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## **An historical record of the Royal Regiment of horse guards**

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Introduction.

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## INTRODUCTION.

THE ancient Armies of England were composed of Horse and Foot; but the feudal troops, established by William the Conqueror in 1086, consisted almost entirely of Horse. Under the feudal system, every holder of land amounting to what was termed a "knight's fee," was required to provide a charger, a coat of mail, a helmet, a shield, and a lance, and to serve the Crown a period of forty days in each year at his own expense; and the great landholders had to provide armed men in proportion to the extent of their estates; consequently the ranks of the feudal Cavalry were completed with men of property, and the vassals and tenants of the great barons, who led their dependents to the field in person.

In the succeeding reigns the Cavalry of the Army was composed of Knights (or men at arms) and Hobiliers (or horsemen of inferior degree); and the Infantry of spear and battle-axe men, cross-bowmen, and archers. The Knights wore

armour on every part of the body, and their weapons were a lance, a sword, and a small dagger. The Hobiliers were accoutred and armed for the light and less important services of war, and were not considered qualified for a charge in line. Mounted Archers\* were also introduced, and the English nation eventually became pre-eminent in the use of the bow.

About the time of Queen Mary the appellation of "*Men at Arms*" was changed to that of "*Spears and Lances*." The introduction of fire-arms ultimately occasioned the lance to fall into disuse, and the title of the Horsemen of the first degree was changed to "*Cuirassiers*." The Cuirassiers were armed *cap-à-pié*, and their weapons were a sword with a straight narrow blade and sharp point, and a pair of large pistols, called petronels; and the Hobiliers carried carbines. The Infantry carried pikes, matchlocks, and swords. The introduction of fire-arms occasioned the formation of Regiments armed and equipped as infantry, but mounted on small horses for the sake of expedition of movement, and these were styled "*Dragoons*;" a small portion of the military

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\* In the 14th year of the reign of Edward IV. a small force was established in Ireland by Parliament, consisting of 120 Archers on horseback, 40 Horsemen, and 40 Pages.

force of the kingdom, however, consisted of this description of troops.

The formation of the present Army commenced after the Restoration in 1660, with the establishment of regular corps of Horse and Foot; the Horsemen were cuirassiers, but only wore armour on the head and body; and the Foot were pikemen and musketeers. The arms which each description of force carried, are described in the following extract from the "Regulations of King Charles II.," dated 5th May, 1663:—

"Each Horseman to have for his defensive armes, back, breast, and pot; and for his offensive armes, a sword, and a case of pistolls, the barrels whereof are not to be und<sup>r</sup>. foorteen inches in length; and each Trooper of Our Guards to have a carbine, besides the aforesaid armes. And the Foote to have each souldier a sword, and each pikeman a pike of 16 foote long and not und<sup>r</sup>.; and each musqueteer a musquet, with a collar of bandaliers, the barrels of which musquet to be about foore foote long, and to containe a bullet, foorteen of which shall weigh a pound weight\*."

The ranks of the Troops of Horse were at this period composed of men of some property—gene-

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\* Military Papers, State Paper Office.

rally the sons of substantial yeomen : the young men received as recruits provided their own horses, and they were placed on a rate of pay sufficient to give them a respectable station in society.

On the breaking out of the war with Holland, in the spring of 1672, a Regiment of Dragoons was raised\* ; the Dragoons were placed on a lower rate of pay than the Horse ; and the Regiment was armed similar to the Infantry, excepting that a limited number of the men carried halberds instead of pikes, and the others muskets and bayonets ; and a few men in each Troop had pistols ; as appears by a warrant dated the 2nd of April, 1672, of which the following is an extract :—

“ CHARLES R.

“ Our will and pleasure is, that a Regiment of Dragoones, which we have established and ordered to be raised, in twelve Troopes of fourscore in each beside officers, who are to be under the command of Our most deare and most intirely beloved Cousin Prince Rupert, shall be armed out of Our stoares remaining within Our office of the Ordinance, as followeth ; that is to say, three corporalls, two serjeants, the gentlemen at armes, and twelve souldiers of

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\* This Regiment was disbanded after the Peace in 1674.

“ each of the said twelve Troopes, are to have and  
 “ carry each of them one halbard, and one case  
 “ of pistolls with holsters; and the rest of the  
 “ souldiers of the several Troopes aforesaid, are  
 “ to have and to carry each of them one match-  
 “ locke musquet, with a collar of bandaliers, and  
 “ also to have and to carry one bayonet\*, or great  
 “ knife. That each lieutenant have and carry  
 “ one partizan; and that two drums be delivered  
 “ out for each Troope of the said Regiment‡.”

Several regiments of Horse and Dragoons were raised in the first year of the reign of King James II.; and the horsemen carried a short carbine‡ in addition to the sword and pair of pistols: and in a Regulation dated the 21st of February, 1687, the arms of the Dragoons at that period are commanded to be as follows:—

“ The Dragoons to have snaphanse musquets,  
 “ strapt, with bright barrels of three foote eight  
 “ inches long, cartouch-boxes, bayonetts, granado  
 “ pouches, bucketts, and hammer-hatchetts.”

After several years' experience, little advantage

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\* This appears to be the first introduction of *bayonets* into the English Army.

† State Paper Office.

‡ The first issue of carbines to the regular Horse appears to have taken place in 1684; the Life Guards, however, carried carbines from their formation in 1660.—*Vide* the ‘ Historical Record of the Life Guards.’

was found to accrue from having Cavalry Regiments formed almost exclusively for engaging the enemy on foot ; and, the Horse having laid aside their armour, the arms and equipment of Horse and Dragoons were so nearly assimilated, that there remained little distinction besides the name and rate of pay. The introduction of improvements into the mounting, arming, and equipment of Dragoons rendered them competent to the performance of every description of service required of Cavalry ; and, while the long musket and bayonet were retained, to enable them to act as Infantry, if necessary, they were found to be equally efficient, and of equal value to the nation, as Cavalry, with the Regiments of Horse.

In the several augmentations made to the regular Army after the early part of the reign of Queen Anne, no new Regiments of Horse were raised for permanent service ; and in 1746 King George II. reduced three of the old Regiments of Horse to the quality and pay of Dragoons ; at the same time, His Majesty gave them the title of First, Second, and Third Regiments of *Dragoon Guards* : and in 1788 the same alteration was made in the remaining four Regiments of Horse, which then became the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Regiments of *Dragoon Guards*.

At present there are only three Regiments which are styled *Horse* in the British Army, namely, the two Regiments of Life Guards, and the Royal Regiment of Horse Guards, to whom cuirasses have recently been restored. The other Cavalry Regiments consist of Dragoon Guards, Heavy and Light Dragoons, Hussars, and Lancers; and although the long musket and bayonet have been laid aside by the whole of the Cavalry, and the Regiments are armed and equipped on the principle of the old Horse (excepting the cuirass), they continue to be styled Dragoons.

The old Regiments of Horse formed a highly respectable and efficient portion of the Army, and it is found, on perusing the histories of the various campaigns in which they have been engaged, that they have, on all occasions, maintained a high character for steadiness and discipline, as well as for bravery in action. They were formerly mounted on horses of superior weight and physical power, and few troops could withstand a well-directed charge of the celebrated British Horse. The records of these corps embrace a period of 150 years—a period eventful in history, and abounding in instances of heroism displayed by the British troops when danger has threatened the nation,—a period in which these Regiments

have numbered in their ranks men of loyalty, valour, and good conduct, worthy of imitation.

Since the Regiments of Horse were formed into Dragoon Guards, additional improvements have been introduced into the constitution of the several corps; and the superior description of horses now bred in the United Kingdom enables the commanding officers to remount their regiments with such excellent horses, that, whilst sufficient weight has been retained for a powerful charge in line, a lightness has been acquired which renders them available for every description of service incident to modern warfare.

The orderly conduct of these Regiments in quarters has gained the confidence and esteem of the respectable inhabitants of the various parts of the United Kingdom in which they have been stationed; their promptitude and alacrity in attending to the requisitions of the magistrates in periods of excitement, and the temper, patience, and forbearance which they have evinced when subjected to great provocation, insult, and violence from the misguided populace, prove the value of these troops to the Crown, and to the Government of the country, and justify the reliance which is reposed on them.

AN HISTORICAL RECORD  
OF THE  
ROYAL REGIMENT OF HORSE GUARDS,  
OR  
**Oxford Blues :**

ITS SERVICES, AND THE TRANSACTIONS IN WHICH IT  
HAS BEEN ENGAGED,

FROM ITS FIRST ESTABLISHMENT TO THE PRESENT TIME.

BY

**EDMUND PACKE,**

LATE CAPTAIN ROYAL HORSE GUARDS.



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30, CHARING CROSS.

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AN ACCOUNT OF THE

ROYAL REGIMENT OF HORSE GUARDS

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BY

EDMUND PARKER

OF THE REGIMENT OF HORSE GUARDS

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