

Monday 18th June 2011

Remembering the Contribution of the Wellington Regiment

The prized colours of the Wellington Infantry Regiment of World War One are being donated to the National Army Museum in a small ceremony on Wednesday 22nd June.

Over 10,000 men from all walks of life represented the province of Wellington during the war and the colours represent recognition by King George V who approved the presentation of a silk union flag, termed 'colour', to each of the Regiment's three Battalions who served during the war.

The Wellington Infantry Battalion was formed at the start of the conflict by groups from the four Territorial Battalions of Wellington; West Coast, Hawkes Bay, Taranaki and Ruahine. The battalion first saw action in the defence of Suez Canal and then later as part of the assault on Chunuk Bair in the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign. The 1st Battalion was commanded by Lt Col W G Malone, considered one of New Zealand's most outstanding soldiers of the Gallipoli campaign which claimed his life.

Following the evacuation of Gallipoli, a 2nd Battalion was formed and hence the birth of the Wellington Infantry Regiment to which a 3rd Battalion was later added in 1917. The regiment served the remainder of the war in France, Belgium and Germany.

The men of the Wellington Infantry Regiment wore with great pride the distinguishing patches of their battalions in the distinctive Wellington colours of black and gold. They served with honour and amongst them were awarded 544 British and 26 foreign awards for valour and suffered 2193 dead.

Post war the regiment disbanded and the returning men went back to their pre war occupations whilst others sought to pick up their lives free of any military involvement. The colours were presented to the regiment in 1920 in a ceremony conducted in the Square, Palmerston North, the place where the original soldiers gathered in preparation for departure overseas in 1914. As tradition dictates these colours have since been on public display in All Saints Church, Palmerston North. The once vibrant colour of these artefacts are now considerably faded and in a delicate state and will be donated to the National Army Museum for care and preservation.

ENDS

For further information please contact Marketing Manager, Nicola Bennett, nicola.bennett@nzdf.mil.nz or 021 495 178.