



Scottish military research using family photographs

Most Scottish families had an ancestor who fought in the World Wars; hundreds of thousands of them served in Scottish infantry regiments and many of them had photographs taken of themselves in uniform. In many cases a photograph of a man in khaki is one of the few items which a family will still have to record that service.

Luckily for us the Scottish regiments had many “tribal” peculiarities, especially the Highland regiments, and if you know what to look for in an old family photograph it is often possible to identify a regiment and sometimes even a battalion even if you can't see a cap badge.

To provide a detailed guide to every combination of uniform worn by Scottish soldiers over the years would fill a large book. Apart from the service dress the men wore, the caps and badges were very similar in both World Wars, so most of the photographs in this guide are First World War portraits from 1914-1919. Many soldiers chose to get their photographs taken in a studio in their regimental finery and it is those photographs this guide will focus on as these are the sort of photographs most likely to be the ones a family will possess.

There are also photographs covering other periods – The Second World War, pre-1914, Imperial Service, post-1945 but they will not be covered in detail to allow this to remain a brief guide. There are a couple of photographs of pipers, but since so few men served as pipers and because of the extra uniform differences, they will also not be covered in detail.

Most Scots who served in the army during the World Wars served in the ten famous Scottish infantry regiments – five Lowland and five Highland

Lowland	Highland
Royal Scots	Black Watch
Royal Scots Fusiliers	Seaforth Highlanders
King's Own Scottish Borderers	Gordon Highlanders
Cameronians, Scottish Rifles	Cameron Highlanders
Highland Light Infantry	Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders

Scotland also had a regiment of Foot Guards – The Scots Guards; and a cavalry regiment – The Royal Scots Greys, 2nd Dragoons. This guide will cover all these regiments plus the seven Scottish volunteer cavalry regiments – The Ayrshire Yeomanry, Queen's Own Glasgow Yeomanry, Lanarkshire Yeomanry, Fife and Forfar Horse, Lothian and Border Horse, Scottish Horse and Lovat Scouts. There were also three Scottish regiments raised in England before and during the First World War which are included – the London Scottish, The Liverpool Scottish and the Tyneside Scottish. We will also briefly touch on the army's corps – artillery, engineers, medical, transport and flying and the war-raised Machine Gun Corps.

There will also be a short look at Canadian and South African Scottish units. This is another area of study which would take a book in itself to cover in full. During the First World War many Scots served in overseas forces, and in the Canadian Expeditionary Force several units wore Highland uniform - in some case modelled directly on regiments in the British Army. There are some items which help distinguish the Canadian uniforms even if at first glance on a photograph they look identical to the British regiment.

The guide will cover the cap badges of the Scottish Regiments and other insignia will be referenced where visible on a photograph but they will be covered in more detail, along with rank badges, in another Scottish Military Research Group guide which will be published separately – “Ranks and Badges”

We hope this very brief guide – made using our own collection of photographs and out of copyright photographs from Wikimedia and the Imperial War Museum *Faces of the First World War* collection - will help you identify a soldier's unit from his photograph.

Please contact us with your own photograph if you would like someone from the Scottish Military Research Group to have a second look.

Cap Badges

If you have a clear view of a cap badge on a photograph then it is relatively easy to identify the regiment, so we will start this guide with some images of the cap badges of the Scottish regiments. These are the badges commonly used in the late Victorian period and through the two World Wars and are most likely to be seen on an old photograph. There have been variations of these badges over the years and in some regiments officers and pipers wore slightly different badges but for the most part these are the most common examples for each regiment. They are not listed in order of precedence, rather they are grouped by their similarity to each other for ease of distinguishing them for the layman.

Scottish badges, especially those of the Highland regiments, tend to be slightly larger than other regimental badges of the British Army.



Royal Scots Greys



Royal Scots Fusiliers



Scots Guards



Royal Scots



King's Own Scottish Borderers



Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders



Black Watch



Highland Light Infantry



Glasgow Highlanders



Black Watch



HLI



Cameronians Scottish Rifles



Cameron Highlanders



Gordon Highlanders



Seaforth Highlanders



Territorial Units

London Scottish / Liverpool Scottish WW1 / 5th Bn Seaforth Highlanders WW2 / Liverpool Scottish WW2
 Tyneside Scottish WW1 / Glasgow Highlanders / Lowland Regiment WW2 / Highland Regiment WW2



Other Corps

Thousands of Scots served in supporting corps during the World Wars and there were Territorial artillery, engineer, medical and transport units based across Scotland. For reasons of space we are only showing six of the most commonly seen ones. The same Royal Artillery badge was used by the Royal Horse Artillery, Royal Field Artillery and Royal Garrison Artillery during the First World War. Men who wore this badge in their caps wore shoulder badges with RHA, RFA and RGA on them. Hopefully the shoulder badge can be seen in any photograph to identify which branch they served in. The Royal Flying Corps merged with the Royal Naval Air Service in 1918 to form the Royal Air Force so anyone photograph of someone wearing that badge predates the formation of the RAF. The Machine Gun Corps was only formed in 1915 and was disbanded in 1920.



First World War Photographs

It is worth noting at the start of this section that most photographs taken before and during the First World War were developed using emulsions which were not sensitive enough to capture the colour yellow. This means that yellow showed as black. Because of that the Gordon Tartan used by the Gordon Highlanders looks just like the Government Tartan kilt, which is what it was based on. Kilts of the Black Watch, Gordon Highlanders and Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders all look exactly the same in photographs of this period.

To help differentiate between the regiments, different uniform items can be used alone, or with other items, to piece together the clues for an answer. However there are exceptions to these uniform rules. In 1908 the Volunteer Regiments became the Territorial Force and became part-time battalions of the regular regiments. Several Territorial battalions still retained their pre-1908 uniform distinctions into the First World War which meant:

4th and 5th (Queen's Edinburgh Rifles) Battalions, Royal Scots –wore the uniform of a Scottish rifles regiment

9th (Highland) Battalion, Royal Scots – wore a kilt of Hunting Stewart tartan, not trews.

6th (Glasgow) Battalion, Highland Light Infantry – wore a Mackenzie kilt not trews (the same sett as the Seaforth Mackenzie kilt but with the red stripes over the legs - not in the centre of the kilt like the Seaforths wore. Unfortunately red shows as black on old photos so both regiments' kilts look the same)

9th (Glasgow Highlanders) Battalion, Highland Light Infantry – wore a Highland uniform based on the Black Watch

5th (Sutherland and Caithness) Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders – wore a uniform roughly based on the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders

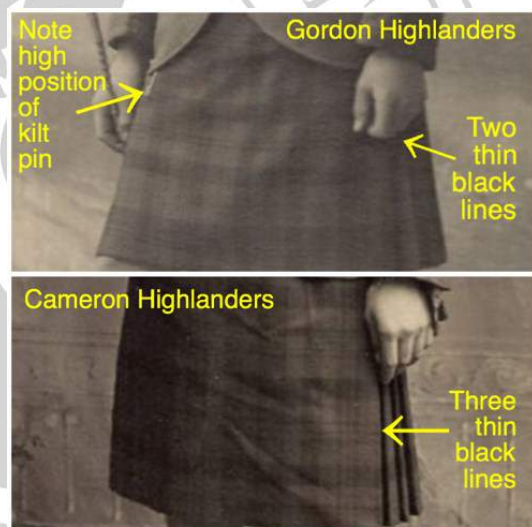
As can be seen the two battalions of the Highland Light Infantry have similarities in uniform to other regiments and it may not always be possible to distinguish them as HLI from a photograph.

In the table below where a regiment is identified as Lowland (L) the men wore tartan trews in full dress and in barracks but did not wear it on front-line service. Please use this table in conjunction with the photographs on the following pages. The patterned hose were replaced in the front line by plain woollen hose by 1916. The sporrans were replaced by khaki kilt covers at the front but early WW1 photographs taken in the UK often show them. Later ones taken in Europe do not, as a rule, show them.

For decoration sporrans had a number of short tassels (e.g. Black Watch) or longer tails (e.g. Seaforth Highlanders) in contrasting hair colour. For convenience this guide uses the term tassels for all lengths of sporran decoration.

Regiment	Tartan	Sporran colour of sporran / colour and number of tassels / pouch badge	Hose (socks)	Garter flashes	Glengarry Body/ Dicing
Royal Scots (L)	Hunting Stewart No.8	N/A	N/A	N/A	Dark Blue/ red white and green (4 th and 5 th QE Rifles Battalions wore plain dark green glengarries)
9 th (Highland) Bn Royal Scots	Hunting Stewart No.8	White/ 2 long black/ Thistle (Also had privately purchased leather purse sporran)	Red and dark green	2 red tabs – double pointed and with one belled loop	Dark Blue/ red white and green
Royal Scots Fusiliers (L)	Government Tartan No. 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	Dark Blue/ red white and green
King's Own Scottish Borderers (L)	Leslie Tartan No. 7	N/A	N/A	N/A	Dark Blue/ red white and green
Cameronians (Scottish Rifles)(L)	Douglas Tartan No. 6	N/A	N/A	N/A	Dark green No dicing
Black Watch	Government Tartan No. 1 aka Black Watch	White / 5 short black / St Andrew	Red and black	2 red tabs – double pointed	Dark blue No dicing No black rosette
Highland Light Infantry (L)	Mackenzie Tartan No. 5. Slightly larger sett than the same tartan worn by the Seaforth Highlanders	N/A	N/A	N/A	Dark Blue/ Dark green
6 th Bn HLI	Mackenzie Tartan No.2 See Seaforth Highlanders	Black / 3 short white / small version of HLI cap badge	Red and white	2 red tabs – double pointed	Dark Blue/ red white and green
9 th Bn HLI Glasgow Highlanders	Government Tartan No. 1 with box pleat	White / 5 short black / St Andrew	Red and black	2 red tabs – double pointed	Dark Blue/ red white and green
Seaforth Highlanders	Mackenzie Tartan No.2 Government tartan with red and white stripes. Only white shows in old photographs	white / 2 long black/ Stag's Head – same as cap badge	Red and white	One red tab, Two stacked belled loops on plain tabs – no points	Dark Blue/ red white and green
5 th Bn Seaforth Highlanders	Government Tartan No. 1 with box pleat	Grey / 3 dark grey/ Metal cantle	Red and dark green	2 red tabs – double pointed	Dark blue No dicing or red and white
Gordon Highlanders	Gordon Tartan No.3 In early 20 th Century photographs the yellow strips shows as black so the Gordon tartan looks exactly the same as a Government tartan kilt	white / 2 long black / Stag's head on heater-shaped shield	Red and Black	2 red tabs – double pointed and with one belled loop	Dark Blue/ red white and green

Regiment	Tartan	Sporran colour of sporran / colour and number of tassels / pouch badge	Hose (socks)	Garther flashes	Glengarry Body/ Dicing
Cameron Highlanders	Cameron of Erracht Tartan No. 4 In early 20 th Century photos the yellow stripes shows as black so it is difficult to distinguish this tartan from the Government Tartan unless there is a clear photo where subtle differences can be discerned.	black / 2 long white / St Andrew – same as cap badge	Red and dark green	2 red tabs – double pointed	Dark blue No dicing
Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders	Government Tartan No. 1 with box pleat	Black / 6 short white/ Plain or Sometimes has a badger's head for a cantle	Red and white	2 red tabs – double pointed	Dark blue Red & white
London Scottish	Hodden Grey Not a tartan. A plain grey / brown colour chosen by Lord Elcho when the unit was formed in 1859.	Brown-grey/ 2 long black/ London Scottish cap badge	Hodden Grey	One dark blue tab - pointed	Dark blue No dicing
Liverpool Scottish	Forbes Tartan Similar to the Mackenzie tartan of the Seaforth Highlanders with no red stripe and with a larger sett than Mackenzie No.2	Brown-grey/ 2 long black/ King's Regiment "Horse" badge	Red and Black	2 red tabs – double pointed	Dark Blue/ red white and green



Glengarry

Headwear used by the Scottish infantry regiments from the 1850s onwards, and in use with Service Dress at the outbreak of The First World War. It was found to be impractical in the trenches and replaced at the front line from late 1914 by blue Balmoral caps with khaki covers and then the larger khaki Tam O' Shanter from the spring of 1915.

Note: All pipers of all Scottish regiments wore plain glengarries without dicing.

Other headwear

Balmoral

A dark blue flat bonnet with red tourie. A bonnet used by civilians since the nineteenth century, it was first introduced by the army in late 1914 as trench warfare developed. It was soon issued with a khaki cover and then superseded by the Tam O' Shanter (see below). Officers wore their own privately purchased uniform during the First World War and often wore a khaki Balmoral rather than a Tam O' Shanter from 1915 onwards.

Tam O' Shanter

A khaki flat bonnet with a khaki tourie. First introduced in April 1915 it was used by all Scottish infantry units – replacing glengarries, and commonly seen in studio photographs from 1916 onwards. It can be distinguished from a Balmoral by its larger crown and rougher material. In Scottish Divisions it was sometimes, but not always, adopted by other troops too - such as the Machine Gun Corps.

Atholl Bonnet

Another nineteenth century civilian bonnet adopted by two Scottish volunteer cavalry units after the Boer War. The Atholl was shaped like a Balmoral bonnet with the addition of a diced band. It was only used by the Scottish Horse and Lovat Scouts. The Scottish Horse had red, white and blue dicing and a red tourie. The Lovat Scouts had blue and white dicing and a blue tourie and theirs is sometimes called a Blue Bonnet

Kilmarnock Bonnet

A similar bonnet to the Atholl but with a larger crown which was stiffened so it looks like a Tam O'Shanter in shape. It was in use by the Royal Scots and King's Own Scottish Borderers in Full Dress from 1903 until 1914 - replacing the Home Service helmet they had worn since the 1880s. It was also used pre-1914 by the 6th Bn Highland Light Infantry with a green crown and an eagle feather behind the badge. The battalion adopted the glengarry in wartime but their Kilmarnock may be seen unstiffened like an Atholl bonnet in early WW1 photos of the 6th Bn HLI.

The Kilmarnock re-appeared for formal dress for all Scottish regiments in the late 1940s until the glengarry came back into fashion again in the 1960s.

(The original Kilmarnock Bonnet - the name taken from its place of manufacture - was drum shaped and was first used in the late 18th Century. It had a diced band by the early nineteenth century and with the addition of ostrich feathers it evolved into the feather bonnet)

Feather Bonnet

The feather bonnet was first adopted by the Highland regiments in the early nineteenth century and was last used by frontline Highland troops during the Indian Mutiny. It was used in full dress uniform by the regular Highland regiments until 1914 and is still used by drummers and the pipers of some regiments until today. Volunteer rifle regiments did not wear feather bonnets so if an ordinary soldier was photographed wearing one he will have been a regular soldier

Service Dress peaked cap

Worn by the Royal Scots Greys (2nd Dragoons); Scots Guards; Ayrshire Yeomanry; Lanarkshire Yeomanry; Queen's Own Royal Glasgow Yeomanry; Lothian and Border Horse; Fife and Forfar Yeomanry. Also worn by Scottish Territorial Force units of the Royal Garrison Artillery; Royal Field Artillery; Royal Engineers; Royal Army Medical Corps and Army Service Corps. In use from 1905 up to the Second World War until replaced by the Field Service Cap (the cap worn by the platoon in Dad's Army) and later the beret.

Wolseley Helmet

Widely worn throughout the British Empire's tropical postings from the Edwardian era onwards; it was the standard hot-weather headwear for Scottish soldiers in Gallipoli, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Palestine and India during the First World War. It was used between the wars and in the first years of the Second World War until it was replaced by slouch hats and headwear used in temperate climates e.g field service caps, Tam O' Shanter's.



Highland Regiments

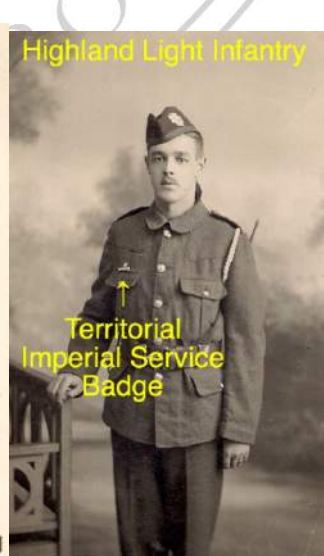


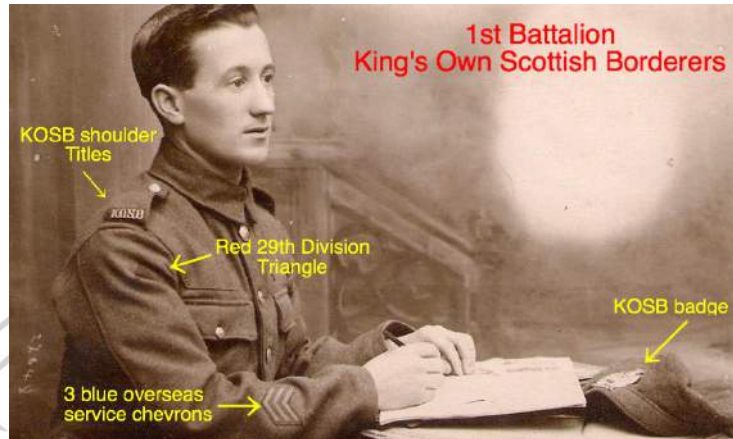
Territorial Force Battalions





Guards & Lowland Regiments

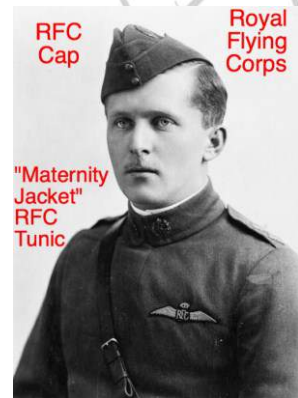
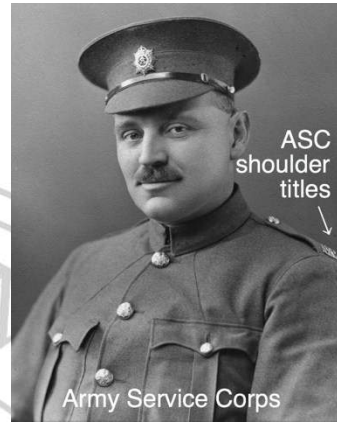




Yeomanry



Other Corps



Highland Regiments of the Canadian Expeditionary Force

Before the First World War several Canadian Militia units adopted the uniform of Scottish regiments and adopted the same tartans for their kilts and used similar other uniform items but often used their own badges. For reasons of space only a couple will be highlighted here but common Canadian features are the use of collar badges (often using a maple leaf) which isn't as usual on British khaki service dress uniform of this period, and stand collars on early-war uniforms - instead of the stand-and-fall collars used on British uniforms. For further information on uniforms and badges of the Canadian Expeditionary Force please see here:

http://regimentalroque.com/misc/researching_first_world_war_soldiers_part18.htm

Only some Canadian units went overseas, many others remained in Canada. The kilted battalions which served on the Western Front wore these tartan kilts:

Government Tartan

13th Bn (Royal Highlanders of Canada); 42nd Bn (Royal Highlanders of Canada); 85th Bn (Nova Scotia Highlanders)

Davidson Tartan

15th Bn (48th Highlanders of Canada)

Mackenzie tartan

16th Bn (Canadian Scottish); 72nd Bn (Seaforth Highlanders of Canada)

Cameron of Erracht tartan

43rd Bn (Cameron Highlanders of Canada)

"Cantile" Tartan

42nd Bn (Royal Highlanders of Canada); 73rd Bn (Royal Highlanders of Canada) – Temporary war-issue khaki kilt with red, blue and green stripes



Other Canadian Units

Many Scots served in non-Highland Canadian units and their uniform was very similar to the British Army's service dress. Canadian uniforms tend to be of a darker shade in photographs which may help in identification.

South African Scottish

During the First World War the 4th Regiment South African Infantry served in France & Flanders with the South African Brigade. Between 1916 and 1918 it was attached to the 9th (Scottish) Division. The 4th Regiment wore Highland uniform.

Kilt

Murray of Atholl

Pre-1914 / Imperial Service

The kilts, sporrans and hose seen in the First World War section are the same as were used before the war on Imperial service but the tunics and headgear were different. For reasons of space this section will only be a brief look at some common uniform items that can be used to help identify the period the photograph was taken.



Lowland Tartans

Before the First World War the Lowland regiments wore tartan trews. They were replaced on active service in 1914 with khaki trousers.

Government Tartan

Royal Scots 1881-1903; Royal Scots Fusiliers 1881-1948; King's Own Scottish Borderers 1887-1898; Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) 1881 - 1891

When the Lowland Regiments first adopted Scottish uniform in 1881 they also adopted Government tartan trews until they replaced them with their own tartans. The Royal Scots Fusiliers did not adopt their own tartan until 1948

Royal Stewart

Pipers only of the Scots Guards, Black Watch and from 1943 Cameron Highlanders; 72nd Highlanders as trews until 1882

Hunting Stewart No.8

Worn by the Royal Scots from 1903. In old photographs the yellow and red stripes show as black

Leslie No. 7

King's Own Scottish Borderers. Adopted in 1898. Double white stripes show in photographs

Douglas No.6

Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) – Adopted 1891. White stripes show in old photographs

Mackenzie No.5

Highland Light Infantry worn as trews since 1834. This is a different sett of the tartan than the No. 2 sett worn by the Seaforth Highlanders. The white stripes are slightly further apart.

Two other regiments wore tartan trews until 1881 when they adopted the kilt of the regiments they merged with.

Lamont Tartan

Worn by the 74th Highlanders as trews between 1846 and 1881. When they became 2nd Bn Highland Light Infantry they adopted the McKenzie No5 tartan trews of the HLI

Campbell Tartan

Worn by the 91st Highlanders as trews between 1864 and 1881. When they became the 1st Bn Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders they adopted the government kilt of the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders

Scottish Volunteers 1859-1908

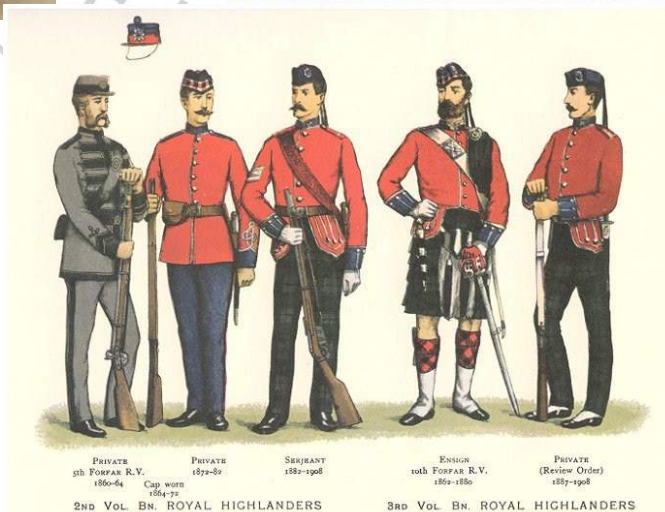
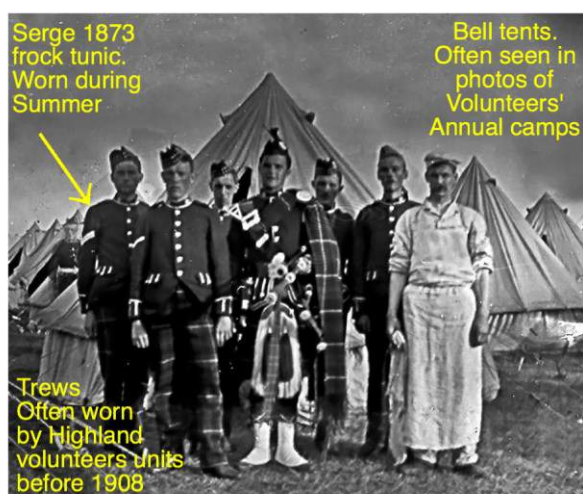
During 1859-1860 scores of volunteer rifle companies were raised across Britain in response to a highly improbable scare of a French invasion! The result of that scare was an organisation that developed over the next fifty years into the Territorial Force. It was fashionable in the early years of the movement to get small carte-de-visite photographs of the volunteers and these may end up in a family's photograph collection alongside more conventional photographs.

Unfortunately for identification there were as many variations in uniform as there were units. It was only after 1880s that there was some attempt at linking them together to a parent regular regiment and a standardisation of uniforms. Luckily for us at the time of the creation of the Territorial Force a history of the volunteers in Scotland was written by General James Grierson - *Records of the Scottish volunteer force, 1859-1908*

In it Grierson not only describes each unit's history he gives a description of their uniforms and there are dozens of colour plates too. The book is available on Archive.Org and it is well worth looking at if your ancestor was a Scottish rifle volunteer.

<https://archive.org/details/recordsofscottis00grierich>

We have included a couple of photographs of volunteers here, and a plate from the Grierson book as examples.



Inter-War

The uniforms seen in this Inter-War section are very similar to those used during the First World War but there are some details which can be picked out which will help date the photograph to the post-WW1 period.

The most common item to be found on post-war period uniforms to help identify the period are the First World War Service medals. Another clue to date the inter-war photographs is the service dress tunics became more tailored and closer fitting at this time.



A new type of tropical headwear was introduced in India from the mid-1930s onwards— the Solar Pith Topee. It did not replace the Wolseley Helmet entirely which soldiered on until the Second World War when it was replaced by the slouch hat in the Far East and by normal military headwear in the Middle East.

Second World War

During the Second World War the British Army adopted battledress and the kilt was no longer worn on the front line. It was sometimes still seen in studio photographs. Photographic stock changed and with new developing techniques it was now possible to capture the yellow stripes on tartan.



Post-1945

During this period the Scottish regiments shrank in number and there was a move back to more ceremonial uniforms after the drab khaki worn since 1914. It is relatively easy to distinguish the Scottish regiments during this period, especially as colour photographs became more common



In 1948 the Highland Light Infantry regained the kilt after losing it in 1809.
 In 1957 the Royal Scots Fusiliers amalgamated with the Highland Light Infantry to form the Royal Highland Fusiliers – wearing trews
 In 1961 the Seaforth Highlanders amalgamated with the Cameron Highlanders to form the Queen's Own Highlanders
 In 1968 the Cameronians chose disbandment over amalgamation
 In 1971 the 3rd Carabiniers amalgamated with the 2nd Dragoons, Royal Scots Greys to form the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards
 In 1994 the Queen's Own Highlanders amalgamated with the Gordon Highlanders to form the Highlanders
 In 2005 the Royal Scots amalgamated with the King's Own Scottish Borderers to form the Royal Scots Borderers
 In 2006 the Royal Regiment of Scotland was formed from all Scottish infantry regiments

In 1948 the Kilmarnock Bonnet - like a cross between a Tam O'Shanter and an Atholl Bonnet - was re-introduced for all Scottish regiments. It was phased out again in the mid-1960s as the Glengarry came back into use.