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Catalogue description

THE SUFFOLK REGIMENT, 1685-1959

This record is held by Suffolk Record Office, Bury St Edmunds Branch

Reference: GB 554

Title: THE SUFFOLK REGIMENT, 1685-1959

Description: GENERAL REGIMENTAL RECORDS

A1 Printed and typescript histories

A2 Records relating to the history and traditions of the regiment

A3 The Battle of Minden

A4 The Great Siege of Gibraltar

A5 250th anniversary celebrations, 1935

A6 The Colours

A7 Standing Orders

A8 Honours and decorations

A9 Rolls of Honour

A10 Regimental war memorials

A11 Army Lists

A12 Officers' mess

A13 Maps and plans

A14 The Boer War

A15 Photographs

A16 Miscellaneous

B FIRST BATTALION

B1 Printed and typescript histories

B2 Digests of services, war diaries and other contemporary narratives

B3 Battalion orders

B4 Nominal rolls

B5 Honours and decorations

B6 Rolls of honour

B7 The Colours

B8 Officers' mess

B9 Sergeants' mess

B10 Sports

B11 Maps and plans

B12 Photographs

B13 Miscellaneous

C SECOND BATTALION

C1 Digests of services, war diaries and other contemporary narratives

C2 Battalion orders

C3 Nominal rolls

C4 The Colours

C5 Officers' mess

C6 Sergeants' mess

C7 Maps and plans

C8 Charities

C9 Photographs

C10 Miscellaneous

D DEPOT

D1 Administration

D2 Officers' mess

D3 Photographs

D4 Miscellaneous

E MILITIA/THIRD BATTALION

E1 Printed histories

E2 Digests of services and other contemporary narratives

E3 Administration

E4 Orders

E5 The Colours

E6 Officers' mess

E7 Charity

E8 Photographs

E9 Miscellaneous

F VOLUNTEERS TO 1908

F1 Printed histories

F2 Administration

F3 Photographs

F4 Miscellaneous

G FOURTH BATTALION (TERRITORIAL ARMY)

G1 Printed histories

G2 Digests of services and other contemporary narratives

G3 Battalion orders

G4 Nominal rolls

G5 The Colours

G6 Photographs

G7 Miscellaneous

H FIFTH BATTALION (TERRITORIAL ARMY)

H1 Printed histories

H2 Nominal rolls

H3 Maps and plans

H4 Photographs

H5 Miscellaneous

I SIXTH BATTALION

I1 Miscellaneous

I2 Photographs

J SEVENTH BATTALION

J1 Printed histories

J2 Nominal rolls

J3 Rolls of honour

J4 Photographs

J5 Miscellaneous

K EIGHTH BATTALION

K1 Printed histories

K2 Digests of services

K3 Nominal rolls

K4 Photographs

K5 Miscellaneous

L NINTH BATTALION

L1 Photographs

L2 Miscellaneous

M TENTH BATTALION

M1 Photographs

N ELEVENTH BATTALION

N1 Photographs

O TWELFTH BATTALION

O1 Photographs

P FOURTEENTH BATTALION

P1 Photographs

Q THE SUFFOLK YEOMANRY/FIFTEENTH BATTALION

Q1 Printed histories

Q2 Administration

Q3 Orders

Q4 Miscellaneous

Q5 Photographs

R SECOND LINE BATTALIONS, 1939-1945

R1 Photographs

S SUFFOLK VOLUNTEER REGIMENT

S1 Photographs

S2 Miscellaneous

T HOME GUARD

T1 Orders

T2 Nominal rolls

T3 Honours and decorations

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U SUFFOLK REGIMENT ASSOCIATION

U1 Administration

U2 Finance

U3 Regimental Dinner Club of Past and Present Officers

U4 Suffolk Regiment War Memorial Homes

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V OLD COMRADES ASSOCIATION

V1 Registers of members

V2 Annual reunions

V3 Administration

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V5 4th and 5th Suffolks Old Comrades Fund

W SUFFOLK REGIMENTAL GAZETTE

X REGIMENTAL MUSEUM

X1 Photographs

X2 Visitors' books

X3 Miscellaneous

Y INDIVIDUAL SOLDIERS

Y1 Suffolk Regiment

Y2 Other units

Y3 Unidentified soldiers

Z MISCELLANEOUS

Z1 Printed books

Z2 Newspapers and journals

Z3 War graves and war memorials

Z4 1st East Anglian Regiment

Z5 Royal Anglian Regiment

Z6 Other regiments/units

Z7 Maps and plans

Z8 Photographs

Z9 Miscellaneous

Date: 1697-2000

Held by: [Suffolk Record Office, Bury St Edmunds Branch](#), not available at
The National Archives

Language: English

Creator: Suffolk Regiment, 1685-1959

Immediate source of acquisition: acc. nos. 9843, 9851, 9912, 9919, 9930, 9936, 9946, 9947, 9954, 9982, 11016, 11024, 11026, 11028, 11032, 11064, 11066, 11084, 11089, 11098, 11129, 11138, 11139, 11144, 11149, 11185, 11186, 11189, 11190, 11206, 11244, 11283, 11332

Publication note: Two early histories are listed in the catalogue (A1/1 and 2), to which can be added Centurions of a Century, C.H. Gardiner (1910). Shorter histories and books or pamphlets on aspects of the regiment's history will be found throughout the catalogue.

The standard, official, history of the regiment was published in four volumes:

A brief single-volume history is:

Two recent books which give a soldier's-eye view of life in the ranks between the World Wars are:

Subjects:

- Armed forces
- First World War, 1914-1918
- Second World War, 1939-1945

Administrative / biographical background: (Based on the programme for the 300th Anniversary celebrations)

The origins of the Suffolk Regiment can be traced to 1685 when Henry, 7th Duke of Norfolk, raised a regiment in Norfolk and Suffolk as part of the forces of James II to meet the threat of the Monmouth Rebellion. The regiment was known in its early years by the names of the various colonels who commanded it.

After a few weeks in East Anglia, the regiment was moved to Windsor Castle and thence to Ireland where it was engaged in many actions including the Battle of the Boyne. In the next forty-five years it saw service in Flanders, the West Indies and the Balearic Islands, returning to Suffolk in 1730.

In 1742 the regiment left for Europe to take part in the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748). It was present at the Battle of Dettingen on 27 June 1743 against the French, the last battle in which an English monarch led his troops in the field. The Adjutant at that time was James Wolfe, later to gain fame as General Wolfe of Canada.

In 1751 Infantry Regiments were numbered and no longer took the name of their commanding officer. The regiment became the XIIth Foot, thus indicating its seniority as one of the oldest regiments in the army.

During the Seven Years War (1756-1763), at the Battle of Minden, on 1 August 1759, six British Regiments of Foot, including the XIIth, defeated ten thousand French cavalry. As the British Infantry advanced through some gardens they picked roses and wore them in their hats; after that on every 'Minden Day' members of the

Suffolk Regiment wore red and yellow roses to commemorate the victory.

1769 saw the regiment sail for Gibraltar, where it spent the next fourteen years. This period included the great siege of the Rock by the Spaniards from 1779 to 1783. 1781 saw a further change in the title: in addition to XIIth Foot, it was also to be known as The East Suffolk Regiment. The years between 1783 and 1796 saw the regiment in widely scattered places: England, Ireland, the Channel Islands, Barbados, Martinique and Flanders.

In 1796 the regiment paid the first of many visits to India, remaining there for the next ten years in operations against the French and local rulers. In 1810 it took part in the capture of the island of Mauritius, and remained there on garrison duty until 1818. After the Napoleonic Wars there followed a long period of comparative peace with the regiment serving in various parts of the world.

In 1842 a Reserve Battalion was formed which took part in the 'Kaffir Wars' in South Africa (1851-1853) and it was a draft to reinforce this battalion which was on the troop ship Birkenhead when it was wrecked on 24 February 1852 with the loss of most of the troops.

In 1854 the regiment sailed for Australia and remained there, and in Tasmania, until 1860 when it went to New Zealand to help put down the Maori Rebellion. It was during this period that alliances with the Launceston Regiment of Australia and the Auckland Regiment of New Zealand were formed. In 1858 the Reserve Battalion became the 2nd Battalion.

The 2nd Battalion sailed for India in 1864 and from then until 1907 one or other battalion was usually serving there. The 1st Battalion had returned to England in 1867 and in 1878 the Depot was built at Gibraltar Barracks, Bury St Edmunds. In 1881 the regiment became The Suffolk Regiment. At the time of the Boer War (1899-1902) approximately 90% of the strength of the 1st Battalion, who took part in the conflict, were Suffolk men.

The new century saw the further involvement of the citizens of Suffolk in the County Regiment with the formation of the Territorial Army in 1908. The 4th Battalion, The Suffolk Regiment (T.A.) had its Headquarters in Ipswich and Drill Halls throughout East Suffolk, whilst the 5th Battalion The Suffolk Regiment (T.A.) was based on Bury St Edmunds and covered West Suffolk.

The 1914-1918 War saw the raising of twenty-five battalions of the Suffolk Regiment. The Regular Army formed the British Expeditionary Force to France in 1914, which included the 2nd Battalion. The Regular Army was virtually destroyed following the Battles of Mons and The Marne and to replace it Kitchener's New Army was formed. These new units - the 7th, 8th, 9th, 11th and 12th Battalions - followed the Regulars into the war: six battalions

of the regiment were engaged on the Somme in 1916 and five in the battles at Arras in 1917. During the war years, apart from France and Flanders, battalions of the regiment fought at Gallipoli, Salonika and in the Middle East. The Regimental Chapel situated in St Mary's Church, Bury St Edmunds, commemorates the 360 officers and 6,513 other ranks of the Suffolk Regiment who did not return.

During the next twenty years between the Great War and the Second World War, the 1st and 2nd Battalions saw service in India, Shanghai, Gibraltar and Malta. The 4th Battalion (T.A.) was re-established and the 5th Battalion (T.A.) formed in 1939.

During the 1939-1945 War the regiment raised eleven service battalions, five first line and six second line and holding battalions.

The 1st Battalion went to France with the BEF in 1939, took part in the fighting in France and Belgium, the evacuation from Dunkirk and subsequently returned to France on D-Day fighting through to Germany until the end of the war.

The 2nd Battalion were at Razmak on the north-west frontier of India when war broke out and took part in the Burma Campaign and the fighting in the Arakan and at Imphal in March 1944. At the end of the war the battalion was stationed at Lahore in India.

The 4th and 5th Battalions (T.A.) were part of the 18th Division. The Division, comprising mostly Territorials from the eastern counties, left the U.K. for the Middle East in October 1941, were diverted to Singapore when Japan entered the war, and on the fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942 spent three and a half years as POWs, most being involved in the construction of the Burma - Thailand Railway.

The 7th and 8th Battalions were formed in May 1940. In 1941 the 7th Battalion was converted to Tanks, becoming the 142nd Regiment Royal Armoured Corps, but still wearing the Suffolk cap badge.

The second line and 'holding' battalions consisted of the 6th, 8th, 9th, 30th, 31st and 70th (Young Soldiers) Battalions. The 8th Battalion spent the war years in the UK supplying drafts to other units. The 31st Battalion served as line of communication troops in North Africa and Italy and on garrison duty in Gibraltar.

Apart from these Army Battalions, 11 Home Guard Battalions were formed, together with two Motor Transport Companies for the local defence of the county.

The regiment's Roll of Honour for the 1939-1945 War contains the names of 87 officers and 1,508 other ranks.

After the war, the 2nd Battalion was disbanded and the 5th Battalion (T.A.) was not reformed. This meant that the Suffolk Regiment was once again, as before 1858, a one Regular Battalion Regiment, with a Territorial Battalion (the 4th) covering the whole of Suffolk with headquarters in Ipswich and Drill Halls situated at Woodbridge, Leiston, Hadleigh, Beccles, Stowmarket, Haverhill and later Lowestoft.

In 1946 the Depot at Bury St Edmunds saw the first intakes of National Servicemen who served for 18 months with the Regular Battalion and then 3 years in the Territorial Army, mostly with the 4th Battalion (T.A.).

Between 1946 and 1949 the 1st Battalion saw service in Egypt, Palestine and Greece before sailing for Malaya in July 1949 where it spent the next 3½ years involved in jungle warfare against Communist infiltration. During its service in Malaya the regiment gained a first-class reputation for jungle warfare and played a leading part in suppressing the communist threat.

On returning to the United Kingdom the battalion stayed in Colchester for a short time before moving to Trieste in 1953 to take up internal security duties. In 1954 it moved to Wuppertal in Germany. Leaving Germany in 1956 for Cyprus, the battalion was involved in the EOKA campaign against General Grivas. In May 1959 it returned to England and on 29 August 1959 was amalgamated with the 1st Battalion The Royal Norfolk Regiment to form the 1st East Anglian Regiment.

More details of the service of individual battalions can be found in the introductions to the various sections of the catalogue.

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