

NORTH IRISH HORSE

The North Irish Horse was first raised in 1902 under the title of the North of Ireland Imperial Yeomanry. In that year the Earl of Shaftesbury at Belfast Castle received a command from the C-in-C, Ireland, The Duke of Connaught, to form a regiment of Imperial Yeomanry in the North of Ireland. The first two squadrons were formed in the same year, the Duke of Abercorn was appointed second in command and the Regiment's headquarters were established at Dundalk.

At the outbreak of war in 1914 the North Irish Horse with their sister regiment, the South Irish Horse, were the first yeomanry to go into action. Fittingly enough, they were also the last yeomanry regiment in action in 1918 and in all gained 17 battle honours and 68 decorations including one V.C. In 1919 the Regiment was "disembodied" and received only an annual mention in the newspapers, as "the one-man regiment", a reference to Sir Ronald Ross, whose name remained in the Army List.

In May 1939 the reconstitution of the Regiment was announced in the House of Commons and under a special order of September 11th that year the North Irish Horse was transferred from the Corps of Cavalry of the Line to the Royal Armoured Corps. With Sir Ronald Ross in command recruiting began immediately. In 1941 the Regiment after over a year's training in armoured cars moved from Portrush to Ballykinlar, where their battle role was changed and they received their first tanks, which were Valentines. In October the Regiment was ordered to England.

In February 1943, equipped with Churchill tanks for infantry support, North Irish Horse under the command of Lieutenant Colonel David Dawnay sailed for North Africa, where they were immediately involved in the final stages of the campaign, in which they played a brilliant and vital part in the capture of the famous Longstop Hill.

January 1944 saw the Regiment sail for Italy, where they achieved great distinction and glory and gained an unsurpassed reputation for their dash, resolution and co-operation in action. The most notable battles engaged in by the Regiment during this period were the break-through of the Hitler Line and the final offensive, in which after the crossing of the River Senio the Regiment for a time led the advance and were first to reach the River Po.

After the war the Regiment was placed in suspended animation. It was reconstituted in 1947, and transferred to the Territorial Army, where now, as senior regiment of the Auxiliary Forces in Ulster, it boasts the greatest volunteer-recruited strength in the yeomanry regiments of the Royal Armoured Corps.

THE GUIDON

The first use of a Guidon by British Cavalry is not known, however, the name is believed to have been derived from the French Cavalry emblem carried in the 17th century.

The word, which is a French adaption of the English words "Guide on", was originally used to describe the pennant that was carried by the Cavalry, and thrust into the ground to guide the Infantry on to dominant features in battle.

In the British Army, this pennant became very elaborate and by the end of the 18th century it had become customary for it to bear the Battle Honours of the Regiment. It had now become known as the "Guidon" and was carried by the Light Dragoon Regiments until about 1820.

At this period, the custom was also becoming established of having the Battle Honours of Regiments displayed on the drum cloths of their mounted bands, and so, in due course, the use of the Guidon as a Regimental emblem by Light Cavalry came to an end.

After the 1939-45 War, it was decreed that, as Cavalry Regiments no longer had mounted bands, the Guidon should be re-introduced for all Regiments of Light Cavalry and Yeomanry as the medium for displaying Battle Honours.

By tradition, the Guidons of Light Cavalry and Standards of Heavy Cavalry are at all times carried on parade by senior Warrant Officers, and not by commissioned ranks.