

WATERLOO MAN

Private Alexander 'Sandy' Archer (1795-1880) 91st Regiment of Foot

Among countless family histories, oral and written, rooted in soldier-settler ancestors of the Perth and Richmond Military Settlements, a very large proportion commence with a legendary hero who stood in Wellington's unbreakable squares upon which Napoleon shattered his last army at Waterloo.

Nevertheless, while true that a great many of those soldier-settlers marched with Wellington, across the length and breadth of Spain and over the Pyrenees into France, it is also a fact that only one of them, Private Alexander 'Sandy' Archer, was with the Iron Duke at the Battle Waterloo.¹ Life-long bachelor Archer left no one to memorialize him in a family history however and, while decorated for the famous battle, he did not actually see action at Napoleon's last stand.

Alexander Archer, the son of David Archer (1765-1799) and Ann Watson (b.1767), was born January 24, 1795 and baptized on February 7, 1795 in Forfar Parish, Forfarshire², Scotland. Parish and tax records³ show that, at the time of his birth, the Archer family was in comfortable circumstances. They lived at Burnside, a hamlet located on the Burnside Estate about six kilometres (four miles) east of the town of Forfar⁴ where his father was a miller and carter with his own team of horses. The Hunter family seat from about 1600, in 1795 the estate was owned by the 8th Laird of Burnside, Charles Hunter (1740-1809) and then inherited by his son David Hunter (1765-1846) in 1809.

However comfortable the Archers may have been when Alexander was born, in 1799, when he was just four years of age, his father died, leaving his mother to care for six children under the age of 11 years.⁵ As a youth, Archer, commonly called 'Sandy', was apprenticed as a tailor but soon began soldiering as a militiaman.

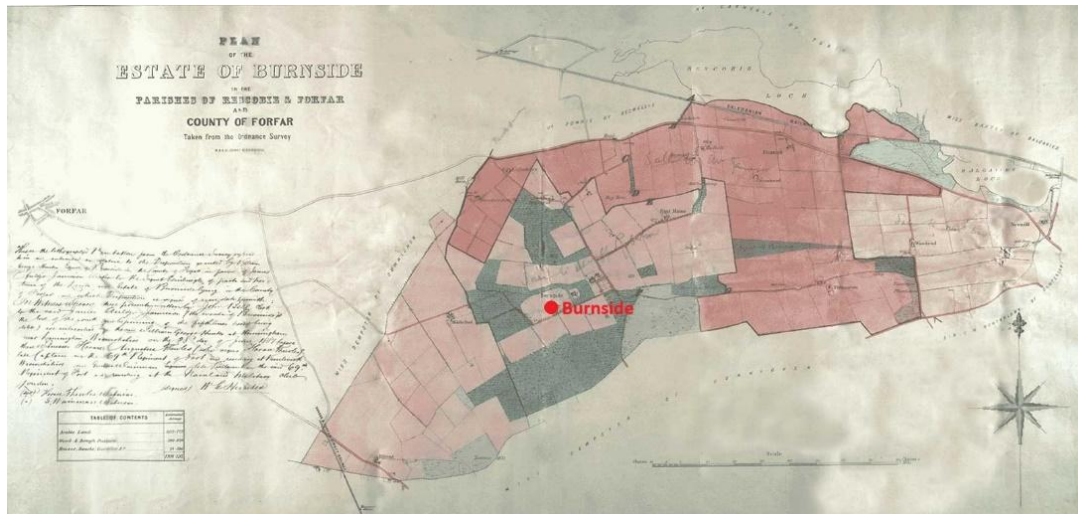
¹ There were seven other soldier-settlers issued location tickets at Perth, representing four other regiments that had been present at the Battle of Waterloo -- Alex Bane/Bain, 10th Hussars; Francis Borrah/Bonah, John Chariott, Richard Green and James Hustwait, 1st Royal Scots; Johnston Smith, 32nd Foot; and John Bryant, 51st Foot. None of those names appear on the Waterloo Medal Roll, however, suggesting these men had been discharged from their regiments before June 1815.

² Renamed the County of Angus in 1974.

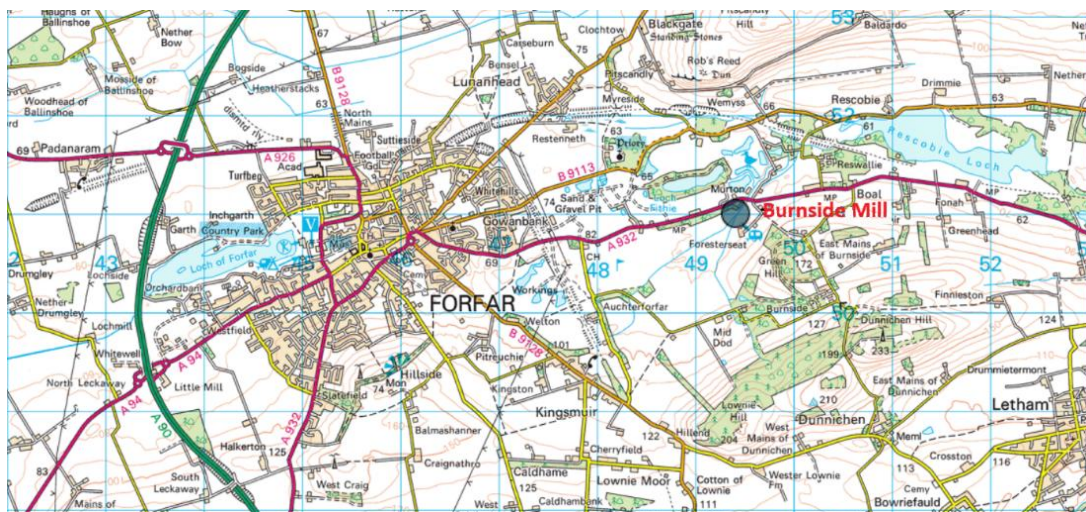
³ See marriage bans posted at Burnside, December 28, 1787; Horse Tax Ledger 1797-1798.

⁴ About 30 kilometers (18 miles) north of Dundee.

⁵ His father David Archer was born in 1765 at Carmyllie, Forfarshire (Angus). He married Ann Watson (b.1767) at Forfar on December 29, 1787. They were the parents of Anne (b.1788), John (b.1790), Mary (b.1792), Alexander (b.1795), Janet (b.1796) and David (b.1799). When David Archer died before his last child was born in 1799, he left his widow with six children under the age of 11.



Burnside Estate, Forfarshire, Scotland



Burnside Mill, Forfarshire, Scotland

Forfar Militia

There had been county militias in England for many years, but a new Militia Act passed in 1757 created a more professional force. However, coming into effect only a decade after the Jacobite rising in support of Prince Charles Stuart in 1745-1746, the fear of arming Scots ensured that the law did not apply to Scotland. It was not until the Militia Act of 1797 that Scottish Lord Lieutenants (representatives of the Crown in each County) were authorized to raise and command regiments of militia.

The 1797 law required the drafting, by ballot, of men between the ages of 18 and 30 years for compulsory service of one year plus one month. Amendments in 1802 extended the service age to 45 years and a term to five years, and service was later extended to the duration of the war with France. Section XVIII of the Militia Act provided instructions for selection of draftees from lists of “*liable men*” as prepared by local schoolmasters and parish clerks.

... the names of all the Militia Men in each Parish, written or printed on distinct pieces of paper, being all as near as may be of equal size, and rolled up in the same manner, shall be put into a box or other vessel, and shall there be shaken together, and then a number of names equal to the number apportioned by the Order in Council aforesaid, shall be drawn out and opened by the person presiding at the meeting ...

As so often in history, the militia draft fell disproportionately upon the poor. Riots broke out in many places across Scotland, but conscription eventually proceeded and failure to report for duty drew a fine of between £10 and £20 (an enormous sum for most people). Ten regiments of militia were raised in 1798, including the Forfarshire Militia⁶, which extended its recruitment area to include Kincardineshire in 1802.

Sandy Archer joined the Forfarshire and Kincardine Militia c1810. As he was only about 15 years of age, three years younger than the official minimum age for compulsory service, he was most likely a paid substitute. Militia law exempted professors, schoolteachers, ministers, articled clerks, apprentices, men with more than two children, sailors, Quakers and the infirm, as well as those with sufficient means to buy their way out by paying for a substitute to serve in their place. The payment for enlisting as a substitute, and his militia pay, may have been his contribution to the welfare of a struggling, fatherless family.

Scottish militia regiments were intended to serve only in their home counties, providing for local defense and the maintenance of domestic order⁷, thus freeing troops of the regular army to serve abroad.⁸ As Britain's wars against Revolutionary France and then against Napoleon intensified and widened, particularly after the failure of the short-lived Treaty of Amiens in 1803, the demand for manpower grew and with it the importance of the militia. In 1810 the establishment of the Forfarshire and Kincardine Militia was expanded from 687 to 1,049 rank and file. 'Home defense' was re-interpreted to mean service anywhere in the United Kingdom and militia regiments were sent to posts far beyond their home counties. In May 1810 Sandy Archer and his Forfarshire and Kincardine Regiment were sent to Newcastle Upon Tyne in England.

As the Napoleonic Wars demanded ever more manpower, the British government also began to use county militias as a reservoir producing individual recruits, and on occasion whole units, for the regular army serving abroad. Lured by liberal signing bonuses, militiamen were encouraged to volunteer to join regiments of the regular army.

91st Regiment of Foot

On May 2, 1811, Sandy Archer, and a good number of his fellow Forfarshire and Kincardine militiamen, took the King's shilling, enlisting with the 1st Battalion, 91st Regiment of Foot at Newcastle Upon Tyne for a term of 'limited service' (seven years). Archer was assigned

⁶ Forfarshire and Kincardine Militia 1798-1854.

⁷ At a time before the creation of a police force, the local militia's primary duty was supporting local magistrates in ensuring law and order.

⁸ Fencible Regiments were also raised for home defense, but those units were manned exclusively by volunteers attracted by bounty payments (enlistment bonuses). Volunteers were also accepted into the Militia, but they were few and far between when a volunteer could receive a bounty for joining a Fencible Regiment, but nothing for enlisting in the Militia.

to No.3 Company at the rank of Private. His enlistment papers describe him as five foot seven inches in height, with hazel eyes, brown hair and a long 'visage' (face), a tailor in civilian life. His age is recorded as 19 years but, in truth, he had just turned 16 years of age.

Officially, Private Archer would receive an annual salary of £12.0.3½, but that pay was subject to so many 'stoppages' (deductions) to cover the cost of his food (above a basic bread allowance), maintaining his uniform and kit and so on, that he would be lucky to see 18 shillings of it. His pay was also usually many months in arrears.



When Archer enlisted in 1811 the 91st Foot was quartered at Ashford, Kent, with recruiting parties scouring the length and breadth of the United Kingdom seeking men to replenish its depleted ranks. The regiment had already served two years in the Peninsular War, ending that expedition as rear-guard to the army of Lieutenant General Sir John Moore (1761-1809) as it was evacuated under fire by the Royal Navy, from Corunna, Spain, in January 1809. On their return to England, they had been immediately dispatched to join an expedition to the low countries where, from an army of 40,000, no less than 35,000 fell victim to Walcheren Fever. Of the 91st Foot's full complement, 219 died and the regiment returned from Walcheren with only 246 rank-and-file fit for duty.

As the battalion struggled to replenish its ranks, the 1st/91st drew in militiamen like Sandy Archer, such other individual recruits as it could find, and absorbed 160 men from its 2nd Battalion.

Archer's regiment had been created in 1798 as the 91st (Argyllshire Highlanders) Regiment of Foot, but in 1809 it lost its regional designation and became simply the 91st Foot. At the same time the regiment also lost its kilts. The recruiting drive necessitated by losses sustained in Spain and the Netherlands had yielded large numbers of English and Irish recruits who had no association with Argyllshire or Scotland and who balked at donning a kilt.

Private Archer was, therefore, outfitted with the standard British Army uniform of the day. He wore a dull red woolen coat with short tails, with distinctive regimental brass buttons and pale-yellow facings (identifying his regiment) around the cuffs, collar, buttonholes and shoulder flaps.⁹ The coat went over a vest and long cotton shirt. His trousers were grey and made of wool or cotton. His feet were clad in socks and shoes with canvas or leather gaiters (leggings) buttoned around his ankles over the tops of the shoes, to keep stones out of the footwear.

⁹ Each regiment had its own distinctive facing color.

White cross-belts were strapped over the coat and fastened in the center of his chest with a buckle bearing the regimental number. His uniform was topped off with a black cap, replaced a few years later by a peaked black felt stovepipe hat, the 'Shako', that bore an engraved regimental badge. Finally, Archer wore a stock – a stiff piece of leather strapped around his neck, designed to protect his neck from saber slashes, but also to keep him awake with his head erect and facing forward at all times.

Private Archer packed his personal effects in a painted canvas knapsack carried on his back with his blanket roll tied on top. He wore a haversack of gray linen and a tin canteen on his left hip and carried his ammunition in a black cartridge case with a large flap to protect its contents in wet weather. He was armed with the Brown Bess (Long Land Pattern) flint-lock musket, a .75 caliber, smooth-bore weapon, 58.5 inches (149 cm) long that weighed about 10 pounds (4.5 Kg) without its 17-inch (43 cm) triangular steel bayonet carried in a scabbard on the left hip.

Wellington's Army

In September 1812, with its ranks replenished to near full strength, the 91st Regiment of Foot marched from Ashford to Chatham and took ship for a return to the Peninsula where an army, now under command of Arthur Wellesley (1769-1852), Duke of Wellington, was helping Britain's Portuguese allies resist an invasion by the French and Spanish troops of Joseph Bonaparte (1768-1844) King of Spain¹⁰ and brother of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821).

Having chased the British Army out of the Peninsula in January 1809, the French invaded Portugal and, in April, a new force under Wellington had returned to reinforce their Portuguese allies. Wellington pushed the French army back into Spain but a lack of supplies and arriving French reinforcements forced his Anglo-Portuguese army to assume a defensive position. When the French counterattack finally came in the summer of 1810 Wellington retreated to defensive positions on the outskirts of Lisbon, but the French advance was stopped. After a stalemate of nearly a year Wellington began another advance, moving into Spain and fighting battles at Almeida, Fuentes de Onoro, and Badajoz in 1811. In early 1812 he captured Ciudad Rodrigo, defeated a French army at the Battle of Salamanca in July and moved on to accept the surrendered of Madrid on August 14th, a few days after King Joseph had abandoned his capital. A month later Wellington laid siege to Burgos.

In September 1812, Private Sandy Archer, in the ranks of the 1st Battalion, 91st Regiment of Foot, landed at Coronna, Spain, site of the regiment's 1809 retreat, and set off to join Wellington's army at Burgos. Before they were well on the road, however, the French launched a counteroffensive, forcing Wellington to abandon the siege and fall back, yet again, into Portugal. Closely pursued by a large enemy force his army lost several thousand men in the retreat and the 91st Foot was left to make its own way south, through the mountains by way of Villafranca del Bierzo, Spain, and Bragauca, Portugal, a march of more than 400 km (250 miles).

¹⁰ King Joseph Bonaparte, King of Spain and the Indies, 1808-1813.

Apart from the hardships of low pay, poor diet, sleeping in the open, brutal discipline and bloody combat, the marching demanded of a 19th century British soldier like Sandy Archer was sufficient to kill a man. An infantryman's knapsack weighed about 49 pounds (22 Kg) without provisions and 57 pounds (26 kg.) inclusive of provisions. One soldier in Wellington's Army recalled that,



91st Foot Cap Badge

The weight I toiled under was tremendous, and I often wondered at the strength I possessed at this period, which enabled me to endure it; for indeed, I am convinced that many of our infantry sank and died under the weight of their knapsacks alone.¹¹

By the time the 91st Foot reached Wellington's army in Portugal in late 1812, the Grand Armée that Napoleon had led into Russia that spring had been obliterated. As the Russian Army, with its Prussian and Austrian allies, advanced westward, the French Emperor recalled some forces from Spain to defend France, thus allowing Wellington to return to the offensive.

In 1813, Private Sandy Archer was part of a 121,000-man allied army from Britain, Spain and Portugal that marched out of Portugal, over the mountains and into northern Spain. They outflanked a French force of 68,000 and captured Burgos in May and then defeated the French at the Battle of Vitoria in June.

Abandoning their guns and baggage train, the French fled northwest into the Pyrenees Mountains with Wellington's army in close pursuit. Bonapartist Spain had effectively collapsed, but most of France's troops retreated in good order and fresh levies were soon gathering beyond the Pyrenees. Meanwhile, sickness was widespread in Wellington's army, discipline was crumbling, and desertion had become a problem. In July more than 12,000 men were absent without leave, most of them engaged in plundering nearby towns and villages.

Sorauren (Pyrenees)

In late July French Marshal Nicolas-Jean de Dieu Soult (1769-1851) led a French counteroffensive that defeated the allies at the Battles of Maya and Roncesvalles. However, as ever when faced with enemy attack, Wellington's army coalesced and repulsed the French advance at the Battle of Sorauren where the 91st Foot fought in the 6th Division executing what Wellington called "*bludgeon work*". The French suffered 4,000 casualties, while Wellesley's army lost 1,500 British, 1,000 Portuguese and 1,000 Spaniards. The 91st suffered 115 killed and wounded out of a total strength of 821. For its efforts at the Battles of Maya, Roncesvalles, and Sorauren the 91st Foot was awarded the honor of adding 'Pyrenees' to its colors.

¹¹ Sergeant John Cooper, Royal Welch Fusiliers – as quoted in *Dragon Rampant: The Royal Welch Fusiliers at War 1793-1815*, by Donald E. Graves (2010).

Nivelle

Wellington pushed on to capture the French garrison city of San Sebastian in August and, following a lull in the fighting, led his army across the Bidossa River, thus entering France for the first time, where it overwhelmed the French defensive works forcing them to withdraw to the Nivelle River.

On the night of November 9, 1813 Wellington moved a force through the passes north of Maya towards the Nivelle and the following morning launched an attack that overwhelmed three entrenched defensive lines. Sandy Archer and his 91st Foot were among the units engaged in the assault that chased French forces to refuge within the garrison walls of Bayonne. 'Nivelle' was added to the regimental colors.

Nive

A month later, moving down both banks of the Nive River, the allied army pressed toward Villafranca where Soult barred the way, positioned across the road to Bayonne. Taking advantage of Wellington's army being divided in two parts, Soult sent all forces at his disposal against him but, in four days of desperate fighting, in which the Sandy Archer's 91st Foot was heavily engaged, the attack was repelled, and the French forced to withdraw. Losses on the Nive amounted to about 5,000 allied troops and 7,000 French. The battle honor 'Nive' was added to the colors of the 91st Foot.



Battle of Orthez, February 27, 1814

(By William Heath, Courtesy of Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library)

Othez

Wellington resumed operations in February 1814, attacking Soult's army at Orthez where the 91st Foot was again in the thick of vicious fighting that inflicted 4,000 casualties on the French, sending them in further retreat and adding another honor to its regimental colors. At about the same time, a detached British force occupied Bordeaux.

Toulouse

In April the theatre of action shifted eastward to Toulouse where Soult put up his last fight from heavily fortified positions. On April 10th, the 42nd and 78th led the attack, with the 91st in reserve, holding a farmyard in close support. The initial assault captured three redoubts, but a French column of 6,000 counterattacked, throwing the 42nd back in disorder. The prompt response of the 91st, however, gave them time to reform and together the 91st and 42nd retook the position. Just as the 91st returned to its post in the farmyard, the other wing of the British assault began to crumble. The 91st sallied out again, restored that position and rescued a large part of 78th who had been surrounded. The prompt and vigorous efforts of Sandy Archer's 91st Foot that day was credited with saving the brigade and yet another battle honor was added to its regimental colors.



1st/91st Foot Regimental Colors

Three days after the defeat of the French army at Toulouse, word arrived from Paris that Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte had abdicated on April 11th and the war was over. On May 3rd, the French Emperor went into exile on Elba, a small island lying between Corsica and the Italian mainland.

Ireland

Private Sandy Archer's 91st Regiment of Foot embarked at Bordeaux in July 1814 and sailed to Cork, spending the next nine months quartered in Ireland around Athlone, Limerick, and Clonmel. As the regiment rested, recruited, re-armed, re-fitted, and trained, Napoleon escaped Elba and, on March 1, 1815, landed back in France. Prisoners of War recently returned from Russia, Germany, Britain and Spain rallied to his standard, providing him a ready-made, trained, and patriotic army. As he marched across the French countryside promising constitutional reform and direct assembly elections, to the acclaim of cheering crowds, the European powers (Austria, Britain, Prussia, Russia and their allies) declared Napoleon an outlaw on March 13th. Louis XVIII fled, and Napoleon entered Paris on March 20th.

Waterloo

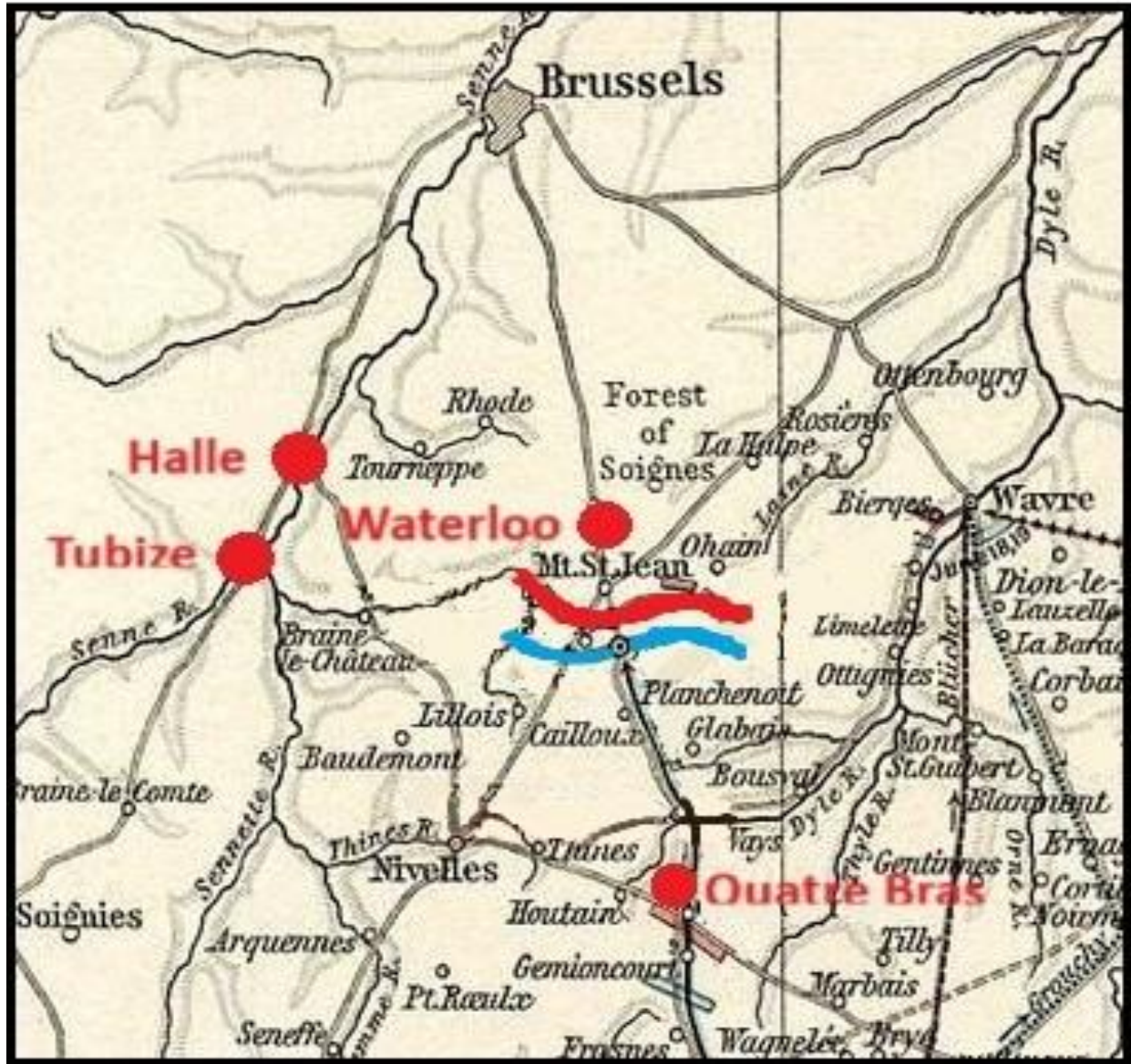
Confronting Napoleon was a British army commanded by the Duke of Wellington and a Prussian army commanded by Field Marshal Gebhard von Blücher (1742-1819), both camped near Brussels. The British soldiers were, however, largely second-line troops. Most of the veteran regiments from the Peninsular War had been sent to Canada to fight the American War of 1812. As one of the few battle-hardened battalions close at hand, the 1st/91st Foot was called back to active service. It left Clonmel, landed at Ostend, Belgium on April 11th and was trans-shipped into lighters that carried them up the canal to Ghent. At Oudenarde in the Netherlands, the 1st Battalion was brought to a strength of about 850 by drawing 150 men from its 2nd Battalion which was already on the continent.

Wellington and Blücher had planned to invade France on July 1st but at the end of May, before the allies could fully organize, Napoleon led his 198,000 strong *L'Armée du Nord* in a pre-emptive attack. The allies moved to engage but on June 16th, Marshal Michel Ney (1769-1815), leading the left wing of the French army, stopped Wellington at the Battle of Quatre Bras while Napoleon's right wing defeated Blücher at the Battle of Ligny. The French pursued the allied army as it fell back on Brussels, but on the night of June 17th, Wellington turned and prepared for battle at a crossroads about a mile (1.6 km) south of the village of Waterloo.

Sandy Archer and the 91st Foot were, however, not at the crossroads. Rather, the regiment was on Wellington's right flank at Halle and Tubize, tasked with holding the road to Brussels which was threatened by a French column. Through the day on June 18th the British army at the crossroads stood fast against repeated French attacks until, with the aid of several Prussian corps arriving late in the day, Napoleon's army was finally routed.¹² Archer and the 91st Foot did not see action. In a letter to his mother in Scotland, dated July 26th, Private John Bald, Sandy Archer's comrade in arms in the 91st Foot, explained.

¹² Although Major Thomas Hunter Blair of the 91st was wounded at Waterloo when serving as a Brigade-Major on the staff of the Duke of Wellington, and for which he received the brevet rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.

On the 18th of June our army lost 13,000 men but luckily our regiment was not engaged on that day as we were guarding the Army's rear in Brussels, which it was expected that the enemy would make a bold push on that road, but it happened better. Although we think ourselves good soldiers, still we would rather defer fighting.¹³



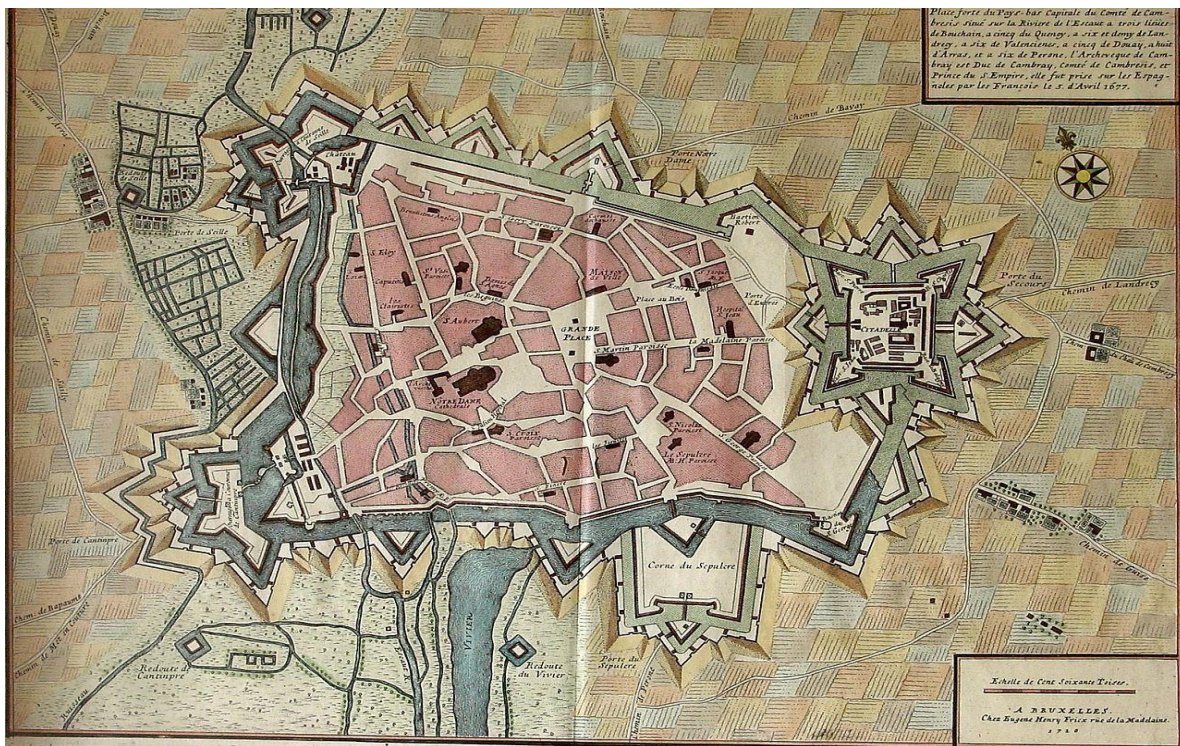
Coalition forces hotly pursued the broken French army to the gates of Paris as, from time to time, its rearguard turned and fought delaying actions. On the road to Paris the 91st Foot formed one of the columns that stormed the fortress town of Cambrai, on June 24th. In his July letter Private Bald provided a first-hand account of that action, as also experienced by Sandy Archer, serving in Captain J. C. Murdoch's 3rd Company.

¹³ Letters of Private John Bald, 91st Regiment, edited by S. G. P. Ward, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. 50, No.202, Summer 1972.

As we lost no men on the 18th and our division being very strong, it was thought proper to put us in front. Then they gave us the appellation of the Storming Division.

The first fortified town we came to was called Cambrai, which appeared to be very strong, having three walls to defend it thirty feet in height and three ditches of the same depth. We lay looking at it all night and all day till four o'clock in the afternoon, everyone expecting the order for attack, not knowing what was to be our fate in a few moments and, I am sorry to say, making but little preparation for a future world. Our whole cry was, "Let us beat the French".

It commenced about four o'clock in the evening of the 24th of June, when we marched to those walls, cool and appearing undaunted. Although they kept up a heavy fire of round shot from their batteries and musketry, we fired none till we were within thirty yards of walls, when we gave them three cheers and fired a volley up at them and leapt down the first ditch, then scaled the walls with our ladders, driving everything before us.



Fortress City of Cambrai

We took the town with very little loss, and I am happy to say there were none allowed to remain in the town except the 23rd and 91st Regiments in consequence their good conduct in taking the town. I received no damage more than getting my ramrod shot away by a musket ball which was a narrow escape.¹⁴

¹⁴ Ibid.

The 91st entered the Cambrai works near the Amiens Gate at a point where the scarp, which averaged 55 feet (17 meters) in height, was considerably lower than elsewhere. The Anglo-allied army casualties during the assault amounted to only eight killed and 29 wounded.

Occupation Army



British Bivouac in the Bois du Boulogne
(Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library)

Napoleon Bonaparte abdicated for a second time on June 22, 1815 and on the morning of July 3rd troops defending Paris surrendered. For the next three years the city was occupied by a 30,000-man army composed of troops from Austria, Great Britain, Prussia and Russia, among them Sandy Archer's 91st Foot. After nearly four years of front-line service, duty at Paris was found quite agreeable. In his letter home, Archer's fellow soldier Private Bald, wrote,

Now we are in Paris, which is a fine town but not to be compared to Edinburgh for beauty. Their shops is abundantly provided with riches and ornamented in fine style, and the King's museum¹⁵ is one of the greatest curiosities I have ever seen, being past my power to describe.

We were reviewed by the Emperor of Russia¹⁶, King of Prussia¹⁷ and the King of France¹⁸, Lord Wellington, Marshal Blücher and a great many of our great generals present, so was the Prince of Orange¹⁹. The assemblage of Belgick and English troops was to the amount of 130,000 men. The different monarchs was much pleased with the appearance of the army at large.²⁰

¹⁵ Today's Musée du Louvre (Louvre Museum).

¹⁶ Alexander I, Aleksandr Pavlovich (1777-1825).

¹⁷ Frederick William III (177-1840).

¹⁸ Louis XVIII, Louis Stanislas Xavier, (1755-1824).

¹⁹ William II, King of the Netherlands, William Frederick George Louis (1792-1849).

²⁰ The review took place on July 24, 1815 in the Bois de Boulogne between the Barrière de l'Etoile and the Pont de Neuilly.

*The inhabitants of Paris is very contented with the English, but possibly more through fear than love. The Prussians is the finest soldiers that I ever saw to appearance.*²¹

In late 1816, while serving with the Army of Occupation, Private Sandy Archer was awarded the Waterloo Medal.

The decoration was issued to every soldier present at one or more of the battles of Ligny, Quatre Bras and Waterloo. Even though not engaged in the fighting of June 17-18, 1815, the men of the 91st Regiment of Foot were included in that rollcall in recognition of their important role in holding the Brussels Road on the army's flank. Having not spilled blood, however, the regiment was not granted the right to inscribe 'Waterloo' on their colors.

The Waterloo Medal was the first decoration ever issued by the British Government to all soldiers present during an action.²² It was cast in silver and measured 37 mm (1.5 in) in diameter. The obverse depicts a left-facing effigy of the Prince Regent²³ with the inscription 'George P. Regent' and the reverse shows a figure of Victory seated on a plinth with the word 'Wellington' above, and 'Waterloo' and the date 'June 18, 1815' below. Its ribbon, crimson with dark blue edges, passes through a large iron ring on top of the medal.

Six months before the 91st Foot returned to the UK from France in November 1818, Private Sandy Archer's seven-year enlistment expired. He was sent from Paris to the army depot at Chatham, England, and discharged effective either June 10th or July 2nd²⁴ having served seven years, 62 days. In the 'Observations' column of his discharge papers he is described as "A good sort of man" but had never advanced beyond the rank of Private. He had also never been wounded and thus was not awarded a pension, although as a veteran of Waterloo he received a bonus equivalent to two year's additional pay.



Waterloo Medal

²¹ *Letters of Private John Bald, 91st Regiment*, edited by S. G. P. Ward, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. 50, No.202, Summer 1972.

²² The Waterloo Medal was also the first campaign medal awarded to the next-of-kin of men killed in action. As well as the Waterloo Medal issued by the UK, six other nations also struck decorations for their troops who were part of the campaign -- Brunswick, Hanover, Nassau, Netherlands, Prussia, and Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg. Belgium did not follow suit, so their soldiers did not receive any official recognition. Needless to say, France did not issue any Waterloo medals, but nearly a half million St Helena Medals were issued in 1857 to the veterans who served in Napoleon's armies.

²³ George Augustus Frederick (1762-1830), later King George IV, then acting as Regent for his Father King George III (1730-1820) during his insanity.

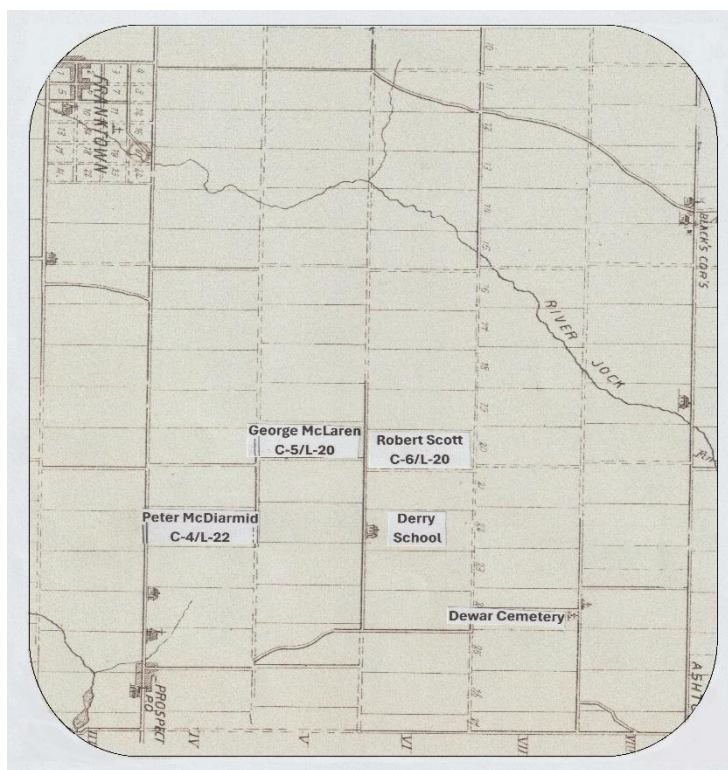
²⁴ Archer's army service records are inconsistent.

Beckwith

Perhaps later that summer, or more likely in the spring of 1819, 25-year-old Sandy Archer emigrated to Beckwith Township at the Rideau Settlement in Upper Canada.²⁵

As a former Private in His Majesty's Forces, Archer qualified for a free grant of 100 acres of 'waste land', plus tools, rations and other support toward creating a farm, but he never exercised his right. His occupation in the 1851 Beckwith census is given as 'tailor', suggesting perhaps that he returned to the trade of his youth. However, there is no record of him ever operating a tailor shop in the area, although he might have practiced his trade on an itinerate basis. Another source says that after arriving in Beckwith he "*learned the art of weaving*".²⁶ Even his choice of Beckwith Township is a mystery. He seems to have had no relatives there and he did not join former comrades in arms as he was the only veteran of the 91st Foot to settle at the Perth or Richmond Military Settlements.

Archer never married and very little is known of his life over the six decades he lived in Beckwith. He may have worked for a time as a tailor or weaver but seems best remembered in the Township as an itinerant farm laborer, moving from farm-to-farm, working for room, board and small wages. Such evidence as survives suggests that he spent much of his life within a small area known as the 'Derry', a section of good farmland isolated by surrounding swamp in the eastern part of concessions five to seven. The Derry was largely populated by Gaelic speaking Scots from Perthshire, an area adjoining Archer's native Forfarshire but there is no record of other settlers from Forfarshire itself. In the 1851 census, he was enumerated at the C-4/L-22 farm of Peter and Janet McDiarmid,²⁷



Sandy Archer's Derry

farm of Peter and Janet McDiarmid,²⁷. In 1861 he was recorded in the home of George and Christian McLaren and family²⁸ at C-5/L-21.²⁹ In the late 1870s he is found in the household of widow Janet Stewart-Scott (1838-1920) at C-6/L-20.

²⁵ According to his obituary in the *Carleton Place Herald* via *Perth Courier*, February 20, 1880, "He emigrated to these Provinces shortly after his discharge and resided in Beckwith".

²⁶ *The Story of the Derry* (1943), by George Edward Kidd (1883-1948).

²⁷ Peter McDiarmid (1812-1892), wife Janet McIntosh (1819-1900), and 11 children.

²⁸ George McLaren (1809-1887), wife Christena McLaren/McLaurin (1824-1909), and six children.

²⁹ In the 1871 census Archer does not appear anywhere in Lanark County.

In about 1848, three decades after his army discharge and emigration to Upper Canada's Beckwith Township, Sandy Archer received his second military decoration.

A year earlier, responding to mounting public opinion on behalf of those veterans who had little to show for their service but wounds and disability, the British Army announced approval of the Military General Service Medal (MGSM) -- 32 years after the end of the conflict to which it related (the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars). Excepting the Waterloo Medal, it was the first British decoration ever issued to rank-and-file British soldiers. It was, however, only available to surviving veterans who had fought in one of 29 battles for which clasps were authorized and was thus never issued without at least one clasp.³⁰ Veterans also had to apply for the decoration and Beckwith farmhand Sandy Archer, former Private of the 91st Foot, did so.



Military General Service Medal (MGSM) 1848 With Clasps for Nivelle, Nive, Orthez and Toulouse

The MGSM is a silver medal, 1.4 inches (36 mm) in diameter. On the obverse is a left-facing effigy of Queen Victoria (1819-1901) with the inscription 'Victoria Regina' and the date '1848'. On the reverse is Queen Victoria standing on a dais, crowning a kneeling Duke of Wellington with a laurel wreath. Above is the inscription 'To The British Army', with the dates '1793-1814' below. Archer's name and regiment were impressed on the rim in block capital letters. The medal was suspended on a 1.25 inches (32 mm) wide ribbon of crimson with dark blue edges.³¹ When Sandy Archer's MGSM reached him in Beckwith Township in the late 1840s it bore clasps acknowledging his presence at the Battles of Nivelle, Nive, Orthez, and Toulouse.

The 1861 census enumerator for Beckwith Township marked the designated column for "*lunatic or idiot*" next to the name of Alexander Archer.³² The term however, as used in the 19th century, may be understood as a catch-all describing those whose behaviour ranged from mentally handicapped, to barking mad, or just endearingly excentric. Clearly, there must have been something out of the ordinary about Archer. At age 66 he could have been suffering from early onset dementia but, considering the battlefield carnage of which he had been a part, he more likely suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD). Many soldier-settlers at the Perth Military Settlement showed symptoms that today would be associated with PTSD. Beckwith Township historian Dr. George Edward Kidd (1883-1948) described Archer only as one of the community's "*most colorful characters*".

³⁰ Most carried clasps/bars for actions in the Iberian Peninsula or Egypt. Only three battles of the War of 1812 were considered worthy of clasps -- Fort Detroit, Chateauguay and Chrysler's Farm.

³¹ That Queen Victoria (1819-1901) appears on both sides of the medal is curious in that she had not even been born in the period covered by the award.

³² Early Canadian census records are often notoriously inaccurate. The 1861 census also recorded Archer as aged 48 (b.1813) when he was, in fact, 67 years of age (b.c.1794), 19 years older. That age of 48 was also two years younger than Archer's age recorded 10 years earlier in the 1851 census - 50 years (b.1801), when he was actually about 57 years of age. Were the census takers grossly negligent or was Archer misleading them? Decades later, in 1876, Archer provided accurate information (age 82, b.1794) when he applied for his Chelsea pension. (There is little doubt, however, that all of the census records refer to the same man).

The only other clue that Sandy Archer may have been of unsound mind might be that, although the Upper Canada Militia Act of 1793 required all able-bodied men between the ages of 19 and 39 enroll in their local battalion, his name does not appear on the *Militia Nominal Roll 1828-1829*³³ as serving with the Beckwith militia or any militia regiment in the colony. Nevertheless, when he applied for a Royal Chelsea Hospital out-pension³⁴ in February 1876 his entry in the *Examination of Invalid Soldiers*³⁵ files made no reference to his mental or psychological state, describing him only as *“Being now old, unable to work, without means and entirely supported by charity”* ... suffering from *“no particular disease, but gradually declining through age”*. He was granted a pension of 1s 6d. per day.

Sandy Archer died on February 12, 1880, at the age of 85 years, although his death certificate recorded his age as 95 and his gravestone said 87 years. He died *“of old age and general disability, confined to bed three months”*.³⁶ His obituary in the *Carleton Place Herald* reported that he

... expired at the residence of Mrs. Robert Scott, Beckwith ... Although he had no personal relatives, in his last illness he had the good fortune of ‘shuffling off the mortal coil’ in a Christian locality where every assistance that human aid could give him was rendered to him. His remains were accompanied to a magnificent spot in the Beckwith Cemetery, 7th Concession³⁷ by a respectable number of the community, among which were church officers, the Reeve of Beckwith³⁸, and one of the Councilors. The funeral services were conducted by Rev. Mr. McAllister³⁹ of Ashton.⁴⁰

Sandy Archer appears to have spent the final years of his life with the Scott family on their farm at Beckwith C-6/L-20. Janet Stewart-Scott (1838-1920), mentioned in his obituary, was the widow of Robert Scott Sr. (1821-1870) who had died a decade earlier leaving her with five children aged between one and eight years. When the infirmities of old age overtook Archer, he became a ward of Janet Scott who cared for him *“in his last illness”* ensuring *“every assistance that human aid could give him”*. In those final years, however, Archer was not *“entirely supported by charity”* as suggested by his obituary. The Chelsea Hospital outpension granted him in 1876 provided the means to adequately compensate Janet Scott for his care, and doubtless represented a welcome addition to the widow’s income. In the late 1870s the old soldier’s daily stipend of 1s 6p represented a purchasing power equivalent to about \$18.50 today (i.e. \$6,750 annually).⁴¹

³³ *Men of Upper Canada Militia Nominal Rolls, 1828-1829*, edited by Bruce S. Elliott, Dan Walker, Fawne Stratford-Devai (1995).

³⁴ Founded in 1682 by King Charles II following the English Civil War for the *“succor and relief of veterans broken by age and war”*, the Chelsea Hospital in London and the Kilmainham Hospital in Dublin had a limited number of residency places for veteran in-pensioners but were also authorized to grant financial assistance to out-pensioners. Chelsea Hospital continues to shelter army pensioners into the 21st century.

³⁵ UK National Archives W.O. 116/111.

³⁶ Ontario Death Certificate.

³⁷ 459 Glenashton Road.

³⁸ Archibald Dewar (1834-1916), Beckwith Township Reeve 1878-1882.

³⁹ Reverend John Masson McAllister (1845-1926).

⁴⁰ As reprinted in the *Perth Courier*, February 20, 1880.

⁴¹ As calculated using *MeasuringWorth.com* <https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/ppoweruk/>

Sandy Archer's gravestone in Dewar Cemetery, apparently erected by the community that knew him in youth and cared for him in old age, read,

*In Memory Of
Alexander Archer
Died February 12, 1880
Aged 87 Years
Deceased Served H.M. 91st Regt. Of Foot
7 Years & 62 Days
Served Under the Duke of Wellington
In The Peninsular War.
Was Engaged in the Battles of
Nivelle, Nive, Orthez,
Toulouse and Waterloo*

The Dewar Cemetery tombstone, as described by historian George Kidd, was “of particular interest” ...

Set in a little niche in its marble, and protected by glass, is a military medal, on the bars of which are inscribed the names of many battles of the Napoleonic wars.⁴²

Kidd's account describes Archer's MGSM, but later accounts⁴³ refer to “*medals*” (plural) embedded behind glass in the gravestone, implying that both the MGSM and the Waterloo Medal were displayed. That seems impossible, however, as, according to Archer's pension application of 1876, the Waterloo Medal had been lost prior to that date.

In 1958 or 1959 vandals trashed the Dewar Cemetery, smashed Sandy Archer's stone, broke the glass and stole his medal. The cemetery board of the day failed to report the theft, explaining that “*perpetual care had not been paid for some years on the grave*”,⁴⁴ although the chance of recovering the medal would have been slim in any case.

Apart from whatever ‘souvenir’ value Sandy Archer's medal may have had in the minds of the miscreants who vandalized Dewar Cemetery, on the collector's market today an MGSM with four clasps, depending upon condition, is valued at about \$2,500. The previously lost Waterloo Medal would command about \$4,500 today.⁴⁵



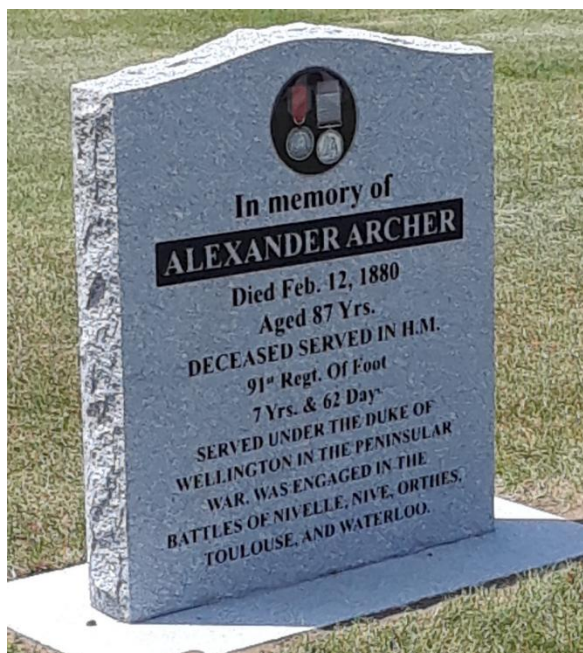
This poor image of Archer's original gravestone shows only one embedded medal

⁴² *The Story of the Derry* (1943), by George Edward Kidd (1883-1948).

⁴³ Harry J. Walker, *Ottawa Journal*, November 4, 1950, September 25, 1954, and December 3, 1960.

⁴⁴ Harry J. Walker, *Ottawa Journal*, December 3, 1960.

⁴⁵ In the first decades of the 21st century collectors are paying as much as \$5,500 for a Waterloo Medal depending upon condition and the particulars of the original recipient. Sandy Archer's medal would be worth less as he and his regiment were not actually engaged at Waterloo.



In the summer of 2025, 145 years after the erection of Archer's original gravestone, and nearly 70 years after that stone was destroyed, the Township of Beckwith installed a replacement. Lest the Waterloo Man should ever be forgotten the new stone records his dates of birth and death, the major battles of his service in the Peninsular War with the 91st Regiment of Foot and includes replicas of his medals.

The information on the stone is, however, not entirely accurate. Private Archer was not 'engaged' at the Battle of Waterloo, but he was 'present', and thus a Waterloo Medal recipient. The Military General Service Medal replica embedded in the stone carries eight battle clasps on its ribbon, whereas Archer was in fact awarded only four clasps (for the battles correctly engraved

on the stone)⁴⁶. Also, the Waterloo Medal replica embedded beside the MGSM was not mounted in the original 1880 stone (as the old photo shows), it had been lost sometime before Archer's death.

- Ron W. Shaw with assistance from Sandy Archer's g.g.g nephew David Archer and Karen Prytula (2025)

⁴⁶ Private Alexander Archer's MGSM did not have clasps for Barossa, Corunna, Pyrenees and Vittoria.