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The Loyal Suffolk Hussars: The History of the Suffolk Yeomanry 1794-1967

Margaret Thomas, Nick Sign

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The book is the first complete account of the Suffolk Yeomanry from its formation in 1794 as volunteer cavalry, intended to meet the threat of a French invasion, to its eventual disbandment as a regiment and merger with T.A. units in 1967. With access to previously unpublished material and with the full cooperation of the Suffolk and Norfolk Yeomanry Museum Trustees, the authors have been able to give a detailed account of how this volunteer unit served the British Army and the civil power across nearly two centuries, responding to the challenges presented by a succession of crises at home and abroad.

Interwoven with the military history is a fascinating account of how the activities of, and attitudes towards, the yeomanry cavalry, whose officers and men were initially drawn from the county's landowners and farmers, were very much a reflection of the society of the time. Drawing upon personal diaries and interviews with surviving Yeomanry veterans, as well as formal accounts, the authors, both experienced local and social historians, provide an insight into the expectations, aspirations and fears of serving officers and men as they tell of the exploits of the Suffolk Yeomanry both at home and on battlefields abroad from the Boer War through Gallipoli, Palestine and the Western Front in the First World War to the Normandy landings and European battlefields a generation later.

At each stage, this military narrative is placed within its local and national context, providing a glimpse of the changing structure of volunteer forces, and changing governmental attitudes towards them. It traces how the Yeomanry was formed in 1794, disbanded as a regiment in 1828, rehabilitated in 1831, slowly increased its strength to become a regiment again in 1870, before becoming part of the Imperial Yeomanry during the Boer War. Thereafter, the story is told of how the Suffolk Yeomanry Cavalry became a dismounted cavalry force in the early years of the First World War and ended it as an infantry battalion of the Suffolk Regiment. Peacetime brought retraining as artillery men and a brief merger with the Norfolk Yeomanry before the Second World War saw an independent Suffolk Yeomanry again reformed as a regiment, fighting in an anti tank role. After the war, their final period of service was as an artillery regiment, again amalgamated with the Norfolk Yeomanry until disbandment as part of a TA reorganization.

Illustrated with a selection of rare or previously unpublished images, including 8 pages in color, this study is being produced in a limited edition hardback printing of 500 individually numbered copies, each signed by both authors.

Dr Margaret Thomas is an historian with current research interests in eighteenth and nineteenth century Suffolk, in particular its landscape and society. Following graduation from the University of Wales, she taught for six years before research for an M.Phil. at the University of Bristol led to an interest in the interaction of agriculture and industry in the area around Nailsea, near Bristol. She is the author of a number of books on the development of Nailsea, its glassworks and coalfields. In 1993, she returned to Suffolk, the county of her birth. Her research at the University of East Anglia, on trees and woodland in the Suffolk landscape between 1660 and 1870, led to a PhD. She also became a history lecturer and, with Dr Nick Sign, was, for many years Course Leader for the pioneering History degree at Suffolk College, later University Campus Suffolk. During her career, both in Bristol and Suffolk, she has encouraged an interest in local

history through extramural appointments at the Universities of Bristol and East Anglia, the WEA and Adult Education Centres. Since retiring, she has continued to give lectures to local history societies and has run courses at the Suffolk Record Office. She was Chairman of the Avon Local History Association and is currently Chairman of the Suffolk Local History Council and council member of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History.

A graduate of London University, Dr Nick Sign has enjoyed a long teaching career in High Schools as a department head and Deputy Headmaster, at a College of Education in Lincolnshire and more recently until his retirement in 2008 as a lecturer and degree course joint leader at Suffolk College, now University Campus Suffolk. His research interests include the history of education in the seventeenth century, investigated for his M.Phil, the use of archives in history teaching and the introduction of state secondary education to Suffolk between 1900 and 1939, which he studied for his Ph.D., under Professor Michael Sanderson at the University of East Anglia. He has also contributed a chapter on the development of further education in Suffolk to a forthcoming history of Suffolk College. He is currently a member of council of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History and is a former chairman of the Mendlesham History Group, which has published three booklets on the village's history. As the Vice-Chairman of the Suffolk Local History Council and Hon. Editor of their journal, Suffolk Review he has worked with Dr Thomas to develop and deliver courses in local history sources and methods for societies affiliated to the SLHC. He also gives lectures to local history groups throughout the county and has given illustrated talks and courses at Suffolk Record Office and in the Ipswich Arts Association's Town Lectures series.

REVIEWS

"This is a well-bound, well-illustrated limited edition book on high quality paper that would look good on anyone's bookshelf ... The content is ... extremely sound and is the result of some very thorough research... Thomas and Sign have done a good professional job of recording the history of a regiment which ultimately fell victim to successive amalgamations of TA artillery units." Mars & Clio

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