

# 206 (Ulster) Battery Royal Artillery

On the 16<sup>th</sup> October 2004, 206 (Ulster) Battery Royal Artillery Volunteers presented a 25 Pounder Saluting Gun to be permanently on loan to Grey Point Fort, WW1 Coastal Defense Battery

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206 (Ulster) Battery Royal Artillery (Volunteers) "The Ulster Gunners", is part of British Army's 105th Regiment Royal Artillery (Volunteers). It is a TA artillery sub-unit based in Northern Ireland and is split between two locations, Newtownards and Coleraine.

## History

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### 8th (Belfast) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery[edit]

The 8 (Belfast) HAA Regiment Royal Artillery (Supplementary Reserve), was founded in the wake of the Munich crisis, and recruited mainly in the spring of 1939 from young men of the City and District of Belfast. It was mobilised and at action stations, manning its guns to defend Belfast, before war was declared on 3 September 1939.

In October, it left for practice camp in Cornwall, and thence to France, where it joined the British Expeditionary Force before Christmas. Following the German invasion of the Low Countries on 10 May 1940, all units were soon in action, but the fortunes of war resulted in evacuation from Dunkirk, Cherbourg, Saint-Malo and other ports during late May and early June. One troop\* successfully brought back four of its 3.7 AA guns and some vital gunnery instruments despite having orders to blow them up. Back in England, the regiment was soon in action again during the Battle of Britain and the Blitz, first in London and then on Teesside. In the spring of 1942, the regiment embarked for the Far East in the Belfast-built liner RMS Britannic, and after a long voyage, reached Bombay. The guns and equipment were unloaded at Karachi and both elements assembled at Lahore before driving some 2,000 miles in convoy down the Grand Turk Road to Calcutta. It was later transferred to East Bengal, before moving south to join XV Corps in Burma. For the next two and a half years, the regiment took part in the Arakan campaigns, firing effectively against the Japanese Air Force and ground targets. Their accuracy at long range earned them the nickname "The Twelve Mile Snipers." Some elements took part in the famous Battle of the Admin Box at Ngakyedouk ("Okeydoke") Pass. Several officers and men received awards for gallantry following this heroic stand, which proved to be the turning point in the Arakan. At Easter 1945, a tablet to the memory of members of the regiment who died in the Arakan was unveiled in St. Mark's Church, Akyab. This little, battle-torn church was one of the first in all Burma to be retaken, and men of the regiment assisted in restoring the building.

### Post-war

When the war ended, the regiment was fortunate to embark at Madras as a unit, instead of being dispersed in age groups as was the common practice, and returned home to Ulster in another Belfast-built ship, RMS Sterling Castle. Many of the officers and men came together again in 1947 when the Territorial Army was re-formed, and so helped to perpetuate the regimental spirit in a new organisation, the 245th (Belfast) (Mixed) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment RA which was formed in TA with HQ at Belfast. (245 HAA Regiment was considered the successor to 8th (Belfast) HAA Regt, although that unit was continued by the regular 56 HAA Regt). The successor of which, the 206 (Ulster) Battery Royal Artillery (Volunteers), (of 105th Regiment RA(V) – ( the Ulster and Scottish Gunners) is one of the most efficient units of the Volunteer Reserve today.

The Battery was formed in 1993 by the Options for Change program and the disbandment of 102 (Ulster) Regiment, Royal Artillery (Volunteers). The two old batteries of 206 (Coleraine) Battery and 215 (North Down) Battery were amalgamated to form 206 (Ulster) Battery. The new Battery was absorbed into 105 Regiment to make the "Ulster and Scottish Gunners" along with 207 (City of Glasgow) Battery and 212 (Highland) Battery.

## Role

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206 (Ulster) Battery has recently<sup>[when?]</sup> re-roled from being an Air Defence battery to become a Field Artillery battery equipped with the L118 105 mm Light Gun. All aspects of Field Gunnery are covered in the battery, i.e. the Gun, Command Post and Observation Posts (OPs).

The Battery also continues its ceremonial role by firing Royal Salutes at Hillsborough Castle five times per year.

The Battery has recently deployed soldiers on Op HERRICK in Afghanistan in the Field Artillery Role and continues to support both Op TELIC in Iraq and Op TOSCA in Cyprus with a steady flow of TA augmentees.

## Awards

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The Battery has won the Thales' Shield (formerly the BP Trophy) for the Best Air Defence Battery in the TA in 2001, 2002, 2003 and in 2005, a feat unmatched in the Territorial Army. This year, the Battery also won the prestigious Queen's Cup for being the overall Best Battery in the TA - a reflection of the hard work and commitment of the members of the Battery.