



25 Field Regiment, Royal Artillery

The Royal Regiment of Artillery (Royal Artillery, RA) is an arm of the British Army. Despite its name, it comprises several regiments. The name "Royal Artillery" was first used in 1720. On 1st April 1722 two companies of field artillery were increased to four to form the Royal Regiment of Artillery. The regiment expanded rapidly and by 1757 had 24 companies divided into two battalions.

On 1st July 1899, the Royal Artillery was divided into three groups: the Royal Horse Artillery and the Royal Field Artillery comprised one group, while the coastal defence, mountain, siege and heavy batteries were split off into another group named the Royal Garrison Artillery. The third group continued to be titled simply Royal Artillery. In 1924 the three amalgamated once more to become one regiment.

25 Field Regiment during World War II

25 Field Regiment fought in Africa as part of the 4th Indian Infantry Division. They took part in the East African Campaign, a series of battles fought in East Africa by the British and allies against Italian forces from June 1940 to November 1941. The 4th Indian Division fought in Egypt and took part in Operation Compass in December 1940. The division was involved in the decisive battles of that campaign in the camps around Sidi Barrani.

In December 1940, the division was rushed to British Sudan to join with the 5th Indian Infantry Division to prevent the Italian forces from threatening Red Sea supply routes to Egypt as well as Egypt and the Suez Canal itself. In June 1942 they were at the Gazala Line at Tobruk. On 21st June a battery of the regiment destroyed their guns and vehicles at the fortress of Tobruk. Four officers and 17 men avoided capture by the Afrika Korps of Rommel. Philip Pope received a DSO for his gallantry during the Gazala battle.

25 Field Regiment entered The Netherlands on 4th October 1944 arriving at Leende, near Eindhoven. They moved to positions near Zeeland on 9th October and on 11th were ordered to support operation Aintree, an attack on the town of Venray resulting in the Battle of Overloon. The regiment moved to a very exposed position northwest of Overloon on 13th and fired red smoke on 14th to assist Typhoons in attacking German positions in Venray. Between 20th and 26th they moved to St. Antonis.

On 27th October 25 Field Regiment were moved to Heusden, near Asten. The commander of VIII Corps placed them under command of the 7th US Armoured Division to stop a German counterattack near Meijel. Together with 131 Field Regiment they opened fire on the enemy on 28th. The Germans attacked with three battalions and some 30 tanks. The commander of 25 Field Regiment at that time was Lieutenant Colonel Rupert Brazier-Creagh. For more than 24 hours the Americans were extremely exposed with their flanks turned and little infantry protection. Brazier-Creagh then moved to a forward position, where with skilfully co-ordinated artillery fire he broke up one German assault after another. Brazier-Creagh was awarded with a DSO for this action.

This action is reputed as being "the most celebrated gunner action of 21st Army Group in the whole campaign". The regiment was awarded a Distinguished Unit Citation and an Honour Title, becoming 25 (Asten) Battery, Royal Artillery.

On 29th October they fired more than 10,000 rounds. At one point the enemy were so close that the attack was stopped when German forces were only 300 yards from the Regiment's observation post.

Between 1st and 3rd November the regiment supported an attack on Liesel, it was captured without difficulty and on 8th they moved to St. Antonis again. They stayed there Until the end of November and then moved to Blerick and Sevenum.

From 11th until 13th December the regiment was in reserve at Deurne and on 1st January 1945 moved to Baexem where they suffered some casualties from Luftwaffe attacks. On 10th January they relieved 181 Field Regiment in Maasbree and later moved to the area of Venray and on 20th March entered Germany.

In 1947 the regiment was renumbered 59 (Asten) Battery and is today 59 (Asten) Training Battery.