

The Hertfordshire Yeomanry



Can trace its formation to the late 1700's. King George III was on the throne, William Pitt the Younger was Prime Minister of Great Britain, and across the English Channel, Britain was faced by a French nation that had recently guillotined its King and which possessed a revolutionary army numbering half a million men. The Prime Minister proposed that the English Counties form a force of Volunteer Yeoman Cavalry that could be called on by the King to defend the country against invasion or by the Lord Lieutenant to subdue any civil disorder within the country.

Between 1794 and 1803, a large number of cavalry units such as the North Hampshire Yeomanry Cavalry, the New Forest Volunteer Cavalry, the Fawley Light Dragoons and the Southampton Cavalry were raised in southern England as independent groups of Yeomanry, but were brought under the collective title of North Hampshire Regiment of Yeomanry Cavalry in 1834, the title "North" was dropped by 1848. Over the next 60 years the name changed several times, but always maintained a link with both Hampshire and the Yeomanry until in 1908, after the formation of The Territorial Army, the regiment became known as the Hampshire Yeomanry (Carabiniers) with detachments in Winchester, Portsmouth, Bournemouth and Southampton.

Boer War

On December 13, 1899, the decision to allow volunteer forces serve in the Second Boer War was made. Due to the string of defeats during Black Week in December, 1899, the British government realized they were going to need more troops than just the regular army, thus issuing a Royal Warrant on December 24, 1899. This warrant officially created the Imperial Yeomanry.

The Royal Warrant asked standing Yeomanry regiments to provide service companies of approximately 115 men each. In addition to this, many British citizens (usually mid-upper class) volunteered to join the new regiment. Although there were strict requirements, many volunteers were accepted with substandard horsemanship/marksmanship, however they had significant time to train while awaiting transport. The first contingent of recruits contained 550 officers, 10,371 men with 20 battalions and 4 companies, which arrived in South Africa between February and April, 1900. Upon arrival, the regiment was sent throughout the zone of operations. The Hertfordshire Yeomanry provided troops for the 42nd Company, 12th Battalion.

World War I

There were three regiments of Hertfordshire Yeomanry in World War One the original now known as the 1/1st Hertfordshire Yeomanry the second line Regiment (2/1st) and the third line Regiment (3/1st).

1/1st Hertfordshire Yeomanry

The 1/1st was mobilised in August 1914 and attached to the Eastern Mounted Brigade, they later moved to Egypt in January 1915 and joined the Yeomanry Mounted Brigade.[7] The Yeomanry Mounted Brigade moved to Gallipoli as dismounted troops attached to the 2nd Mounted Division and redesignated as the 5th Mounted Brigade.[7] After the evacuation of Gallipoli they returned to Egypt in December 1915, and were remounted and moved to the Western Frontier Force.[7] In March 1916 the Regiment was split up, RHQ with A Squadron were attached to the 54th Division, later A Squadron joined XXI Corps, Cavalry in Palestine.[7] B Squadron was attached to the 11th Division, in England until on 12 July 1916 joined VI Corps Cavalry, until early in 1917 when it moved to join XVIII Corps, Cavalry. In May 1917 it became GHQ Troops. In July 1917 it returned to Egypt and in May 1918 joined XXI Corps Cavalry in Palestine.[7] D Squadron moved to Mesopotamia, initially on Lines of Communication duties and in July 1916 it was attached to the 13th Division, until December of that year when they moved to III (Tigris) Corps Cavalry. In August 1917 they were attached to the 15th Indian Infantry Division, and in May 1918 they were tasked with Lines of Communication duties with the North Persia Force.

2/1st Hertfordshire Yeomanry

The 2/1st was formed in September 1914, the regiment remained in the United Kingdom and did not see active service as a regiment they did supply drafts of fit troops for service in France in March 1918.

3/1st Hertfordshire Yeomanry

The 3/1st was formed in 1915, they remained in the United Kingdom until being absorbed by the 6th Reserve Cavalry Regiment in February 1917.

Between The Wars

On the reforming of the TA, the 14 senior Yeomanry Regiments remained as horsed cavalry regiments (6 forming the 5th and 6th Cavalry Brigades) the remaining Yeomanry Regiments would be re-rolled as Artillery. **The Hertfordshire Yeomanry was one of the regiments now re-designated and formed part of the Royal Artillery.**

World War II

During World War Two there was two regiment's associated with the Hertfordshire Yeomanry the pre war 86 (East Anglian)(Herts Yeo) Field Regiment RA(TA) and a second line unit was formed the, 135 (East Anglian)(Herts Yeo) Field Regiment RA(TA). 86 (East Anglian)(Herts Yeo) Field Regiment RA(TA) The 86 (East Anglian)(Herts Yeo) Field Regiment was mobilised in September 1939, its three batteries were the:

341 (St Albans) Battery

342 (Hertford) Battery

462 Battery

In 1940 the regiment was equipped with 8 x 4.5 inch Howitzers & 4 x 18/25 pounder guns, it remained in the United Kingdom until 1944 being attached to various divisions; The 54th (East Anglian) Infantry Division , 42nd (East Lancashire) Division and the 42nd Armoured Division. During this time it used a number of new self-propelled artillery vehicles Bishop , Priest and the Sexton self propelled guns. In 1944 it was attached to British 2nd Army and participated in the following battles Normandy , Antwerp , Nimegen , Ardennes , Rhine Crossing, Bremen.

135 (East Anglian)(Herts Yeo) Field Regiment RA(TA)

The 135 (East Anglian) (Herts Yeo) Field Regiment RA was formed in September 1939 it consisted of three batteries, the:

344 (Hitchin) Battery

336 (Northampton) Battery

499 Battery

The Regiment remained in the United Kingdom until 1941 when it was sent to India and joined the 18th Indian Division and deployed to Singapore it was still serving with the 18th Indian Division when Singapore was captured by the Japanese.

Lieutenant Colonel

Philip Toosey, in 1941 was appointed to command the 135th Hertfordshire Yeomanry regiment. In October 1941, his unit was shipped to the Far East. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for heroism during the defence of Singapore. Because of his qualities of leadership, his superiors ordered him on 12 February 1942 to join the evacuation of Singapore, but Toosey refused so that he could remain with his men during their captivity. He was the senior Allied officer in the Japanese prisoner-of-war camp at Tha Maa Kham (known as Tamarkan) in Thailand during World War II. The men at this camp built the Bridge on the River Kwai which was described in a book by Pierre Boulle and later in an Oscar-winning film in which Alec Guinness played the senior British officer. Both the book and film outraged former prisoners because Toosey did not collaborate, unlike the fictional Colonel Nicholson.

Post War

When the Territorial Army was reformed after the war the Hertfordshire Yeomanry was amalgamated with the Bedfordshire Yeomanry and formed 201 (Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire)Yeomanry Battery Royal Artillery Volunteers which is part of the 100th (Yeomanry) Regiment Royal Artillery (Volunteers). 201 Battery, is based in Luton and Romford and is affiliated to the 7 Parachute Regiment , Royal Horse Artillery , which it supports on operations.