

Following the Napoleon's invasion and occupation of Egypt in 1798, the British Government saw the presence of a large French force in Egypt as a direct threat to Britain's emerging empire in the Indian sub continent. Although, this threat was largely neutralised by the complete destruction of the French Mediterranean fleet at Admiral Nelson's victory at the Battle of the Nile. However, there was still a massive well trained and experienced French army based in Egypt that the navy was unable to destroy, therefore in 1799 the British decided to send an army to Egypt.

On 12th March 1801 a British force of 16,000 men landed near to Alexandria. Despite being outnumbered by the French the force was able to successfully consolidate its foothold in Egypt. However, the British had underestimated the sheer number of French troops present in the region and reinforcements were quickly sent for. As a result the 24th Regiment was sent to Egypt, leaving England in June 1801 on board *HMS Monmouth*. The 24th Regiment arrived in Egypt near to the end of the campaign, during which the bulk of the French force had surrendered. The remaining French soldiers were trapped inside Alexandria. The combined British force began to attack the French



forces within the city, with the French rapidly capitulating. Although the 24th Regiment had missed much of the campaign, their presence did contribute to the British victory. All of the regiments that were involved in the 1801 Egyptian campaign received a special campaign honour. This honour allowed a 'sphinx' badge or device with 'Egypt' written beneath it to be added to the Colours and Regimental accoutrements of regiments who took part in the campaign.

As a result of French expansionism in the Iberian peninsular (Portugal and Spain), the British Government sent an intervention force to Portugal in 1808. This drawn out campaign lasted until 1814 and saw the French expelled from the Iberian peninsular. The 24th Regiment distinguished itself during this campaign and was awarded regimental honours for several battles including Talavera (1809) where the 24th Regiment played a decisive role. All of the regiments that took part in the campaign (including the 24th) were granted the right to include a 'laurel wreath' upon their badges in memory of the men who died in the campaign.

Following the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879, a Wreath of Immortelles (Dried Flowers) was added to the colours of the 24th by Queen Victoria in memory of the regiment's sacrifices during the conflict and of the bravery of Lieutenants Melvill and Coghill. In July 1881 the 24th Regiment was renamed 'The South Wales Borderers'. In 1899 a new cap badge was adopted with the Egypt campaign 'Sphinx' surrounded by the peninsular campaign laurels wreath, onto which was superimposed the Wreath of Immortelles. This remained the badge of the South Wales Borderers until the introduction of the universal Welsh Brigade capbadge in 1960. It is worth noting that Officers and junior ranks had different 'Sphinx' collar badges. Officers had female Sphinxes, whilst junior ranks had male Sphinxes; see if you can notice the difference.

