



Cambridgeshire Kitcheners: A History of 11th (Service) Battalion (Cambs) Suffolk Regiment

Joanna Costin

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In the opening months of the First World War, 1,500 men from Cambridgeshire came forward to serve their country as a battalion in Kitchener's New Army. They came from the city and they came from the fields. Many had never left the county before, let alone their country, and all too many would never return.

Whether farm laborers, shop assistants, bricklayers, chauffeurs, university scholars or college porters, men from all walks of life united and became the Cambridgeshire Kitcheners. Sent to the Western Front in January 1916, they took part in some of the bloodiest battles of the war, including the Battle of the Somme.

One hundred and eighty-seven men lost their lives on 1 July 1916, most within a few minutes of each other, as they marched over the top into no man's land and shell and machine-gun fire.

This was not the end of their story. In early April, the battalion saw fierce fighting during the Battle of Arras and in a doomed assault on a heavily fortified position near Roux at the end of the month.

In 1918 they resisted the German Spring Offensive, never falling back without orders, despite parts of the battalion becoming cut off and nearly surrounded during the fighting.

Mixing personal accounts with official documents, this is the story of the Cambridgeshire Kitcheners' war. Their momentous efforts are explained throughout this book, which is a timely reminder of this heroic battalion's dedication, skill and bravery.

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