mass-killings of Indigenous people occurred on the frontier. One was the Waterloo Creek massacre perpetrated by the mounted unit of the British Army known as the New South Wales Mounted Police, and the other was the Myall Creek massacre committed by a group of armed settlers.

The following is a list of British Army regiments that served in Australia between 1810 and 1870

Regimental designation	Arrived	Departed	States served in	Notes
73rd Regiment of Foot)	1810	1814	New South Wales and Tasmania.	
46th (South Devonshire)	1814	1818	New South Wales and Tasmania.	
48th (Northamptonshire)	1817	1824	New South Wales and Tasmania.	
3rd (East Kent) – The Buffs	1823	1827	New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and Northern Territory.	
40th (2nd Somerset)	1824	1829	New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and Queensland.	Served two tours in Australia. Reputed to have "seen more action in Australia than any other regiment", it took part in the Black War in 1824. It later helped to put down the Eureka Rebellion in 1854.
	1852	1860		
57th (West Middlesex)	1825	1832	New South Wales, Western Australia, Tasmania, Northern Territory, Victoria and Queensland.	
39th (Dorsetshire)	1827	1832	New South Wales, Western Australia and Tasmania.	
63rd (West Suffolk)	1829	1833	New South Wales, Western Australia and Tasmania.	
17th (Leicestershire)	1830	1836	New South Wales, Tasmania and Queensland.	
4th (King's Own)	1832	1837	New South Wales, Western Australia, Victoria and Tasmania.	
50th (West Kent)	1833	1841	New South Wales, Tasmania, Western Australia, and South Australia.	Served two tours in Australia.
	1866	1869		

Regimental designation	Arrived	Departed	States served in	Notes
21st (Royal North British Fusiliers)	1833	1839	New South Wales, Western Australia and Tasmania.	
28th (North Gloucestershire)	1835	1842	New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland.	Sent to India after the First Anglo-Afghan War.
80th (Staffordshire Volunteers)	1837	1844	New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia.	
51st (2nd Yorkshire West Riding)	1838	1846	New South Wales, Western Australia and Tasmania.	
96th (Manchester)	1841	1848	New South Wales, Tasmania and South Australia.	
99th (Wiltshire)	1843	1856	New South Wales, Tasmania, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia.	The longest serving regiment.
58th (Rutlandshire)	1844	1846	New South Wales.	Was sent to fight in New Zealand in 1845 before returning to Australia in 1846, remaining a further year until being sent back to New Zealand.
11th (North Devonshire)	1845	1857	New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania.	
65th (2nd Yorkshire, North Riding)	1846	1849	New South Wales.	
12th (East Suffolk)	1854	1861	New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania.	Took part in putting down the Eureka Rebellion in 1854.
77th (East Middlesex)	1857	1858	New South Wales.	Was dispatched to fight in India during the Indian Mutiny.

Regimental designation	Arrived	Departed	States served in	Notes
14th (Buckinghamshire)	1867	1869	New South Wales, Western Australia, Victoria and Tasmania.	
18th (Royal Irish)	1870	1870	New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania.	

Edited from Wikipedia and The Australian Dictionary of Biography