



9th Battalion Suffolk Regiment.

The Suffolk Regiment

The Suffolk Regiment was formed in 1685 when King James II ordered the Duke of Norfolk to raise a regiment against the threatened Monmouth Rebellion. This Regiment included men from Norfolk and Suffolk and incorporated a company at Windsor Castle.

In 1784, in an article in the Ipswich Journal, the Colonel of the Regiment asked the people of Suffolk for "their countenance and protection in favour of a corps... with some degree of reputation."

Initially, the Regiment had often depended on the Suffolk Militia for recruits and had maintained recruiting parties in the County. These links were formally recognised with the Cardwell reforms of 1873. Cambridgeshire was added to the recruiting area and, most importantly, the Depot of the Regiment was established at Bury St Edmunds where the barracks to house the Depot was built in 1878.

In 1881, the title of the Regiment became The Suffolk Regiment with The West Suffolk Militia and The Cambridgeshire Militia becoming the 3rd and 4th Battalions respectively. By the end of the century, 90% of the men came from Suffolk.

The Territorial Force, the forerunner of the Territorial Army was formed in 1908. It strengthened the county links and established the 4th Battalion throughout East Suffolk and the 5th Battalion in West Suffolk.

The Great War

The new century saw the advent of the Territorial Army in which The 4th Battalion based at Ipswich, the 5th Battalion at Bury St Edmunds and The 1st Battalion of The Cambridgeshire Regiment at Cambridge brought with them the

traditions of the old Volunteers. The Militia became the 3rd Battalion (Special Reserve).

When Britain entered the war on August 4th 1914, The Second Battalion was immediately mobilised and was in France with the British Expeditionary Force by the 17th. It was soon in action against the advancing Germans near Mons and on 25 August at Le Cateau. There the decision was taken to stand and fight. Along with other Battalions of 14 Brigade acting as rearguard of 5 Division they fought against overwhelming forces for nine hours before being overrun. Losses were over 700. The Battalion spent the rest of the War in France taking part in all the major battles.

The First Battalion moved from Khartoum and arrived in France in 1915. It was involved in heavy fighting around Ypres and in May was nearly wiped out with over 400 casualties. After further service in France it was moved to Macedonia where it saw service until the end of the War.

The 4th (Territorial) Battalion was in France before the end of 1914. Its first major battle was that of Neuve Chapelle in 1915. It was to see further battles for the rest of the War. The 5th Battalion (TF) was sent to Gallipoli in 1915 and thereafter served in Palestine taking part in two Gaza battles and subsequent actions in 1918. Also in Gallipoli and Palestine was the Suffolk Yeomanry which became the 15th Battalion of the Regiment in 1915 and went on to serve with distinction on the Western Front.

The 1st Battalion The Cambridgeshire Regiment served continuously in France and Flanders from 1915 to 1918 earning 27 Battle Honours and over 300 awards for gallantry. It earned a high reputation as an outstanding Battalion.

Mention might be made of the ordeal suffered by The 2nd Battalion on March 28th 1918 at Wancourt (first battle of Arras 1918) during the great March offensive by the German Army. Two companies, commanded by Captain W L Simpson MC from Bury St Edmunds and Captain L J Baker MC from Lavenham, fought desperately, holding the German attack up in an action described by The Times: "There is a story, such as painters ought to make immortal and historians to celebrate, of how certain Suffolk's, cut off and surrounded fought back to back on the Wancourt-Tilloy road."

Two VCs were awarded to men of the Regiment: Sergeant Saunders of the 9th Battalion at Loos in September 1915 and Corporal Day of the 11th near Peronne in 1917. Thanks to Sergeant Saunders' bravery - despite wounds which cost him his leg - Lieutenant Christison of the Cameron Highlanders, though badly wounded, survived to become General Christison and celebrate his 100th Birthday in 1993.

Five other Battalions of the Regiment, all raised in wartime, served in France. Eight Battalions (including the Cambridgeshire's) were involved in the Somme campaign of 1916. More detailed accounts of the many battles fought cannot be covered, but the eighty one Great War Battle Honours, from Mons to Palestine 1917-18, show their range.

In total, 23 Battalions of The Suffolk Regiment were raised during the Great War

