



The regiment's first fatal casualties. Lieutenant William Fitch (left) and Private Thomas Moor were killed in action at Batoche and thus became the Royals' first combat casualties. (*Canadian Illustrated War News*)

West Show. The Cree Chief Big Bear held out the longest but was eventually captured in July, an event that marked the official end of the rebellion.

"The grub is terrible": The end of the rebellion and the return home, 13 May to 23 July

After the battle at Batoche, the Royal Grenadiers moved to Prince Albert, where they remained until late May when they shifted to Battleford. Here they were reunited with the Queen's Own Rifles, who had marched with Otter's column. The Royals' sister Toronto unit had had rather an unfortunate experience when Otter attacked an aboriginal camp at Cut Knife Hill in

early May and was forced to withdraw under heavy fire after being nearly surrounded. From Battleford the Royals moved to Fort Pitt. On 3 June the unit contributed 75 men to a force detached by Middleton to rescue some prisoners believed to be held by the Cree Chief Big Bear. They succeeded in freeing some of the captives and returned to the main force on 12 June. By this time, the regiment had grown weary of the rebellion and wanted nothing so much as to go home. In Francis's diary, the phrase "Nothing" or "Nothing New" appeared frequently. They were also fed up with rations, which Harding described as "Tea & Hard Tack & vice versa." The Royals were particularly annoyed that a boxcar of gifts and delicacies donated by the generous citizens of Toronto had not arrived although the Queen's Own Rifles had received their allotment. As Harding complained to his wife:

We are getting half starved now, the grub is terrible. By the way my dearest we have not received anything of the supplies yet and from what I can make out are not at all likely to. It is an infernal shame the Queen's Own got theirs some days ago, but our car has been delayed over and over again & as one of the officers said to me today, he did not expect to see any of our stuff until we see the Union Station. So do not bother about sending anything more, you can make this as public as you like for the public ought to know about it. The QOR have done nothing, have been laying in camp for nine weeks and now get their stuff. It is too bad. Bob H. is going to send a letter to the press about it.⁶⁵

The gifts from Toronto finally arrived on 15 June but the Royals did not have a great deal of time to enjoy them because on 3 July they boarded a steamer which made its way slowly up the Saskatchewan, frequently grounding on sand bars. It took ten days to reach Winnipeg, where they were given a splendid civic reception at which the beer flowed plentifully, and Surgeon Ryerson noted "many of the boys got rather wet."⁶⁶ From Winnipeg the Royals moved by rail and steamer until, in the evening of 23 July 1885, they arrived at Toronto.

The Royals had learned from newspapers that Toronto was planning a tremendous welcome but most just wanted to get home. As Sergeant Harding put it to his wife:

We, one and all, say that the best reception that they can give us after we arrive is to let us alone, dismiss us as soon as they can & let us go home, where we will meet with a glorious reception (I will I know). Give me a crust of bread & cheese and a glass of beer with you my darling pet in preference to all the Banquets they can set up for us.⁶⁷



Royals who went after Big Bear. A photograph of the men from No. 2 Company who joined in the hunt for the Cree chief, Big Bear, whose surrender in July 1885 marked the end of the campaign. The men are wearing white forage caps made out of mealie bags, an extemporized field modification. (RRC Museum)



Welcome home, boys! Frederick Curzon records the tremendous reception that the city gave its militia units when they returned home. Ceremonial arches were erected in various part of the city to show Torontonians' affection for their fellow citizens. (*Canadian Illustrated War News*)

Despite such sentiments the Royal Grenadiers were overwhelmed by the enthusiastic reception they received when their train pulled into the north Toronto Station at 5.45 p.m. on 23 July. After the regiment formed up, it marched down Yonge Street, passing under hastily constructed arches bearing the appellations "VICTORY," "FISH CREEK," and "BATOCHÉ." The regiment tramped along streets thronged by "crowds such as have never before or since assembled." Men "cheered and cheered again as the troops passed" while women "from every window on the line of route waved their handkerchiefs or small flags" and flowers "by hundreds of bunches were thrown at the passing heroes."⁶⁸ Arriving before the City Hall at Front and Jarvis Streets, they had to endure some lengthy speeches from the mayor and other worthies before being marched to the nearby Drill Hall and finally dismissed to their homes. This was the first time the Royals had returned to the "Queen City" as victorious heroes – it would not be the last.



The North-West Campaign Medal. This medal was presented to every veteran of the campaign in May 1886. In 1888 the Royals received their first Battle Honour, "BATOCHÉ 1885," and in 1929 the Honours "FISH CREEK, 1885" and "NORTH WEST CANADA 1885." (RRC Museum)