

An Historical Sketch

OF THE
64TH (SECOND STAFFORDSHIRE) REGIMENT
AND OF THE
CAMPAIGNS THROUGH WHICH THEY PASSED



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Part II.

In consequence of the disturbed state of the American Colonies in 1768 troops were sent out from home. On the 1st October of the latter year, two weak battalions (the 14th and 29th Regiments) barely 800 strong landed at Boston, and on the 16th and 17th November, 1768, the 64th and 65th Regiments arrived from Cork, and were quartered in some commodious stores on Wheelwright's Wharf. The muster rolls of the 64th for the six months ending the 24th April, 1769, were signed at Boston on April 25th. On the 5th May the 64th, with the 14th, and 29th Regiments were reviewed on the Common, and shortly after the 64th and 65th Regiments were ordered to proceed to Halifax, Nova Scotia. Four companies of the 64th embarked in the Launceston man-of-war (44 guns) on the 8th July, and sailed on the 25th for Halifax. Five companies embarked in the Romney man-of-war (50 guns) and sailed on the 27th. The Launceston arrived at Halifax on the 29th July, and the Romney on the 5th August. The muster rolls of the Regiment were signed at Halifax on the 24th October, 1770. On the 18th April, 1771 the Boston frigate, commanded by Captain Hyde Parker, arrived in Halifax with orders for Lieutenant-Colonel Bruce, of the 65th Regiment (who commanded there) to immediately embark the 64th and 65th Regiments for Boston. On the 23rd April four companies of the 64th embarked in the Boston, and one company and a half in the Senegal. Seven companies of the 65th embarked in the Mermaid and the Rose; the remainder of the regiments were divided among five transports. The reason of this sudden move was, war being considered imminent with Spain, the 64th and 65th Regiments had been selected to form part of a force assembling at Boston for an expedition against Louisiana.

When they reached Boston on the 5th and 6th May they were ordered back to Halifax, as intelligence had been received that a peaceful arrangement with Spain had been arrived at. So having been redistributed in the transports, they sailed on the 26th May, and arrived in Halifax on the 1st June.

When the 14th Regiment was ordered to proceed from Boston to the West Indies, the 64th was detailed to replace them. A detachment of the latter regiment arrived and took up quarters in Castle William before the 14th left in July, 1772; the remainder followed as soon as transports could be procured at Halifax, and by the end of August the whole regiment had arrived. Their new quarters at Castle William were situated on an island about three miles south-east of Boston, and here they remained until the evacuation of the city. The muster rolls for the last year the Regiment was at Halifax, and for the four succeeding years, were signed at Castle William. In March, 1774, Captain McLeroth's company was under orders to proceed to New Providence in the Bahamas to relieve a company of the 14th Regiment stationed there, but a ship of war not being available to take them, the move was countermanded. On the 31st May the Regiment was reviewed at Castle William by Major-General Gage; their effective strength at this time was low; each company consisted of 1 captain, 1 lieutenant, 1 ensign. 2 sergeants. 3 corporals, 1 drummer, and an average strength of 33 privates; the

Grenadier company had two fifiers on their establishment. During 1774 twenty-two desertions took place, but the regiment had lost fifty from this cause up to the 17th April of that year.

In 1774 the Massachusetts Assembly constituted themselves into a Congress and appointed a committee to organise the forces of the State, and collect warlike stores; they also formed a force called "minute men". General Gage, who had replaced Governor Hutchinson at Boston, knowing of these proceedings was obliged to take action. In September, 1774, he expeditiously seized two cannon and a quantity of powder at Cambridge, and on the 26th February, 1775, he dispatched Colonel Leslie and 200 of the 64th, it seems, from Castle William to capture certain military stores at Salem, but the expedition miscarried.

This incident is described in Trevelyan's "American Revolution" as follows:-

"Colonel Leslie sailed to Marblehead for the purpose of seizing some artillery which the provincials had deposited at Salem as a place of comparative security. He landed his detachment successfully on a Sunday morning, but when the alarm reached the nearest meeting house, the congregation turned out and took up a position upon some water which barred his route. They refused to lower the drawbridge on the plea that there was no public right of way across it, and when Leslie attempted to lay hands on a couple of barges, the owners proceeded to scuttle them. The soldiers drew their bayonets and inflicted some wounds, and only just enough to allow Salem to claim the honour of the first drop of blood which was shed in the revolution. A loyalist clergyman intervened. The people agreed to lower the bridge, and Leslie pledged his honour not to advance thirty rods beyond it. Brave to impudence when duty as well as danger lay clear before him, he was not prepared without specific orders from a high quarter to light a blaze. He recalled his men and re-embarked them, empty handed, just as a company of minute men from the next township, with plenty more of their like to follow, came marching to the help of Salem."

[Colonel the Honourable Alexander Leslie was born in 1731, and was the second son of the fifth Earl of Leven. He joined the 3rd Foot Guards in 1753, and in 1758 he appears as senior captain in the newly formed 64th Regiment. He obtained the command of the regiment on the 28th August, 1766, and served with it at Boston until the evacuation. His judgement was much trusted by General Gage, who consulted him frequently regarding the plans for defending Boston Neck, and part of his regiment, the 64th, formed General Gage's bodyguard at Danvers. Colonel Leslie, according to the orders dated April 1776, at Halifax, was appointed Aide-de-Camp to His Majesty, with the rank of Colonel in the Army and Brigadier-General in America. When the troops were brigaded before the battle of Long Island, in July 1776, he was appointed to command the Light Infantry Brigade. He served with distinction during the war, and was much trusted by Cornwallis, and at the siege of Charleston earned his lavish praise. He became a lieutenant-general in 1787, and honorary colonel of the 9th Regiment of Foot. He died in 1794. from the effects of a blow received during a riot in, or near, Glasgow, when second in command of the forces in Scotland.]

Soon after this General Gage received intelligence that a depot of munitions of war had been formed at Concord, some twenty miles from Boston, which he determined to destroy. For this purpose, on the night of the 18th April, he despatched the Grenadier and Light Infantry Companies belonging to the corps in Boston (which did not include those of the 64th), under Lieutenant-Colonel Smith. This led to the unfortunate affair of Concord or Lexington on the following day, when the British lost nine officers and 223 NCOs and men killed and wounded, besides 25 missing. After this the colonists took up arms, and Boston was immediately invested by 20,000 men, whose lines extended from Roxburg, on the right, to the Mystic River on the left - these were soon strengthened by redoubts and artillery. The troops in Boston were too weak to assume the offensive, and from the 20th April became closely blockaded in their lines. In June, it seems, an exchange of prisoners took place, as stated in the following extract from a letter written at Cambridge, New England, on 8th June, 1775, and published in the London Chronicle:

"Thursday last. being the day agreed on for the exchange of prisoners, between twelve and one o'clock Dr. Warren and Brigadier-General Putnam, in a phaeton (Americans), together with Major

Dunbar and Lieutenant Hamilton, of the 64th, on horseback, and Lieutenant Potter, of the Marines, in a chaise, proceeded to Charlestown, in order to exchange the prisoners, after which the officers, with General Putnam and Doctor Warren, proceeded to the house of a Doctor Foster, where an entertainment was provided."

On the 24th May, 1775, Major-Generals Howe, Clinton, and Burgoyne arrived at Boston with six regiments, which brought the force there up to over 10,000 men, and the newly arrived commanders proposed to occupy and fortify Charlestown Neck. This idea having been made known to General Ward, the American Commander, he directed Colonel Putnam to entrench himself on Bunkers Hill, but the latter took up a more forward position on Breeds Hill on the night of the 16th June, and there constructed a redoubt. On the following morning General Gage was surprised at the appearance of this work, and began preparations to dislodge the enemy. This led to the dearly-bought victory of Bunkers Hill, really Breeds Hill; (but in which the 64th had no part). after which the British entrenched themselves near Charlestown Neck, and both sides, being secure in their positions. attempted nothing more than a distant cannonade. The 64th, on account of their isolated position on Castle Island, escaped the routine of the Boston garrison to a great extent, but they are often mentioned in General Howe's orderly book, in which the daily orders of the garrison in Boston and Charlestown are given.

The first order in the above work in which a 64th officer is mentioned is on the 25th July, 1775, when field officers were appointed to the Grenadiers and Light Infantry. Major Musgrave (64th) was posted to the Light Infantry. Then it states: "Major Mitchell to command the Grenadiers encamped at Boston, and Major Musgrave the Light Infantry." On the 11th September it states in orders: "The corps of Light Infantry, under the command of Major Musgrave, to march on Tuesday morning at 8 o'clock to join the troops on Charlestown Heights, under the command of Major-General Howe."

On the 10th October the latter General succeeded to the command on General Gage's return to England. Most of the orders refer to the troops in Boston and on Charlestown Heights only, but some apply to the 64th. On the 28th October we hear of the old Canadian remedy for scurvy advised in orders, as follows: "Spruce beer being recommended for the soldiers by the physicians of the hospital as a preservative against scurvy, the corps in Boston will receive from Mr. Goldthwaite spruce beer at the allowance 3 pints per day to each man, to be paid for by the soldiers at a dollar per barrel, containing, from 30 to 32 gallons, brewed with 5 quarts of molasses and 10 quarts of essence of spruce."

General courts-martial were frequent, the courts consisting of a field officer as president, and twelve members, which as a rule were captains. The sentences were severe, but discipline was difficult to maintain on account of the privations suffered, as the orders regarding plundering and pulling down houses to obtain firewood show.

On 10th November an increase in the establishment of regiments is directed in orders:

"His Majesty has been pleased to direct that the regiments in America (the 18th and 59th excepted) be forthwith augmented by an addition to each of the 10 companies of 1 sergeant, 1 drum, and 18 private men; as also that 2 companies, each consisting of 1 captain, 1 lieutenant, 1 ensign, 3 sergeants, 3 corporals, 2 drummers, and 56 private men, should be added to each of the said regiments." Orders. 20th November: "In consequence of the augmentation His Majesty has been pleased to make in his Regiments of Foot serving in North America, the following establishments is to take place the 25th August, 1775: Establishment of a battalion of 12 companies: 1 colonel, 1 Lieutenant-colonel, 1 major, 9 captains, 14 lieutenants, 10 ensigns, 1 chaplain, 1 adjutant, 1 quartermaster, 1 surgeon, 1 mate, 36 sergeants, 36 corporals, 24 drummers, 2 fifers, 672 privates, including 3 contingent men per company; total 855."

The 2 newly formed companies remained in England as a depot. On the 21st January, 1776, the following appears in orders:- "The commanding officers will avoid sending soldiers upon advanced guards that have not served 1 year at least, nor is any soldier under that time of service upon any account to be posted as sentry next the enemy. That duty must be taken as a post of honour by the

most experienced soldiers upon the guard, being a post of the first consequence."

The scale of provisions is stated in the orders of the 5th January. The following allowance was presumably for one man per week: "7 pds. flour, for which the baker gives 9 pds. bread; 1 pd. dried cod fish (in lieu of 1 pd. salt beef, or 9 oz. salt pork); 3 pds. pork, 3 pints oat meal or pease, 1 oz. oil, 5 oz. butter, 1 pd. 14 oz. flour more (in lieu of 7 oz. pork), and 8 oz. rice."

On the 7th February, 1776, the commanding officers of corps were directed to provide the sergeants with firelocks, if they have them to spare, if not they were to apply to the artillery for carbines. It appears, however, that on the 13th February short muskets were issued to sergeants. On the 29th February it states in orders:- "Regiments when formed by companies or battalions, or when on the General Parade, are always to have their files 18 inches distant from each other, which they will take care to practice for the future, being the order in which they are to engage the enemy." These orders are significant, and seem to have been given with regard to the character of the enemy they had to deal with, whose good shooting rendered a looser formation necessary, as the following extract from Trevelyan's "American Revolution" shows - "In July and August (1775) the Southern riflemen marched into Washington's camp - stout, hardy men, who had trudged [up to] 700 miles to have a shot at the regulars. On the way north they had shown their skill at a review. One of their companies, while advancing in skirmishing order, had put a good proportion of balls into a mark 7 inches broad at a distance of 250 yards. A wonderful performance for those days."

"Headquarters, Boston, 11th February, 1776.

The Commander in Chief desires to return his thanks to Colonel Leslie and Major Musgrave (64th officers) for their planning and conducting the service of last night, and to the officers and soldiers of the detachment under their command for their spirited behaviour on the occasion. He also highly approves of the alacrity of the troops in general last night, and of their soldier-like manner in getting under arms without the least noise or confusion. Such steady behaviour plainly indicates the powerful superiority they must ever preserve over the enemy we have to contend with when an opportunity shall offer to determine it."

Orders, 15th February:- "Major Musgrave will give in a return to the Deputy Quarter-master-General of the detachment that was under his command on the morning of the 14th, including the men that carried the biers and artillery. likewise those artillery men that were with Colonel Leslie, that they may receive a pair of shoes and stockens each. Colonel Leslie will give a return of the detachment of the 64th for the same purpose."

The above service is alluded to by Fotheringham in his "Seige of Boston as follows: "A party of the British from the Castle and another from Boston, several hundred Grenadiers and Light Infantry, crossed over (14th February) to Dorchester Neck to surprise the American guard there, 70 in number, and nearly succeeded. The guard barely escaped, the houses were burned, and two persons captured."

The winter had been so mild that but little ice had formed on the waters round Boston, but at length in the middle of February it froze hard enough to bear troops, and Washington having received a number of large guns, a heavy fire was kept up. Under cover of one of these cannonades on the night of the 4th March the enemy marched a force over to Dorchester Heights, which commanded Boston from the south, and next morning two forts on these were visible. The Heights had not been occupied by the British commander on account of the weak state of the garrison, which now amounted to only 6,646 men fit for duty. But Howe saw the necessity of taking the Heights if he was to remain in Boston. For this purpose 2,100 men were told off on the morning of the 5th March, under Earl Percy (the 64th was not one of the regiments detailed). The rendezvous was at Castle Island, which was about 900 yards, from Dorchester Point, but the weather became so bad that any attempt at landing was impossible. All next day the storm continued, and the attack had to be abandoned which, indeed, had little prospect of success, as the works on Dorchester Heights were garrisoned by 1,000 men, and Washington had another body of 1,000 at Cambridge, ready to embark in boats when the assault commenced to attack Boston under cover of floating batteries, which he had constructed. It would

appear Howe had meditated a night attack, as orders said: "Clerk's and Musgrave's corps of Light Infantry, Agnew's and Wemy's Grenadiers, 23rd and 38th Regiments, to parade this evening (5th March) at 7 o'clock, and be ready for embarkation": and in next day's orders it states: "The General desires the troops to know that the intended expedition last night was unavoidably put off by the badness of the weather."

Howe resolved on the 7th March to evacuate Boston, on which date the voluminous orders for the embarkation commenced. These do not much concern the 64th Regiment at Castle William, where they must have been at work dismantling or demolishing the Castle, for the Americans commenced restoring it after the evacuation. The 64th probably embarked on the same day as the army (16th March), and on Sunday, 17th, the transports, crowded with refugees as well as with troops, sailed for Halifax without being molested by the enemy's guns.

The strength of the 64th Regiment on embarkation at Boston was as follows:- 1 Lt-Col, 1 Major, 7 Captains, 16 Subalterns, 3 staff, 27 sergeants, 14 drummers, 319 rank and file fit for duty, 17 sick present, 4 sick absent, 6 recruiting or on furlough.

There is a break in the "Orderly Book" between the 16th and 30th March, during the time the transports were at sea, and orders again appear on the latter date at Halifax. Those then issued refer chiefly to the discipline and administration of the troops in port. On the 3rd April 1776 they state:- "Quarters being prepared in the town for the troops, when ready, as many men as they will contain will be brought on shore: in the meantime the Commanding Officers of Corps will air their men when the weather permits on George's Island... They will take their arms for exercise, or to fire at marks as they will think proper. A proportion of officers always to remain on board the transports till they are evacuated." The same orders also state:- "The King having been graciously pleased to appoint the Hon. Lieut.-Colonel Leslie, of the 64th Regiment, to be his Majesty's Aide-de-Camp with the rank of Colonel in the Army. Colonel Leslie will take rank as Brigadier-General in the Army in America under the command of Major-General Howe." The following practical order appears on the 6th April:- "One Subaltern and 24 rank and file of the R.F.A. [Royal Fencible Americans] Regiment will be employed in catching fish for the use of the troops; they are to go aboard such vessels as the D.Q.Mr.-General shall direct. It is recommended to the officer who has voluntarily undertaken to superintend this necessary piece of service for the good of the whole Army to pay every attention to it in his power."

Orders 12th April state:- "The six companies of Light Infantry, that were under the command of Major Musgrave, to be joined by the light companies of the 27th and 64th on the Citadel Hill at nine o'clock tomorrow morning; if the weather be fair Major Musgrave will exercise them." It appeared in orders repeatedly that the troops were to be exercised, the place of assembly being on the Citadel Hill. Major Musgrave of the 64th Regiment, must have been an expert drill, as he was frequently detailed in orders to drill the Grenadiers and Light Infantry. Earl Percy generally superintended the drill of the Regiments, which paraded by brigades, three battalions in each. When Regiments were ordered out for exercise they were not to be joined by their Light or Grenadier Companies unless particularly ordered.

The orders of the 26th April give the rate of stoppages for rations on board ship. When for sea the stoppage was 1 3/4d., and 1/2d. necessary money to the master; when in port at full allowance the ration was 2 1/2d., and necessary money 1/2d.

On the 14th May the following order appears:- "The Commander-in-Chief is pleased to form the Grenadiers and Light Infantry Companies into four battalions." The Grenadiers of the 64th Regiment were included in the second Grenadier Battalion, of which Lieut.-Colonel Monckton and Major Steward were the field officers. The Light Company of the 64th was in the second battalion of the Light Infantry, the field officers being Major Maitland and Major Strobenzie. Major Musgrave of the 64th, commanded the first battalion of Light Infantry. [The flank companies of the 64th Regiment remained in these battalions during the war]

Orders, May 17th, appoints Captain Lewis, of the 64th, a major of brigade: he was posted to the Light Infantry Brigade. In the orders of May 18th the distribution of transports appear: the *Father's*

Goodwill and *Stephenson* were told off to the 64th Regiment to carry 362 men of the battalion companies. The Grenadiers and Light Infantry were in separate transports.

Comforts for the troops were sent out sometimes from home even in those far off days, as the following appears in the orders of May 20th:- "An extensive and generous subscription having been commenced and continued in Great Britain for the encouragement and relief of the troops employed in the present most important service in America, the object and progress of which will be explained by a printed paper delivered to every corps." In the next day's orders commanding officers of the regiments that served at Boston were directed to order their quarter-masters to attend Quarter-master Gratton, of the 64th, on board the *Renown* ship, to receive their proportions of shoes, stockings, and caps sent by the society for the relief of the soldiers.