

Mountsorrel Yeomen

The Leicestershire Yeomanry - The Road to War 1914



Origins

The Leicestershire Yeomanry have their origins in those regiments raised to meet a feared French invasion during the crisis of 1794. Following a meeting at the Three Crowns Inn in Leicester on April 10, where details were agreed, funding and volunteers found, by 4th July the Regiment consisting of six troops paraded to receive their standards. With the Peace of Amiens in 1802, the regiment was disbanded but rapidly reformed the following September, as the Leicestershire Yeomanry Cavalry. The regiment was renamed for Prince Albert, the Prince Consort, in 1844.

Yeomanry units were intended for Home Service only and thus when mounted infantry were needed for the South African Wars a new force, The Imperial Yeomanry, was formed with units being sponsored with manpower coming from the ranks of the Yeomanry and other volunteer units. The regiment sponsored two companies of the Imperial Yeomanry in 1900 (the 7th and 65th).

In 1901 the regiment was itself reorganized as mounted infantry as the Leicestershire (Prince Albert's Own) Imperial Yeomanry. In 1908 it was transferred into the Territorial Force, returning to a cavalry role and equipping as hussars, under the new title of The Leicestershire (Prince Albert's Own) Yeomanry.

Organisation and Training

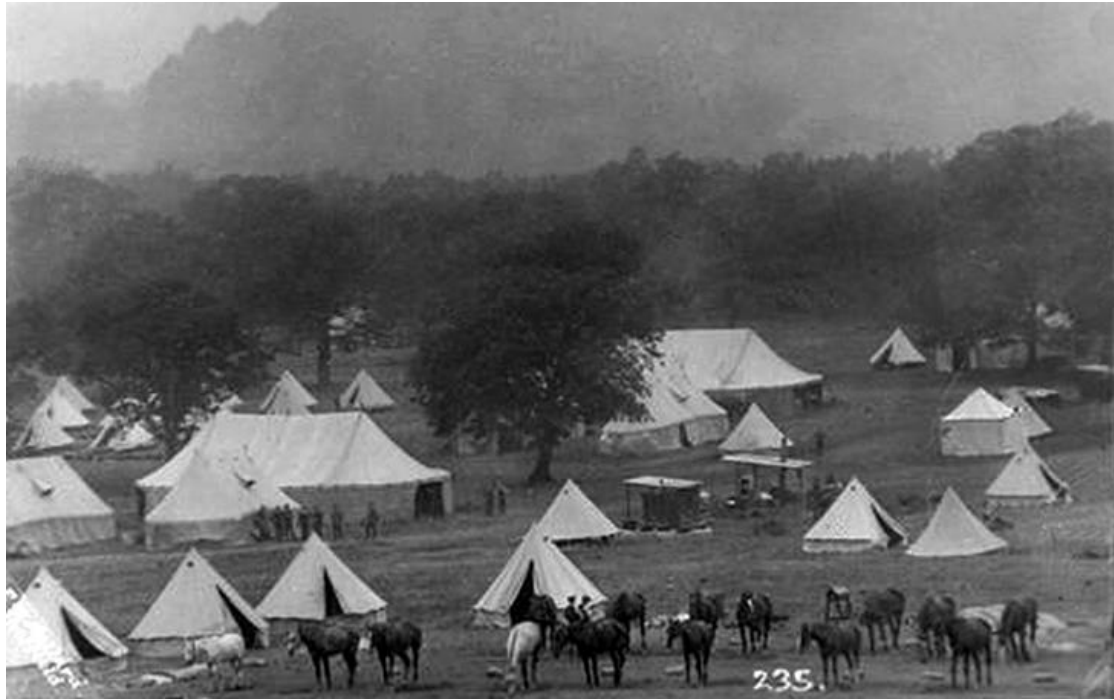
With Regimental HQ at Magazine Square in Leicester, squadrons were based across the County:

- A Squadron Melton Mowbray
- B Squadron Leicester
- C Squadron Loughborough
- D Squadron Lutterworth (with Troops at Wigstam and Ibstock)

C Squadron, based originally in Selborne St and later Toothill Road Loughborough, also had the use of facilities at the Drill Hall in Mountsorrel.

Pre-war training reflected that of the infantry with regular week long training camps and weekends both locally and further afield.





Yeomanry Training Camp at Whitwick 1912

Personalities

At the outbreak of war the Squadron Commander was Major W F Martin, of The Poplars, Mountsorrel, who had served with the Yeomanry since the late 1890's, volunteering for service with 7th Company 4th Battalion Imperial Yeomanry during the South African War. He was the brother of Major RE Martin commanding F Coy of the 5th Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment. Like his brother, Major WF Martin was a Director of the Mountsorrel Granite Company and served as Company Secretary.



Major WF Martin
Officer Commanding
C Squadron
1914

Along with their Squadron Commander there were believed to have been some 7 men from the village serving with the C Squadron at the outbreak of war but others would follow them later.

Name	Service Number and Rank	Comments
Robert Perkins	1222 (255159) Sergeant	Wounded in Action 15 th May 1915
Bert R Rouse	1966 (255195) Shoeing Smith Corporal	Wounded in Action 19 October 1918 and Prisoner of War. Home address given as Rothley Plain
William A Whittle	1968 (255205)	Home address given as The Lindens
Arthur Smith	1967	Farm Labourer, Son of George Henry and Harriet Smith of 67 Danvers Rd. Killed in Action 13 May 1915
A Neal		Possibly Andrew Neal
H Holmes		Quarry worker
R Perkins		Family linked to Barrow. Quarry worker

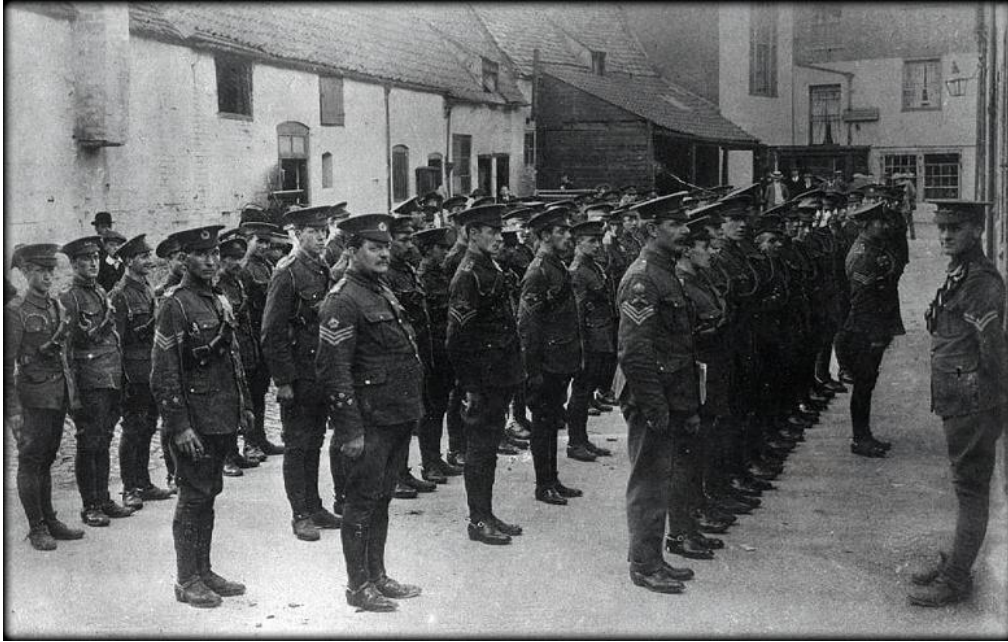
Another Director of the Mountsorrel Granite Company had served in the Yeomanry prior to the war, Captain CH Martin of Kinchley House, Rothley. He like many others immediately re-enlisted at the outbreak of war.



Captain CH Martin 1914

Mobilisation

On the outbreak of War in 1914, the regiment mobilised on their home bases but with D Squadron personnel being distributed amongst the other Squadrons to bring them up to full strength.



C Squadron in Loughborough 6th August 1914

9 Aug -

Sgt. Moore and 7 men
with saddles and bridles 14.

~~Go off parade~~
Catch 10.45 M.R. into Leicester
fetch 14 horses from Repository into
Loughborough to Walls Head.

arrange SV Troop exercise
these horses in halts at 9 parade.

A note dated 9th August 1914 from Maj. Martin to Sgt Moore for the collection of horses from the regimental repository in Leicester

Parading in Loughborough shortly after the 5th Battalion Leicestershire Regiment had departed, the Squadron moved off initially to Grantham where they concentrated with the other Yeomanry units that made up the North Midland Mounted Brigade.



C Squadron prepare to depart from Loughborough Market Place



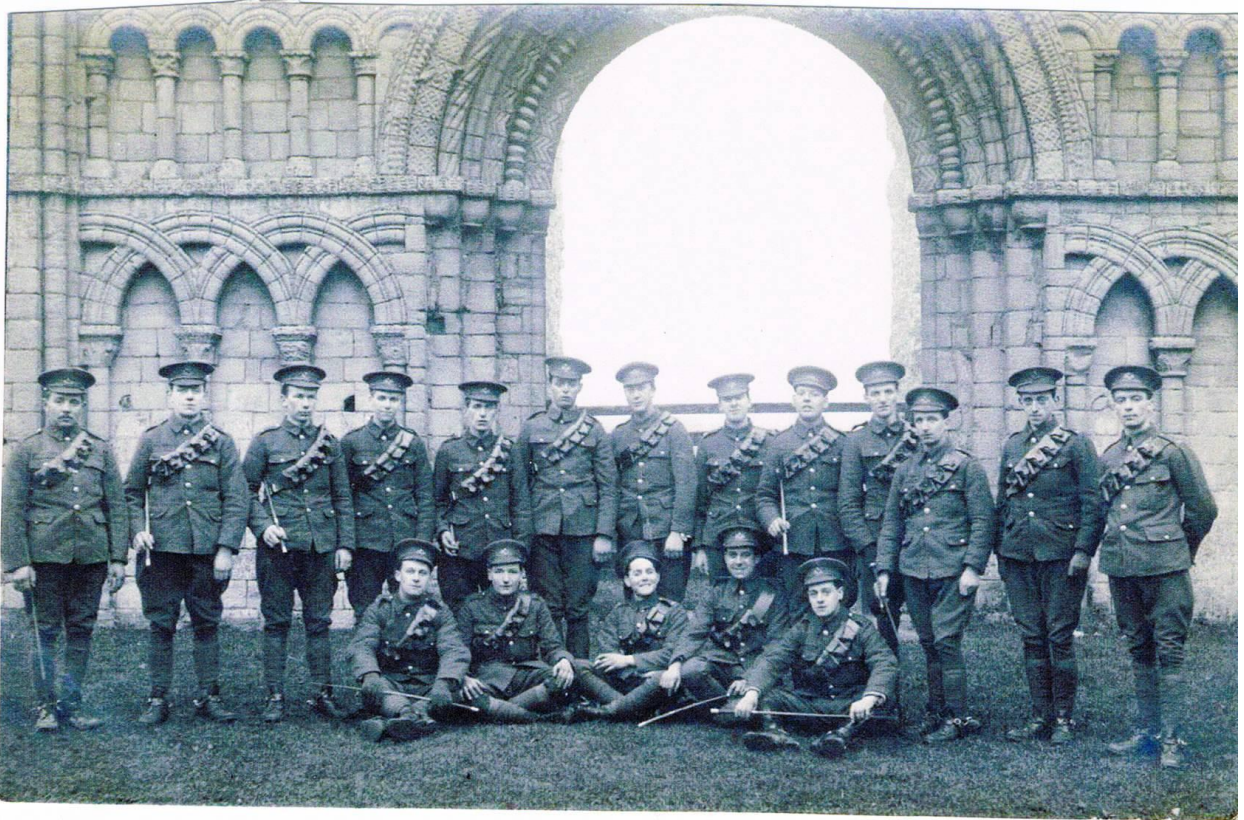


Maj. WEF Martin leading C Squadron off.



The Brigade having concentrated at Grantham then moved to holding areas near Diss in Norfolk to carry unit and formation training as part of 1st Mounted Division. Here the question of volunteering for overseas service was put to the men with some

94% accepting and the remainder forming a second line unit to act as a training base for future volunteers and drafts.



Men of C Squadron at Castle Acre Priory Autumn 1914



On 2nd November the Regiment left Diss by train for Southampton where that night they sailed for France landing at Le Havre the next morning.

After some initial acclimatisation training, notably learning to dig trenches, they came on 12th November under orders of 7th Cavalry Brigade, part of 3rd Cavalry Division. The rest of the Brigade was made up of 1st Life Guards, 2nd Life Guards and the Royal Horse Guards.



A British cavalryman 1914

The Regiment was employed as reserves and reliefs in trenches in Ypres Salient in extreme winter weather conditions of rain and mud followed by frost, snow and intense cold. These initial winter months of service at the Front were fairly static and there was some small relief in December when they moved into billets around Haazebrouk. This though was the lull before the storm that would come with the spring of 1915.