

2/7th and 2/8th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment, 1914-1916

Introduction

This article can be read in the context of the Senussi Uprising, and as background information for the units that participated in the suppression of the Senussi Uprising in 1915-16.

- 7th Bn. Duke of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex Regiment) 8th Bn. Duke
- of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex Regiment) 9th Bn. Duke of Cambridge's
- Own (Middlesex Regiment) 10th Bn. Duke of Cambridge's Own
- (Middlesex Regiment)

Middlesex Regiment, Territorial Force, 1914

In 1914 the regiment consisted of the 1st to 4th line battalions and the 5th and 6th Reserve battalions; a further 7 volunteer battalions existed as part of the Territorial Force.



The machine gun division from 9th Bn. Middlesex Regiment, Territorial Force, at Sittingbourne, c. 1914.

From a simultaneous postcard.

The card is stamped 16 September, but the year cannot be read.

I assume the photo was taken shortly after the mobilization. The supply train looks full-numbered, but consists of printed vehicles; during an exercise you would hardly have had so many vehicles, and might have borrowed "real" vehicles from one of the regular battalions.

The machine gun carriage was still used by some regular units in 1914 and was common in the Territorial Force units.



17th (Service) Bn. Middlesex Regiment (1st Football), Clipstone, juli 1915.

From a postcard seen for sale on the Internet.

The dating comes from Source 4.

In the absence of more illustrations of the regiment's Territorial Force battalions, one of the so-called New Army battalions must take its place 1).

Some data about this battalion can be found in Source 7. The battalion's nickname *1st Football* indicates that the soldiers came from different football clubs. The enlistment system made it possible for comrades (*pals*) who enlisted at the same time to also serve together.

About the 2/7th and 2/8th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment, 1914-1916



Regimentsmærke

Duke of Cambridge's Own

(Middlesex Regiment),

Territorial Force, ca. 1908.

From Source 3.

7th Bn. Duke of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex Regiment) - Historisk resume

1860: 2nd and 6th Admin Battalion, Middlesex Rifle Volunteers established as umbrella organization for a number of volunteer battalions in the county of Middlesex
 1880: 3rd Middlesex Rifle Volunteer Corps
 1891: 3rd Middlesex Volunteer Rifle Corps
 1908: 7th Battalion Duke of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex Regiment)

1915: 1/7th Battalion, The Duke of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex Regiment) ved oprettelsen af 2/7th Battalion i marts 1915 1920: 7th Battalion, The Duke of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex Regiment) 1921: 7th Battalion, The Middlesex Regiment (Duke of Cambridge's Own) 2)



English infantry from the Territorial Force, c. 1911.

After the drawing *Infantry, skirmishing* by Richard Caton Woodville.

From Source 1.

From 1908 the two battalions followed a parallel development and both were, on mobilization in 1914, part of the 2nd Middlesex Brigade (later 201st Brigade) in the 2nd Home Counties Division (later 67th Division).

The battalions were separated from their brigades in February 1915 and sent to Gibraltar in August 1915.

During the autumn of 1915, the battalions were sent to Egypt, where from November they were part of The Composite Infantry Brigade, Western Frontier Force.

After the suppression of the Senussi uprising, the battalions were sent to France in May 1916 and arrived in Marseilles on 15 May 1916. Here they were quarantined in a camp at La Valentie (about 15 km from Marseilles), as there was a risk that the soldiers were infected with typhus - one case had been detected en route from Egypt.

The unit on the plate is not named, but could be one of the Territorial Force battalions of the Duke of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex Regiment).

The battalions were disbanded per 10 and 15 June 1916 respectively. I am not aware of which units the soldiers were transferred to after being declared fit, but the need for new personnel was great everywhere after the battles at the Somme, where e.g. the regiment's 1st battalion was deployed 3).

The battalions' third call-up - 3/7th and 3/8th Bn. - subsequently received the designations 2/7th and 2/8th Bn. These battalions remained in England until October 1917, when they were disbanded. The soldiers have presumably been distributed to other units, perhaps 1/7th and 1/8th Bn. 4).



*Regimentsmærke
Duke of Cambridge's Own
(Middlesex Regiment),
ca. 1950 5).*

8th Bn. Duke of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex Regiment) - Historisk resume

1861: 7th Admin Battalion, Middlesex (South West Middlesex) Rifle Volunteers 1880: 16th Middlesex (South West Middlesex) Rifle Volunteer Corps 1887: 2nd Volunteer Battalion, The Duke of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex Regiment) 1891: 8th Middlesex (South West Middlesex) Volunteer Rifle Corps 1908: 8th Battalion Duke of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex Regiment) 1915: 1/8th Battalion, The Duke of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex Regiment) ved oprettelsen af 2/8th Battalion i marts 1915

1920: 8th Battalion, The Duke of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex Regiment) 1921: 8th Battalion, The Middlesex Regiment (Duke of Cambridge's Own) 6) —



City Imperial Volunteers, ca. 1900.

Drawn by Richard Simkin.

The illustration is an excerpt from a plate that was published with the Army & Navy Gazette.

Regimental badges

The difference between the two renditions of the regimental badge is the ribbon. In principle, the Territorial Force was not allowed to wear the banners of the parent regiment, but only those assigned to the units themselves.

The badge reproduced at the historical summary of the 7th Battalion is thus the Territorial Force issue, and bears the banner South Africa 1900-1902, awarded to the soldiers of the volunteer units who signed up for the war in South Africa. Following a special law of 2 January 1900, each battalion from the regular army could have a company of volunteers attached (116 men).

In order to circumvent the law that regulated the volunteer units and stipulated that they could only serve within the borders of England, the soldiers had to sign a 1-year contract with the regular army. 328 men from the Middlesex units enlisted, which was proportionally the largest contribution to the special units raised during the Boer War. In addition to those who served in The Volunteer Service Company, Middlesex Regiment, others served in i.a. City Imperial Volunteers 7).

The regimental badge worn by the regular battalions and the Territorial Army (formed 1920) bears the banner Albuhera to commemorate the Battle of Albuhera 8) in Spain on 16 May 1811, in which the commander of the 57th Regiment of Foot (West Middlesex), Colonel William Inglis, though badly wounded, urged his men to sell their lives, as dearly as possible... *Die-Hard 57th, Die-Hard!* sounded the call; the regiment has since been nicknamed *The Die-Hards*.

The easily adapted rendering originates from Dr. Vinkhuijzen's collection of uniform images at the NYPL Digital Gallery, where the rest of the cut-out plate is also found, see Imperial Yeomanry, officer and Imperial Yeomanry, private.

Sources

1. *His Majesty's Territorial Army - A descriptive account of the yeomanry, artillery, engineers and infantry with the army service and medical corps, comprising the 'King's Imperial Army of the Second Line'* of Walter Richards, Virtue & Co., London (ca. 1911).
2. *The Volunteer Infantry 1880-1908* af Ray Westlake, The Military Historical Society, Special Number 1992, London 1992, ISBN 0-9510603-1-7.
3. *The Territorial Battalions - A Pictorial History 1859-1985* af Ray Westlake, Spelmount Limited, Tunbridge Wells, Kent 1986, ISBN 0-946771-68-5.
4. *Kitchener's Army* af Ray Westlake, Spellmount, Staplehurst/Kent 1998, ISBN 1-873376-98-7.
5. The Duke of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex Regiment) (The Long, Long Trail). 6. 2/8th Middlesex Regiment, End of January 1916 to May 1916 (Great War Forum).
7. *History of the Great War, Military Operations Egypt & Palestine, Volume I, From the outbreak of war with Germany to June 1917* af generalløjtnant Sir George Macmunn og kaptajn Cyril Falls, HSMO, London 1927.
8. Sir John Maxwell's Egypt Despatch (The Long, Long Trail).

Per Finsted

To note:

- 1) On the difference between the Territorial Force and the New Army, see my review of the book *Your Country Needs You* by Martin Middlebrook.
- 2) Se videre i 7th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment, 1859-1961 (Land Forces of Britain, the Empire and Commonwealth).
- 3) The battalion's history, and to some extent the entire regiment's, is covered in detail on the website *The Die Hards - 1st Bn. Middlesex Regiment, 1914-1918* (Howard Anderson).
- 4) The history of the two battalions in the period 1919-1939 is described in *The Middlesex Regiment 1755-1966* (Alec Powell).
- 5) From *Regimental Badges* by TJ Edwards, Gale & Polden Limited, 1951.
- 6) Se videre i 8th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment, 1859-1961 (Land Forces of Britain, the Empire and Commonwealth).
- 7) The City of London Imperial Volunteers were formed from the volunteer units in London and consisted of two mounted infantry companies, an infantry battalion and a battery of field artillery. Another reproduction of this unit's infantry uniforms can be found e.g. on card No. 15 of Player's cigarette card series *Uniforms of the Territorial Army, 1939*. See *Battle of Albuera* (Wikipedia).