

NOT FOR PUBLICATION, BROADCAST IN OVERSEAS BULLETINS OR USE ON CLUB TAPES BEFORE 2330 D.B.S.T. ON 14th MAY, 1944 (i.e. FOR MONDAY MORNING PAPERS). NOT TO BE BROADCAST IN THE MIDNIGHT NEWS OF 14/15 MAY 1944. THIS EMBARGO SHOULD BE RESPECTED OVERSEAS BY PREFACING ANY MESSAGES FILED WITH THE EMBARGO.

ROYAL DEVON YEOMANRY COLLEMMORATES

The last invasion of English soil and the prompt expulsion of the enemy by the forerunners of the Home Guard are recalled by the 150th Anniversary on 15th May, of the formation of the Royal Devon Yeomanry.

In the last years of the 18th Century, there were fears of an invasion from France, and a call went out for volunteers to form "a species of cavalry" to consist of "gentlemen and yeomanry who would not be called upon to set out of their counties except under pressure of invasion or urgent necessity". This appeal for what was virtually a forerunner of the Home Guard met with quick response. On 15th May 1794, the "First Troops of Volunteer Cavalry" for the County of Devon assembled at Pynes near Exeter. Other troops quickly mustered throughout Devon to form two Brigades.

These volunteers were soon to be put to the test. In February 1797 the French Black Legion - a raiding force of four men-of-war - landed at Ilfracombe. The approach of the Devon Volunteers led to the hasty withdrawal of this sabotage gang with nothing more than a burst farmhouse to their credit. They crossed to Fishguard where at the hands of the Welsh they fared no better. Thus it may truly be said that the farmers of Devon repulsed French forces as effectively as two centuries earlier the fishermen of Devon had trounced the Armada.

Later the Devon Yeoman acted as mounted police in emergencies until the coming of the "Peelers" enabled them to concentrate on military training.

The Royal Devon Yeomanry became part of the newly formed Territorial Force in 1908. In that capacity they fought throughout the last war during which they were converted into infantry. The unit was re-organised as artillery in 1921.

Thus during the century and a half of its existence the Yeomen of Devon have seen service as cavalry, dismounted cavalry, infantry, horse artillery, and now as mechanised artillery.

Once again in this war the Royal Devon Yeomanry has two Regiments in the field, and eagerly awaits an opportunity to destroy the enemy wherever he may be found.

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MILITARY AFFAIRS