

Maj Gen W H E Poole and his association with the Guards

The conclusion of the Anglo-Boer War ended the Guards' involvement with South Africa for some time. Throughout the First World War (1914-1918), there was no direct association, other than that the 1st South African Brigade served on the Western Front in France alongside the Guards Division.

Several South Africans have served in, or been attached to, a Guards regiment from time to time. One of the more famous of these was an officer of the Union Defence Forces named William Henry Everard Poole. Poole eventually attained the rank of major general during the Second World War (1939-1945) and led the 6th South African Armoured Division, the largest South African formation ever to depart the shores of our country, throughout the campaign in Italy during the last two years of that war.

In 1935, as a temporary lieutenant-colonel and after a period of service as Officer Commanding the Special Service Battalion in South Africa, Poole was sent to the United Kingdom. There, he was attached to the Brigade of Guards at the Guards Depot in Caterham and, during the following month, trained with the Brigade's Machine Gun Concentration at Warminster, Salisbury Plain. Over the next three months, he spent time with three Guards battalions: 2 Bn Grenadier Guards, 1 Bn Scots Guards and 1 Bn Welsh Guards. Whilst serving with the Grenadier Guards, he took part in the Royal Review of the British Army by King George V and was presented to the King that same day.