

# CROSIER SURTEES

The Militia in England had a long tradition based on the belief that every man should be ready to defend his country if the need arose. When war began or invasion threatened, the Militiamen left their homes to serve as full-time soldiers until the danger had passed.

There was a Militia throughout the Middle Ages and in Durham it was under the control of the Bishop. In 1757 Parliament decided to create a new Militia.

The new Durham Militia was formed in August 1759 at Barnard Castle by the Earl of Darlington with a strength of 369 men. The soldiers were chosen by ballot - in a similar way to being called -up - but the officers were all volunteers from the County gentry. This Militia survived, with some changes, until the end of the First World War.

Crosier Surtees was one of the first officers of the new Durham Militia. He was born at Merryshields, Northumberland in 1739 and was 20 years old when the Earl of Darlington commissioned him as a Lieutenant in the Grenadier Company of the Durham Militia.

He soon decided however that soldiering, even part-time, was not for him and he resigned in 1761. Though not before he had had this magnificent portrait painted of himself in uniform.

10 years later in 1769, he married his first cousin Jane and acquired Redworth Hall near Darlington. It was an unhappy marriage, and around 1800 Jane left her husband and her children. Crosier then retired to Pennington Rake near Hamsterley, where a local woman bore him several more children.

He was described by the Surtees family history as a "designing, artful man, a bad character". There was little sadness then, when, on the 21 December 1803, he was found frozen to death in the Linburn Beck, north of Raby Castle after falling drunkenly from his horse. He was aged 65 and, according to the family history, died "unlamented".

Though his military career was neither long nor distinguished, his magnificent Grenadier Cap on display here in the museum is of great importance as so little has survived from the early years of the Durham Militia.

The cap is made of brown fur with a heavily embroidered plate on the front. This plate is made of silver wire, with additions of yellow metal wire and red and white threads and bears the letters "DM" (Durham Militia) and crest of the Earl of Darlington. The back of the Cap has a silver net and tassel over a green velvet bag. When Redworth Hall was sold in 1952, the Cap was donated to Darlington Museum. It was transferred to the DLI Museum in 1968.



Crosier Surtees' Grenadier Cap, c. 1759



# JIMMY DURHAM

In 1885, the 2nd Battalion DLI was in Egypt as the Dervish Army from Sudan invaded. On display here in the museum is a Dervish 'jibbah' - a cotton smock with coloured patches. Dervish soldiers believed that the jibbahs' coloured patches were magical and could stop enemy bullets. Unfortunately for them, this was not the case and they were defeated by the British at the Battle of Ginnis in Upper Egypt on 30 December 1885.

After this battle a party of Durham soldiers were patrolling the banks of the River Nile when they discovered a baby boy all alone. They learned that his name was Mustapha and that during the battle his father had been killed and his mother had fled.

They took him back to their camp and for the next year, whilst still on campaign in the desert, 2 DLI's Sergeants looked after him. They named him "Jimmy", after his first nurse Sergeant James Birley, who bathed him every day in a stable bucket outside his tent.

When the Durhams moved to Cairo, Lieutenant Henry de Lisle wanted to send Jimmy to an orphanage but the Sergeants asked to keep him and promised one rupee each a month to support him. De Lisle agreed and Jimmy, now christened James Francis Durham, sailed for India with the battalion in January 1887.

In India, Jimmy lived with a number of Sergeants and their families, as the battalion moved from station to station. He went to school and spent his free time exercising ponies for the Polo Club. In May 1899, when aged about 14 years old, Jimmy was given special permission by Queen Victoria to enlist as a boy bandsman in The Durham Light Infantry as 6758 Private James Francis Durham. Eventually, he returned to England and in July 1908 married Jane Green of Bishop Auckland, whose brother was a Quartermaster Sergeant with the Durhams.

In 1910 he was stationed at Fermoy in Ireland, when, not being used to the colder climate, he caught pneumonia. He died on 8 August 1910 at the military hospital and was buried with full military honours in the local cemetery. Some of the old Sergeants, who had first seen Jimmy twenty five years earlier in Egypt, travelled from Durham to be present at the service. A few weeks after the funeral, Jimmy's only child was born, a daughter, and was christened Frances. She lived in Bishop Auckland and though she married, sadly she never had any children. She died in 1998.



Jimmy Durham as a baby, Egypt c. 1886



# HORATIO ROBLEY

Horatio Robley was born in June 1840 in Madeira. His father was a Captain in the Madras Infantry in India. In May 1858 he joined the 68th Light Infantry - the forerunner of The Durham Light Infantry - and served in Burma for 5 years on garrison duty.

During this time he became an enthusiastic amateur artist, sketching and painting the local people and exotic landscapes that surrounded him. He also became fascinated by tattoos and had an image of the Buddha tattooed on his right arm.

At the end of 1863 the 68th Light Infantry were sent to New Zealand to stop the Maoris from trying to prevent the spread of the British settlements. They landed in Auckland in January 1864 and were sent south to Tauranga on the Bay of Plenty.

During his time there, Lieutenant Robley put his artistic talent to use, sketching British soldiers, Maori forts (pahs) and even groups of wounded Maori soldiers - he gave his rum ration to them as payment. Many of his drawings were later published in the 'Illustrated London News' providing a unique glimpse of war at a time when televised news broadcasts were non-existent.

As the Maori tribes began to surrender, he spent as much time as he could with the Maoris, living with them and

sketching and studying their way of life, their art and especially their tattoos or Moko as they were known. He probably had a few Moko of his own but it is impossible to know for certain as they would have been safely concealed under his tunic.

He came to be called 'Te Ropere' by the Maoris. Whilst he was living with them, he met Harete Mauao and together they had a son, Hamiora Tu Ropere.

He left New Zealand in 1866 when the 68th Light Infantry went home and never returned. He always maintained his interest in the Maori people keeping in touch with his family by letter. In 1896 he published a book on Moko and over the years sold over 70 of his paintings to the New Zealand Government.

He also began to collect smoke-dried Maori heads (mokomoka) with their prominent tattoos and by 1908, had over 30 heads - probably the finest collection in the world. He offered the collection to the New Zealand Government but was turned down and finally sold them to the New York Natural History Museum.

Horatio Robley died in October 1930 but is still remembered today in New Zealand not just for his historically important drawings and paintings - his descendants still live on North Island.



Horatio Robley's watercolour of Te Kuha, Maori chief, New Zealand, 1866

