

**A Short History  
of the  
WESTMINSTER  
DRAGOONS**

Captain N. Huw-Williams

**1901 to 1987**

# Preface

*This short history of the Westminster Dragoons from its original formation in 1901 to the present day, and covering its various titles and rolls, has been compiled and written by Captain Nicholas Huw-Williams for the H.Q. (Westminster Dragoons) Squadron, Royal Yeomanry at the request of the Committee of the Westminster Dragoons Regimental Association, to commemorate the first twenty years in the Westminster Dragoons new role within the Royal Yeomanry. It is dedicated to all those who have served in the Regiment in its various roles, and at various times.*

N.H-W

1987

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Makers—Alvis Motor Co. Wt. — 11 ton. Lgt. — 16ft. Ht— 7ft. Wdth. — 8ft4ins. Speed—45mph. (max). Armour — 1-76.2mm Gun. 2 — 30 M.G. (Browning) & 6 — Smoke discharges. Petrol — 4.7 mpg. Crew — 3 (Dvr. Gun/Sig & Commander) Radius of Action — 250 mis on roads & 140 mis across country. (Withdrawn in 1983).

*FERRET MK. 2.* is one of the most popular reconnaissance vehicles. With a crew of two, it is fully equipped with modern radios, a machine gun and multi-barrelled smoke dischargers. Its role is liaison. The Ferret is powered by a 6-cylinder Rolls-Royce engine.

(Withdrawn in 1976)

## PLATE 15

### THE VEHICLES OF THE BERKSHIRE AND WESTMINSTER DRAGOONS REGIMENT

*SARACEN* is a six wheeled armoured personnel carrier/ command vehicle powered by a Rolls-Royce 8 cylinder petrol engine. It can carry up to ten men, and is armed with a Browning machine gun. The command vehicles carry a wide range of latest radios.

(Withdrawn in 1984)

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*The Fox Armoured Car (Unit fully equipped by 1983)*

*FERRET SCOUT CAR MK. 1* (turretless) is one of the Army's most popular reconnaissance vehicles. With a crew of two, it is fully equipped with modern radios, a machine gun and multi-barrelled smoke dischargers. Its role is liaison. The Ferret is powered by a 6-cylinder Rolls-Royce engine.

## PLATE 17

### THE NEW C.V.R.(T) - VEHICLES OF THE ROYAL YEOMANRY

Both *SPARTAN* and *SAMSON* have the wheel arrangement, track system and basic hull form of the *Scorpion*, *Scimitar* and *Striker*.

Note that *SPARTANS* may be fitted with ZB89 surveillance radar hoods or other equipment or weapons that may break the hull line.

*SPARTAN* is normally armed with a 7.62 mm machine gun. Both vehicles are normally fitted with smoke dischargers forward.

BRITISH SAMSON ARMOURD RECOVERY  
VEHICLE (FV106)

## PLATE 18

### THE NEW C.V.R. (T) - VEHICLES OF THE ROYAL YEOMANRY

British *SULTAN* armoured command vehicle (FV105)

Armament — 7.62 MG. and Smoke Dischargers.  
Length — 5m. Height — 2.5m. Speed — 87/hr. (max road)

British *SAMARITAN* armoured ambulance (FV104)

# Westminster Dragoons

The 2nd County of London Yeomanry  
The Berkshire & Westminster Dragoons  
H.Q. Sqn. (Westminster Dragoons) The Royal Yeomanry

## Titles of the Regiment

1901 to 1961    1961 to 1967    1967 to 1987

1901-1903	2nd County of London Imperial Yeomanry
1903-1908	2nd County of London (Westminster Dragoons) I.Y.
1908-1914	2nd County of London (Westminster Dragoons) T.Y.
1914-1918	2nd County of London (Westminster Dragoons)
June 1918	'F' Battalion Machine Gun Corps
August 1918	104 Machine Gun Battalion (Westminster Dragoons)
1920-1922	4th Armoured Car Company (Westminster Dragoons)TA
1922-1923	22nd (London) Armoured Car Company (Westminster Dragoons) Tank Corps T.A.
1923-1938	22nd (London) Armoured Car Company (Westminster Dragoons) Royal Tank Corps T.A.
Jan 1939 to Sept 1939	22nd Battalion (Westminster Dragoons) Royal Tank Corps T.A.
1939-1940	102nd O.C.T.U. (Westminster Dragoons) R.A.C.
1940-1961	Westminster Dragoons (2nd County of London Yeomanry) R.A.C. (T.A. from 1947)
1961-1967	Berkshire & Westminster Dragoons R.A.C. T.A.
<b>From 1967 onwards</b>	
1967-1971	H.Q. (Berkshire & Westminster Dragoons) Squadron Royal Yeomanry Regiment R.A.C. T.A.V.R. II
1971-1983	H.Q. (Berkshire & Westminster Dragoons) Squadron The Royal Yeomanry
1983-1987	H.Q. (Westminster Dragoons) Squadron The Royal Yeomanry

# The Westminster Dragoons

## A Short History

Chapter One  
"The First Sixty Years"  
1901-1961

The Westminster Dragoons were not an old Regiment compared with many volunteer regiments in the British Army since it only just passed its Diamond Jubilee. However, it did include a wide variety of functions and roles in a number of different parts of the world in those sixty years of its existence.

The Regiment was raised in 1901, with Colonel C. Larkin as Honorary Colonel, as the 2nd County of London Imperial Yeomanry and enrolments started in October with the regiment under command of Lt. Col. C.R. Burn, 1st The Royal Dragoons, who was largely responsible for its formation.

Other than the location and later the name 'Westminster' which was not adopted until 1902, the Regiment had no direct connection with previous cavalry or yeomanry regiments associated with Westminster, such as the London and Westminster Light Horse Volunteers or the Westminster Regiment of Volunteer Cavalry. But these regiments had been raised to meet national emergencies and so too was the Westminster Dragoons raised to meet just such a national emergency.

Throughout the life of the Regiment there have been two Regular Regiments which played leading parts in the activities of the Regiment, particularly with the officers and N.C.O.'s. For the first twenty years, as cavalry, it was 1st Royal Dragoons, and for the rest of the period from 1921 onwards, when in armour, the Royal Tank Regiment. To both of these regiments the "W.D.'s" owe a great deal, particularly for the high reputation which the Regiment achieved during the period of its active life, firstly as cavalry and then in armour.

The newly formed Regiment did not fight as a unit in the Boer War but trained and sent out drafts totalling almost 1,000 men to the Imperial Yeomanry Brigade which was serving in South Africa. Many of these men rejoined the Regiment in 1901 when it reformed after the war.

In South Africa, the hat badge adopted was the Prince of Wales Feathers, but when the Regiment reformed a new badge and uniform was evolved, and in 1902 the Regiment became affiliated to the City of Westminster and adopted the arms of

the City as a regimental badge and was given the title of 'Westminster Dragoons'.

The officers cap badge was the staff officers badge of a lion surmounting a crown, but this was also the original badge of the "Royals" from which Regiment so many of the officers had come. The regimental colours of royal purple, scarlet and gold were the royal racing colours of Edward VII and were adopted with his permission because of his friendship with Colonel Burn who had also been an A.D.C. to the King.

The full dress mounted uniform was as for dragoons — a silver helmet with brass fittings and fronted with an eight pointed Garter Star on which was a raised figure '2' with the name of the Regiment surrounding it and the initials 'IY' beneath. The plume was originally purple and was later white for officers, but the purple plume was changed to white for all since the purple dye 'ran' after being in the rain. The jacket was scarlet serge with purple facings and shoulder chains. Breeches were of black barathea with yellow leg stripe and normal military riding boots and spurs. White buff leather gauntlets and sword belt and a cross belt with black patent leather pouch completed the uniform.

The walking out dress was similar but with black overalls and box spurs, a blue pill box hat with a wide yellow band and a swagger stick. There was also a mess kit for officers and sergeants.

On duty an adapted khaki uniform was worn (first used in South Africa) which included a purple collar and cuffs, a slouch hat with turned up brim and a small purple plume. Brown boots, leggings and a bandoleer were worn. Later a flat peaked khaki hat was adopted.

Within months of the formation of the Regiment, its strength was up to 20 officers and 500 O.R.'s and at no time was there any shortage of volunteers; it was a popular and fashionable regiment to belong to and was selective in its recruitment. By 1906 the Regiment was at full strength.

During the period up to the outbreak of the War in 1914 the Regiment trained hard and progressed steadily under its ex 'Royals' officers and its ex-regular N.C.O.'s, of the troopers, they were young business and professional men living in the London area. There were few junior officers and most of the troops were led by N.C.O.'s, many of whom were later commissioned and some were later to command the Regiment.

The Regiment numbered amongst its ranks some very wealthy and influential men (including a maharajah!) and it was this fact that enabled the Regiment to buy, build and equip the magnificent Headquarters at Elverton Street, Westminster, at a cost of £10,000 of which £7,000 was raised by the officers. The accommodation included an indoor riding school, stabling for twenty horses, drill hall, officer and N.C.O. messes, club rooms and a caretakers quarters. In 1908 with

the establishment of the Territorial Army, the Regiment became Territorial Yeomanry instead of Imperial Yeomanry, and the Territorial Association took over the H.Q. but paid much less for it than it cost which justifiably upset the Regiment and the chief subscribers.

In 1909 at a great presentation parade of volunteer units at Windsor, the Regiment received a guidon from Edward VII which was to last for more than fifty years before being laid up in Westminster Abbey in 1961.

The highlight of the regimental year was the annual camp lasting for two weeks at which the Regiment was always well mounted and turned out, and displayed a high standard of training with venues at Eastbourne, Churn and Salisbury Plain.

At the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, the Regiment was in camp in Berkshire, and returned to H.Q. to be mobilised when great activity took place particularly in the requisitioning of horses — from many sources! A few days later the Regiment moved to Pirbright, and a month later embarked on the S.S. "Aragon" at Southampton for Alexandria to relieve the 3rd Dragoon Guards in Cairo as garrison cavalry. Their first duty was to parade to impress the population and protect the ruler on the proclamation of Egypt as a British Protectorate.

In early 1915 the Turks launched an attack across Sinai and towards Egypt, and the Regiment with the Hertfordshire Yeomanry made numerous reconnaissances in force to the east of the Suez Canal before being withdrawn and returned to Cairo where intensive training was started.

By August 1915 the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign was under way, and the Regiment together with other yeomanry regiments, were dismounted to form the 5th Brigade of 2nd Yeomanry Division and embarked as reinforcements. The Regiment was without one composite squadron of 'Home Details' of about a hundred who remained to look after the horses. When cavalry was dismounted the problem was of caring for their horses; in the case of the Gallipoli operation, dismounted cavalry regiments left over 50,000 horses behind — no small problem in caring for them.

On the 21st August the Regiment took part with the Yeomanry Division in the murderous advance across the dry open salt lake which resulted in the capture of Chocolate and Scimitar Hills. This was followed by a fifteen week period of entrenchment in appalling conditions of dirt, flies, lice, poor food and water under constant fire and midst mounting unburied dead. When eventually the Regiment was pulled out at the end of the campaign and re-embarked for Egypt, it paraded just 3 officers and 48 men; truly staggering casualties.

On returning to Egypt, re-equipping and training took place before the Regiment was sent to Libya to put down a rebellion stirred up by the Turks of the previously friendly Senuissi tribesmen. The role of the Regiment was patrolling for the protection of the lines of communication, and was based at El Daaba. Whilst here

a small detachment was attached to 1st Light Car Patrol at Amrir (shades of the future role) which made long distance sorties into the desert in vehicles which were mechanically most unreliable with frequent breakdowns and punctures (thirty per vehicle per day was average!). On the termination of this campaign, the Regiment returned to Cairo and it was about this time that a large number of O.R.'s were sent off for commissioning.

In January 1917, a force under General Chetwode advanced into Sinai with the intention of driving the Turks out of Palestine, and removing the threat to Egypt and the Suez Canal; the Regiment formed part of the 5th Mounted Bde. The first objective was Rafa, and the second was Gaza which was not taken at the first attack but only later after the capture of Beersheba. By this time the Regiment was acting as XX Corp. Cavalry, a high honour indeed for a yeomanry regiment. A number of battle honours were won by the Regiment in these various actions.

After the fall of Gaza, the next objective was Jerusalem the capture of which took place on the 9th December, 1917, after a long and arduous advance in terrible weather conditions, and over most inhospitable terrain after first capturing Bethlehem. This was just eleven months after leaving Egypt and thus it was that 'A' Sqn. of the Westminster Dragoons was the first *formed* body of British troops to enter Jerusalem.

The following day fighting took place with the Turkish rear-guard near the Mount of Olives and a charge was made by 'A' Sqn. against them: this was to prove to be the last mounted charge the Regiment was ever to make.

The next few months were spent in patrols and reconnaissance to the north of Jerusalem in terrible weather conditions which resulted in many casualties in men and horses, mostly from the bad weather.

Thus ended the Palestine Campaign in which the Regiment had done so well, and in March 1918 was withdrawn to Alexandria. It was here that the sad news was confirmed that the Regiment was to lose its horses, which was a bitter blow to cavalrymen, and hand-in equipment and horses prior to starting training as machine gunners and re-named the 104 Bn. (W.D.) Machine-Gun Company — an era had come to an end in the history of the Regiment.

Two months later the Regiment sailed from Alexandria to Marseilles and on by train to the Western Front, arriving at Etaples in June 1918 for more training in M.G. technique; again shades of the role to come since it was from the Heavy Branch of the Machine-Gun Corps that the Tanks Corps was later formed. The Regiment was then split up into sections which were attached to various formations of the 2nd Army for the final battles of the war including Ypres, Menin and Daddizoole. The Regiment had had to adapt themselves to this complete change in climate, arms and terrain, and to trench war in those actions it gained more honours and personal awards until the night of 10th November when the duty

signaller received the famous message that Germany had accepted the armistice.

Before leaving the period of the Great War it is necessary to make mention of the fact that when the Regiment left for Egypt in 1914, immediately a second line was formed (2/2 C.L.Y.) under a 'WD' officer, Lt/Col. Sir Simion Stuart, which started recruiting and training at Feltham and later at Woodbridge. It supplied numerous drafts to the first line before being sent to France in 1916 as separate squadrons which were absorbed into other cavalry regiments as reinforcements. A third line (3/2 C.L.Y.) was started at Shorncliffe as part of the 9th Cavalry Reserve and then went to Newbridge in Ireland and also supplied drafts to the 1st and 2nd regiments before being disbanded.

In 1919 the Regiment was demobilised and was not officially reformed until 1921 when Lord Howard de Walden, a previous serving officer and the one who throughout his life did so much for the Regiment, raised it once more as the 22nd London Armoured Car Company (WD.) of the new Tanks Corps (later the R.T.C.) This was after almost a year of much activity by Lord Howard behind the scenes, firstly as to being reformed at all, secondly, of retaining the Regiment's identity and, thirdly, the possible role. Having won the first two, he wisely chose the role of armoured car unit in preference to gunner or signals since it was more in keeping with the previous role of mobility and reconnaissance.

The Regiment (Company) remained as an A.C. unit for nearly twenty years until 1938, and equipped firstly with Peerless and later with Rolls Royce cars (some of which were still operating in the M.E. in 1941!). The "Regiment" gained a high reputation for itself both military and socially during these years with training carried out both at weekends and annually with R.T.C. units, and a high standard of training was achieved. The unit often took part on manoeuvres with regular units acting as the 'Enemy'. During this period the establishment was the O.C. (Major), four captains, six subalterns and one hundred and seventy-five O.R.'s. In 1923 the Tank Corps black beret and 'tank' arm badge were incorporated in the dress of the Regiment.

In 1937 the unit was raised to battalion strength and selected to be brigaded with three other London regiments, under Brigadier W Fox-Pitt, D. S.O, to form an officer producing unit; these other units were — H. A.C. (Infantry) Artists Rifles and Inns of Court. The role of the unit now was to select potential officers and then train them in armoured warfare, and so the unit was equipped as a mixed tank regiment. Much rebuilding and alterations were made at H.Q. to accommodate for the new role, and selected and enthusiastic recruits soon had the unit up to its new strength. The new CO. was Lt/Col. E. ('Baron') Munt, M.C., and he and the new adjutant, Capt. C. Tirmmis, were excellent regular tank officers who worked ceaselessly for the good of the Regiment and left their mark upon it.

Thus on the outbreak of war in 1939 the Regiment was ready and was immediately formed into the 102nd O.C.T. Unit (W.D.) at Blackdown, and for the next nine

months continued with the task of training officers — firstly, most of its own members and later on new intakes. Of the immediately late pre-war strength, over 90% of the Regiment were commissioned, most to the R.T.R. and Yeomanry, with some older members to the R.A.S.C. (Transport).

However, from a long term point of view, the Regiment's role as an O.C.T.U. was not very satisfactory so it was with great satisfaction that late in 1940 the Regiment was reformed at Blackdown as an armoured regiment and styled the Westminster Dragoons (2 C.L.Y.) R. A.C. with a cadre of about 10 officers and 15 O.R.'s under command of Lt/Col. A. ('Sailor') Willis R.T.R. (a Great War naval officer and a wonderful CO.). Later two drafts of men joined, one from the 16/5 Lancers, and the other from the Queens Bays (2 DG) to be followed shortly by recruits from London, Southampton and Bristol.

The Regiment was moved to Whitby and formed part of the 30th Armoured Brigade, 11 Armoured Division under General Herbart ('Hobo'). This brigade included 1st Lothian Horse, 22 Dragoons and 12KR.R.C. In the spring of 1943 this brigade joined the 42 Arm. Div. where training continued until November when it moved to Warminster and joined the 79th Arm. Div. and began intensive training on being issued with flail tanks. These were special tanks with long lengths of chain attached to a rotating drum on the front of the tank (Shermans or Churchills) for exploding mines and clearing a path.

The 79 Arm. Div. was a collection of all specialised assault tanks and engineer equipment for the coming assault on Europe. To ensure the success of such an operation, the equipment had to be specially evolved and the operating crews very highly trained in these techniques having also to fight their vehicles as tanks. Besides the flails other vehicles included — flame throwers, bridging tanks, fascine carriers, roller tanks, and another excellent and popular CO., Lt/Col. W. Blair-Oliphant successfully led the Regiment for the whole of the advance from Normandy to Germany.

On "D" Day, 6th June, two squadrons of the Regiment were to lead the attack by the 50 Northumberland Division, C. Sqn. supporting 69 Inf. Bde, and B. Sqn. the 231 Inf. Bde. on 'Gold' beach near Arramonche; A. Sqn. landed later. In spite of heavy seas and strong opposition, the bridgehead was effected. The Regiment was the only yeomanry regiment to be in the assault, and not only one of the few regiments to land on "D" Day, but actually led the 50th Division... the battle honour 'Normandy Landing 1944' was richly deserved. By the 15th June most of the regiment was together again near Bayeaux, after the first phase was over, for maintenance, replacements and a short rest. The shape of the battle was now changing from holding and expanding the bridgehead to the preparation for the breakout to the West.

Throughout the advance through N.W. Europe, the Regiment fought numerous small and successful actions as the need for their services arose; most were on a

troop basis and thus the need for troop leaders to show good judgement and initiative, and there were numerous cases of great individual bravery shown. Naturally some casualties resulted, but over the whole campaign, and particularly since the unit led the assault, these were relatively not heavy.

The successful breakout and advance carried the Regiment along with it, and on the 15th August the Seine was crossed and then on to Antwerp and the terrain between the Maas and the Rhine. Worsening weather conditions with the onset of Winter, gradually reduced the tank strength. By mid December, the German counter offensive in the Ardennes was underway, later to be contained. During the first months of 1945 the Regiment was further engaged in actions leading up to the Rhine crossing on 28th March when once again they were amongst the first armoured troops to cross and be on German soil. Within a short time the rapid advance was on, and it speeded up so that the enemy had less time to lay mines, but tank guns were always needed. The squadrons were switched from one formation to another as needed, but by the 16th April most of the Regiment was pulled out and told that they were to be converted to 'D/D' ('swimming' tanks). This was not to be, however, since on the 5th May a cease-fire was ordered — the war in Europe was over.

The Regiment had been in almost continuous action for nearly a year during which time it had earned seven battle honours, and now after a period of rest it gave up its tanks and took over occupational duties in Germany. This included policing, dealing with refugees and displaced persons, and dealing with some German guerrilla activities. Early in 1946 the Regiment was placed in suspended animation and the personnel demobilised or posted away.

As in 1921 so in 1947 the Westminster Dragoons were reformed as a volunteer armoured regiment under a regular army commander of the R.T.R. with a small permanent staff at the bomb damaged H.Q. in Westminster and recruiting started in May as vehicles, wireless sets and other equipment arrived. On the 25th April the first of many post-war Annual Reunion Dinners took place at which over 300 past members attended. These dinners were to be a great success for the next twenty years.

After any war, interest in the armed forces waned, but by 1948 the Regiment's strength had reached 20 officers and 40 O.R.'s and weekend camps and evening training was started as well as social functions. A renewal of the ties with the City of Westminster was also started including the Annual Church Parade in the Abbey. Two important functions in 1948 were the Review Parade of the T. A. in Hyde Park by George VI in October, and the unveiling of the Memorial Window in Westminster Abbey by Queen Elizabeth in November.

By 1950 the T. A. started receiving drafts of National Servicemen (Conscripts) to do their compulsory three year 'stint'. Some of these men were excellent and stayed on. But the majority defeated the object of the volunteer concept. However, in 1951

with a deteriorating international situation, the Regiment, with a strength now of 250, received for a two week training call-up, over 750 'Z' reservists and was able to usefully employ them all for this period. Another post-war innovation was having in attendance as clerks and cooks, a company of W.R. A.C. who proved to be the most useful.

In 1951 the Regiment received the Freedom of the City of Westminster which confirmed the right to march through the City "with drums beating, colours flying and bayonets fixed" — a great honour showing the cordial relationship between regiment and city.

Between 1952 and 1956 training of all kinds continued with various changes in command. In the life of the Regiment there were in all eight commanding officers who had previously served in the ranks and had risen to command the Regiment.

In 1952 a detachment was supplied to line the route at the funeral of George VI, and another later at the Coronation of Elizabeth II.

The Regiment was now a part of the 56th London Armoured Division under Major General Dawnay, and the whole division was engaged in 1954 in a huge exercise called 'London Pride' which involved some 1200 men and 400 Comet tanks; the Regiment performed with great credit, but this was to be the last of the big army exercises staged in this country.

During 1957 a complete reorganisation of the T. A. took place which resulted in the division becoming the 56th Infantry Div, T. A. and so in 1958 the Regiment was changed from tanks to armoured cars — back to its role between the wars; back to a truly cavalry role of long range reconnaissance. The Regiment had its first full scale taste of this at the next Summer camp held in Pembrokeshire, and over the next two years became most proficient in the new role.

In 1960 the Regiment paraded at Buckingham Palace and was presented by the Queen with a new guidon to replace that presented by Edward VII at Windsor in 1909, and which was later laid up at a special parade in the Abbey.

The Year 1961 was a momentous one in that under a big government cut-down programme of the Army, the Regiment was to be amalgamated with another yeomanry regiment, the Berkshire Yeomanry, which had, immediately previously been gunners. No regiment likes being amalgamated but this one was as happy as is possible, and was better than being disbanded like so many units had been. It was possibly only because of the efforts of the Honorary Colonel, General Sir Harold Pyman, that the Regiment was amalgamated and not disbanded. The actual amalgamation was carried out most spectacularly at a special parade of the two units at Lulworth; a new guidon was presented later at a parade at the Duke of Yorks H.Q.

From 1962 to 1967 the new regiment trained hard, gathered recruits and reached a high standard of proficiency as was shown by its performance in a vast exercise in 1965, called "Greenfields" held in Yorkshire but actually ranged from the Scottish border to the Humber. The vehicles of the Regiment successfully did a total distance of over 63,500 miles on this exercise, and thus it was all the more difficult later to form one squadron of a newly formed Royal Yeomanry Regiment. So the old regiment as such ended on the 1st April 1967.

*N.B. This Chapter produced for the Military Historical Society Bulletin (No. 93) is a summary of the book "A History of the Westminster Dragoons", co-authored and edited by Captain N. Huw-Williams, and produced privately by the Regimental Association of the Westminster Dragoons.*

## Chapter Two "The Middle Years" 1961-1967

### The Berkshire & Westminster Dragoons Regiment

As was seen in the concluding paragraph of the " Short History of the Westminster Dragoons, 2nd C.L.Y", the Westminster Dragoons ceased to exist as an independent unit in 1961 when the amalgamation with the Berkshire Yeomanry took place to form a new armoured regiment called the Berkshire and Westminster Dragoons Regiment in the 56th Armoured Division T. A.

The decision to amalgamate later proved to have been the right one since in 1967, after another major reorganisation of the reserved forces, the Regiment was reduced to a squadron strength within a new unit, The Royal Yeomanry Regiment with the title of H.Q. (B. & W.D.) Sqn. R.Y.R. and the retention of some of the old unit's badges and buttons. This title was again changed later in August 1983 to R.H.Q. (W.D.) Sqn. The Royal Yeomanry, and the Berkshire Yeomanry element was reformed as the 94th (Berkshire Yeomanry) Signals Regiment. R.C.S. So the merger of the Berks Yeo. and the WDgns. which had come about in 1961 was finally severed to the mutual satisfaction of each unit, and both had retained their old original titles and badges in new formations: the title "Westminster Dragoons" was still in being, and this at a time when numerous older yeomanry regiments had virtually disappeared.

Beside the Amalgamation Ceremony which took place at Lulwoith Camp in 1961, which was itself a most impressive parade under command of the new regiment's CO. Lt/Col. M. Crosthwaite T.D., the new regiment was also introduced to its new vehicle, the Saladin Armoured Car: the pendulum had swung full circle. However, this vehicle was very different from the previous armoured cars (the Peerless and Rolls Royce) which the 22nd London Armoured Car Company (Westminster Dragoons) R.T.C. T.A. had used from 1921 until 1938, and well remembered by many older members of the Regimental Association.

The location of the various parts of the new unit was to be — "R.H.Q." and "H.Q." Sqn. at Elverton St. Westminster, 'A' Sqn. and 'B' Sqn. at Catford, and 'C' Sqn. at Newbury, and made up entirely of old Berkshire Yeomanry members; this, wide dispersal proved to be rather difficult in many ways in the years to come: it definitely isolated the Berkshire element.

In July of that year, the new regiment embarked on its first social function by providing a Guard of Honour for the Lord Mayor of London at a dinner in the City; in November, the old Westminster Dragoon Guidon was laid up in

Westminster Abbey, the regimental church of the W.Dgns, and was a very impressive and moving ceremony, and well attended by Old Comrades.

The end of the year saw a change in command with the departure of Lt. Col. Mike Crosthwaite who had commanded during the difficult time of the amalgamation, and now Lt. Colonel Robert Blott T.D. took over, and he brought much dash and colour to his new command. This was exactly what was needed to help mould the new regiment into a sense of unity using the best of each of the old regiments. Colonel Blott was the son of a very well-known past WDgn. and was another CO of the Westminster Dragoons who had risen from the ranks to command the Regiment.

In 1962 a company of W.R. A.C. (76th Company) was attached to the Regiment for the first time, and they served the Regiment well until the next reorganisation in 1967, and the demise of the Regiment as such.

Also in 1962 a new service engagement was created called the "Ever Readys" wherein a recruit on joining volunteered to serve anywhere in the world at a moment's notice: the Regiment's first volunteer was Cpl. B. Hammet.

The Annual Camp in 1962 was held at Bellerby, with training all over the Yorkshire Moors and this was the first camp where all the administration and cooking was performed by the W.R. A.C.'s.

Both in training and in social functions, except at the Annual Camp, it was difficult to have all the squadrons together because of the dispersal of the squadrons' home locations. However, numerous recruiting drives took place in the four squadron areas, and these met with fair success.

Annual Camp in 1963 was held at ChickereU Camp in Dorset; again, by virtue of being an armoured car regiment, training ranged far and wide over the country with the gunnery carried out at Lulworth Ranges. Later in the year the winter training periods were carried out with the usual enthusiasm, and at Christmas, the usual parties were carried on, but mostly by the individual squadrons rather than on a regimental level, again because of squadron dispersal.

During 1963, the Regimental Museum was set up under a Declaration of Trust with Capt. Mike Pickersgill, W.Dgns. as the first curator. He found a mountain of work awaited him. For years past, past and present members, particularly of the old W.Dgns. had off-loaded much of their old photographs, uniforms, badges, buttons and other memorabilia all to be sorted, and catalogued — a mammoth task.

In the Spring of 1964, the Regiment suffered a most grievous loss in the sudden and debilitating illness of the Regiment's honorary colonel, General 'Pete' Pyman who had been such a tower of strength to the Westminster Dragoons in the early

PLATE 1

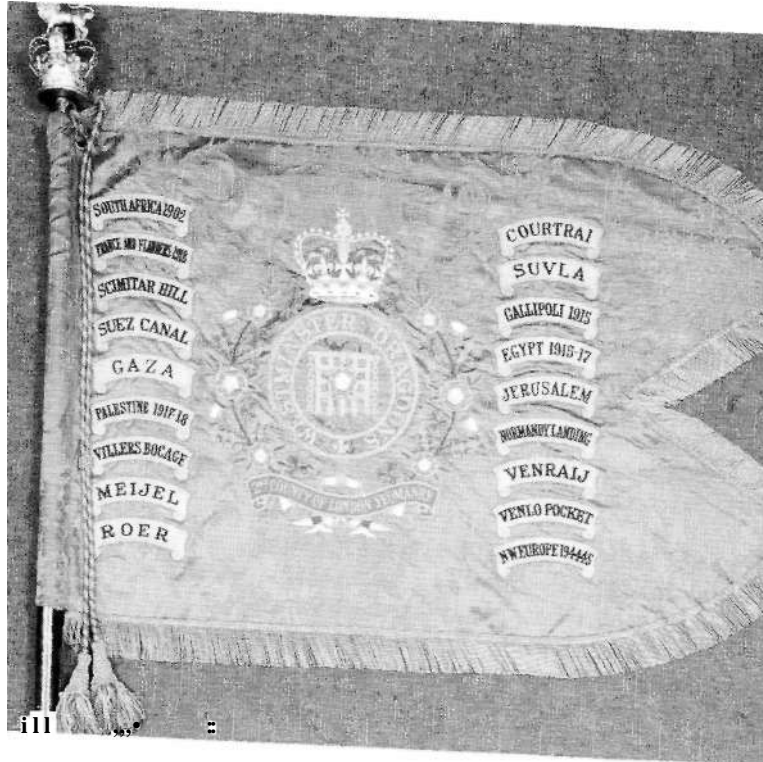


PLATE 2

EMBLEMS OF THE WESTMINSTER DRAGOONS.



1830-1902.



Helmet Plate  
2CLY. W.Dgns;  
1902-1914. a



Officer's Cap Badge  
Westminster Dragoons  
(2CLY) 1901-1961  
1983-1985.



O.R's Cap and  
Collar Badge  
J g g Q - Westminster Dragoons, 2CLY;

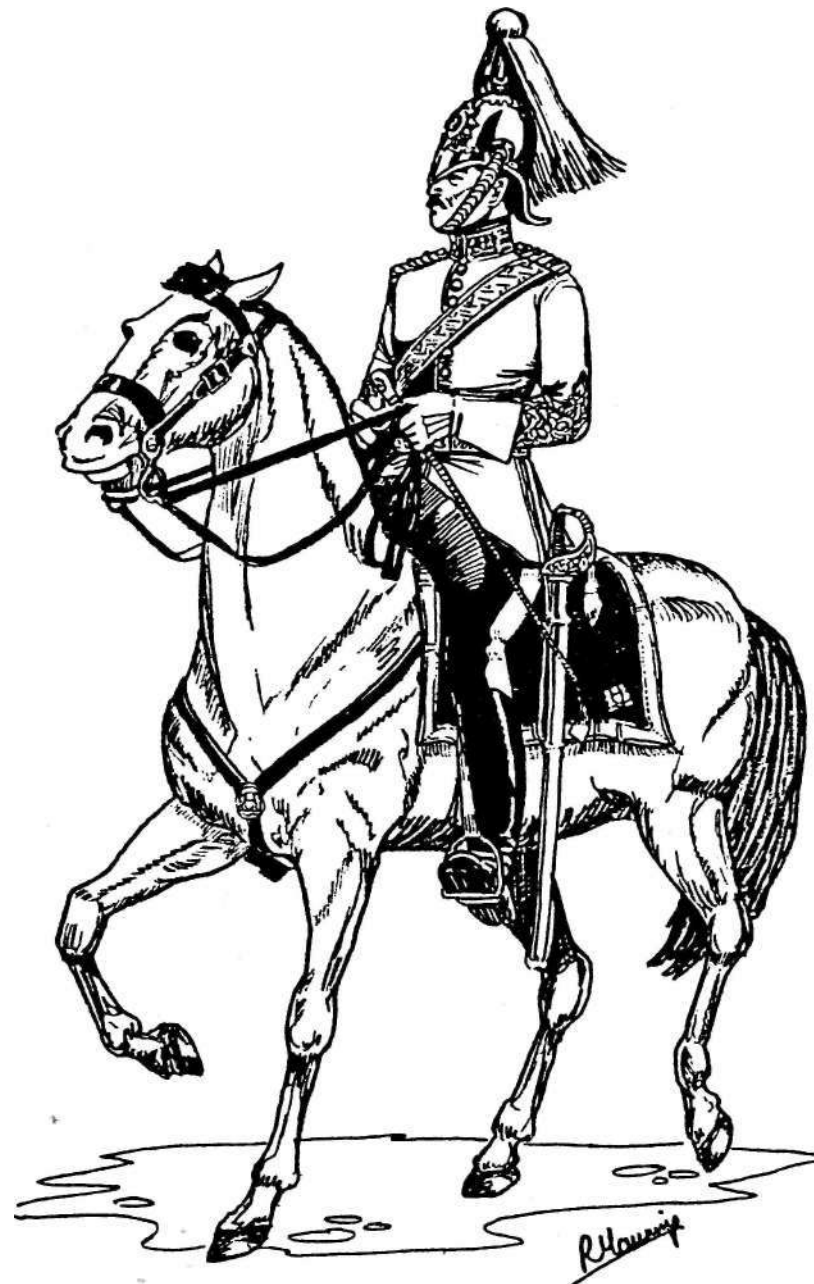
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PLATE 3



PLATE 4





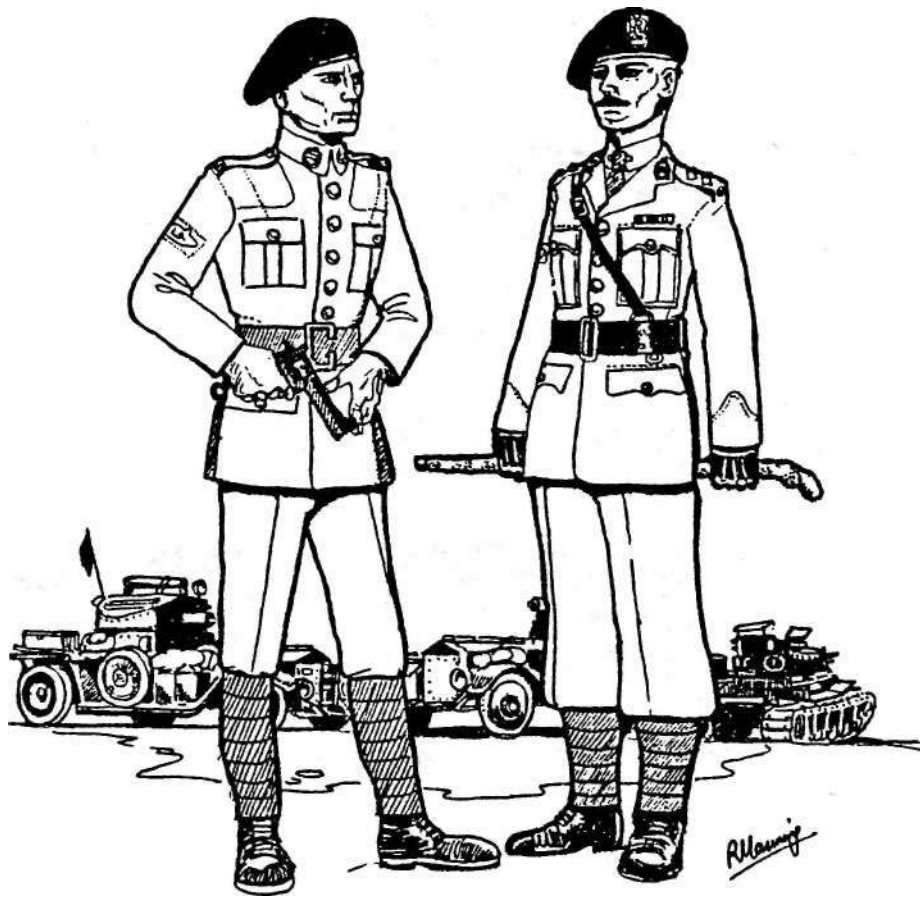


PLATE 11

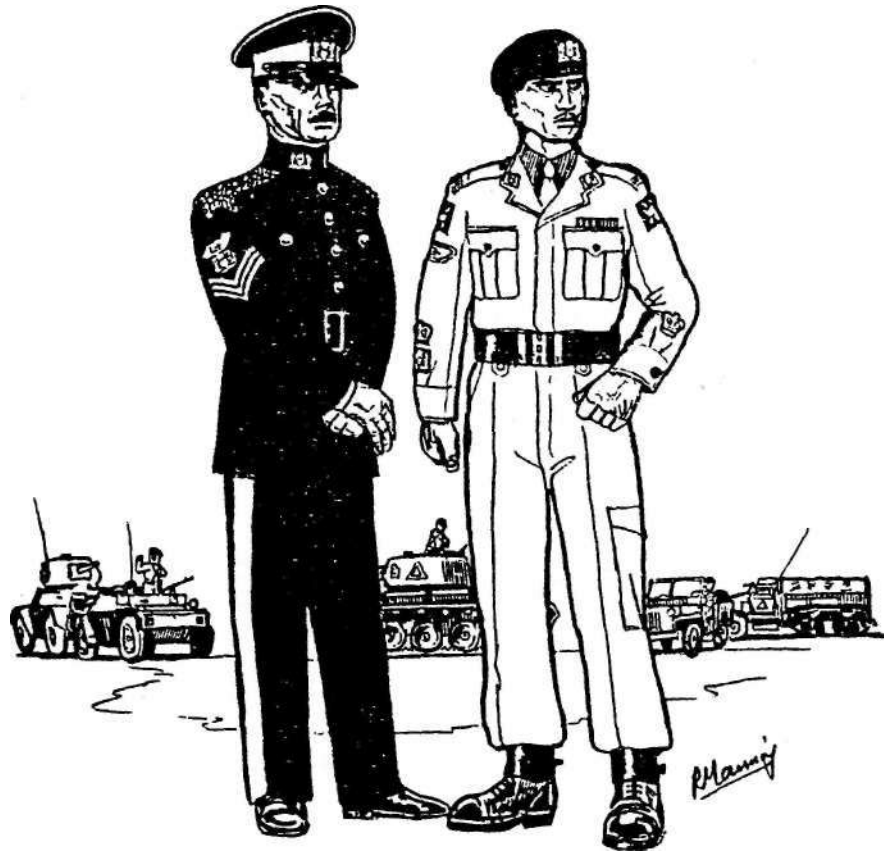


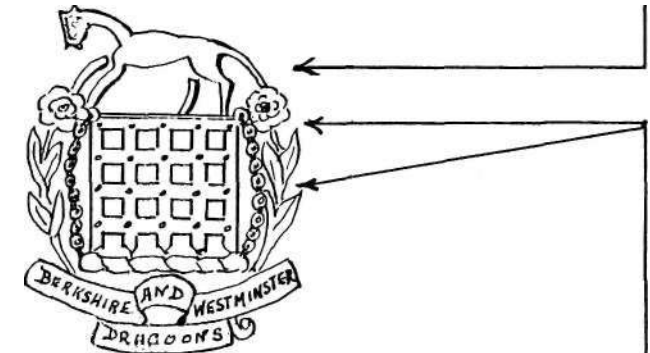
PLATE 12

Berkshire Yeomanry

The White Horse of Berkshire



The Combined Badge



The Portcullis and the Tudor Rose of Westminster

Westminster Dragoons

PLATE 13

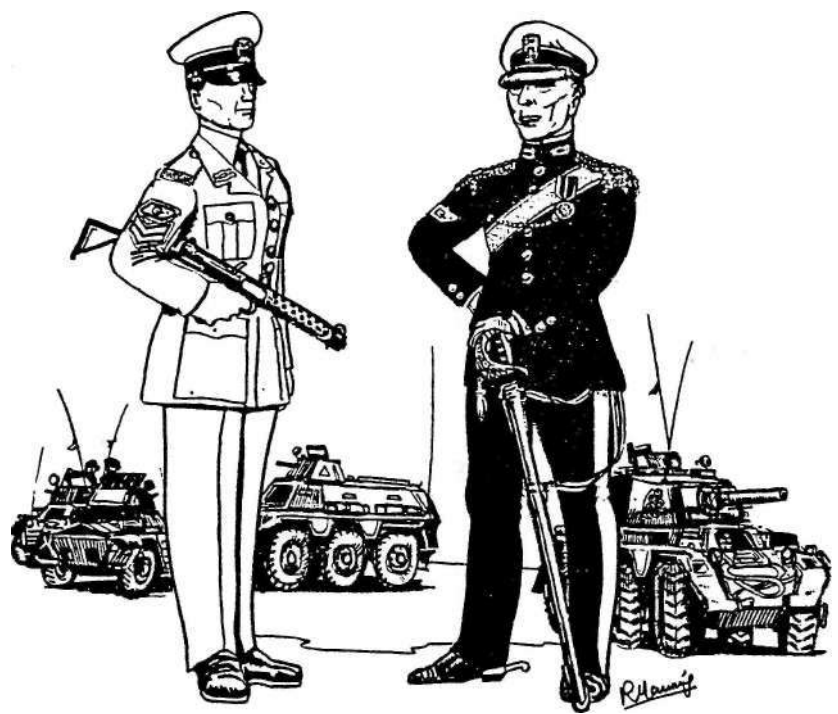


PLATE 14



PLATE 16

*mmm*



PLATE 15



PLATE 17



PLATE 18



days after the 1939-45 War, and later in 1961 when it was largely his efforts whereby the Regiment was kept alive even if it did mean as an amalgamated unit. Later, General Pyman was forced to give up the honorary colonelship of the Westminster Dragoons, and they lost a very good friend.

Mention has been made of the dash and colour which Colonel Robert Blott brought to his position of command, and in May he organised a special regimental church parade to Westminster Abbey (the Regimental Church). The special innovation for this parade was a partially mounted parade with the horses supplied by the Household Cavalry from Knightsbridge Barracks; the route went through the City of Westminster streets to the Abbey from Elverton Street, and back. This was an unheard of idea, and had a Royal Tank Regiment Regimental Sergeant Major on horseback! However, the parade passed off with great aplomb and entertained the considerable crowds along the route; it also drew quite a few new recruits — so much splendour must proclaim a good unit and one to join! (Shades of the past and the 'Piccadilly Peacocks'!)

The Annual camp in 1964 was a long haul for the Regiment — to Omagh in Northern Ireland. However, it proved to be a very good and well-equipped camp with wonderful co-operation from the resident regiment, the 2nd R. Tanks with whom the Westminster Dragoons have had a long and happy association: in fact the 2nd R. Tanks are the 'parent' regiment of the W.Dgns. In 1964, the 2nd R.T.R. was commanded by Lt/Col. J.G.R. Allen, later to become Honorary Colonel of the Westminster Dragoons Squadron and of the Royal Yeomanry.

The Autumn of 1964 saw a change in command in the Regiment with Lt. Col. Robert Blott handing over to Major John Penhaligon T.D., his second in command, and himself a 2nd R. Tanks man. "Penny" as he was always known, was a keen and efficient soldier, and was, as it later turned out, to be the last commanding officer of the B. & W.Dgns. Regt. since even by 1965 the writing was 'on the wall' for the disbandment of the unit. Thus the task of holding the unit together until that day came, needed great skill, patience, dedication and ingenuity by the CO. and his officers and non-commissioned officers to keep the unit alive during such a period: this "Penny" did — by special recruiting drives in each squadron area!

The camp in 1965 was a 'mobile' affair taking place mainly on the North Yorkshire Moors, but ranging far and wide as only an armoured car regiment can. Part of the training at this camp was Exercise "Greenfields" in which the Regiment covered 1,700 miles and used 12,000 galls of petrol! The Regiment performed extremely well on this exercise, and not only gained great experience from it but also great praise from 'above'.

The Spring of 1966 saw a change in the honorary colonelship of the Regiment, due to the continued illness of 'Pete' Pyman, to a Berkshire Yeoman in the person of the Hon. Gordon Palmer, O.B.E., T.D., D.L., gentleman of great experience,

enthusiasm and charm, and a member of a famous Reading family. He was a popular successor to General Pyman.

During the 'Sixties' cadre courses for recruits were held of nine weeks duration organised and run within the Regiment; these were very successful and helped to keep interest alive — particularly from about 1965 onwards.

The Annual camp in 1966 was held at Warcop, but was rather of a holding operational nature in view of the impending changes in role; in any case it could never be as hectic as the previous year's camp with the exercise "Greenfields".

A big event in the life of the Regiment occurred in September 1966, which was rather ironic in view of the impending 'axe'. This was the presentation of a new Guidon to the Berkshire and Westminster Dragoons by Field Marshall Earl Alexander of Tunis at the Duke of York's Barracks in Chelsea. This was a very colourful and impressive ceremony held on a beautiful early Autumn afternoon. This led in the following month to another ceremony, a parade to "Lay up" the old Westminster Dragoon's Guidon in the Chapel of Westminster Abbey, the Regimental Church; this was also an impressive parade, but was also a very moving and solemn occasion.

Christmas 1966 was a rather sad time since it was to be the last one in the life of the Berkshire and Westminster Dragoons as a regiment so everything possible was done to give an air of normality at the various functions which were organised.

The final big function for the Regiment took place in January 1967 where the commander of the 161st Infantry Division T. A. made a farewell visit to express thanks for the past association of the two formations.

On the 31st March, 1967, as a result of the then Labour Government's drastic reduction of the forces, and the reorganisation of the reserve forces, the Berkshire and Westminster Dragoons Regiment was reduced to that of a squadron (H.Q. Sqn.) in a new formation called the Royal Yeomanry Regiment, under command of Lt/Col. D.H. Rice, in which other yeomanry regiments (or amalgams of regiments) were also reduced to form the other squadrons in this new unit.

So ended the relatively short life of the Berkshire and Westminster Dragoons Regiment after just six years (1961-1967). However, the title "Westminster Dragoons", together with their badges and buttons, was still kept alive in the title of the new H.Q. Squadron of the new unit, which was under command of Major R.A.S. Bowlby, T.D.

Some years later (in 1983) the title was again changed to H.Q. (Westminster Dragoons) Squadron, The Royal Yeomanry, and to date (in 1987) that remains to be the title.

## **Chapter Three** "The Last Twenty Years" 1967-1987

### **The H.Q. (Berkshire & Westminster Dragoons) Sqn. Royal Yeomanry Regt. T A.V.R. (1967-1983)**

On the 1st April, 1967 the Regiment was reduced to squadron strength and became Headquarters (Berkshire and Westminster Dragoons) Squadron, Royal Yeomanry Regiment (a unit of the T & A.V.R. II). The Royal Yeomanry Regiment was not to keep this name for long as in 1970 it became The Royal Yeomanry. The Squadron kept its cap badge as a regimental cap badge and each constituent squadron of the new Regiment retained its distinct identity.

The Royal Yeomanry Regiment was made up of nine old yeomanry regiments some of which had already been amalgamated, but all were now reduced to squadron strength. The regiments which made up the R.Y.R. (under command of Lt/Col. D.H. Rice Q.D.G.) were:-

- 'A" (Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry) Squadron, Swindon & Trowbridge
- "B" (Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry) Squadron, Nottingham
- "C" (Kent & County of London Yeomanry) Squadron, Croydon
- "D" (North Irish Horse) Squadron, Belfast
- 'HQ" (Berkshire & Westminster Dragoons) Squadron, London
- The Band (Inns of Court and City Yeomanry) London

The new Regiment's role was to be that of an Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment equipped with Saladin, Saracen and Ferret armoured cars, Bedford RL four ton trucks and Land Rovers, and, with 5 Sqns. The Royal Yeomanry Regiment became one of the largest, if not the largest regiment within the T & A.V.R. and regular army.

Many of those members of the TA serving at the time of amalgamation were not able to continue to do so due to the contraction of the TA, and many of those who remained had to lose rank to stay. The Squadron admitted new members from other units, in particular from The Inns of Court and City Yeomanry, and from C Sqn. (B. and W.Dgns) from Windsor.

As can be seen, the new regiment was drawn from all over the country, with a permanent staff from regiments in the Royal Armoured Corps.

Each squadron was to retain its own separate identity in the way of dress, wearing its own cap badge, collar badges, and buttons, but would soon be wearing a common shoulder title, R.Y.R. in brass.

The new H.Q. Sqn. R.Y.R. (as with the other Sqns.) was formed on a selection board basis from members of the old B. & W.Dgns. Regt. and from the Inns of Court and City Yeomanry with some of the former selected to serve in the new "C" Sqn. at Croydon. This selection was necessary because of the contraction to a Sqn. strength from a regimental strength — too many volunteers for the jobs available.

In the early months of 1967, weekends were spent in the Aldershot and Leicestershire areas, learning new jobs. It came strange at first, as most personnel came from Sabre Squadrons.

In July 1967, the newly formed regiment assembled for the Annual Camp at West Down on Salisbury Plain, and it was a most impressive sight to see all the vehicles and men that went to make up the new Royal Yeomanry Regiment.

For the first week of the Camp, training was carried out by squadrons as troop training whilst the second week ended in a regimental exercise which, as a first attempt, was considered quite successful with no vehicles running out of petrol and no men out of food!

On the Sunday of the middle weekend, a drum-head service was held, and each individual squadron paraded its own Guidon followed by a march past of the whole Regiment by squadrons led by Lt/Col. D.H. Rice with the Honorary Colonels of the Regiments taking the salute. The music was played by the Band of the Inns of Court and City Yeomanry. A very fine painting of this parade can be seen in the Sergeants' Mess of H.Q. Sqn. at Westminster.

H.Q. Sqn. was equipped with 4 ton lorries, Land Rovers, MK2 Ferret Scout cars and Austin 1 ton trucks (K9) which were converted locally as command vehicles.

The regimental scheme in the second week was most instructive and a fair success seeing it was the first regimental occasion where all squadrons were involved.

For the rest of the year and the beginning of 1968 the Sqn. concentrated on troop and squadron training, and on tradesmen training and tests.

In 1968 and 1969, two sabre sqns. and half of H.Q. Sqn. went to Germany for then-annual camp to stay with a host regiment, the 5th R. Tanks, and to try out their new Saracen Personnel Carriers. At this time all Squadron personnel were issued with the Sterling sub-machine guns. Again the 1st week was devoted to Sqn. training and the 2nd week to a Regimental exercise in which the 5th R. Tanks acted as the enemy. The middle weekend was time for visits to Hamburg and to view the Iron Curtain.

For the half of the Regiment that didn't go to Germany, they went to Bellerby in Yorkshire for squadron training, and a Regimental exercise for the 2nd week.

The Royal Yeomanry was extremely fortunate that Her Majesty The Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother became the Regimental Honorary Colonel, and she paid her first visit to the Regiment at a reception held in her honour at Elverton Street on 30th October 1968.

During the years training nights, the Squadron continued with hard individual training and with enthusiasm, and gradually teething troubles were ironed out.

In 1970 H.Q. Sqn. spent a useful (and pleasant) two weeks training at Thetford with a Church Parade held on the Sunday morning at which the Squadron was joined on parade by a 'detachment' of Old Comrades. The Sqn. training during the second week was on the Stanford training area.

During the Autumn and Spring of 1970/71 weekly training at Elverton Street went on apace with the usual Christmas festivities at the end of 1970, and the odd weekend training jaunts.

For the 1971 Camp the Regiment went for a Gunnery Camp to Castlemartin with firing the 1st week for the Sabre Sqn. gunners, and the Ferret crews of H.Q. Sqn. were able to fire their Browning Machine Guns while the rest of the Sqn. were able to carry out Echelon training with the other Sqn. Echelons. The 2nd week was devoted to a Regimental Exercise. It was during the 1970 and 1971 camps that the last CO of the B and W.Dgns, Colonel J. Penhaligon (Penny) visited the Sqn. having been recalled to serve as a T & AVR Colonel responsible for all Greater London Units south of the Thames.

In 1971 the command of H.Q. Sqn. passed from the first officer commanding, Major R.A.S. Bowlby T.D. to Major B. Mollo T.D.

Another important yearly parade in the H.Q. Sqn's calendar has been the Service of Remembrance held on the training evening nearest to Remembrance Sunday in November, when a party places crosses at the Field of Remembrance in Westminster Abbey Church Yard. This ceremony is followed by a formal parade service in the H.Q. Drill Hall at Elverton Street.

The whole of the Sqn. and the Regiment went to Germany for the 1972 Camp to take part in a large scale Exercise with the Regular Army: travelling by road to Harwich and then by civilian ferry to Bremerhaven, and then straight into the Exercise for two weeks; the advance party having flown out some days beforehand. This was to be the pattern for all following Germany Camps; no longer was the Sqn. to be based with host regiments, but was to live in the field for the whole period of the camp, and to exercise with the Regular Army in their main Germany exercises.

The "One Army" concept had been adopted with Regular soldiers and T.A. soldiers being encouraged to consider themselves members of the same Army. The Squadron and the T.A. in general, is equipped to the same scale of clothing, vehicles and equipment.

The year 1972 saw the 25th Anniversary of the reconstruction of the Territorial Army in 1947 after the 1939/45 War; it also marked the 25th Anniversary of the re-forming of the Westminster Dragoons. This was suitably celebrated by the Officers Dining Club, the Veterans Lunch and the Annual Regimental Dinner held during that year.

The Squadron also said goodbye to Colonel Gordon Palmer who handed over the Honorary Colonelship to Colonel E.G.A. Kynaston, OBE, TD, DL, JP, a pre-war Westminster Dragoon who rose through the ranks to command the Regiment from 1953 to 1957.

One night in 1972 a group of anarchists calling themselves the Angry Brigade placed a bomb against the splendid wooden entrance doors to the Drill Hall and blew them in. It is thought that they believed that they were attacking the Headquarters of the Royal Tank Regiment whose door is on the corner of Elverton Street and Horseferry Road! They were eventually caught and received long sentences for this and other similar crimes.

In 1972, the O.C.A. lost the services of its Welfare Officer Major Richard Bullock C. B., after twenty years of dedicated service to matters of welfare to past members of the Regt. who were in need of help.

In April 1972 the Squadron, in the Saracens and Ferrets, took part in a parade of the T.A. called Exercise "London Pride" at Duke of York's Headquarters, at which the salute was taken by the then Prime Minister, Mr. Edward Heath.

The year 1973 saw the continuing round of training evenings for the Squadron, and here mention should be made of the competence of the R.S.O. and his operators, and the very superior radio sets then in use. One H.Q. Sqn. vehicle on a long range radio exercise did, by careful sighting, obtain some 46 miles on a B47 set, a short range V.H.F. set for 3 - 5 miles only!

With the spread of the Sqn's. locations in Northern Ireland, London, Croydon, Wiltshire and Nottingham, the R.S.O. was able to hold in the first 2 years several very successful Sky Wave Radios Exs. to include most of the R.A.C. regiments stationed in England and in BAOR.

In June 1973 Ferrets of the Squadron carried the Rhine Band of the Royal Tank Regiment round the arena of Wembley Stadium as a part of the Musical Ride in the Military Musical Pageant. The Band rode on Land Rover seats hooked on the the turrets and, although they looked precarious, no mishap occurred.

The 1973 Camp was held in May at West Down, Tilshead, and followed the usual pattern of squadron training for the first week, and a regimental exercise for the second week. At this camp the North Irish Horse attended, and brought over their armoured Land Rovers, and their up-armoured Saracens. However, the real highlight of this camp was that the Royal Honorary Colonel, the Queen Mother, and Princess Alexandra, visited the Regiment, and she watched each squadron perform one aspect of its armoured reconnaissance role, and following a Regimental Advance in Review Order she inspected the Regiment. Following lunch with the officers, Her Majesty departed by helicopter to three rousing cheers from the Regiment, but not before numerous members of H.Q. Sqn. had had the opportunity of meeting and speaking to the Royal guests.

In 1974 a change in the command of the H.Q. Sqn. took place with Major I.C. Brooking-Thomas T.D. taking over from Major B. Mollo T.D.

Camp for this year was held, as in 1971, at Castlemartin in the county of Pembrokeshire, and known as Linney Head to large numbers of ex-tank and armoured car members. The first week was devoted to troop and squadron firing with the second week, as usual to a regimental exercise.

Shortly after this camp there was the retirement of the Paymaster, Major D.A. Bishop T.D., who was the last remaining Westminster Dragoon commissioned officer to serve, having been commissioned into the Westminster Dragoons from the Sgts. Mess in January 1959.

In September of 1974 the Squadron took part in Exercise 'Full House' which was held in the Banbury area, and was the first weekend exercise in which the whole Regiment took part including, of course, the North Irish Horse who came over from Ulster with their armoured Land Rovers and their up-armoured Saracens.

In November of 1974 the T. A. was represented by the Squadron at the National Service of Remembrance at The Cenotaph wearing great-coats for the last time as they were thereafter withdrawn. The Daily Express, confused by the Squadron's red hats, referred to the contingent as a "detachment of impressive Royal Military Police with Sterling machine guns draped menacingly across their chests" and published a photograph captioned "Guard of Honour. . . . . military policemen line up in Whitehall yesterday!"

The year 1975 saw another visit to the Regiment at H.Q. in Elverton Street of its illustrious Regimental Honorary Colonel, H.M. The Queen Mother, who attended a reception given in her honour.

The Camp for 1975 was again held in Germany with the Regiment training with regular regiments and in regular formations which is excellent training for part-time soldiers.

Another yearly event in the Squadron calendar, although perhaps more concerned with the Westminster Dragoons Old Comrades Association, but to which serving soldiers in the Squadron can attend, is a parade held in Hyde Park on the first Sunday in May. This is a memorial parade and service for all cavalry O.C.A.'s who assemble there, and after marching past the Cavalry Memorial Statue, where the wreaths are laid and the salute taken, form up for a service of remembrance for all members of cavalry regiments who fell in two world wars and in action since 1946.

This parade is attended by thousands of ex-cavalry men, and is a good example of the strength of those O.C.A.'s and in particular of the O.C.A. of the Westminster Dragoons which has always given great support to the serving regiment/squadron.

In April of 1976 the Regiment, and particularly R.H.Q. had another royal visitor, namely H.R.H. Princess Alexandra, who, as Deputy Honorary Colonel of the Royal Yeomanry attended a reception given in her honour.

The camp for 1976 was held in the North of England at Otterburn, excellent country for armoured car training.

Since 1967 the Squadron had been receiving new and better combat kit and equipment. The Bedford RL four ton trucks were replaced by the Bedford MK diesel four ton trucks with greater creature comforts such as heaters. As the Ministry of Defence had decided that the jerrycan had had its day, the Squadron received Unit Bulk Refuelling Equipment which when mounted on a MK turned it into a mobile filling station thus lightening to some extent the load of MT troop. The Mark 2 Ferrets which had been with the Squadron from the beginning were withdrawn and replaced with the 'sports' version — the turretless Mark 1 Ferret.

Spring of 1977 saw the arrival of the tenth birthday of the Royal Yeomanry, and to celebrate the occasion a number of events were planned by the Regiment and by the Squadrons.

The H.Q. Squadron (Westminster Dragoons) Royal Yeomanry exercised its Freedom of the City of Westminster on 27th March and following an inspection of the Squadron at Horse Guards Parade by the Lord Mayor of Westminster, the Guidon was paraded through the streets of Westminster by the Squadron mounted in four Saracens, a Guidon Party in five Ferrets, eight Bedford RL's, two Land Rovers carrying the OC and Second in Command, two more Ferrets with MTO and SSM, followed by the Squadron LAD with a Scammell and a Bedford. The Lord Mayor complimented the Squadron on its turnout but did not know that the dress rehearsal was ruined by a non starting Saracen.

Then on the 1st April, Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother attended a cocktail party given by the Royal Yeomanry at the Cavalry and Guards Club.

The Combined Cavalry Old Comrades Parade was held for the year 1977 on Sunday, 1st May in Hyde Park as usual, and the Band of the Royal Yeomanry was on parade. The salute was taken by H.R.H. The Princess Alice of Gloucester, and this year the Regiment had to provide two men to act with two others from the 17/21 Lancers as Main Wreath Bearers. As usual there was a good attendance by members of the Westminster Dragoons O.C.A.

For the H.Q. Squadron's O.C.A. there are four main events in the calendar — the Cavalry O.C.'s Parade in Hyde Park in May, followed by a buffet lunch at H.Q. The possible visit to the Regiment when in Camp over the middle weekend, the Remembrance Service in the Westminster Dragoons' Regimental Church, i.e. Westminster Abbey, early November, and finally there is the Annual General Meeting and Regimental Dinner later in November.

In June 1977 the Squadron paraded the Guidon at the Review of Reserve Forces at Wembley Stadium by Her Majesty The Queen as part of the celebrations of Silver Jubilee Year. The Guidon Party was in No. 2 Dress and carried self loading rifles with fixed bayonets. Forty two Standards, Colours and Guidons were on Parade representing Reserves of all three Services. The Squadron was also represented by two troopers in the London District Contingent.

In September of 1977 the Regiment went for its Annual Camp to Westdown Camp on Salisbury Plain, that stamping ground for soldiers for generations past, attacking and defending its well-known features.

So arrived another year and another year of troop and squadron training both at evening sessions at Elverton Street, and weekend sessions in country locations culminating in the Annual Camp for 1978 in Germany, once more being part of a large Regular Army formations exercise.

The New Year Honours List for 1979 contained the award of an M.B.E. to WO. II Charles Wicker in recognition of his 36 years service in the T. A. and the T.A.V.R. — not bad record of service seeing he was only then 53!

The year 1979 saw a change in command of H.Q. Squadron with Major P.M. Mayles I.D. taking over from Major I.C. Brooking-Thomas T.D. who had served the Squadron well for three years. Major Mayles came from C.Sqn. (Kent and County of London Yeomanry) based at Croydon.

Annual Camp for 1979 was held at the Stanford PT. A. location with troop and squadron training during the first week and leading on in the second week to a regimental exercise in which all the squadrons took part.

The location of the Annual Camp for 1980 was again in Germany taking part with the Regular Army in their manoeuvres as part of N.A.T.O. defensive exercises.

A mention here must be made of a post-war organisation called the Brunswick Boys Club which has strong connections with the Westminster Dragoons and some of their past members. This began in a ROW. Camp, Oflag 79, which was near Brunswick, when some of the prisoners realised that after two, three or four years of incarceration one of the facilities that they greatly missed was those for recreation and games; these were also lacking for children and particularly for young boys in deprived inner city areas. So a committee containing a number of ex-Westminster Dragoons was set up to plan just such a club for boys, after the termination of the War, in the Fulham area of London.

True to the convictions of those P.O.W.'s a club was opened in Fulham in 1947, and from that beginning the Club, called the Brunswick Boys Club, has grown and prospered, and the prize possession of the Club is a painting of the roll-call in Oflag 79 on Christmas Day 1944, painted in the Camp by Gordon Horner. The present Club Committee still contain several ex W.D.'s.

The first event of importance for the year 1981 was when the Squadron again exercised its Freedom of the City of Westminster on the 21st March, 1981, this time dismounted. The Squadron marched to Horse Guards Parade from Elverton Street, and was inspected by the Lord Mayor. The Guidon was trooped through the squadron and the retiring OC, Major Mayles, formally handed the squadron over to his successor, Major Winstanley. The Squadron marched past the Lord Mayor and through Whitehall Arch, past Parliament and along the concrete canyon of Victoria Street with the sound of the band echoing back and forth, and back to Elverton Street.

The Annual Camp in 1981 was held at Warcop, and the Regiment was graced by a visit from H.R.H. Princess Alexandra. The weather was as one might expect at Warcop — uncertain! Her Royal Highness met the squadron whilst it was preparing for an exercise which was to start the next day, and which would range over County Durham, Northumberland and Cumbria. The squadron was in the vehicle park of Warcop Camp which was in fact a muddy, windy and rain-swept field. The squadron was drawn up informally to meet Her Royal Highness who spoke to as many of the squadron as she could. She dined that evening with the Regiment's officers.

The year 1982 saw the arrival of a new Honorary Colonel of the H.Q. (W. Dgns) Sqn., Major Gen. J.G.R. Allen, C.B. who took over from Major Gen. T.M. Brockbank C.B.E., M.C. to whom the Regiment said a grateful farewell.

Much of the training of the of the early part of 1982 was directed towards the high level of efficiency going to be needed during the Annual Camp which was

to be held in Germany (near Ludenhausen) and was part of Exercise "Crusader" which received great publicity nationally. This was the biggest British troop movement since D-Day. The MOD wanted to find out how long it would take for BAOR to be re-inforced from the UK in a time of international tension. The squadron's 'A' vehicles were put in containers and sent on abroad by road and sea to Belgium and then by rail to the Corps Reinforcement Group at Sennelager where they were reunited with their crews. This was the first time this had been done and the squadron until then had been accustomed to driving them all the way. The "B" vehicles travelled by road and ferry to Sennelager as had always been the practice. The regiment then came under command of BAOR for the exercise. The exercise and practice mobilisation was declared a great success by the Ministry. The doings of the Squadron were brought to the attention of the public (including the fact the SHQ command vehicle was called Gladys) by the Defence Correspondent of The Times who travelled to Germany with the Squadron.

A further mention must be made of an important aspect in the life of the present H.Q. (Westminster Dragoon's) Sqn. R.Y. and to the past Westminster Dragoon's Regiment (etc) which has carried on from the immediate post-war period, which is the matter of Benevolence for all past (or present) members of the Westminster Dragoons (Rgt/Sqn). It is administered by appointed Trustees, from the Regimental Association, forming a sub-committee of the Westminster Dragoons Regimental Association Benevolent Fund; this sub-committee under the Welfare Officer administer the Fund to make loans, donations and other payments, after suitable scrutinising of requests, to Dragoons who may be in need.

Another important event during 1982 was that the squadron provided a contingent for a parade in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen at Imphal Barracks, York, to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the T.A. and the Inauguration of 2nd Infantry Division — itself mainly composed of TA units. The Regiment led the Drive Past with each Squadron's Guidon mounted in a Fox. The Squadron having no Fox of its own borrowed one from C(K & CLY) Sqn. The trumpeters from the Band (ICCY) played a fanfare on Her Majesty's arrival but the Ferret which carried its Guidon was crewed by the Squadron as naturally the Band had no RAC crewmen. Following the Regiment in the Drive Past were four Fox of the Queen's Own Yeomanry mounting the four Guidons of the Regiment. The spectacle of ten Yeomanry Guidons on parade was splendid and cannot have been seen for many years.

Later in the year 1982 came the final parting of the ways of the Berkshire Yeomanry and the Westminster Dragoons of which mention has previously been made.

The Berkshire Yeomanry with whom the Westminster Dragoons had amalgamated in 1961, had been reformed as 94 (Berkshire Yeomanry)

Squadron of 71 (Yeomanry) Signal Regiment, Royal Corps of Signals. As the Squadron's connection with Berkshire had diminished over the years it was decided that the Squadron should again be known as the Westminster Dragoons and that the old badge — the Coat of Arms of the City of Westminster — should be readopted. The squadron marched the Berkshire and Westminster Dragoons Guidon to Westminster Abbey on 5th December, 1982, and laid it up. The Westminster Dragoons Guidon, presented to the Westminster Dragoons by Her Majesty The Queen at Buckingham Palace in 1960 was rededicated in a ceremony performed by the Dean of Westminster and the Squadron marched back to Elverton Street through the dark streets behind the Band and the rededicated Guidon. Unfortunately, the new (old) badges were not available for general issue until late 1983.

In 1983 the Royal Yeomanry again went for their Annual Training Camp to Westdown Camp. This was the first camp where the yeomanry was fully equipped with the Fox Armoured Cars, and after the parade at this camp, the last surviving Saladin Armoured Car was driven off the parade ground to the strains of 'Auld Lang Syne'. It was also in 1983 that the Clansman series of radios were introduced and greatly improved communications.

One ex WO. was heard to describe the new Fox A.C. as an armoured sports car powered by a de-tuned Jaguar engine which mounted a scaled down Bofors gun called a Rardon cannon. This cannon fires at such a rate that it 'drills' holes through armour plating! In such a high performance car the crew (3) are obliged to wear crash helmets with built-in headphones and microphone.

All of this is a far cry from the Armoured Cars first used by the Westminster Dragoons on their reforming in 1923 after the Great War (Which they had started with horses). There had been three A.C.'s in those days, the Peerless, Crossley, and later the Rolls-Royce — there are still some members of the O.C. A. who actually crewed these vehicles.

The Peerless had an American chassis and engine, twin turrets each mounting a Hotchkiss gun, solid tyres, foot-brake operation on the propeller shaft, flat out speed 15 m.p.h. (faster down hill in neutral but difficult to stop then!); a separate steering wheel in the back which could be locked 'in' or 'out' for driving in reverse. The Rolls was a much more advanced vehicle and remained in service with 22nd London Armoured Car Company (Westminster Dragoons) TA until their change of roll in 1938. It continued service in the Middle East well into the 'forties'.

The Peerless together with the Rolls-Royce were used on convoy during the General Strike in 1926 and the Peerless were crewed by Westminster Dragoons. This was because the Royal Tank Corps could not supply sufficient crews for the Peerless, and Territorials cannot be used for 'strike-breaking'. Only Territorials, the W.D.'s in particular, were available so a bill was rushed through

the Commons allowing Territorials to volunteer to leave the T. A. on a temporary basis, thus becoming civilians, they could then crew the armoured cars.

On the question of new members, recruiting into the Squadron had always been a steady flow helped along by occasional advertising by MOD and Greater London TAVRA. The individual squadrons had their own methods of selection and enlistment. In 1983 the Regiment began to run Regimental Selection Weekends for potential recruits. These were held at The Guards Depot, Pirbright, and each squadron sent its potential new soldiers to be assessed both physically and mentally in a weekend packed with employment and fitness tests. The recruits were assessed as to their character and suitability for service in the Regiment. Over 25% were rejected as unsuitable. Those passing were attested and went on a two week recruit course run at a regular training establishment, if possible the RAC Training Regiment. Following this the recruit is posted to a Troop and begins his trade training.

The year ended on a high note and again one good for recruiting for on the 17th December, 1983, the Squadron led a parade past Westminster City Hall in Victoria Street, where the Salute was taken by The Lord Mayor of Westminster, to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the T.A. Following the squadron, which was mounted in Saracens and Ferrets, were the other surviving TA units in Westminster — 6 (London Scottish) Coy, 51st Highland Volunteers and B Coy, 4th Royal Green Jackets, The Band (ICCY) played marches and carols (in deference to the season) beside the saluting base. Markers were provided by the Squadron in ceremonial dress. Owing to the threat of action by the IRA little publicity was given and the parade was seen only by Christmas shoppers. Following the parade the Lord Mayor gave a reception for those taking part.

Also in 1983, three members of the Sqn. led by Lt. Macnamara, appeared at The Royal Tournament at Earls Court dressed in the ceremonial full dress of the Westminster Dragoons as part of the celebrations for the 75th Anniversary of the T.A.

The year 1984 was not a month old when, as a result of the withdrawal of the Squadron's Saracen Armoured Cars, at the end of 1983, the squadron's first tracked vehicles since 1958 — a Spartan on loan from the Blues and Royals arrived in January. Driver training commenced straight away and the Squadron was able to crew its complement of Sultan (armoured command vehicle), Spartan (armoured personnel carrier) and Samaritan (armoured ambulance) at Annual Camp in Germany in October. The Regiment had also been equipped with Clansman radios which were very much more sophisticated than the Larkspur sets they replaced and were secure. With the issue of the CVR(T) — Combat Reconnaissance Vehicle (Tracked) the Regiment became fully equipped to the same standard as a Regular recon regiment.

As well as the ceremony already referred to, the Squadron twice represented the TA at the British Legion's Annual Festival of Remembrance and have on a number of occasions provided Guards of Honour to The Lord Mayor on civic occasions and in 1987 the Greater London TAVRA was presented with a banner by the Greater London Council, and the Regiment was represented by two Ferrets from the Squadron.

The Honorary Colonel, H.M. The Queen Mother, again attended a Regimental Reception held in her honour at Elverton Street on the 12th July, 1984 when she was introduced to over one hundred serving and past members of the Regiment.

The Annual Camp in 1984 was Exercise "Lionheart" and was a similar exercise to Ex. "Crusader" in 1982 in that mobilisation arrangements for the Territorial Army were being tested and getting the troops over to join the B.O.A.R. and much publicity was given to the exercise.

The FTX part of "Crusader" was called Ex. "Spearhead 84" and this was the biggest exercise of its type since the War. For the journey out, H.Q. (W.Dgns) Sqn. (which had been visited by the U.S. Secretary of State for Defence, just before it left Westminster), travelled in no less than three main parties. . . . by rail, ('A' vehicles being containerised), by road ('B' vehicles being driven) and by Tristar Jet (for some personnel). This air party had to finish the last part of their journey to Sennelager by rail — and in cattle trucks! The sea crossing from Dover to Zeebrugge was made by Channel ferries, one squadron to each ferry.

On this exercise, the Royal Yeomanry was given some demanding tasks to do all of which were carried out with acclaimed success. This was especially the case in the second week's exercise which was a hectic one racing eastwards towards the Hertz Mountains and the East German border. Supply lines were almost stretched to the limit, and reflect great credit on those responsible for keeping the Regiment supplied with the vital necessities that were needed over such a distance.

In 1985 the Annual Camp was held at the Gunnery Camp at Castlemartin (Llinnyhead for old campaigners) in West Wales, where much useful practise was put in with the units various arms including a target aircraft being shot down by a '30 Browning from a Ferret Scout Car! This caused dismay and disbelief from the range authorities!

At the end of this camp, the Regiment exercised back from Castlemartin by way of mid-Wales to Salisbury. This exercise needed much organisation and administrative support since at times the Regiment was stretched out over 100 miles of roads; the exercise proved a success.

On the 23rd October, 1985 H.R.H. Princess Alexandra attended a Regimental Reception in her honour at Elverton Street.

At the end of the year the Regimental Bobsleigh Team won the Army 4-man Handicap Competition with H.Q.(W.Dgns) Sqn. forming the major part of the Royal Yeomanry's Bobsleigh Team. The team had again been to Switzerland to race in the British Championship. A beginners skiing course was also run for young members of the Squadron.

In 1986, Major T.C. Parkes took over command of the H.Q. (W.Dgns) Sqn. from Major C.J. Winstanley, but owing to unforeseen circumstances Major Parkes was to hand over the command of the squadron in 1987 to Major P.D. Kennerly.

The last serving soldier to have started his service as a National Serviceman was Sgt. Charles Fry, B.E.M., R.A.M.C. who at one time was the S.S.M. of H.Q. (W.Dgns) Sqn., and had served continuously until his sudden death on duty in April 1986.

The Royal Yeomanry went to Germany again in 1986 taking part in Exercise "Keystone" with the Queen's Own Yeomanry; this exercise was for the T.A. and Regular Army reconnaissance regiments, and was a preparation for the bigger exercise to be carried out during 1987.

A Regimental exercise during the year took place on the Wrekin in Shropshire, and taking part for the first time was a unit of the Home Defence Force. Assault troops were carried into attacks along the banks of the River Severn by train since no helicopters were available.

The main social function of the year was another visit by Princess Alexandra who, during this visit to H.Q. in Elverton Street, met and spoke to as many people from the Squadron as possible assembled there to meet the Princess.

In May 1987, the Cavalry Memorial Service and Parade was held, once again, in Hyde Park where the salute was taken by Field Marshall Sir John Stanier. This was the first time that the Westminster Dragoons Regimental association's contingent did not march as a separate unit, but as a part of the Royal Yeomanry Association's contingent. The R.Y.A. put on a buffet lunch at R.H.Q. in Westminster for its members and for all members of the separate squadron's O.C. A.'s. The function was very well attended and a great success.

The Camp in 1987 was again with the B.A.O.R in Germany, and was a continuation of Exercise "Keystone" of 1986. It was divisional exercise with major formations of the Territorial Army and the reconnaissance regiments of the Regular Army stationed in Germany, taking part. It was in 1987 that the Parmigan was fitted to the R.H.Q. command vehicles. This exercise turned out to be a very comprehensive training exercise which included a crossing of the River Weiser; the Regiment and H.Q. (W.Dgns) Sqn. in particular, gained much experience from this exercise, and were again congratulated for their

efforts, enthusiasm and professionalism.

As had already been recorded, command of H.Q. (W.Dgns) Sqn. passed to Major P.D. Kennerley during 1987. Major Kennerley came to command from 'C (Kent & C.L.Y) Sqn. at Croydon.

In conclusion, with the end of the year 1987, the first twenty years in the life of the Royal Yeomanry, and its H.Q. (Westminster Dragoons) Sqn. came to an end. Much had been achieved by the Regiment, and no doubt the same high standard and enthusiasm which has been present in the past will continue to be there in the future twenty years. As far as H.Q. (Westminster Dragoons) Sqn. is concerned, the name "Westminster Dragoons" is still in being, and hopefully will continue to be into the foreseeable future.

## The H.Q. (Westminster Dragoons) Squadron, R.Y. 1967-1987

### The Titles of H.Q. (Westminster Dragoons) Sqn. Royal Yeomanry 1967 - 1987

- (a) Headquarters (Berkshire and Westminster Dragoons) Squadron, The Royal Yeomanry Regiment 1967 — 1971
- (b) Headquarters (Berkshire and Westminster Dragoons) Squadron, The Royal Yeomanry 1971 - 1983
- (c) Headquarters (Westminster Dragoons) Squadron, The Royal Yeomanry 1983 -

### Honorary Colonels of H.Q. (Westminster Dragoons) Sqn. R.Y.

1967 - 1972	Col. The Hon. Gordon Palmer, OBE TD DL JP.
1972 - 1977	Col. E.G.A. Kynaston, OBE TD DL JP.
1977 - 1982	Maj. Gen. J.M. Brockbank, CBE MC.
1982 - 1987	Maj. Gen. J.G.R. Allen, CB.
1987 —	Maj. Gen. Simon Cooper.

### Officers commanding the H.Q. (Westminster Dragoons) Sqn. R.Y.

1967--1971	Maj. R.A.S. Bowlby TD.
1971 —1974	Maj. B. Mollo TD
1974--1979	Maj. I.C. Brooking-Thomas TD
1979--1981	Maj. P.M. Mayles TD
1981 —1986	Maj. C.J. Winstanley
1986--1987	Maj. T.C. Parkes
1987-	Maj. P.D. Kennerley

### Squadron Sergeant-Majors of H.Q. (Westminster Dragoons) Sqn. R.Y. 1967-1987

1967--1969	W.0.2 S. Pepper	1974--1975	W.0.2 L.A. Scott
1969--1971	W.0.2 D. Mully	1975--1979	W.0.2 C. Wicker MBE
1971 --1972	W.0.2 D.A. Williams	1979--1983	W.0.2 T.M. Burton
1972--1974	W.0.2 D. Lucraft	1983--1987	W.0.2 A.D. Pilton
1973--1974	W.0.2 C.A. Fry	1987-	W.0.2 M.P. Taylor

### The H.Q. (Westminster Dragoons) Sqn. R.Y. Annual Camps 1967 — 1987

1967	Westdown	1978	Germany (Cuxhaven)
1968	Bellerby/Germany (half sqn to each)(Wolfenbuttel)	1979	Stanford PT.A.
1969	Bellerby/Germany (half sqn to each)	1980	Germany (Leuth)
1970	Standford PT.A.	1981	Warcop
1971	Castlemartin	1982	Germany (Ludenhause)
1972	Germany (Gottengen)	1983	Westdown
1973	Westdown	1984	Germany (Leuth)
1974	Castlemartin	1985	Castlemartin
1975	Germany (Jacobsburg)	1986	Germany
1976	Otterburn	1987	Germany
1977	Westdown		

Awards & Decorations to Serving Members of  
H.Q. (Westminster Dragoons) Sqn. R.Y  
1967-1987

W.O.2 Wicker-M.B.E.

Sgt. C.A. Fry (RAMC ATT) (Former SSM and RQMS RY) - B.E.M.

Maj. A.S. Brown TD (RAPC ATT) (Former QM. Tech.) - M.B.E.

APPENDIX 2

**THE SQUADRONS OF THE ROYAL YEOMANRY  
AND THEIR LOCATIONS**

WESTMINSTER H.Q. (*Westminster Dragoons*) Squadron.  
1 Elverton Street, London SW1P 2QJ.

LONDON *Band of the Royal Yeomanry*  
(*Inns of Court and City Yeomanry*)

TROWBRIDGE A. (*Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry*)  
Squadron. T.A. Centre, Bythesea Road,  
Trowbridge.

SWINDON A. (*Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry*)  
Squadron. Training Centre,  
Church Place, Swindon.

NOTTINGHAM B. (*Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry*)  
Squadron. Cavendish Drive,  
Carlton, Nottingham.

CROYDON C. (*Kent and Sharpshooters Yeomanry*)  
Squadron and the Light Aid  
Detachment, REME. The Barracks,  
Mitcham Road, Croydon.

BELFAST D. (*North Irish Horse*) Squadron,  
Dunmore Park Camp, Antrim Road,  
Belfast, Northern Ireland.