NOBODY'S OWN

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE 20TH HUSSARS AND ITS FORBEARS

by
Douglas John Hill

Late 14th/20th King's Hussars

PREFACE

For many years it has caused me some concern that a full history of the 20th Hussars and its forebears has not been recorded in book form. From my observations the continuous disbanding and resuscitation of regiments have discouraged authors from attempting such works. The loss and misplacement of regimental dairies and digests have also contributed to the difficulty in formulating the movements and actions in detail.

With amalgamations continually taking place, the junior regiments in these marriages appear to have been pushed into the background, resulting in their part in the annals of military history being neglected. This has prompted me to undertake this task.

D.J.H.

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1. THE FIRST TWENTIETH

Four British cavalry regiments have been numbered the Twentieth, the first of which was the 20th Inniskilling Light Dragoons.

In 1756, Britain declared war on France when the clash of their trading interests in Canada became the focal point of heated diplomatic exchanges and France had then attacked and captured Minorca.

So began the Seven Years War and an army was sent to Flanders and an expeditionary force, under General Wolfe, sailed for the conquest of Canada. As the war progressed, reinforcements were despatched to the seats of conflict, leaving a shortage of manpower to aid the civil authorities and guard the coastline from the threat of invasion.

In 1759 the 20th Enniskillen Light Dragoons were raised in the town of Enniskillen and the regiment adopted the name in honour of its contribution of men to the war effort.

A nucleus of trained men came from the "light" troops of the 6th Inniskilling Dragoons before the regiment had embarked for Germany. The "light" troops, added in 1755, had already gained experience, having served at Cherbourg and St. Malo in 1758. Volunteers came from other regiments and there was never a lack of recruits in Ireland. These "light" troops must not be confused with the "Light" or "Hussar" Troops which were adopted by all regiments of Dragoons following an order by the Duke of York, which continued in certain corps for a quarter of a century. All heavy accoutrements worn by men and any unnecessary horse furniture were to be cast off.

It enabled freedom of movement and added speed in carrying out the duty of reconnaissance.

The regiment was listed in the army as the 20th Light Dragoons on the English List and as the 20th Enniskillen Dragoons on the Irish Establishment in 1759.

This small corps was ranked eighth amongst the dragoon regiments on Irish pay. The Dragoon corps on the Irish Establishment then stood as follows:

1. The Royal Irish Dragoons
2. 6th or Inniskilling Dragoons
3. 8th Dragoons
4. 12th Dragoons
5. 13th Dragoons
6. 14th Dragoons
7. 19th or Droghera Light Horse (afterwards the old 18th Hussars)
8. 20th or Light Inniskillings.

The regiment was raised by Sir James Caldwell, Bt., of Caldwell Castle, County Fermanagh in the year 1759, who became Captain Commandant.

The four troops were commanded by Lieutenants John Fitzmaurice, William Southwell, John Colthurst and John Bullock. The cornets were Richard Warburton, Charles Tottenham, John Gore and Thomas Nesbitt. John Daws was adjutant, Thomas Higginbottam the Chaplain and Michael Lawe was the Surgeon.

The full establishment was twelve officers and four full Troops numbering 232 non-commissioned officers and men. The uniform was scarlet with yellow facings at the outset but changed to scarlet and black with silver lace.

The regiment remained in Ireland, performing home service and undertook the duties of aiding the civil powers. At times the authorities required help in dealing with strikes and it is reported that their duties were carried out in good style and they also attended civic duties.

The regiment marched to various towns and villages and made a few arrests in troublesome areas but apart from that, the regiment had a peaceful lifetime. Irishmen proved to be excellent soldiers outside their own country and were good fighters. Fortunately, there were no incidents like the mutiny which occurred a couple of years later in Dublin.

The signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1763 brought about a reduction in the forces and the 20th Inniskilling Light Dragoons were disbanded.

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The end of the Seven Years War gained for Britain new colonies which formed an empire to be defended. Canada was ceded to Britain by France under the terms of the Peace Treaty and all colonial territories down to the Mississippi were recognised as British Imperial possessions. From these came a great deal of wealth, both for the government coffers and the landed gentry favoured with estates and plantations. This dripping roast had to be jealously guarded against the smouldering fire of discontent being stirred by the French and Spanish colonists. The paying of taxes was a thorn in the side of the colonies which eventually broke their patience with the

home government. This resulted in the famous Boston Tea Party when the colonists took advantage of a period in which the Red Indians were pretty well under control and with little threat from the French. A fratricidal struggle ensued with the first shots being fired in April 1775 and it was to last for eight years in the American War of Independence. It was a desperate period for the government when the British surrendered at Saratoga in 1777 and France had thrown her lot in with Spain.

The army had to be expanded in order to release what regular regiments remained in the home country. These were embarked speedily overseas to the seats of conflict on the Continent and to America.

The second regiment of 20th Light Dragoons were resuscitated in 1779 at Bury St. Edmunds from the "light" Troops of the 3rd Dragoon Guards, 1st Royal Dragoons, 6th Inniskilling Dragoons and the 11th Dragoons. The colour of the uniform was scarlet with yellow facings and silver lace.

The first notice of the Regiment appears in the "London Gazette" for 27th March 1779, to be commanded by Colonel R. Burton Phillipson, who was promoted Major General and Colonel 20th Light Dragoons, 25th April 1779. He was a veteran of the Seven Years War in Germany where he was a Major with the 1st Royal Dragoons. His name was then Richard Burton and after his return to England he was permitted to assume the name Phillipson. In January 1771 he was appointed Lieutenant Colonel in the Royal Dragoons and in 1775 aide-de-camp to the King and Colonel in the army.

The Lieut.Colonel was Francis Edward Gwyn with Major James Telfer as the second in command. Thomas Garth, John Pritchard and Henry Yarburg were Captains and Simon Wilmot was Captain Lieutenant and Captain. The Lieutenants were Charles

Ravenscroft, John Campbell, Edmund Anderson, Henry Marshall and William Savary. The Cornets were Henry Pennyman, Theodore Luders, Joshua Evans and the Honourable Edward Finch. Peter Shadwell was Adjutant and Robert Anderson the Surgeon with John Bulman as the regimental Chaplain.

Following the first publication of appointments, the subsequent Gazettes contain the appointment of Major Roberts of the 6th Inniskilling Dragoons to be Lieutenant Colonel; Captain Telfer of the Scots Greys to be Major; Lieutenant P. Boissier of the 11th Dragoons to be Captain-Lieutenant in the place of Lieutenant Dunbar of the Scots Greys, "who declines...." etc. It would appear that a few more of the appointments were also "declined".

In the summer of 1779, the Regiment was encamped on Lexden Heath, near Colchester, in brigade with the 3rd Dragoon Guards, 1st Royal Dragoons and the 15th and 21st Light Dragoons.

Subsequently, the Twentieth moved to the West of England, having its headquarters at Plymouth. The Regiment spent most of its service chasing smugglers along the coasts, a traditional employment for Dragoons on home service. The patrols were exceedingly unpopular among the residents of the coastal districts, large numbers of whom benefited in one way or another from these nefarious activities. The Royal Navy was hard pressed with only a few ships of the line in home waters and were frequently casting their eyes across the Channel for any signs of an invading army.

In July 1780 it was at Canterbury, with detachments at Chatham and other places along the Dover road. The Regiment was then commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Francis Gwyn, afterwards General Gwyn, aide-de-camp to King George III and Colonel of the 25th Light Dragoons. These long days of patrol on the coast, facing gales and strong winds, took its toll on the health of the men.

An order issued to the regiment whilst at Canterbury, illustrates the insalubrity of even the fairest portions of England two centuries ago; "*General Order, 5th February 1781. The men of the Twentieth Light Dragoons, who are recovering from the ague, will march from Canterbury to Margate, there to remain until further orders*". That these men formed no inconsiderable portion of the corps is proved by another General Order, issued a few days later, directing "*the quarters of the troops of the 20th Light Dragoons at Margate, to be enlarged to Broadstairs and adjacent villages, as may prove necessary*".

From Margate the 20th Light Dragoons moved in March 1781 to Lenham Heath, between Maidstone and Ashford, and there encamped. The duties included helping the civil powers in keeping law and order, they being sufficiently recovered by the sea air in Margate to take up normal daily routine. On the breaking up of the camp in the following October, it moved to Macclesfield and thence to Manchester.

These were long days for the Twentieth and only a small part of the barrack life was sustained under such conditions. From Lady Day to Michaelmas the "Reveille" was sounded by the trumpeters at half past five in the morning. The horse-lines in camp were 'mucked' out and the horses were 'dressed' (groomed) and the saddlery was cleaned. At eight o'clock the horses were watered and fed, in the meantime the troops ate what breakfast was on offer. The horses were then saddled up to the blare of the trumpet sounding "boot and saddle" and another day of patrolling began. Whenever possible, the horses were watered again at four o'clock in the afternoon and fed from feed-bags. When the troops returned to camp by eight o'clock in the evening, the horses were rubbed down and wisped, then "racked up" (filling the hay racks) for the night.

The horses, both sick and lame, which were left in the camp were generally "aired" each morning with a gentle exercising walk and then given treatment. In the winter months, the start of the day was a little later, "Reveille" being at quarter past six in the morning.

In March 1782 the regiment moved to Chelmsford and Bury St. Edmunds. In May of that year, it appears to have had two Troops at Hertford and four at Bury St. Edmunds. In June the Troops at Bury St. Edmunds proceeded to Lowestoft and encamped at Mutford Bridge. In the autumn of 1782 the regiment was concentrated with its headquarters at Bury St. Edmunds. In June 1783 the rest of its service was passed in supplying detachments for revenue duties on the Norfolk and Suffolk coasts where the smugglers continued their lucrative activities in landing contraband goods.

A combined Franco-Spanish expedition retook Minorca and another laid siege at Gibraltar which, with good fortune, managed to hold out until the Treaty of Versailles was signed. This ended the war and cuts in the fighting services were immediately put into effect.

The 20th Light Dragoons were once more disbanded at Bury St. Edmunds; the war with America ceased with the surrender and evacuation of New York which had been in our hands since 1776.

2. RAISED FOR SERVICE IN THE WEST INDIES

In 1789 the French economy collapsed, resulting in the overthrow of the monarchy and the outbreak of the French Revolution. A Republic was proclaimed in 1791 which forthwith declared war on all the monarchies of Europe. To encourage further agitation, hordes of armed and undisciplined revolutionaries poured across the frontier of the Austrian Netherlands.

Most of the French officers in the army had been aristocrats and gentlemen of means, who were tried before the Citizen courts and consequentially they were either guillotined or hanged.

The actual potential of the French Revolutionary army was, at that time, of little consequence and lacking in proper administration and discipline. The danger lay in the possibility of the unruly plague spreading its infection to other discontented peoples of Europe and beyond its frontiers. This became a matter of great anxiety for the peaceful nations and alarm travelled through the Continent.

It must be acknowledged that in 1789, it was beyond any reasonable thinking that Britain was capable of mounting an army for war. Pitt and his government were determined, if at all possible, to avoid any military involvement across the Channel. He decided the best way of avoiding such a commitment of sending troops, was to support the nations defending their own frontiers against the revolution by financial subsidies.

The Royal Navy would cut off the French overseas possessions and stop any ships taking supplies to the French ports. A greater watch would be taken to protect all British commerce on the high seas. In this way Pitt, being a financial expert, felt

confident that France could soon be brought to her knees by economic sanctions without the necessity of marching an army against France. Unfortunately such a policy was doomed to failure. Had Britain's army joined with her allies and crushed the militant French Republic at the outset, the rise of Napoleon and a war lasting a quarter of a century would never have occurred and the thousands of lives lost could have been saved.

The revolution was to bring about a situation in the West Indies which was going to deeply affect Britain and its colonies. The Declaration of the Rights of Man by the French Assembly led to unrest among the blacks and mulattos in the French West Indies, more particularly in San Domingo, which was the most important of the islands.

This unrest was encouraged by the revolutionaries in Paris, firstly by a Society known as the Negroes Friends which asserted the equality of the blacks and whites, and then by the French Assembly itself, which made this assertion a matter of Law.

In 1790 this gave rise to the most serious apprehensions in Jamaica where the Maroons had for long given trouble.

Jamaica was a Spanish possession from the time it was discovered by Colombus in 1494 until, in 1655, Penn and Venables, those great admirals of the Commonwealth took it from them. The natives of the island were originally slaves of the Spaniards and when the Dons were finally driven out of the island by the British in 1658, their slaves took refuge in the mountains and were a thorn in the side of British Colonists for many years.

Joined from time to time by runaway Negroes, they formed two distinct communities and their history is one of raids upon the settlers; murder, rapine and general

lawlessness. About the middle of the eighteenth century they were united into a kind of nationhood by a former slave named Cudjoe and were christened Maroons or hog-hunters, by the colonists.

Cudjoe, who seems to have been an individual of administrative and military ability, introduced a regular system of tactics which the nature of the country rendered easy.

Traversing Jamaica from east to west is the magnificent chain of the Blue Mountains, averaging from 7,000 to 8,000 ft in height. In these mountains there exist natural valleys or glens termed "cockpits" which are entered through narrow defiles and surrounded by precipitous limestone cliffs.

In these "cockpits" the Maroons took up their abode, establishing a system of signals by means of horns which enabled them to defend these narrow entrances by ambuscade. There they lived, quietly enough, while supplies lasted and then took to raiding the settlements for a fresh supply, carrying off cattle, corn and women, like the moss-troopers of old. Eventually they took up their position in the Trelawney district where there was good water and a fine line of retreat in case of necessity.

As the years passed by, so strong did the Maroons become that a treaty was entered into between their chiefs and King George II in 1738. By this treaty they acquired absolute freedom and several privileges. In return the Maroons made an undertaking to hand over runaway slaves and to help the king in wartime.

They were granted a settlement of 1,560 acres of land and arrangements were made for the residence of a white superintendent with a staff of assistants to live in the neighbourhood.

The Maroons remained quiet until the early 1790s when a certain Major James, who had made himself greatly respected, was deprived of his post on coming into an

estate. He was a remarkable man, son of the leader of a band of desperadoes known in colonial history as the "Black-shot" men. Eminently an athlete, James had won their hearts by physical superiority in all their games and exercises and his replacement did not please them. They began to kick over the traces and eventually ran amok altogether. They drove Captain Craskell, the new resident, out of the Maroon Town in July 1795 and, as there was no chance of their old favourite being reinstated, threw down the gauntlet of defiance on the 17th July. They told the whites that they were ready for them and that if they did not come, they would come down from the "cockpits" to them.

In the meantime, the Lieutenant-Governor and the House of Assembly had made application for an immediate increase in the military force there stationed, to the extent of three squadrons of cavalry and two additional regiments of infantry.

In acquiescence with this desire, a letter of service was issued early in 1791 to Lieutenant Colonel H. Farrington Gardner, of the 16th Light Dragoons, authorising him to recruit a light dragoon corps, 300 strong, for service in the Island of Jamaica, to be designated the Twentieth, or Jamaica Regiment of Light Dragoons. The appointments to the corps, which first consisted of four Troops, were announced in the "London Gazette" of 6th July 1792, as follows:-

> *20th or Jamaica, Light Dragoons - Lieutenant Colonel Henry Farrington Gardner from the 16th Light Dragoons, to be Lieutenant Colonel Commandant. Captain George Sandford, from the 2nd Royal North British Dragoons, to be Major. Captain T. Ivie Cooke from half-pay Simcoe's Cavalry and Captain T. Incledon to be Captains of Troops. Lieutenants George Anson, from the 10th Light Dragoons and W.C. Willmott from 3rd Foot, to be Lieutenants. Quartermasters Pryor*

from the 16th Light Dragoons, James Shadwell from 15th Light Dragoons and John Elliott, gentlemen, to be Cornets. Sergeant Major Samual Simpson, from 29th Foot to be Hon.Lieutenant and Adjutant. Reverend John Hughes, Clerk in Orders, to be Chaplain and Surgeons-Mate Lemprier, from 11th Foot, to be Surgeon.

The uniform was blue (grey for tropics) with yellow facings and silver lace.

Only four Troops were formed at first, two in England and two in Ireland. Lieutenants Francis Edward Lee Gwyn and Robert Rollo Gillespie joined from the 3rd Irish Horse. During the latter two Troops stay in Ireland, a Masonic Lodge No. 759 of the Irish Constitution was warranted on 8th March 1792, for the 20th Light Dragoons and lasted until some time just before July 1815 when, with so many other travelling Lodges, it was regarded closed.

The only two notices of the regiment in the War Office "Marching Orders" is an order in February 1792, directing Captain Sandford's Troop of Lieutenant Colonel Gardner's Regiment of Light Dragoons at Helstone in Cornwall, to hold itself in readiness to embark for its destination, as soon as transport for that purpose should be provided at Falmouth. Another order in May following, directing the Troop at Farnham to move to Petersfield, there to await instructions from the Officer Commanding at Portsmouth, relative to its embarkation. A muster roll taken some months later shows that the four Troops were at Spanish Town, Jamaica, in the autumn of 1792; and also shows that the non-commissioned officers and trumpeters had been chiefly supplied by the 15th and 16th Regiments of Light Dragoons and the men as follows: From regiments in England, 7th Light Dragoons, ten men; 10th Light Dragoons, nine men; 11th Light Dragoons, nine men; 15th Light Dragoons, ten men; 16th Light Dragoons, ten men.

From the regiments in Ireland, 8th Light Dragoons, seventeen men; 12th Light Dragoons, seventeen men; 13th Light Dragoons, sixteen men; 14th Light Dragoons, sixteen men; 17th Light Dragoons, sixteen men; 18th Light Dragoons, eighteen men; recruits three and one deserter from the 19th Light Dragoons in India. Total 147 men.

The 20th Light Dragoons set sail for San Domingo on 17th September 1792, leaving in two Wings, one from Falmouth and the other from Portsmouth. They arrived after an uneventful voyage at Barbados and awaited transportation to Jamaica.

During the action of San Domingo the 20th took no part. On the arrival of the regiment in Jamaica, the Lieutenant Governor was directed to notify the House of Assembly that its wishes had been met, that a corps of Light Cavalry had been specially raised for service in Jamaica, for the maintenance of which the Colony must provide as supernumerary to the British Establishment, and also that two additional regiments of foot had been ordered to the island from Nova Scotia.

This called forth the following, thoroughly characteristic, address, which duly figures in the Journals of the House of Assembly, under date, Sunday 9th December 1792:-

May it please your honour,

We are ordered to wait upon Your Honour and, in reply to your message of Tuesday last, to inform you that the regiment of cavalry having been raised and in part arrived at the request of this House for securing the internal safety of the colony at this alarming juncture, the House will provide for the whole expense of it from year to year, during the time it may be necessary to have the said regiment stationed on the island, although the terms and conditions are unprecedented in this colony, and what we

humbly conceive an infringement of our constitutional and inherent rights, and different from the terms in which the requisition for the said regiment was made; that this House consider that as they already contribute their full proportion to the support of the Empire, they are entitled to efficient protection from the British Government adequate to their local situation and circumstances, without being compelled to purchase the same for the protection of their lives and properties.

The rates of pay and subsistence for the several ranks of the regiment were fixed as below:-

	Pay per Day			Subsistence	
	£.	s.	d.	s.	d.
Lieutenant Colonel	1	4	6	18	6
Major	1	0	6	15	6
Captain		15	6	11	6
Lieutenant		9	0	7	0
Cornet		8	0	6	0
Chaplain		5	0	4	6
Adjutant		5	0	4	6
Surgeon		8	0	6	0
Surgeon-Mate		5	0	4	0
Quartermaster		6	6	4	6
Sergeant		2	9	2	3
Corporal		2	3	1	9
Trumpeter		2	3	1	9
Private		1	9	1	6

In the case of the non-commissioned officers and men, one half of the subsistence money was retained as stoppage for forage, but over and above their pay and the balance of the subsistence money, five shillings and four pence was paid weekly on

account of each man for rations and every non-commissioned officer and man received the sum of one pound eleven shillings and ten pence per annum, under the term of "grass-cutting" money.

The officers received a colonial allowance of £50 per annum in addition to pay and subsistence, at the rates specified. This, with non-effective and other charges, brought up the cost of the regiment to the Colonial Treasury to a sum of about £27,000 currency per annum.

Amongst other charges on first formation, in addition to the above, and exclusive of recruiting and transport from England, which were borne by the Home Government, appears the following:-

> *To purchase of 32 black pioneers (slaves) at £70 a head; ditto 300 troop horses at £45 each; ditto 24 cart-horses for the regiment, at £45 each. (These, it would seem, were subsequently replaced by bat-mules); ditto 300 sets of horse-furniture at £5. 16s. 9d each. Etc. Etc.*

On the 9th September, 1792, George Sandford was promoted from Major to Lieutenant Colonel, Thomas Ivie Cooke to be Major and George Anson to be Captain.

The climate told heavily upon the regiment on its first arrival, as might be expected. "Yellow Jack" took its toll in no uncertain manner. Amongst the early muster-rolls of the corps is one, taken long after date in the fashion of those days, which shows that within six months of its landing in Jamaica, the regiment, out of a total of two hundred of all ranks, had lost its Colonel and thirty-two non-commissioned officers and men and had half of its officers absent on sick leave. In addition there were

forty-seven non-commissioned officers and men, or twenty-five percent, sick in hospital on the day of the muster.

The negro insurrection on San Domingo brought peril, not only to the small French garrisons on that and neighbouring islands in the West Indies, but to all the planters. Intervention in San Domingo was taken, not by the home government of Pitt but by the Governor of Jamaica in response to the appeals for help made by the French colonists. This initiative by the Assembly was supported by the Home Government which diverted further reinforcements to Jamaica to enable a force to be organised for the occupation of San Domingo and were misled by the French emissaries, who were endeavouring to exploit it for their own ends.

Being no longer subject to the ties of patriotism, torn apart by the revolution and acknowledging no allegiance to the Republican government, they had no concern other than the security of their lives, property and position of office. Their action in appealing to the Governor of Jamaica, to whom they in fact surrendered their garrisons and ceded French territory in San Domingo, was repudiated by the French Republican government.

Deputies were hurriedly despatched to the islands to restore order by arming the Negroes and using them to put down the colonists. This resulted in complete chaos, with Negroes, half-whites and whites all fighting one another.

It was into this inferno that the British government committed a small British force, with no very clear directions as to what it was expected to do.

About this period an officer joined the Twentieth Light Dragoons, as a lieutenant, on promotion from the 6th Dragoon Guards (Carabineers), whose name is intimately connected with its early career during the next ten years. Robert Rollo Gillespie,

then aged twenty-five years, with eight years service, already had a notorious past as a young Cornet and had been chief actor in a painful tragedy.

A quarrel between some civilians and certain officers had resulted in a dual between Barrington (a stripling younger brother of Sir Jonah) and a Lieutenant McKenzie of the 3rd Irish Horse, a brother officer of Gillespie who acted as his second.

They met at the arranged place, shots were exchanged twice without effect and an attempt was then made to settle the affair. But Gillespie, who was very impetuous and hot-headed, thought the manner of such an ending to the dispute may incur the displeasure of his brother officers, the inference being that it may reflect on the honour of the regiment and he insisted on the duel proceeding. After much argument a violent scene ensued, ending by Barrington and Gillespie exchanging shots across a handkerchief - Barrington fell dead.

According to Sir Jonah Barrington's account, Gillespie then mounted his horse and fled, attended by a party of Irish Dragoon officers whom he had brought with him to the scene of action.

Eventually he surrendered and was tried for murder at Maryborough at the Summer Assizes of 1788, but despite the adverse summing up of Judge Bradstreet, the jury, which included several half-pay officers, brought in a verdict of "Justifiable Homicide" and the defendant was discharged upon his own recognisance to come up and plead the King's Pardon in the Court of the King's Bench, Dublin during the ensuing term.

The expedition sailed from Jamaica to San Domingo and landed in September 1793, on board one of the ships was Lieutenant Gillespie, who undertook the journey as a volunteer and not with his regiment, which remained in Jamaica. The British flag

was hoisted and formally annexed the French-held part of the island, which extended to the borders of Haiti, then held by Spain.

During Gillespie's stay in San Domingo, he greatly distinguished himself on this as on subsequent occasions after he had obtained his Troop at Port-au-Prince in 1794. It was here that he was fired at while swimming to shore with a flag of truce and was severely wounded. He also distinguished himself afterwards at the storming of Fort Bizotten and the attack on Fort l'Hopital, in the same year.

Nothing in the shape of actual service befell the Twentieth until the early part of the year 1795, when the Colony blundered into war.

3. JAMAICA - THE MAROON WAR

In April, the Earl of Balcarres, Colonel of the 63rd Foot and wounded at Ticonderoga, was made Governor of Jamaica and he took strong measures to supress what promised to be a very dangerous rebellion. When one considers the spread of anarchy and Republicanism, rife among the neighbouring islands, the situation was very frightening. He mustered the militia and gathered what troops he had to hand and prepared for what trouble was coming with the energy of an old soldier. He had already been gathering what information he could in respect of the passes and the features of the surrounding area of the "cockpits".

At the end of July there seemed to be prospects of a settlement but after an ill-judged act of severity, the flogging of a couple of Maroons by order of the magistrates of Montego Bay, the dissensions took the shape of open hostility and on the 12th August some black Militia were attacked, which fired the war.

Balcarres' plan was to surround the Maroon stronghold and attack it from various points. The 20th Light Dragoons, in company with the 17th Light Dragoons and a hundred men of the 62nd Foot, left Spanish Town and some black Militia followed. Their destination was the north side of the Maroon Town.

For several days on arrival, the troops were busy burning provisions and other supplies abandoned by the Maroons then, as the rains came in full force, the 20th and 17th Light Dragoons went into huts.

During this period a small Field Force was brought up with great difficulty by the gallant young Colonel of the 83rd Foot. A track had to be cut into the hillsides and the pioneers were obliged to stop work at times in the teeth of a tropical storm. The trumpeters of the 20th and 17th Light Dragoons kept sounding calls to direct the

workers towards their position. Next day a gun was hauled up and placed into a gun-pit.

The 20th troops had been looking around for loot and came across some valuable pieces of plate, while others were having fun with gaily flowered chintz nightgowns and dresses.

Colonel Sandford had been previously sent with a small force to take possession of the New Town and by some misinterpretation of the orders, coupled with a bad map, he had pushed on to the Old Town and fallen into an ambush. During the fight to get out of the situation, Colonel Sandford was killed and with him Quartermaster McBride fell mortally wounded and six privates of the 20th Dragoons fell dead. The 18th Light Dragoons lost eight men killed and thirteen men of the Horse Militia were also killed. Colonel Gallimore's body was never recovered, which added further grievance.

On entry into the New Town, one of the Dragoons found a copy of Wake's Catechism in a burning hut and he picked it up and placed it inside his jacket, just over his heart. In the defile where they were fired upon, a bullet struck the man in the chest, penetrating nearly two hundred pages of the book stopping just three leaves from the end.

The Maroons did not follow up their success. After the troops had retired, they went back into the Old Maroon Town and got drunk on the stocks of rum. When the British force finally advanced and occupied the Old Town, the bodies of Colonel Sandford and eighteen others were found and buried. The Maroons had abandoned all intention of defending the town and fled with all they could carry, back into the "cockpits".

The Governor, Balcarres, left the area and went down to the coast in September to make further arrangements, presumably for more troops, leaving Colonel Fitch of the 83rd Foot to carry out a plan of hemming in the enemy by a cordon of troops and barricades drawn round the cockpit.

Some parleys with the Maroons came to nothing and parties of troops were constantly falling into ambushes. In one of these affairs Lieutenant Tomlinson, of the Light Infantry, was decapitated and his head was hung on the branch of a tree. It was said at the time that the poor fellow had lost his spectacles and was so short-sighted that he missed the correct path.

A worse calamity was soon to follow for Colonel Fitch was reconnoitring in front of an advanced post, wearing a light striped linen jacket. In company with two British officers and two friendly Maroons, they were fired upon and Fitch was mortally hit in the pit of his stomach and two others were wounded.

Colonel Jackson of the Militia, the only one unhurt, ran back and found Fitch lying across a fallen tree in great agony. Drawing a dagger from his belt Jackson assured him that he would not let him fall into the hands of the merciless Maroons alive. He would deliver a friendly act that is more often performed for a brother officer than the British public is aware of. As the Maroons cocked their pieces for another volley, Jackson tried to pull him off the tree trunk and out of danger. Fitch resisted being moved, obviously in great pain and could not speak. As Jackson raised the body a ball struck him above the right eye, killing him instantly. Later, when his body was found, his head had been cut off and inserted into his own bowels.

Colonel Fitch was one of the most popular officers in the service and deeply mourned by the 83rd which he raised in Dublin in 1793.

On 22nd September the House of Assembly met in conference to find a way of ending the war. At this meeting it was decided to offer three hundred dollars to any person for taking or killing a Trelawney Maroon and half that amount for the death of any slave joining them. It was hoped that with this advent, a better system of warfare could be adapted which would bring the present action to a successful conclusion

A new Commander-in-Chief was appointed from the 13th Light Dragoons, Lieutenant Colonel Hon. George Walpole, with the rank of Major General. His first order was to abandon the cordon system as being impracticable. After establishing a chain of defence posts to cover the settlements, Walpole ordered all the Negroes to clear the bushes and undergrowth which could harbour an ambush and make tracks up the sides of a hill which commanded a view of almost all the interior of the cockpit itself.

The regiments of Light Dragoons were all well mounted, the commissary having purchased several hundred at a reasonable price but the nature of the fighting kept them out of the saddle for long periods.

Walpole seemed to think the cavalrymen were very adept at this kind of warfare for he selected men from these regiments for his bush fighting. Whether it was thought they were better camouflaged in the blue jackets rather than the scarlet of the infantry is not known. Perhaps the bulk of the infantryman's equipment prevented the stealth of movement in the bush. Events showed that his choice was usually for the light-framed horsemen who can move quickly without hindrance through straggly growth on the hillsides.

The Dragoons often referred to themselves as the Blue Dragoons. It was in 1784 that they changed from scarlet and the name may have been adopted at that period.

A few years hence would see them in grey for the tropics, when the jacket also lost its skirts to become coatees.

When the bush was sufficiently cleared, Walpole sent about seventy men of the 17th Light Dragoons, dismounted, under one of their officers, Lieutenant Richards, to climb the hill to the right of Guthrie's Defile. The summit of the hill overlooked the cockpit and the party had to find out if it was possible to negotiate the limestone cliffs and seek a way into the basin below.

After marching about a mile they began to mount the height and a small support group of ten men, under a sergeant, was sent to the left of Guthrie's Defile. If they were observed by the Maroons it might act as a feint, on the other hand they were always there as a reserve.

Up the main party swarmed, pushing through the wild cotton trees towards the thick pimento-covered summit where there would be plenty of cover. However the precipitous cliffs checked their progress and they were seen by the Maroons who opened fire.

Crouching behind rocks and bushes for cover, the Dragoons replied with their short carbines. Neither side did much damage as the positions on both sides were beyond effective range but the ammunition continued to be wasted. It did act as a moral victory for the soldiers when the Maroons realised that they were going to be fought in their own manner.

Mr. Richards, with his ammunition running short, sent a man down to the sergeant below for help. In the meantime, the sergeant had crossed a track at the mouth of Guthrie's Defile when a loud horn had sounded. Uncertain whether his officer had effected a way down into the basin, his party doubled into the Defile and there was a

crash of musket fire. Then there was silence and the man searching for the sergeant came across an alarming scene. The sergeant and his Dragoons were seen crumpled up on the ground without any signs of movement. They had been killed to the man. Some men, as their pouches had become empty had crept down the hill and were running towards their quarters for more ammunition when they heard the shattering gunfire.

Walpole had been witnessing the action and brought up some 20th and 13th Light Dragoons as reinforcements and was waiting for the heavy rain to cease before taking further steps to improve the situation. He then ordered a howitzer to be hauled to the top of the hill where it was positioned to fire into the basin. The hilltops echoed with the boom of its fire as the shells plumped down from the sky. Knowing that the exits on one side were bristling with bayonets, there was only one way to go. With such a persuader giving the Maroons a reminder that there was probably more to follow, they quickly sent their women and children into a distant valley, leaving much of their goods behind. The men were not long in following, while the Dragoons helped them on their way with withering rounds of fire from their carbines. They then took refuge on a hill further away, which to all appearances looked inaccessible, and watched the shells bursting below them. The Maroons felt confident that they could hold their ground on the hilltop.

However, they had not reckoned with the observational powers of Lieutenant Oswald Werge, of the 17th for as he watched the hillside he saw one of the Maroon women climbing up through the bushes with a large container of water. He quickly crept after her and discovered a path winding up the steep slope. He returned to his men and gathered a mixed force of Dragoons who, with swords and carbines in their hands, soon made their way to the top of the hill. Surprised and alarmed, the Maroons bolted down a very steep precipice to Ginger Town Bottom, from whence

they sallied against the Dragoons a number of times. Each time they were driven back with many losses. The Maroons then retired into a range of hills some distance away, no doubt to lick their wounds and reassess the predicament in which they found themselves.

With the 62nd Regiment of Foot behind them, the force moved forward continuously flushing out the enemy, until it became a never ending succession of "cockpits" being abandoned. It was almost becoming a comedy of pursuit. In the end General Walpole met all his officers to discuss the best means of bringing the Maroons to see the folly of the war and bring about a speedy cessation of the conflict.

A chance conversation by one of the officers with a Spaniard suggested a means which, however repugnant to British taste, certainly brought matters to a head. To save further lives of British soldiers, it was decided to employ a force of trained Spanish chasseurs with bloodhounds from a close neighbouring island. This idea was put to the Governor and after a long debate in the House of Assembly as to cost etc., the scheme was given their backing.

Anxious to see the new allies at work, General Walpole drove to Seven Rivers in a post-chaise and watched the Spanish huntsmen parade with their hounds. To put them through their paces, two oxen had their throats slashed with a machete and while the dying beats were still standing, the hounds were let loose. They rushed at the oxen and soon tore them to pieces, wallowing in the blood and looking a ferocious sight. Walpole was very impressed but when the hounds saw his horses they began to strain at the leash and the Spaniards had their work cut out in controlling them. The General beat a hasty retreat back to his post-chaise and drove off, saving his horses from a frightening situation.

The next day the force gathered and advanced towards the "cockpit" with forty Spaniards and more than a hundred hounds following in the rear. The troops began the march, with detachments climbing either side of the high ground, overlooking the basin of the "cockpit". A subaltern, with thirty men of the 17th and ten more from the 20th Light Dragoons, acting as a vanguard, were suddenly surprised by a large party of Maroons under the leadership of a man called Johnson. There was a sharp skirmish and the hounds were soon brought forward.

The Spaniards shouted and fired their fusils to encourage the hounds, which were barking and howling to be set free. Hearing them, the Maroons ran back and Johnson joined forces with another leader, named Montagu. The presence of hounds was causing some apprehension. The officer had been hit with a ball-shot in the skirmish and put a sergeant in charge of the advance unit. He immediately ordered the men to draw their swords and the gallant cavalrymen charged the Maroons to the front causing great slaughter and routed them. On the 18th December, after advancing about a dozen miles, the advance guard came up on the blacks and opened fire. The men were then ordered to cease fire and it was intimated to the Maroons that the British were willing to make peace and save any further bloodshed. At first the Maroons seemed greatly surprised at this offer and the horns began to sound, calling in the other leaders to talk about it. There appeared to be a great deal of activity amongst them. Mr Oswald Werge took matters into his own hands and pluckily clambered down the hill and, ignoring the muskets, advanced towards them, crying out "I bring you peace". At first the Maroons hung back but eventually one of them came forward and shook hands with the Lieutenant.

An impromptu truce ensued, both sides being wary and distrustful, keeping their arms handy and lying beside them all day. The Maroons asked for the sentries to be withdrawn from the water while they quenched their thirst, after which the 62nd

and the Dragoons filled their canteens. There was no more fighting. The hounds had proved their worth and neither side were anxious to prolong the struggle.

Walpole concluded the treaty by which the Maroons submitted on condition that they would not be sent out of Jamaica. The House of Assembly promptly violated the terms and had the Maroons shipped off to Nova Scotia. Many of the troops were disgusted by such treatment of the enemy and more so was General Walpole. He, quite rightly, refused to accept the Sword of Honour which had been voted him by the House of Assembly for his successful campaign and the ending of the war.

News came through that as from the 1st August 1795, hair powder would be abolished, leaving queues a natural colour. This was due to the scarcity of flour.

4. SAN DOMINGO

During the trouble in Jamaica the neighbouring islands were experiencing a share of the conflict, on a much grander scale, between the Republicans and Negroes in San Domingo and Grenada.

In 1796 some regiments of cavalry were despatched from Jamaica to San Domingo that included the 17th and 18th Light Dragoons who went through much arduous service before returning home.

Grenada, one of the most beautiful of the islands of the West Indies, was formerly the home of the Caribs until the French exterminated them during the seventeenth century, it was restored to the British in 1783.

A French Force had landed on 2nd March 1795 at La Bay and massacred many colonists and stirred up the blacks against the British. A mulatto named Fédon was the particular instrument in this case and for pure atrocity his actions were hard to beat. He captured the Governor and held forty-two whites as hostages.

At home a fleet of transports, carrying Sir Ralph Abercromby's army, were gathering in the ports. The ships of the line included the Hermione, a thirty-two gun frigate, commanded by Captain P. Wilkinson, the same ship which took the 20th Jamaica Light Dragoons to the West Indies. Two years later a ghastly mutiny and massacre took place on the Hermione, now commanded by Captain Hugh Pigot, one of the greatest martinets in the service. The crew attacked the officers and entered the Captain's cabin where he was stabbed and forced through the cabin windows into the deep. As he was falling, his voice could be heard, invoking all hell and vengeance on the perpetrators as he went astern.

When the troops had embarked, it is said on the 21st September 1795, a dispute arose about the soldiers being amenable to naval discipline whilst in passage. The military and naval authorities argued it out at such length that it was not until the 16th November 1795 that Admiral Christian finally put to sea.

The fleet left port and, on entering the Channel, ran into the full force of a November gale. Making no headway, the ships put back to port on three occasions, ending with a terrible list of casualties. So fierce was the tempest and so great the loss that it was long known as "Admiral Christian's Storm". Ships were driven ashore, others foundered on the rocks and the Commander-in-Chief, General Abercromby did not sail until March 1796.

Another division of troops destined for the West Indies were on board ship on the 10th January 1796, at anchor in the Cove of Cork. Among these forces were four troops of the 17th Light Dragoons which formed a dismounted brigade of cavalry under the command of Major General Whyte. With this brigade were also the 14th 18th 21st and part of the 26th Light Dragoons. Sailing round from Portsmouth was the other half of the 26th Light Dragoons with their horses and hoping to join them in the Cove. The latter left port only to be driven back again by those terrible winter gales. Such was the force of these winds that the ship carrying the 26th and their horses was battered and mauled by the rough seas, so badly that the horses were lost. The beaches along the beautiful Cornish coastline were strewn with the carcasses of horses, washed up on shore. They were identified by the regimental number, D26, which was branded on the hooves. The ships eventually sailed on the 21st February 1796, having suffered great loss.

Eventually the army reached San Domingo where some of the troops were then sent on to Grenada. It was here that General Colin Lindsay arrived from St.Lucia with a

handful of Artillerymen and a small number of the 9th and 68th regiments, with which he put in an attack against the rebels. The rains came somewhat earlier than usual and all military operations had to cease. The black Militia he had for support were panic-stricken and retired "en-masse" into the ships which had brought Lindsay's force and were still lying in the Bay. Apart from the killed and wounded, there were casualties from the yellow fever. In a letter to the Governor of the island complaining about the Militia, he requested supplies of blankets and shirts for his soldiers, stating that when his men stripped all impedimenta from their backs and went into action, the black Militia had stolen their packs and haversacks. Poor Lindsay was under such stress and anxiety with the state of events that he shot himself the following day. Eventually, in the following March, a solid force came from Barbados and Brigadier General Nichols lost no time in getting to grips with the enemy.

During the assaults on the Republicans, the brother of the infamous Fédon was killed which brought about the slaughter, in cold blood, of about fifty prisoners of war. There were heart-rending reports as to the manner in which the victims were put to death. The Negroes perpetrated all those nameless horrors which ensue when rebels vent their anger. A mulatto was seen parading on the street with a white man's head on a tray, crying out "Viva la Republique".

With a number of British infantry regiments, supported by a couple of artillery batteries and with the Dragoons and Light cavalry to add the "coup de grâce", General Nichols and Campbell led their men on with great élan and hotly pursued the enemy. There was no quarter and when the troopers were released, thankful to be astride the pigskin once more, the whirl of sabres sliced through the scattering Republicans. Sir Evan Lloyd, recorded that within "*the space of a few hundred yards*" they had the satisfaction of seeing the earth ridden of 300 incarnate fiends.

Fédon retreated into the hills but his following soon surrendered and in June 1796, the French commandant, Jossey, capitulated. Fédon, with characteristic barbarity, murdered all the whites which he held hostage at Morne Quaquo, before he took to his heels. There was never a satisfactory account of what really happened to him.

An important addition took place in the cavalry regiments, namely, the appointment of veterinary surgeons. This was "*an inducement for Medical Gentlemen to pursue the Veterinary Art. It is liberally proposed to make them commissioned officers and to give them seven shillings a day*". Mr. Edward Coleman, professor of the Veterinary, Inspector to the Honourable Board of Ordnance, was gazetted Veterinary General to the Army, with the authority of appointing surgeons to different regiments.

This move sounded the death knell of the old system of 'rule of thumb' by the farriers, which must have cost the army a fortune in cast horses.

In spite of the trying conditions of the climate and the prevalent yellow fever, the severe discipline did not relax and the lash was in continuous use. The previous punishment was abolished for Light Dragoons, which was known as "picketing". It was a barbarous method of hanging a man to a high post by one wrist for a quarter of an hour at a time. The only relief being to rest his bare feet on a peg which had been driven into the ground. This process inflicted great torture and not infrequently resulting in rupture and lameness for life.

5. HOME THEN TO THE MEDITERRANEAN

After tranquillity was restored in Jamaica, the 20th Light Dragoons were once again quartered at Spanish Town. There is no record of any special movements of the regiment but the muster-rolls of the period testify how severely both men and horses, especially the latter, suffered in the warfare and miserable climate.

In 1795 alone, it was estimated to have cost 10,000 soldiers lives in the West Indies from the dread fever and other diseases. As each regiment of the 'Blue Dragoons' (a name referring to the colour of their jackets) left the West Indies for the homeland, they must have hailed the day of embarkation with great rejoicing. It was also a melancholy day for some who were bidding farewell to their comrades, not only to those who had found their final resting place in the islands but to other pals, who for one reason or another, elected to remain and volunteered to transfer to another regiment. Quite often this was the only way to bring a regiment up to an active establishment.

The feeble skeleton of the 17th Light Dragoons bears testimony to the terrible casualties suffered by the regiment on its return in 1796. In spite of a draft from the 18th Light Dragoons, the requirement to bring them up to establishment was 400 recruits.

From a list of officers in the West Indies, one finds the names of 18 killed in action and 198 who died from unstated causes. The 9th, 16th and four other skeleton regiments of infantry were ordered to recruit boys from the age of thirteen to eighteen. These were "*to be well-fed and have walking drill only, for some time*".

The army had been cut to the bone in stringent economies since 1793 and the physical state of soldiers being attested at the end of the eighteenth century fitted a later description of "the thin red line". Some changes took place in the 20th when Rollo Gillespie returned to the regiment. He had been Brigadier-Major to General Wilford and had distinguished himself at San Lucia in 1796 and in subsequent operations in San Domingo. Lieutenant Colonel Churchill was absent from the regiment, assuming his Army rank of Major General and taking up duty as a General Officer.

In 1797 Major General Lord Heathfield was appointed Colonel of the Regiment, in succession to Major General Sir Charles Grey. Two years later Major Robert Rollo Gillespie assumed command and it would appear through the sponsorship of the House of Assembly, which makes interesting reading:-

Dated 20th November 1799

May it please your Honour,

We are ordered by the House to wait upon your Honour and inform you, that if His Majesty should graciously be pleased to appoint a second Lieutenant Colonel to the 20th or Jamaica Light Dragoons, this House will provide for the expense thereof, and assure your Honour, that this House, being sensible of the care and attention of Major Gillespie to the health and discipline of the regiment since it has been under his command, contemplate with satisfaction the probability of an officer, who has served with such distinguished credit in various high situations, will be advanced to professional rank; and that they hope, that the promotion to take place in the 20th Light Dragoons, may be

confined to the officers of the said regiment, to which they are justly entitled by their long service in the Island.

In accordance with this wish, Gillespie was appointed Lieutenant Colonel on the 25th December 1799. According to the Army List this took effect the day after the letter of request was sent, being the 21st November 1799.

What the state of the regiment may have been at this period, no records remain but from the evidence of discipline in other corps, one cannot assume that the 20th were a paragon of virtue. Overseas stations were not particularly favourable to high discipline where cheap drink was easily available, however the administration was of a high standard. The evidence is seen in the only remaining documents, the muster rolls and pay lists, which are entirely in manuscript and are an example of neatness and accuracy for any regiment to follow. There can be no doubt about the orderliness within the regiment.

Towards the end of the year 1801, the Royal Navy had now become capable of protecting the Island from invasion, which induced the House of Assembly to consider easing the heavy tax burden by getting rid of the 20th Light Dragoons and made application for the regiment to be withdrawn.

The following entries appear in the minutes of their Journal after a meeting held at the beginning of December 1801:-

PRAYER

9th December 1801

To His Honour Sir George Nugent, Etc.

May it please your Honour,

We, His Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Assembly of the Island of Jamaica, ever ready to alleviate the heavy pressure of taxes under which the people of this Island have been laboured, beg leave to report to your Honour, that it is our opinion that this country ought not to be burdened with any expense so very considerable as that caused by the 20th Light Dragoons, it having been found that regular cavalry is a description of troops little calculated for the defence of this island.

Impressed with these weighty considerations, we feel it our duty to request that your Honour will be pleased to represent to His Majesty's Ministers, our anxious desire to be relieved from the expense incident to the support of this establishment.

F Smith Esq.

The House passed a vote of thanks to all the officers and men of the 20th. At the same time the Assembly must have wanted to smooth the way by passing a grant of money for a presentation sword for Lieut.Colonel Gillespie.

The Message of the same date as the above reads:-

May it please your Honour,

We are ordered by this house to wait upon and to express to your Honour the high sense they entertain of the merits and uniform good conduct of

Lieutenant Colonel Gillespie, the officers, non-commissioned officers and privates of the 20th or Jamaica Light Dragoons, during their long service in this Island.

The Resolution of the same date:-

Resolved, nem.con. - That the Receiver-General of this Island be authorised to pay to the order of Lieutenant Colonel Gillespie, 20th or Jamaica Light Dragoons, the sum of 100 guineas, to be, by him, expended in the purchase of a sword, as a testimony of the high esteem in which his conduct is held in this House..

In reply, a letter from Lieutenant Colonel Gillespie was ordered to be entered in the Journals (minutes) of the House of Assembly:-

Spanish Town

To F. Smith, Esq.

Sir,

I am this moment favoured with your letter. I with gratitude accept the sword voted to me by the House of Assembly. Such a mark of their approbation is highly flattering and I have only to add, that I should be at all times ready to draw it in defence of so esteemed and so respectable a colony.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient and very humble Servant

(Signed) R.R.. Gillespie,

Lieutenant Colonel, Commanding 20th L.D..

So, in accordance with these wishes the regiment was withdrawn. After leaving behind such men as were willing to volunteer for transfer to another regiment, the 20th or Jamaica Light Dragoons bade a final adieu to the Island on the 28th June 1802 and embarked for England.

On arrival in Southampton, the regiment marched to Guildford Barracks where the following few months were spent in recruiting.

The uniform was altered at this time, the skirts of the jackets were cut away, leaving a type of shell jacket, buttoned and frogged at the front. The new helmet was of a very stylish type, shaped like a bowler hat in polished leather. It was furnished with a crest of bearskin, running from front to back, with a yellow puggree encircling and a white out of scarlet plume protruding from a socket on the left side. Two prints, one showing a metal badge underneath a plume and the other, a much earlier painting, shows a badge at the front with the numeral XX and LD underneath, the crocodile of the Jamaica Dragoons being left off. At the rear dangled two small tassels, being a token of the neck cover used in bad weather. The pantaloons were of white doe skin with short black knee boots. A white shoulder belt and a scarlet with centre stripe of yellow girdle, completing what must have been one of the most picturesque uniforms ever worn and evincing all the drab changes that followed.

In 1802 sleeve chevrons were introduced, for non-commission officers, to be worn on the upper arm. At the same time the 20th deleted 'Jamaica' from the title and from then were styled as The 20th Regiment of Light Dragoons.

With recruiting going well, the regiment was brought up to the normal establishment for Dragoons and by the summer of 1803 they moved west along the

south coast to Dorchester with Troops also at Weymouth. The duties included assisting the revenue men in their continuous fight against smugglers and at the same time their eyes were ever focused on the Channel. Afterwards the 20th were on the move once more when they left Dorchester and marched to Southampton. Detachments of Troops were then sent to Ringwood, Wimbourne and adjoining places.

There must have been a certain amount of friction between the officers after Gillespie took command for, on return of the regiment to England, an accusation was made against him by Major Allen Cameron which led to a court-martial. This took place at Colchester and is explained as follows:

The Horse Guards, Whitehall, published this letter on 23rd July 1804, after the findings of the court-martial were known:-

The following copy of a letter from the Judge Advocate-General, is to be read at the head of every regiment and entered in the regimental order-books.

By order of H.R.H. The Commander-in-Chief

(Signed) Harry Calvert, Adjutant-General.

Judge Advocate-General's Office

Dated July 1803

Sir

Having had the honour of laying before the King, the proceedings of a General Court-Martial, held at Colchester on Friday the 29th of last month and continued by adjournment till the 17th of this instant July, for the trial of Lieutenant Colonel Robert Rollo Gillespie, of the 20th or Jamaica

Regiment of Dragoons, upon the following charge preferred against him by Major Allen Cameron, of the same regiment, viz:-

Signing false returns in the Island of Jamaica, where he, the Lieutenant Colonel R.R. Gillespie, was commanding the 20th Light Dragoons and thereby obtaining monthly for the following food, viz., from the 25th day of November 1800 to 25th December 1801, both days inclusive, allowances for men stated to belong to the said regiment then under his command, beyond the effective strength thereof in the said island. And likewise obtaining, from 25th of November 1800, to 25th December 1801, both days included, allowances for commissioned and non-commissioned officers and quartermasters belonging to the said regiment then under his command, beyond the allowances they were entitled to receive for the above period.

I have to acquaint Your Royal Highness that His Majesty has been pleased entirely to approve the opinion of the court-martial, whereby Lieutenant Colonel R R. Gillespie is most honourably acquitted and which opinion is conceived in the following terms, viz.:-

The court-martial having duly weighed the evidence in support of the charge preferred against Lieutenant Colonel Robert Rollo Gillespie, of the 20th Light Dragoons, is of the opinion that he is Not Guilty of the charge preferred against him and doth therefore most honourably acquit him inasmuch as he appears to have acted entirely for the good of the service, from long established custom and in the instance of the regiment which he commanded, with the sanction of the Commander of the island and the States thereof.

I am further commanded to acquaint Your Royal Highness, that His Majesty, taking notice that Major Cameron has not been able to substantiate the very serious charge deliberately preferred by him against his commanding officer, viz., 'Signing False Returns', has thought fit that it be intimated to the said Major Allen Cameron, 20th Light Dragoons, that His Majesty has no further occasion for his services.

I have etc. etc.,

(Signed) Chas. Morgan.

It seems that the age-old custom of drawing rations for dead men was condoned by the King and no account of Major Cameron's loyal service was taken into consideration.

Gillespie, no doubt, did sign false returns for money which he was not entitled to receive but because it had been used for the good of the regiment, so he said, and not gone into his own pocket, that was thought not to be dishonourable. Corruption it seems was widespread. It was a sad episode in the annals of the regiment but more so for two brother officers and Scots. The justice of it all must have been sadly felt by the Clan Cameron.

Soon after, Lieutenant Colonel Gillespie exchanged to the 19th Light Dragoons. He embarked for India to join his new regiment where his further exploits at Cornelis, in leading the successful storming party, led to the conquest of Java. He also stormed the fort at Jacarta and thereby saved the lives of all the British on the island of Sumatra. Ten years after leaving the 20th Gillespie met his death before the Fort of Kalunga in Nepal. He died as he had lived, a brave soldier who dared and which carried all before him. He found his grave in the service of his country and was buried with the smoke of battle still drifting in the air.

Napoleon's setback in Egypt brought about a settlement for peace by the signing of the Treaty of Amiens.

In 1803 the 20th Light Dragoons moved from Colchester to Ipswich and fortunately suffered no reduction in the purge of government economy. It still had to make up a number of recruits to reach the establishment level after returning from the West Indies.

Lieutenant Colonel Charles Taylor exchanged to the 20th from the 7th and Robert Wilson, a 15th Light Dragoon and acting as an Inspecting Field Officer, was permitted to purchase a Lieutenancy Colonelcy in the 19th Light Dragoons and then exchanged into the 20th. He became the second Lieutenant Colonel to Charles Taylor.

A new training manual was introduced by the Duke of York whereby many movements were carried out by trumpet calls, principally to speed up the deployment of cavalry Troops from columns in line, the favourable position for a charge.

As yet only a few calls sounded, but this was to prove the knell of the drummers, with the exception of those playing "musik". In the past, many verbal orders had been misheard or had not carried to the ranks above the din of gunfire but the shrill notes of the trumpet travelling from the commanding officer's trumpeter and then repeated by the Troop trumpeters, improved communication considerably.

It no longer proved a problem when troops were dispersed in accommodation, a trumpet call could rally men long before the sergeants, going the rounds to all the inns and lodging houses, could muster the men.

This method of command was to improve and extend to a vocabulary covering all orders from officers, both in the field and on the barrack square. Furthermore, the bugle was introduced for the field calls and those of such an urgency, like fire (in the combustion sense) because the tone carried much further than the trumpet.

Napoleon was now elected as the First Consul of France and was virtually a dictator who never ceased to show hostile designs against Britain. He reinforced the French attempts to regain San Domingo by sending an expedition to the West Indies. The French in India were moving to oust the army of the East India Company by inciting the native princes to act against the British and trained some of their forces, chiefly in gunnery. Britain became so annoyed that it was only a matter of time before the government declared war on the French. In the meantime all measures of disarmament were halted and the Army and Royal Navy were put on alert. Britain finally declared war on France on the 16th May 1803.

The 20th were now under intensive training, Colonels Taylor and Wilson realising that the young recruits needed all the experience on manoeuvres to prepare for war. Wilson advocated the appointment of officers who were war veterans on half pay, to be given a higher rank and brought in on full pay.

In 1805, the British force in the Mediterranean was to be reinforced. At this time it consisted of six infantry regiments under General Fox at Gibraltar and, in addition, 652 gunners of the Royal Artillery and 209 sappers of the Royal Engineers, making a total of 4,185 rank and file. A much larger and mixed force under Major General Villettes was at Malta. This included the island troops of the Royal Malta Regiment and two battalions of Maltese Provincials. The British Foot regiments were the 20th, 27th, 35th and 61st, the Corsican Regiment, Chasseurs Brittaniques, Watteville's,

Dillon's and Froberg's Regiment made up the rest, giving a total of 7,261 rank and file.

Early in 1805 the Government decided upon sending a small body of troops to the Mediterranean, to act in concert with the Russians and Neapolitans in Italy, should the opportunity arise. The command was given to Sir James Craig.

In March 1805, the regiment proceeded, under Lieutenant Colonel Taylor, to the docks but to the dismay of the left wing, only three squadrons of the right embarked.

The remainder of the regiment bade farewell to their comrades and cheered them from the quayside, then turned their backs on the port and marched back to Ipswich, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Wilson. It was a sad day for the remaining two squadrons who thought they were being deprived of going on service. It now meant more training with the brigade under Lord Paget but it was for a short duration, when the Wing moved to Northampton.

The Mediterranean force which gathered at Spithead consisted of:-

20th Light Dragoons with 320 dismounted men; 1st Battalion 39th Foot, 722 men; 58th Foot, 982 men; 81st Foot, 844 men; the Royal Artillery with 386 gunners; Royal Engineers, 14 sappers and the Royal Staff Corps; a total of 4,114 rank and file. The fleet of transports put to sea on the 15th April 1805 with a fair wind to take them through the Channel.

Hearing that the French warships had passed through the Straits of Gibraltar, the convoy, which had been keeping close to the coastline of Portugal, ran for shelter into the estuary of the Tagus. In order not to compromise the neutrality of Portugal, no communication was permitted with the shore and every precaution was taken

with look-outs to prevent a surprise. Nothing of note occurred and so on the 10th May the convoy put to sea again in the hope of a safe passage.

Proceeding to Gibraltar, the transports passed Nelson's squadron, lying off Cape St. Vincent, on the morning of the 11th May 1805. The soldiers were looking across the waters at the British squadron, with H.M.S. Victory in the middle of the warships. Nelson had left the Mediterranean after patrolling outside Toulon, where the French fleet was at anchor. Admiral Villeneuve had departed for the Atlantic and Nelson, anxious for the British convoy carrying 5,000 troops, left his station to ensure that they did not fall into enemy hands. Nelson then received information that the French fleet was steering for the West Indies and, as soon as the convoy was well on its way, he clapped on full sail to follow the French. What Nelson had heard was part of a ruse to lure him away from the Channel and when the bait was taken, Villeneuve turned about and made for the French coast. He was intercepted by Admiral Calder off Cape Finisterre and, losing his nerve, made haste for Cadiz and took refuge with the Spanish fleet.

Nelson, who was following with full sail, was soon outside Cadiz, prepared for action. Napoleon struck his camp at Boulogne to engage the Russians and Austrians at Austerlitz and, before marching, he ordered his Admiral to put to sea and fight.

On the 21st October 1805, the combined fleets of France and Spain were intercepted by Nelson and decisively defeated off Cape Trafalgar, leaving British mastery of the seas and the nation secure from invasion.

In the meantime the convoy carrying the 20th Light Dragoons had reached Gibraltar where they stayed until the end of June, after which the convoy sailed to Malta and the troops disembarked.

Five months were spent in Malta practising tactics, having drills and inspections, whilst the authorities were in communication with the Russian army under Generals Lacy and D'anrep in the Greek islands.

Active efforts were made by the Staff to procure horses from Sicily and Sardinia, to mount the Dragoons and the Artillery gun batteries. Various small combined operations had taken place in the western part of the Mediterranean but with too few troops to carry out the allotted tasks, hence the reinforcements of which the 20th Light Dragoons were the only cavalry. This force was for the protection of the Kingdom of Naples, which included Sicily, the temporary home of the Neapolitan Court.

The troops finally re-embarked at the end of October 1805 and, after tacking for about ten days within sight of Malta, succeeded in reaching Cape Passaro where the Russian fleet, under Admiral Craig, was met. The allied forces then proceeded to the Bay of Naples, where they landed on the 20th November.

Leaving the three squadrons of the 20th Light Dragoons there, we must now turn to the other two squadrons of the 20th whose officers, being deprived of the opportunity to accompany the Mediterranean force, were now champing at the bit for action elsewhere.

Holland at this time, being under the thrall of Napoleon, was nominally at war with Britain. Like those of the French, her overseas possessions were legitimate targets for attack and capture. The most important of the Dutch colonies was the Cape of Good Hope, which would pose a threat to British ships, en route for India, if it fell into the hands of the French.

6. THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE

The squadrons of the 20th, under the command of Sir Robert Wilson, marched from Northampton to Portsmouth and handed over their horses to another regiment. They were to join a secret expedition under Sir David Baird, with the Royal Navy under the command of Sir Home Popham.

It was not until the two hundred men of the 20th were already aboard that they knew of the destination. There was an immediate set-back before the convoy left Portsmouth, as a dispatch arrived from Admiral Calder stating that the French fleet, which had escaped Nelson's watch, had made for the West Indies but was now returning and Calder had chased them into Cadiz. So the voyage to the Cape of Good Hope, for that was their destination, must wait for a more opportune time.

On board were the 1st Battalion 59th Foot and some detachments of H.M. Regiments in India - the 24th, 38th, 71st, 72nd, 83rd and the 93rd Foot Regiments with three batteries of the Royal Artillery and a number of Royal Staff Corps.

The convoy sailed for the Cove of Cork where it was to pick up more men but Sir David Craig was ordered not to assemble another expedition but to take those already on board in the Cove of Cork and put to sea. The convoy sailed from the Cove on the 31st August 1805 and, with a gentle breeze astern pushing them all the way, they arrived off Madeira on the 28th September. There were sixty-one transports, escorted by nine men-of-war, all at anchor while stores and fresh water were replenished from the shore.

The fleet put to sea once more. Being plagued by hazards and discomforts which were common on sea journeys, with men sick and generally unhappy aboard a rolling ship, it was a busy time for the medical staff to treat them. They were dosed

with medicines which seemed calculated to finish them off, though surprisingly, most of them pulled through the ordeal and were made well again.

To get rid of the bugs, lice and fleas, Colonel Wilson had his ship fumigated with gunpowder, brimstone and pitch. From his diary he writes that he had not entirely escaped the general infection on board and suffered from dizziness and violent headaches. He also noted that his wife Jemima was constantly in his dreams and thoughts throughout the whole voyage. He had bought some candied mangoes when in Madeira and wished "*Jem and the brats*" could share them with him.

The men of the regiment would also be missing their families but a soldier's life is one of depravity and a drink was the usual cure. The Colonel greatly disliked drunkenness and discouraged it; though he spared the lash, he would not tolerate unruliness. On more than one occasion when a man had received a sentence of lashes, the punishment was not carried out. Rather he handed the man over to his comrades and told them to give him a good 'booting' for bringing them and the regiment into disgrace.

A cook who had stolen the regimental wines was sentenced to receive a dose of strong emetic to scour his bowels and when he was being violently sick, the band played the 'Rogues March'! On going aboard one of the other ships, a man serving there was recognised to have been the same man that Wilson had dismissed from the regiment for theft. He enquired of the man and learned that he had now made good and had "acquired again a very good character".

Colonel Wilson always held firmly to his belief that discipline did not require brutality but depended more on fair treatment and encouraged an 'esprit de corps'. He looked to his officers to set the example and be tolerant with those under their command.

The convoy put into San Salvador (Bahia) in Brazil, on the 10th November 1805, to the relief of many of the soldiers. Wilson went ashore to purchase horses but without much success. Water and provisions were brought on board along with about one hundred horses after which the fleet weighed anchor, much to the satisfaction of those on board who were not permitted on shore except on duty.

Colonel Wilson received a request from the naval commander of the 'Diomede', a sixty-four gun man-of-war, for an instructor with the broadsword. He selected Sgt. Landsheit to put the midshipmen through their paces and it was during this duty that Landsheit witnessed the loss of two Indiamen, which were wrecked on a rocky island that barely surfaced the water. Fortunately all the passengers and crew were saved without difficulty with the exception of three passengers. Landsheit writes, "*nor would these have perished but for the intemperance of two and the misguided, and fatal, avarice of the third*". It was Brigadier General York to whom Landsheit refers, "*because he so loaded himself with doubloons, that falling short of his leap from the ship's bowsprit to the rock, he sank like a stone and never rose again*".

Apart from this misfortune, nothing of any consequence happened during the rest of the voyage to the Cape except for, "*the usual rough sports when crossing the line*". There were the usual gales and calms and through all these trying periods, Colonel Wilson went to great pains to occupy the minds of both officers and men. He wrote memoranda on tactics for the instruction of all, his written orders on the forthcoming campaign stated that "*violence against their persons (the civilians) or plunder of property is death without trial*".

Musketry practice helped to keep the men fit as well as improving their aim to be good shots. He preached a sermon on Sundays to help the spiritual needs of some to

give them faith in all their doings. The men were encouraged to rise early by the rolling of drums and the trumpets added to the morning chorus of awakening.

The Colonel realised that the conduct of his men in battle was important for his own reputation. His faith in the men reflected in the zeal and pleasure in which they carried out all the duties in a soldier-like manner. He had royal friends but, being middle-class and a Whig, he lacked the solid patrons which mattered so much in an age of influence, so he had to do well.

The convoy was nearing San Salvador (Bahia) in Brazil and he was anxious to find suitable horses to mount his Dragoons. When the fleet put into port on the 10th November 1805, Colonel Wilson went ashore and set about the task of finding good bred horses that were capable of carrying his men, for he knew that in battle much depended on them. "*It was the difference between defeat and glory*" he wrote, "*I have toiled severely, being always on my legs or on horseback for the purchase of horses; beside the trouble of getting money from the commissariat and that of writing drafts for payment, arranging for forage, etc. I have lost no opportunity of promoting public service by want of activity or diligence and indeed my own honour is much implicated in the success of my present efforts*". Wilson was forbidden by the Portuguese government to buy horses outside San Salvador itself, but he accepted the responsibility for disobeying this order. When General Baird warned him that he would be disowned if he got into trouble he still did not waver from his purpose. "*I could not*" he explained, "*tolerate the idea of being a mere spectator when fortune presented me with an occasion of being a distinguished actor*". He further wrote, "*I could not bear the thought of having left my family and passed so many thousand miles with various anxieties to reach the goal without being noticed as one of the emulous competitors for the prize of honour*". Sadly, he was to remain a spectator.

Wilson always wore his Maria Theresa Cross and found it a great help because the inhabitants took it to mean that he was no heretic but a Roman Catholic like themselves. He was also helped by being a Freemason in the Regimental Lodge, 'thereby having the best of both worlds'. Writing of this fact he states, "*No sooner had I declared myself than houses, horses and servants and all things were put at my disposal, for the institution is held in the highest esteem*". Adding, "*Because the law and bigotry persecute the professors with fire and sword, I dare not now mention the names of those who devoted themselves to my service, but some of the chief members of the government have in private made me their acknowledgements*".

Early in December, the convoy sailed from San Salvador and came within sight of Table Bay on the 3rd January 1806. Colonel Wilson was full of confidence. He had an independent command of the 20th Dragoons, good troops which were well instructed by his own methods and well mounted with horses of his own choice. He was to go ashore with the first landing boats. Glory seemed to be just a few miles away on the beaches and his only concern at that moment was that the Dutch might withdraw into the interior without a fight.

There was a delay owing to a gale which made the surf too dangerous to allow a landing and after rowing seven miles they had to return. Once more it was frustration for Wilson who was yearning to test his dragoons against the Dutch force.

Wilson had been at odds with his superiors and Sir David Baird decided to send Beresford with Wilson's dismounted dragoons, and some infantry, to Saldana Bay and effect a landing there. After a sea journey taking several hours, Beresford's small force went ashore without any opposition. After a while some Boers and a party of French soldiers showed themselves but made no attempt to take any action.

The orders were to hold a position and to procure provisions and draught animals for the guns with the main force, then march to meet up with Sir David.

As soon as Beresford had sailed away, Sir David's men made another attempt at landing after the weather had moderated. This time it was successful though a boat with some Highlanders was lost with all the men.

The next day there was sharp action against the Boers at a range of hills named Blueburg in which the Dutch, along with a sprinkling of Frenchmen, were defeated by Sir David. In the meantime the 20th, along with the infantry, were making difficult progress in the deep sand when it was realised that they were marching in the wrong direction. Wilson's dismounted dragoons suffered terribly, not only from the heat and dust but from having to march in their riding boots and carry saddles, etc. in the hope of obtaining horses from the farmsteads. Eventually, the force were on the right road and Wilson's men laboriously occupied outlying farms and rounded up horses for themselves and oxen for the guns and wagons. It only heartened them for the moment as the march was taking its toll on the strength of the men. Colonel Wilson described it as being worse than the retreat through North Holland in 1794. At one particular part of the heavy going, this most considerate man put a fainting infantry private on to his own horse, shouldering the man's musket and carried on the march despite suffering blisters, caused by his own riding boots.

Another typical incident occurred when he caught a couple of Boer farmers trying to escape. He says "*I then drew my pistol. I could have shot the poor fellows and would have been justified in doing so, for they were armed against us and the country would, by their escape, gain information of our approach but other consideration weighed more with me and I replaced my pistols in their lodging without regret*".

By now Beresford was really struggling in his ninety miles march to the Cape. Not only were the horses so wretchedly out of condition that the guns had to be hauled and dragged by sheer manual labour through the deep sand, but thirst was another suffering as there were only three watering places between the landing and Cape Town. And the agony of it all was, on arrival at the Cape, to learn that the Dutch had capitulated to Baird's men and there was no action for them. The Colonel took his disappointment philosophically, all he had to do was round up all the prisoners in the scattered garrisons for their despatch to Europe. His last chance of glory was gone and he spent the next three months in a not too happy attitude. In Wilson's view, Cape Town itself was one of the worst stations in the world because of "*the offensive smells, the furnace heat of the atmosphere, the blast of the north-east wind and the mercenary character and stupidity of the inhabitants*". There was much sickness among both officers and men, which Wilson put down to bad wine but the heat and flies were also a threat to bad health.

All this could no doubt have been endured if the General had used some discretion and tact in the way of handling the soldiers. He was a hard and difficult person without any consideration or feeling for the welfare of the men. The troops could have put up with most of their problems but the drills introduced by Sir David had the "*officers and men discontented beyond expression ..... The balance or 'goose-step', introduced for their practise, excites a fever of disgust*". Officers were suddenly required to wear black leather stocks and Wilson protested personally to Baird, quoting the King's Orders to the effect that velvet stocks were permissible. Baird replied that he was king there, whereupon Wilson bowed to the authority and promised to obey "*King David*".

Not all the officers were so good tempered and obedient to the order. There were many applications for leave and threatened resignations. Additional remounts were

at once provided and the 20th Dragoons took up their quarters in Cape Town with a line of small outlying detachments, about fifty or sixty miles into the interior.

The routine of the troops was that of a normal day in barracks. Sergeant Landsheit comments on how time passed from doing marching drill for an hour between six and seven in the morning, to the regimental and brigade parades "*from which the men never returned before nine o'clock and sometimes not an hour or two later*". Meanwhile, in Barracks, "*pipe-claying, heel-balling and other amusements peculiar to the soldier in these days.....which diversified the guard mountings, field days, roll calls and a system of drill to which there seemed to be no end*". He continues "*The duty in Cape Town resembled in almost every particular, the order of service in a common garrison town in England. Sir David Baird, being a mighty disciplinarian, had all the infantry officers at the "balance step". Watch in hand, he appeared himself on the drill-ground regulating their movements as if he had been the Adjutant.*

So be it for the infantryman but it was otherwise in the 20th Light Dragoons. "*Our Colonel, Sir Robert Wilson, gave us as little trouble as possible. We took our pickets, to be sure, and paraded once a day, besides attending to our stable duty and preserving good order, but he never harassed us with work that was not called for and, as to punishments, there were none because they were not needed. Nay more, he used to march us two or three times a week, in our stable-dress, to an elevated plain about a mile from the town and there encourage us to play at all sorts of athletic games, himself and his officers taking part in them*". But this casual way of soldiering for the cavalryman was to come to an end, much to their disappointment, as Landsheit goes on to explain.

"This latter proceeding, however, accorded not at all with the rigid notions of the General. Having come upon us one day, while engaged in our sports, he took no notice at the time but the very next morning a General Order appeared, which left us no leisure for a repetition of the scene. The riding-school was brought into play. We had parades and drills, as well as the rest of them and were made to feel that under what is called a 'smart commander', the English soldier must cease to think of ought but the drudgery of his profession".

Baird certainly did nothing to improve the lot of the soldier under such trying conditions but Wilson did his best to ease the situation and went about trying to purchase good mounts for his men.

On the 11th February 1806 he wrote in his diary "*I have been on several committees to fix the price of requisition horses which is at last settled at £26 per head. The Cape horse, in my opinion, is not of high quality but we have a roan troop of great beauty*".

The colonists attached great importance to the silver roan or 'skimmel'. It is the belief of some old colonists that this colour originated in the introduction of Spanish blood in the early days of British rule. Could these have been the horses left behind at the Cape by the 20th Dragoons, which Colonel Wilson had brought from San Salvador?

Wilson was not a happy man under Baird and was making overtures for his return to Britain. His journal gives an indication of how his stay at the Cape was affecting his morale. He writes of the punishment he watched - "*the most severe I ever witnessed*", of an East India company's soldier who was lashed for robbery. He mentions the departure of the East India fleet as if with relief because it meant that 4,000 people had no longer to be fed, now that supplies were short. His notes refer to the issue of an *order "that every officer in this garrison is to wear a black leather*

stock".. He complains of the *"blast of the S.E. wind which rages here with inconceivable fury and violently drives with it, clouds of sand and gravel"*. In his journal he criticises, *"the mercenary character and stupidity of the inhabitants, and the excessive dreariness of every necessity of life, render this place one of the worst situations on the globe and particularly for military men". "The measures of our Commander will establish it for us as a veritable Cape of Despair. Officers and men are disgusted beyond expression. I have fifty men sick and the proportion is moderate compared with other regiments. The principal causes, I believe to be bad wine and the want of every comfort for those unwell. As yet I have not been able to get a room for my regimental hospital and the same confusion and want of arrangement pervade every branch of the service. Every officer in the regiment, except myself, has been ill"*.

"February 15th, 06". "I applied yesterday to be exempted from the wear of the black leather stock and stated the King's order on the subject but was refused my petition so that I have nothing to do but to wear the yoke with as good a grace as possible. I shall transmit the order to General Calvert (Adjutant-General, Horse Guards), for we have a right to protection against such troublesome caprices and local commands".

"March 10th, 06". "Last night I was roused from my bed with an alarm that the French had landed in Saldana Bay. On going to Sir David he confirmed the news and showed his authority to a man who had just come from there. This man spoke French well and declared that he had conversed with the French officers on shore and added every probable particular. Nevertheless, I depended so much upon Arbuthnot's conduct in such a case, and from him I had not received a line, that I persisted in disbelieving the informer and requested Sir David not to act on the report. Mr. Rheinveld, the chief magistrate, divided with me, but the generals and chief engineer were against me. Newland (Capt.20th Dgns.) marched at once with thirty men of the 20th Dragoons and two guns. This morning the reporter confessed the whole story was

a drunken fabrication. He may rue his humour, for his life is in danger and I suspect there was an object in the tale. The French here, naturally, wish to give their countrymen every chance and a division of our forces might be of serious detriment in case of a vigorous attack on Cape Town".

"March 12th, 06" "I received a report from Arbuthnot (Capt.20th Dgns.) which I sent to headquarters and Sir David has sent him, a very flattering letter of approval. The man who told the falsehood had a severe whipping yesterday at six different places. He was scourged with rods, one of which was held in each hand of the executioner and the blows given as fast as possible. A severe punishment but he deserved death".

The success in the Cape set Baird and Home Popham the problem of what to do next. The British Government had become so accustomed to failure that a victory had not been taken into consideration, therefore no further orders had been given to the commanders.

Sir Home Popham was an officer with considerable experience of combined operations but with a deserved reputation of caring more for prize-money than for the mere tactical success of any venture - a characteristic which made him much loved by his sailors. He was now looking for fresh fields to conquer, especially lucrative ventures. He was a great friend of Sir David Baird, who had also secured a considerable sum in prize-money, and was not adverse to undertaking more profitable military adventures.

A serious disagreement threatened when Colonel Wilson heard that the naval commander was proposing to employ part of the force in a descent on the River Plate, though he had no authority to do so. By chance Wilson had a recent Spanish Army List which suggested that the garrison in Buenos Aires was stronger than Popham supposed. He also knew a carpenter in the force who had lived in Buenos

Aires and persuaded the man to draw a sketch of the defences. Armed with these items, Wilson tried to dissuade his superiors from what he was convinced was a most ill-advised expedition. Baird was impressed with his arguments but Popham was not and resented his interference. In the end Baird gave the venture his blessing for Popham and Beresford to make the attempt.

It is likely that Wilson made overtures to his friend Hutchinson to plead for his regiment's return home. An unfavourable inspection of his detachment caused another quarrel with authority and the incident caused more anguish for Wilson. Apparently his horses were adjudged to be in a bad condition which was inexcusable under the circumstances. He defended himself vigorously, stating that so many of his men were too sick to attend stables that proper grooming was impossible. He did admit that his mens' hair was too long and some curb chains were missing from the bits and it so happened that a number of his German troopers had fastened their canteens on wrongly but none of this deteriorated the efficiency of his men. He wrote, appealing to the Duke of York but it is obvious that this letter was blocked for transit. A few days later Wilson was dining with Sir David on the best of terms and was still in command of his detachment. He was as easy to forgive as he was to censure.

To add to the frustration of being shut away at the end of the earth with no glory to win, the most momentous news was trickling in. In February 1806 was brought the news of Nelson's victory at Trafalgar which had been fought the previous October. In April there was further news of Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz and the peace between France and Austria. Then came the shock of Pit's death and the possibility of government changes; Wilson knew it was time to get home. He even envied the Dutch prisoners of war because they were due to be sent back to Europe.

He wrote, "*to be absent from Europe when such changes were in progress and when the elevation of friends to power offers opportunity for advantageous employment, is a hard destiny.....Lord Hutchinson, the papers say, has an appointment ..... I am satisfied that he will have some good employment and I calculate upon his friendly offices at all events to remove me from hence*".

Baird had by now agreed to send Wilson home with despatches but there was no ship. A few weeks later Wilson applied once more to Baird, putting forward family reasons for returning as well as the fact that his "*friends were come to office*". This brought a sympathetic response from Baird and a ship, the Adamant, was now into port and was available.

The force awaiting departure for Buenos Aires under General Beresford consisted of the 71st Regiment of Foot with four guns of Artillery and half a dozen 20th Dragoons, including also, one officer and a sergeant. All of the 20th were dismounted. Eventually they sailed for the River de la Plata and, after a tiring journey, they arrived in the month of June.

On the 7th June Wilson embarked at Cape Town after taking his leave of the men and it must have been a very sad day for them. They had a great affection for their Colonel and Sergeant Landsheit relates that in spite of the kindly advice of Colonel Wilson to keep the regiment under the same ways of administration and discipline; "*Sir Robert was not out of sight of land ere the impressionable major set about reforming the regiment after his own ideas and the lash, which had fallen entirely into disuse under the kindly and chivalrous Sir Robert, was soon in full play again*". And adds "*I do not think the duty was better done and I am sure we thought much trouble, which we used to perform with pleasure*".

Sir Robert must have had some misgivings about what would happen after leaving the regiment and it was very much on his mind during the voyage. He writes from "*H.M.S. Adamant, three degrees from Cape of Torment*", under date 10th June 1806; "*on the 4th June the troops were reviewed and looked admirably well. Next day I paraded my detachment and took leave of them in a short address. The major and adjutant could not speak or address the men. I was much moved at this instance of their affection; indeed, I felt the pleasure of my departure from this detestable colony greatly impaired by the thoughts of leaving men who I had reason to believe were much attached to me; but I had the satisfaction of reflecting that I had taken every precaution for their comfort and future interests*". If the contents of the above narrative of Landsheit was transmitted in spirit to the Colonel, how that most compassionate gentleman would have grieved. Early in August 1806, the 21st Light Dragoons arrived in Table Bay to relieve the Twentieth, who were ordered home. The 21st, having disembarked, took over the horses and all the horse furniture of their predecessors and the Twentieth gathered in all the small garrisons from the outlying districts and, for the first time since arriving at the Cape, became once more a complete regiment. Imagine how these men brought to mind again their old Colonel who, they felt quite sure, had requested them home; it was such a joy packing their kit and getting ready for embarkation at Cape Town. But Colonel Wilson, having sailed home via St.Helena, was still in the English Channel and arrived off Start Point on the 31st August. This time he did not record his joy at being home, he saw only the boats putting out to the returning East Indiaman in order to press the crews, who had already been away for two years. "*What a farce*" he wrote, " *to these poor fellows is the freedom of Britain*".

Whether it was in celebration of the news about going home or the fact that drink had become easily available at this time, an incident occurred which presented a

more tolerable side to the character of Sir David Baird. A corporal Marshall of the 20th Dragoons was an orderly at his headquarters, a good man who had been selected for the duty but on occasions he forgot the importance of the job and imbibed in too much wine. On the episode of his drinking bouts, Sir David, who hated drunkenness, admonished him with a warning and that was the end of the matter. However, on the next occasion, Marshall was returned to the regiment with an order that he should be placed under arrest and tried by court-martial.

The trial duly took place and Marshall was reduced to the ranks and also awarded corporal punishment. When the verdict went for approval to the General, he permitted the first to be carried out by the Colonel but excused Marshall from receiving the lash. Knowing the worth of the man, Sir David restored his chevrons and took him back onto his staff. Marshall was to uphold the judgement of his General by proving himself to be a very gallant man in battle at a later date.

7. MONTE VIDEO

In August 1806, news arrived from the Rio de la Plata by one of Popham's frigates carrying despatches from Beresford and asking for reinforcements. His force had overcome the opposition without difficulty and occupied Buenos Aires and in the course of looting at the Argentinean Treasury, he had taken more than a million dollars and a substantial amount of gold and silver. The latter was sent home by frigate and Beresford was hoping that this windfall to the government would induce them to take a more tolerant view of his unauthorised action.

The government were very pleased to receive the gold but the invasion had caused them some embarrassment and although a couple of thousand troops were sent out as immediate reinforcements, orders were given to Beresford and Popham to withdraw at once and return home with the force.

Eventually the cash was divided between all the officers and men, enriching Sir David by £30,000, having stayed at the Cape as a spectator. Sir Home Popham benefited to the extent of £6,000 for having remained in his cabin during the assault and all the soldiers were paid £18:6s. each for doing the fighting. There is no record of Beresford's prize-money, no doubt he received sufficient cash to warrant his action.

There had been little opposition in the landing and the Spaniards soon retreated into the interior, it was then that they realised the folly of abandoning the capital city without a fight. The country felt quite ashamed of their army taking flight from only 1,600 men.

The Argentineans were not long in regrouping their army, which consisted of about 7,000 men and completely surrounded the British in Buenos Aires. There was little

Beresford could do and he surrendered. In the meantime, Colonel Backhouse, commanding the reinforcements, finding he was too late to support Beresford decided on a further plan once his transports could all be gathered together in the estuary of the Rio de la Plata.

Colonel Wilson was still in touch with his regiment and he notes in his diary on the 15th April 1807; "*I have just received a long and interesting letter from Major Blake, in the Rio de la Plata..... He assures me that Arbuthnot is well. Some of my people were cut into pieces, one sergeant literally so. This was the sergeant whom General Moore had recommended to my notice and whom I particularly selected for the service on which he died. I wrote to the General from the Cape, stating what I had done, but I added, in giving him this chance, I could not flatter with the hope that the expedition would terminate successfully*".

"*The poor 71st, when surrendering their arms and exposed to the insults of the French mob, besought General Beresford with tears in their eyes to allow them to die with arms in their hands. Blake says the General had persuaded the Bishop to consecrate the fort in order to prevent the insurgents from attempting an attack upon it but that this had the contrary effect, since then a holy place was in the hands of heretics. I was almost unmanned when I read his letter.*".

As can be seen by this letter, Captain Arbuthnot was not killed as previously stated and went on to become a General. The name of the sergeant was Sergeant John Henry, who actually survived and figures in the muster-rolls of the 20th Light Dragoons for 1807 as "*at Buenos Aires with General Beresford*" and afterwards he appears in the Regimental returns as sergeant-major and remained so until the regiment was disbanded.

The capture of Monte Video appearing impracticable by the new force gathering at the mouth of the Rio de la Plata, Colonel Backhouse turned his back on the fort flying the Spanish flag and focused his attention on Maldonado. With the support of the guns from the naval ships at anchor in front of the town, the Colonel's force effected a landing on the 29th October. The 20th Dragoons were acting as infantry at this stage, being positioned on the flank. Their horses had been handed over to the 21st Dragoons, who were waiting in the rear for an opportunity to get amongst the enemy. After a spirited attack by the 38th Foot, supported by a couple of three pounders firing grape, it was soon over and the whole of Maldonado was in British hands. According to Sergeant Landsheit, the troops were given three hours licence which broke down all sense of discipline and it was some time before the provost and his guard restored order. The immediate remedy was to award lashes on the spot and relieve the culprits of their loot.

Maldonado, although not having a fort, was a military station and had barracks into which the prisoners were placed until the opportunity offered of sending them on board the ships. Outposts were rushed into position as this was an anxious time for Colonel Backhouse and his second in command, Colonel Vessel, for many troops were still lying around in a state of intoxication. It was not long before the threats of severe punishment had the desired effect and order was restored to the ranks. Further relief came with the arrival of General Samuel Auchmuty in January 1807. With him came about 4,000 men which, with the 2,000 in Maldonado, Auchmuty considered making up a force sufficient for an attempt to regain the initiative.

The supplies of food were becoming more difficult to obtain in Maldonado and the fleet were bringing in only small amounts, the shortage of which was being felt by the troops, especially the lack of fresh meat. It was then decided to carry out some

rustling of cattle and Sergeant Landsheit describes, in his narrative, one of the raids which took place in an effort to eke out the rations in a more palatable dish.

Captain Ebrington of the 20th Dragoons was an assistant in the Adjutant-General's Department and was spoken of as a real live wire who seldom failed to be present whenever anything like fun or fighting was likely to take place. Colonel Backhouse heard from one of his agents that at a place some miles away, a drove of some hundreds of beef cattle were being held in a massive coral. Being Christmas Eve, Colonel Backhouse was most determined that the men would celebrate Christmas Day with plenty of roast beef. Ebrington was to take fifty troopers and go bullock-hunting, which meant a night ride of some miles which was to take them three or four hours to reach the place. In addition one hundred infantrymen joined the party. Landsheit describes this, at times amusing, venture in his narrative: "*We moved off in high spirits and with videttes thrown out and other precautions taken, penetrated to the point indicated by our guide. We reached it about three o'clock in the morning and saw between two and three hundred cattle and some valuable horses gathered within a pen. To drive off the keepers, open the pen and turn the animals heads towards Maldonado, was the work of a minute and after a short halt to refresh both men and animals, we began our homeward march.....the day being fully broke, we saw the wide plain.....covered with scattered bands of horsemen who began sounding their cow-horns with all their might and riding in the direction parallel to that which we, with our plunder, were pursuing.....suddenly the yelling of cow-horns ceased and the natives, putting each a finger in his mouth, sent forth a peculiar cry which the cattle appeared to understand.*

Up went the tail of every bullock, straight on end and away they galloped, one taking this direction and one taking the other, 'till the whole herd had dispersed to the different points of the compass..... there was riding amongst us, some laughing, others

swearing.....but failing to head the brutes or keep them in their places.....suddenly there opened upon us a terrible fire of musketry. The Spaniards had laid an ambush into which our precipitance hurried us, nothing now remained but to leave the cattle and fight our way back to Maldonado.

The odds against us were too great after losing several of our men and an officer, shot through the heart, we were driven back to the water's edge and there surrounded. Some tall rocks that lay within the low water mark afforded some cover for the infantry, while the cavalry had nothing for it but to skirmish. It was a providential matter that the tide was out, otherwise no exertion of valour would have saved us, and that the Spaniards held us in too much respect to press us back from our hazardous position. We maintained the fight.....charging from time to time, then retreating so as to be protected by the fire of the infantry.

The officer sent off three dragoons at five minute intervals along the water's edge to headquarters. Happily none of them was cut off and Colonel Backhouse lost not a moment in getting his people under arms, with a slight garrison being left to defend the works, he hastened to our relief. The Spaniards retreated on the first appearance of his scouts and left us to march back, not a little mortified at the result of our excursion".

Later another expedition has a very different ending: "*About sixteen miles from Maldonado, a short way removed from the water, stands the city of San Carlos, an open town but a place of importance, being the residence of a bishop. It was determined to put San Carlos under requisition and threaten the inhabitants with hostile visits unless they supplied us with cattle. Colonel Brownrigg and Captain Ebrington were both with the party. We arrived at an early hour in the morning*

within a mile and a half of the place and sent in a flag of truce and explained the pleasure of the General.

The bishop, in full canonicals and all the clergy came out to salute us. They brought multitudes of people loaded with bread, cheese and wine and explained that they could not at that moment furnish the cattle. They promised that if the party would return another day, they would be prepared for them.

It was the policy to conciliate rather than overawe so the excuse was accepted and Colonel Brownrigg permitted us to eat and drink what the people had supplied, then the trumpets sounded 'to horse' and we withdrew.

The day came on which to return and Colonel Brownrigg thought it best to be provided against accidents and, in addition to his infantry and cavalry, took with him a Lieutenant's party of artillerymen with a couple of six-pounder guns. As before, we arrived at San Carlos without opposition and had scarcely halted when the bishop and his clergy came out to salute us. We planted our videttes and sentries on a small eminence a little distance from the road and dismounted. We proceeded to eat and drink but no cattle came. The bishop was questioned and he expressed surprise but assured us they could not be far distant and would go and hurry their movements. He went with his clerical attendants and the people began to pack up their stores and slink away. "This is odd", said Ebrington to Brownrigg, "I don't know what to make of it". Scarcely were the words out of his mouth when one vedette and then another held up their helmets, firing their carbines and came galloping to the rear while the infantry sentries followed their example. Now bugles and trumpets rang out to mount and fall in, for at the distance of about a mile, five hundred horsemen made their appearance, coming towards us at full speed. Colonel Brownrigg ordered Major Blake to take the cavalry and charge through them while he formed up the infantry and

guns on each flank. It was no sooner said than done. There was no firing or throwing out skirmishers but, in a trice, drew swords and were at them.

Through and through we rode, hacking, cutting and in our turn receiving some hard blows, one of which divided the chain of my horse's head-stall while two others wounded him in the neck.

Corporal Marshall engaged the Spanish commander, hand to hand, and cutting clean through his left wrist with one blow and leant him another on his right temple which divided the head into portions. The rest of us were levelling our men, then the bugles sounded 'retreat' and we wheeled around to get clear of the infantry and guns. Both now in position, seldom have grape and musketry told with greater effect than in the first volley. In seconds the Spaniards were rolling one on top of the other or were scattered like sheep over the plain.

Having recovered our order, we took great care that they could not rally. The victory was complete and the loss on our side was trifling. "We'll burn the town about their ears" was Colonel Brownrigg's first exclamation and, after he had got his people together, we marched to the place and set it on fire in several quarters, having helped ourselves to such valuables as could easily be removed, we withdrew and brought back such of our wounded as could bear the jolting of the carts. We left the rest, along with the wounded Spaniards, in charge of an English surgeon, and carrying back a good many prisoners, returned to Maldonado".

Affairs continued in conference by General Sir Samuel Auchmuty at the beginning of 1807 and it was decided that with the present strength of the force, they were capable of making a forward move against Monte Video and Admiral Stirling, who had come out to relieve Popham, thought this would be a reasonable venture.

All troops, with the exception of a small party left on the island of Goretti, evacuated Maldonado 'without beat of drum' and embarked on the ships so quietly before the Spaniards realised what was happening. The force sailed across the Rio de la Plata towards Monte Video on the 13th January 1807. With the guns of the fleet giving support, a landing was effected at Punta da Carenas, near Brest Florence, on the 18th January 1807.

In the affair at the landing and in a brisk action which followed against the Spanish soldiers, the 20th and 21st Light Dragoons, now fully mounted, and those of the 9th and 17th Dragoons with horses, took an active part in the operation which pushed the Spaniards back towards Monte Video. The 20th had one man killed and a few wounded.

Prior to the 3rd February 1807, when the city of Monte Video was carried by assault, the cavalry were put under the command of Brigadier General Lumley and were directed forward towards the enemy. They halted and came under heavy artillery fire from an enemy force of about 4,000 men. The Spaniards were drawn up along some heights before the city and the cavalry were taking many casualties, both killed and wounded. Sir Samuel galloped to the scene and rebuked Lumley, ordering the cavalry into a hollow before the high ground. It was at this moment when a cannon ball struck his horse on the rear leg, shattering it. Sir Samuel fell to the ground as if slain and his staff crowded round him but, without more ado, the old man stood up and called to his servant to fetch another charger. This form of bravery did not go unnoticed by the men of the 20th, which further endeared him to the men.

On being remounted, he gave out further orders to the cavalry, directing them to charge some guns *'which would annoy the infantry'* as they came forward. The

Dragoons rushed the guns, cutting down the gunners and were soon in possession of three guns. Meanwhile, the rest of the troops were advancing to the attack with all the regularity and precision of a field-day. The 95th Foot, spreading through the sand-hills, opened a deadly fire with ball and the other regiments followed their example. The enemy wings were driven in and confusion ensued, causing them to flee in all directions towards the city. They were pursued all the way until they came under the noses of the guns of Monte Video.

The cavalry, having done great slaughter, then fell back to the rear and stationed the outposts before attending to the wounded of both men, horses and other necessities.

Monte Video was now closely invested by Auchmuty and the walls of the city came under the fire of the guns from the fleet, which had been dragged through the sand-hills by the naval men. The fortifications were of great strength and able to withstand the bombardment of a hastily arranged attack. Six naval guns were well situated on the top of some butts of a gun range and the continuous fire of well aimed shots dropping over the walls brought things to a head. Suddenly a sally-port was opened and out poured several hundred men. They were all in a state of inebriation, mounted on every conceivable animal with four legs - horses, mules and asses - and totally free of any kind of restraint. They came headlong into the mouths of the naval guns which sent in a ceaseless shower of grape and canister and then, when they came within range of the infantry, they were mown down with accurate and disciplined fire. The carnage was dreadful with the road literally carpeted with the slain bodies of both men and animals.

The battery of guns on the mound of the butts had done its work well and a breach in the wall was effected. As darkness grew, affording cover for the infantry, the 40th

Foot, led by Colonel Brown, assaulted the breach. The red jackets of the men blended well with the flame of the fires and the light from the burning houses showed the infantry the barricades which the Spaniards had hastily thrown up in the streets. The action of the foot-soldiers was gallantly sustained and the enemy at last laid down their arms. Admiral Liniers surrendered to the British immediately the infantry made for the citadel while the army of Spaniards outside the city quickly submitted to the General.

There was to be no repetition of the licence and sacking after the manner of Maldonado. Auchmuty had his men well in hand and his popularity brought an immediate response of obedience from his soldiers.

With Monte Video now securely in the hands of Sir Samuel Auchmuty it was necessary to think of the next move. The troops enjoyed the leisure which the city afforded and the mildness in which the citizens were treated by Auchmuty ensured the safety of his men, for the people responded with respect. A search was carried out in many houses for hidden arms and no doubt this was an opportunity for some pilfering of items. Sergeant Landsheit speaks of the beautiful gold and silver inlaid fowling pieces and the magnificent dress swords decorated with jewels and pistols which were in the most handsome cases, all of which were brought to light and taken in store aboard the Admiral's ship.

The time would have been most opportune had the British government sent some reinforcements but there was doubt and confusion as to what was happening in South America. Instead, General Whitelock was sent out with orders to capture Buenos Aires. In view of the fact that there were many casualties resulting from the campaign so far, this was a tall order for any General to undertake and it was bound for failure. Had Auchmuty been given a reasonable number of reinforcements for

the task of attacking Buenos Aires, the affair would have been long completed by the arrival of the new General. Outposts were pushed out as far as Canalon and San Josef.

General Whitelock assumed command in May 1807 and began operations. He did his best but was frustrated by the determined resistance of the Spaniards. With continuous casualties and no reserves it became a matter of time as to how long the force could carry on with the cost of such a heavy penalty to pay. In the end Whitelock finally came to terms with the enemy and, after all the prisoners were exchanged, he evacuated Buenos Aires and returned to Monte Video. It was a happy reunion for the 20th survivors of Beresford's force. The 20th Light Dragoons took no part in the affair against Buenos Aires as they had remained as the garrison in Monte Video.

After three months, when the agreement was carried out by both sides, the British troops embarked on the 7th September 1807 and made sail for home. With the usual varieties of calm, storm and sunshine, the homeward passage was without incident until they reached the Channel where, at the Needles, one ship foundered on the rocks and was lost. The ship carrying the remaining men of the two squadrons of the 20th docked in Portsmouth harbour and from there they marched to their old barracks at Guildford.

8. SICILY

While the two skeleton squadrons at home were recruiting up to regimental strength, we now return to the four Troops which had disembarked at Castellamere on the Neapolitan coast in November 1805.

The Allies were greeted with the news of Mack's surrender at Ulm and the consequent withdrawal of the Austrians. It had been hoped to effect a diversion from Upper Italy to assist the Austrians but that was now too late. Instead the Allies decided to form a defensive line on the Neapolitan frontier. Strenuous efforts were made to procure horses and mules but it proved to be a difficult task and the army remained short of six hundred horses in spite of all the promises of the Neapolitan Court. News now trickled through of the victory at Trafalgar.

The 20th were horsed but most of the field guns were left behind at Castellamere. On the 9th November 1805 the troops moved forward, via Capua, to the neighbourhood of Gaeta. The Neapolitans occupied the fort of Gaeta, the Russians were in the centre and the British held the left flank. Everything was prepared to defend the kingdom of Naples when the astonishing information came of the French victory at Austerlitz and the armistice to which the Austrians had been compelled to submit.

The situation of the force on the frontier was now critical. It was weak in cavalry and had only a few guns. Heavy columns of French troops, numbering about 30,000, were pushing southwards from the river Po. Sir James Craig was of the opinion that to remain on the Neapolitan frontier would place the whole force in extreme danger and there was the risk of both the British and the Russians being cut off from their transports. However Sir James assured General Lacy that if the Russians decided

to maintain the position, Britain would uphold the honour of the alliance and would not abandon him.

The British and Russian commanders then submitted to the King of Naples that it was necessary to withdraw from the frontier. The Neapolitan Court raged about the decision but the military situation was apparent and they very reluctantly ordered a withdrawal. It was decided as a provisional measure to retire into Calabria.

After a council of war, held on the 4th January 1806, the Tsar ordered the immediate removal of the Russians at Naples and they were evacuated and sailed for Corfu. In the meantime the British were now at Castellamere where they embarked on the 14th January 1806. The 20th Dragoons had been at Torre del Annunziata and joined the evacuation troops which, by the 22nd of the same month, were safely at anchor in the beautiful harbour of Messina.

Even though it was a friendly nation there was a delay of six weeks before they were permitted to land, during which time the British troops were in crowded transports, at anchor under the guns of the fortress. Only Sir John Stuart had been ashore to negotiate with the King of Sicily, or rather those that guided the old man. The force then occupied the fortress of Messina and the Neapolitan Court went into temporary residence at Palermo on 17th February. The Assistant Quartermaster General Sir H. Bunbury observes; "*One of the many embarrassments in the position of the army was the want of intelligence. There were no packets in the Mediterranean in those days and after the first defeat of the Austrians, communication through Germany was cut off. All the news at that time came through the bulletins of Napoleon or such garbled accounts as the intriguing Neapolitan Court.....thought fit to impart*".

The Squadrons of the 20th Dragoons, under Lieutenant Colonel C.D. Taylor, took up their quarters in the adjacent town of Barcelonna, where they were subsequently rejoined by a few men who had been left behind with the heavy baggage at Malta.

"*There were*", writes Bunbury, "*no roads in the island.....goods of all sorts were conveyed to and from any distance in the interior on the backs of mules. The tracks worn by these animals were extremely bad, particularly in the mountains and communications were subsequently slow. The sea, indeed, was open to us and boats were plentiful. The rugged neighbourhood of Messina, then alone was occupied by the British, produces no corn or cattle but soon we attracted ample supplies from Catania and the southern coast, and wine was only too abundant and cheap. For ammunition, guns and salt provisions, we had to depend at first on Malta. Our numbers were not great but we were active and although promises and proclamations of King Ferdinand failed to produce any effect, we soon established ourselves strongly and comfortably*".

In May 1806, the British force in Sicily appears to have numbered 7,800 all ranks but the proportion of sickness was reported to have been very high.

The 20th Light Dragoons were kept busy patrolling the coast from the fortified palace of Milazzo and stretching far to the right, with outposts as far away as Taormina.

The Royal Navy had an active small flotilla of gun-boats which Admiral Sir Sidney Smith was increasing to prevent the enemy's numerous rowing vessels from invading French troops to Sicily. These gun-boats would often engage those of the opposing side in sharp encounters. Many episodes were often witnessed by the troops on either side of the Straits and, on fine days, the French soldiers could be seen clustering on the brow of a hill opposite, waving their caps.

Sir Sidney had already shot up the French besieging Gaeta, which was still holding out on the mainland of Italy. During this bombardment he succeeded in landing vital supplies and stores to secure the fortress. He then attacked the rocky island of Capri and forced the garrison to surrender, after which he appeared off Naples with five ships of the line, in a show of intimidation. He was tempted to bombard the illuminated city, where Joseph Bonaparte was having himself proclaimed King of Italy but resisted it in consideration of "*the unfortunate inhabitants (who) had evil enough upon them*". Then, to impede or dissuade the French from any invasion attempts on Sicily, he sailed on round the coast capturing strong points and disarming all the batteries of guns under which an enemy flotilla could shelter and seek protection.

As a result of this naval threat, King Joseph withdrew many of his troops from Southern Italy and part of the siege train threatening Gaeta, for the defence of Naples, which he believed was under threat by the occupation of Capri.

Mr. Hugh Elliot, the British Representative at the Neapolitan Court, approved of Sir Sidney's action and to assist his further operations, gave him 4,000 piastres.

With the success of Gaeta and Capri, after the depression caused by the news of Ulm and Austerlitz, the Admiral's action put new heart into the Court and also those people in the mountains of Calabria, who bitterly resented the intrusion of the French into their country. The Calabrians formed bands of partisans called 'massi' which carried on a merciless war against them. Admiral Smith used the piastres to arm and supply them, much to the annoyance of Mr. Elliot.

In June 1806, Major General Sir John Stuart, now commanding the forces in Sicily, was given orders to assemble a force which could make a landing, "in the manner of a sortie", on the mainland of Italy.

The expedition set sail on the 20th June 1806, under the protection and guidance of Sir Sidney's ships, and landed at a bay in the Gulf of St. Euphemia on the west coast of Calabria. The army consisted of 4,800 men, which was nearly half of the garrison of Sicily. With them went about twenty 20th Dragoons. Unfortunately there was a shortage of transports and no more horses of cavalry could be embarked.

Stuart immediately issued a proclamation ordering the partisans to rise against the enemy forces, with the result of increased activity by the 'massi' and every town and village declared for the British as soon as the patrols approached them.

The French General, whose force had been weakened by the need to send columns into the mountains to pursue the partisans, could muster only 5,000 men to oppose the British. He was still confident that his veterans could defeat the British once they had left the protection of the navy guns. He watched Stuart for three days as he moved along the coast with a couple of frigates and several gun-boats protecting his left flank.

On the 4h July 1806 Stuart, after receiving information that the French were encamped near to the village of Maida, turned inland and advanced towards it. General Raynier was in a good defensive position on the slops of a hill from which it would have been difficult to dislodge him.

Two factors persuaded him to take offensive action. Firstly he thought there were two British landings and would wish to destroy the first force before it was reinforced by the other and, secondly, he realised that the partisans had infiltrated behind him, making his position untenable.

Reynier ordered two of his regiments, amounting to 2,400 men, to attack the British line and in the ensuing battle his men suffered a great loss and retreated in

confusion. Reynier tried to relieve the situation by sending in his cavalry but they ran straight into the line of fire from Colonel Ross's regiment which Sir Sidney had freshly landed. The unexpected volley of muskets shattered the galloping ranks of cavalry which turned the battle field into a mass of dead and wounded. Reynier hurriedly withdrew his troops in confusion, leaving behind 700 dead and 1,000 wounded on the field. The handful of 20th Dragoons made the most of the situation and cut down many stragglers. If the whole regiment had been present it would have been mass slaughter. General Stuart pursued the French as far as the Lamato valley, a distance of about three miles, and then halted his troops.

It was the first decisive defeat of the French by British arms, except for General Abercromby's night action in Egypt.

Sir John Stuart returned with his troops to Sicily with a feeling of triumph and conveyed his news to the Court. He had barely settled down to the routine of his command when General Fox arrived as the new commander-in-chief and with him came his able second-in-command, General Sir John Moore. The appointment of Fox was on the insistence of his brother, the Foreign Secretary. Meanwhile Sir Sidney was moving up the west coast of Italy where he landed a detachment under Brigadier Oswald, which easily captured Scilla and Reggio whose garrisons had been weakened to reinforce Reynier, who had now withdrawn right across the peninsular to Cantanzaro on the Adriatic. He had forcibly occupied it and camped beneath its walls with about 4,500 men, all terribly demoralised. Sir Sidney landed another detachment from the frigate Amphion under Colonel McLeod and Captain Hoste on the east coast and sent them to attack Reynier with the help of many partisans. They drove the Frenchman not only from Cantanzaro, where they took 600 prisoners, but also from Cotrone, his last base in Calabria, where they captured all his reserves of food and ammunition together with forty guns of various calibres.

When Sir Sidney heard of General Fox's arrival, he sent him a detailed report of all his activities and those of the partisans, hoping for arms, money and troop support of at least 1,000 men. However, his Commanding Officer, Lord Collingwood, took an unfavourable view of it all and he was recalled and sent to the Eastern Mediterranean Fleet.

Early in the year 1807, the British Government were becoming somewhat anxious about Napoleon's old ambition of capturing Constantinople and opening the overland route to India. He was now in occupation of Venice and his friendly overtures to the Turks aroused fears that he was planning the eviction of the British and Russians. He had sent his most accomplished diplomat, General Sebastiani, for this purpose. The British Ambassador, Mr Charles Arbuthnot, was instructed to insist upon the dismissal of Sebastian and pledged support of this demand by the presence of a naval force.

Admiral Sir John Duckworth was ordered to proceed to Constantinople with a powerful fleet and to take up a position from which the city could be bombarded. The Admiral, with eight sail of line and Sir Sidney Smith, commanding the rear division, entered the Dardanelles on the 19th February 1807. The Turkish forts on both sides opened fire but he passed on up the straits, leaving a message for Sir Sidney to destroy the small Turkish squadron that had opposed him. In an action lasting only half an hour he drove all the Turkish ships ashore and then his landing parties burnt them and dismantled a battery of thirty-one guns protecting them.

Being unfamiliar with the treacherous currents of the Sea of Marmara, Duckworth, instead of approaching Constantinople along the European shore, sailed on the wrong side of the outflow of the Bosphorus and had to anchor eight miles away, so he was not in a position to threaten the city with his guns. Only a fresh and favourable

wind would have enabled him to override the current and this did not arise. Duckworth remained at anchor for ten days with the possibilities for effective actions constantly diminishing, he then retraced his steps back through the Dardanelles. This reverse was a blow to British arms and helped to undermine the confidence of Russia, our last ally. Alison wrote of the mission, "*A miserable little expedition, too large for piracy and too small for conquest*".

After this failure, the Government decided to send a force back to Egypt which, after the British had evacuated the country in 1803, had fallen into Turkish hands. The force for this purpose was assembled and held in readiness at Messina. It amounted to about 5,250 men which included a squadron of 20th Light Dragoons, numbering four officers and seventy-four rank and file. All had been cooped up in the transports for a few weeks waiting for a naval escort. Eventually, when it arrived, the sole ship was an old captured French prize of sixty-four guns in very poor condition. The expedition was under the command of Major General MacKenzie Fraser and set sail on the 7th March 1807. The day after setting out, heavy gales blew the convoy apart, scattering many ships which ultimately affected the landing.

General Fraser arrived in the Bay of Boukir before Alexandria on the 16th March with only fourteen sail of transports out of a total of thirty-three. The fort of Alexandria was garrisoned by about three hundred Turks which presented no great threat and in spite of the heavy surf, Fraser ordered his men ashore. In all the transports which had arrived, the troops amounted to about 2,000 which included the 20th Light Dragoons with their horses. The wind was atrocious and the surf was whipped up into such a frenzy that its wildness threatened to overturn the boats. Eventually, with bout 1,000 men ashore, the landing had to be postponed and no further attempts were made. Fraser acted immediately with those on land and surrounded the fort of Alexandria. The Turks opened fire without great effect and it

was a question of how long they could hold out with their supplies low and food stores only available for a few days. The Governor capitulated without further resistance on the 20th March 1807.

The British Government, with characteristic uncertainty of purpose in all military matters, after ordering the expedition, now changed its intention and ordered General Fraser not to extend his operations beyond Alexandria. Having set himself comfortably in the fort watching his scattered transports arrive to reinforce his situation, he decided to try and occupy Rosetta and Rahmanieh, some forty miles distant, which would make his tenancy in the fort totally secure.

The representations of the British Consul pointed out to the Cabinet the question of provisions for their troops, which would only last another ten days so that it was imperative that the two places should be occupied before the Albanian garrisons were reinforced by the Turks. This information persuaded the Government to let Fraser carry out his plans.

A small force of about 1,600 men under General Wauchope was despatched to Rosetta on the 31st March 1807. After an arduous march they reached the walled place and marched into the centre of the village without any previous reconnaissance. Suddenly hordes of Albanians opened fire and chaos ensued. After trying to make a stand, with men falling all around, it became a mad rush to evacuate the place. About 500 men, either killed, wounded or prisoners, were left behind and, sadly, General Wauchope was among those slain.

Another expedition was sent under General Stewart, which amounted to about 2,600 men, including a squadron of 20th Dragoons, commanded by Captain Delaney. They also hoped for support by the Mamelukes, the mounted warriors who ruled Egypt before the arrival of the Turks. A Light Brigade was supported by the 78th

Highlanders with the Swiss Regiment of Roll drawing up the rear. The 20th Dragoons were in the van and protected each flank. After several days marching through heavy sand, the force reached the outskirts of Rosetta on the 6th April 1807 and 500 men were then posted in the village of El Hamid which was situated between the Nile and Lake Edko. Here the 20th exchanged a few shots with some Albanian horsemen before they galloped away. The object of this occupation was to keep open the lines of communication with the Mamelukes expected from Upper Egypt.

Operations then commenced against the walled fort, the heavy guns and mortars were brought forward, against which the Albanians attempted several sorties. These were driven off by the 20th Dragoons and the 78th Highlanders captured one of the enemy's advanced batteries during a night attack. There was no further progress and the hoped for support of the Mamelukes never came. The official returns show that the 20th Light Dragoons had two rank and file and five horses wounded between the 6th and 18th April 1807. On the night of the 19th April, a force of 6,000 Turks came down the Nile in djerms and an attack was made on El Hamid, where the hapless detachment was surrounded and cut to pieces. The Turkish cavalry was charged by the whole squadron of the 20th resulting in them being cut off by the vast numbers of the enemy. The squadron dismounted and formed square during which, in the mêlée, Captain Delaney, the Surgeon and eleven men were taken prisoner. One man and six horses were killed before they could send for help.

A galloper, Private Trimble, was sent to El Hamid, where the two remaining companies were still holding out. He had to hack his way through the enveloping Turks and came back with both companies, after fighting every inch of the way. His gallantry received no recognition except for the fact that his regiment remembered

his feat of valour in the records. Trimble's name was also spelt Tremble on the muster rolls at this time but when he was discharged at Cahir in 1818, his name was spelt Trimble. He was described as having been a fine intelligent soldier, one of the best riders in the regiment who, but for his unfortunate addiction to drink, might have risen to a rank of distinction.

General Stewart abandoned the enterprise and fought his way back to Alexandria. The Government ordered the force to remain there until negotiations by Sir A. Paget were completed with the Turks at Constantinople. As a show of strength, Lord Collingwood had the fleet off the coast of Levant.

The Caliph, Mahommed Ali, returned all the British prisoners after Captain Delaney, with Ali's dragoman (interpreter), made overtures for the evacuation of Egypt. This was finally agreed and the British force embarked for Sicily on the 19th September 1807 and arrived at Messina on 16th October 1807. General Sir John Moore had by this time sailed from Sicily with a force to Gibraltar and had been succeeded in the command by General Sir John Coope Sherbrooke who had been junior Lieutenant Colonel of the 33rd in India, although he was several years senior in point of service.

The British force on Sicily had now been reduced to about 270 cavalry of the 20th Light Dragoons, 6,000 British infantry, artillery and engineers and 1,000 foreign infantry. Sickness was very prevalent with an average of 1,400 men constantly in hospital. The cheapness of the wine was an ever present temptation to indiscipline and crime. Bunbury well illustrates the habits of the soldiers and the good sense of their chief: "*Our soldiers could seldom resist the temptation of cheap wine. In the wine houses they were very violent and quarrelsome and apt to treat the Sicilian customers very roughly. The consequence was that several of our men were stabbed and rarely*

was anyone caught. The General issued a proclamation of the death sentence for anyone assassinating a British soldier". "The death of a soldier was reported to Sherbrooke and his investigation found that the soldier had assaulted a Sicilian who was sitting quietly in a wine house. In self-defence the Sicilian picked up a stool and struck the soldier on the head, killing him. Sherbrooke set the trembling culprit free and awarded him some money for not using his knife". It is added that the lesson was not lost on the Messinese.

9. PORTUGAL (OBIDAS & ROLICA)

In November 1806, the British Government discussed, amongst other matters, a project in which an army should be sent to South America for the conquest of Spanish Argentina to avenge the disaster of Buenos Aires. When Sir Arthur Wellesley went to London, the Cabinet asked him if he would consider commanding an expedition for that purpose.

After eighteen months of deliberation, an army was gathered in Ireland but before any steps could be taken in that direction, news came through of the invasion of Spain and Junot's march through Portugal. Napoleon had previously decided that there should be no neutrality of states in Europe and drew up a Treaty of Alliance in which Sweden, Denmark, Austria, Portugal and Russia were required to close their ports to all British goods. Sweden allied themselves to France for protection against Russia and dethroned their king, Gustavus the Fourth, who was the uncompromising enemy of Napoleon. The Danes, tottering on the brink of decision, were bombarded in Copenhagen and surrendered after three days but not before Admiral Gambier had sailed away with the fleet to a British port. The one remaining country on the western side of Europe which still held out, although willing to arrest all British subjects, was Portugal.

Napoleon ordered Junot to march through Portugal and occupy the capital port of Lisbon. On the pretext of sending reinforcements to Junot, Spain was then invaded. Madrid was occupied and King Charles the Sixth was removed; Napoleon then had his brother, Joseph Bonaparte, proclaimed King of Spain. However, before Junot was able to reach Lisbon, Admiral Sir Sidney Smith entered the Tagus with eight sail of line, four frigates and several merchant vessels and brought out the

Portuguese fleet bearing the Prince Regent, his chief ministers and all the treasure and archives of state.

The Spaniards and Portuguese rose in rebellion and appealed to England for support in arms, ammunition and money but no men. The people had already tasted success by forcing a French army of 18,000 to surrender at Batlen. When Sir Arthur Wellesley, in addressing the Cabinet, advised against the Spanish demand for arms and ammunition, he spoke from his own experience in India and of the hopelessness of using undisciplined levies against regular troops. So instead of an expedition to South America, it was agreed to use the army already collected in Ireland in favour of the Peninsular and Sir Arthur was given the command - so began the long drawn out Peninsular War.

In the spring of 1808 the wing of the 20th Light Dragoons, composed of two left squadrons, had been to several stations since returning from South America, including Epsom, Chichester and Colchester. The regiment was now on the march to Southampton. It was now a robust regiment, having grown from its frail looking numbers at Guildford. It had received a considerable number of recruits and a draft of eighty-two volunteers from the Royal Wagon Train, yet it was still under strength when it moved to the south coast.

The Quartermaster General's department showed that the cavalry strength for 1808 amounted to 26,847 with a shortage of 1,951 men. All the cavalry at this time was accepted for general service. The official returns for the month of June 1808, show the 20th Light Dragoons with six Troops in England, mustering two field officers, six captains, six subalterns and 370 non-commissioned officers and men. There were four Troops in Sicily, mustering one field officer, three captains, five subalterns and 258 non-commissioned officers and men. The 20th in England, being short of one

hundred men, were ordered to recruit up to regimental strength, disregarding the wing in Sicily.

At the end of June 1808, the 20th Light Dragoons were ordered to prepare for foreign service and the regiment marched to Portsmouth under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Charles D. Taylor, who had recently returned from Sicily. The regiment (two squadrons) embarked at the beginning of July with detachments of the Royal Artillery and Royal Staff Corps. At sea, the sealed orders were opened which directed them to the Cove of Cork where they joined an expeditionary force under the command of Major General Sir Arthur Wesley. Having settled his business in London, Sir Arthur set off for Cork where his ill-assorted army of about 11,500 officers and rank and file were already embarked. The complement of cavalry only amounted to 346 sabres of the 20th Light Dragoons and 215 troop horses, the regiment having left two Troops at Maidstone to act as the depot troop.

After making deductions, Sir Arthur found that the utmost force he could bring into line was 8,000. In later years he referred to this small army, without a medical staff or commissariat, being "*certainly a shabby enough start*". But then, as today, it was the Government's military policy to cut the army to the bone.

The fleet of transports left the Cove of Cork on the 12th July 1808, under the guidance of Admiral Pulteney Malcolm and, when well out to sea, the men were informed of their destination - not to South America but to Portugal. A good following wind took the fleet on its passage until they reached the coast of Portugal and the transports were directed into Montego Bay on the 1st August 1808. The force was compensated by the arrival of 4,000 men under the command of Major General Spencer.

Having suffered no mishaps, the men of the 20th were in good heart and the process of disembarking began in a fairly heavy surf. The men stood to the horses heads in the flat-bottomed punts, ready to jump into the saddle should any upset occur. It proved to be useful training because one punt did capsize but the men hung on to the horses which ploughed their way to the shore.

The different regiments organised themselves into formations, rations were issued, each man to carry sufficient for three days' march and the various units made their way inland to find billets or a camping ground. The main concern of the 20th Light Dragoons and the Artillery was to find horses which they hoped would be provided by the villages through which they were shortly to pass. On the 9th August the regiment marched to Lyria and on the way their ranks were increased by mounted Portuguese police from Lisbon who had been trained on military lines. At Lyria they were joined by the main force on the 11th August. Two days later, the infantry met up with some enemy scouts at Brilos where our riflemen, after exchanging fire, suffered some loss but it was not until the regiment reached Obidas, on the 15th August, that they came in sight of the French. The 209th formed line in the expectation of having some action but the enemy withdrew and fell back on Rolica. On the 17th August 1808, the British troops advanced towards the rocky slopes of the defensive position taken up by General Delaborde's troops. The two rifle battalions attacked the outpost line and suffered heavy casualties from pressing too closely.

When Wellington arrived at Obidas he climbed a church tower and examined the position, as a result of which he sent a Portuguese Brigade round the enemy's flank. He then made a frontal attack which was preceded by the 20th who, however, had to dismount and take cover when they came into range for the very rocky ground was unrideable.

Wellesley's troops outnumbered the French four to one and soon eased them out of position. Delaborde (spelt de Laborde in the old m/s) carried out a skilful retirement which was followed up by the 20th but they were the only cavalry present and in insufficient numbers to charge the numerous French cavalry. The regiment accordingly formed in single rank and marched at the walk, following closely on the heels of the enemy. Reaching some high ground near to the village of Zambagiera, the regiment was ordered to halt.

Sergeant Landsheit describes the affair at Rolica in the following way: "*In the next place, I am compelled to admit that we had no share whatever in the glories of Rolica. The enemy, occupying a position on the ridges of some steep heights, could only be approached by infantry and we stayed ion a valley watching the advance of our comrades, whose onset was as cool and determined as the most anxious could have wished..... Having won the crest of the hill, they wheeled into line and carried all before them..... We had watched the progress of the battle without sustaining any injury except from a single shell which, bursting over our column, sent a fragment through the backbone of a troop-horse and killed him on the spot*".

On the following morning Wellesley heard that two brigades of reinforcements had arrived at Porto Nova and were lying off-shore at the mouth of the river Maceira, which ran inland near to Vimiera. With them came Sir Harry Burrard in the frigate Brazen. Wellesley hastened on board to greet him and Burrard, after hearing his report, ordered him not to march from Vimiera until the arrival of Sir John Moore with reinforcements. Junot's advance guard was at Torres Vedras and approaching General Fane's brigade position with Anstruther's to the left of him.

The 20th were still with the Rifle Brigade and the 60th Rifles, forming a light brigade under John Fane which were bivouacked on Vimiera Hill. The Brigadier had

already pushed out the piquets and sent out patrols from the 20th Dragoons along the road towards Torres Vedras.

Sergeant Landsheit was in charge of one of these patrols which consisted of a corporal and twelve men. General Fane accompanied them and showed the men the limit of their patrol which was by a building which Landsheit termed the Red Chapel. The light was fading as the General left for his bivouac, which was pitched forward of the outposts, his instructions to report at the very instant of seeing the enemy skirmishers.

It was a clear starry night and the moon came up giving a good light for observation. Soon after the General had gone from sight, Landsheit decided to ride down the road to a village not far distant and, with his men agreeing to such a move, they promptly mounted their horses and were in the village in minutes. Here, Landsheit spoke to an innkeeper who informed him that his son had just arrived home from Lisbon and on his way, less than half an hour ago, he had passed the whole French army on the march towards the village. Landsheit returned to the Red Chapel and waited to confirm the report. Before very long the patrol could hear a muffled marching of feet as if they were on grass and then the hooves of horses could be heard clattering over the wooden boards of a bridge. Landsheit immediately mounted his patrol and returned at a brisk pace to the Brigadier's bivouac. He had no difficulty in finding him because he was pacing up and down with the vedettes about him. He met Landsheit with a volley of oaths and was seething with anger for being kept so long without news. He listened to what the sergeant had to say, during the course of which his whole attitude changed to that of congratulating Landsheit and sent him off to report the circumstances to Sir Arthur Wellesley. On arrival at the headquarter house, the sergeant was admitted and a staff officer took him to the great man himself. After relating his story, Landsheit was closely questioned on all

details and then, after being warmly praised for doing his duty well, Landsheit was sent to the servants' quarters for some food and refreshment but not before he heard the General calmly issuing his orders to the assembled staff officers. They were told to go to their stations and get their men under arms, without the sound of bugles or beating of drums and to put all outposts on the alert. Having eaten, Landsheit returned to his patrol and rejoined the regiment.

At daylight, it was seen that the French had not advanced beyond the village near to the Red Chapel and for some time all was quiet. Then the French drums and bugles could be heard and the clouds of dust showed that the French army was on the move.

The 20th Dragoons, with the Portuguese cavalry, were situated in a valley having the village of Vimiera on their right. As soon as the heads of the French columns came into sight, the British guns opened fire and the infantry, occupying a low ridge next to them, were receiving a good deal of fire from the French.

Colonel Charles Taylor commanding the 20th Light Dragoons, witnessing how hard Fane's infantry were being pressed, galloped forward repeatedly and asked permission to charge but his pleas seemed to be in vain. Suddenly General Fane rode up and exclaimed "*Now Twentieth, now we want you*". The 43rd Regiment, near the entrance to the village, charged the French Grenadiers and broke them into confusion and then the 20th went at them. Passing through the retiring infantry they met the French cavalry under Margaron, who were still in formation trying to cover the retreating infantry. The French Chasseurs and Dragoons were in some confusion, milling around and unable to meet the attack of the 20th who rode through them 'cutting and hacking' until they broke and fled in every direction.

Beyond the French cavalry were some columns of infantry retiring. On the approach of the 20th they faced about to present a front. By now the 20th were out of line and scattered across the field, following behind their Colonel. CharlesTaylorwas riding a hot thoroughbred which had its bit between the teeth and he was frantically trying to control its onrush towards the infantry. The horse carried its rider headlong into the line of bayonets where a French corporal shot Colonel Taylor through the heart.

The regiment, not knowing the fate of their brave Colonel, continued to lay about them with their sabres until the mens' white breeches and tunics were red from the splattered blood. Following up the French Grenadiers, several men and horses approaching a stone wall, were bayonetted as they tried to jump it. Those who did manage to get over, turned and cut down the French, leaving twenty or thirty dead bodies behind the wall.

By now the momentum was lost and the 20th halted with the intention of returning to the British line. They were surrounded by stone walls on every side and it was then noticed that the French were reforming their ranks. While searching for a way out of the situation, Corporal Marshall was being attacked by four French Dragoons. It appeared to be an unequal struggle but Marshall, a big powerful man and a good swordsman, was well mounted. His horse, a muscular stallion, helped its rider in its fright by kicking and biting at the other horses as soon as they came within distance, while Marshall clove one dragoon to the teeth and in a backstroke, struck another across the face and sent him out of the saddle. The other two then hung back undecided and at that very moment a great cheer rent the air as the 50th Regiment advanced at the double with fixed bayonets. The French, seeing the forward movement of the whole British, hurriedly turned and beat a hasty retreat, leaving the field to the victorious infantry and cavalry and much to the relief of the 20th who thought they would all be taken prisoner.

The gallant Corporal Marshall later went to Sicily and was on remount duty in Egypt. He became ill and was taken to hospital in Naples where he sadly died in 1813.

A party under Captain Bingham Newland went in search of the Commanding Officer, whose body was found, stripped to his under-drawers, his watch and ring were missing and it was later said that the corporal had sold his horse. Major Blake, after cutting off a lock of his hair, gave instructions for him to be buried. A hole was dug and the brave Colonel Taylor was laid to rest. In respect of the Colonel's charger, it came into the possession of the French General Kellerman, who sent it back to the 20th Dragoons 'in token of his admiration of the bravery and devotion of their late and lamented commander', which he had personally witnessed during the charge. Colonel Taylor was a native of Reading, educated at Westminster and Christchurch. He had entered the service at the outbreak of the French Revolutionary War in the 7th Light Dragoons, where he stood above Hussey Vivian and Kerrison. With the 7th he fought in Flanders and Holland, obtaining his majority in 1802. He was promoted into the 20th Light Dragoons as Lieutenant Colonel on 24th February 1803. He was in his thirty-sixth year of age and the fourteenth of his service when he met his untimely end.

The 20th had done their duty and with their infantry comrades, proudly occupied the field of battle which was strewn with the dead and dying of both sides. Hordes of peasants, together with women from our own army, were already in full occupation as plunderers, turning over the bodies and filching anything of value from their pockets.

Official returns show the loss of the Twentieth that day, the 21st August 1808. to have been one Lieutenant Colonel, nineteen rank and file and thirty horses killed;

two sergeants, twenty-two rank and file wounded and one captain, one trumpeter, nine rank and file and one horse missing. A severe loss to four under strength Troops.

As the 20th Dragoons returned to camp, the Portuguese cavalry were lined up, having refused to engage in the charge. The officers and men of the 20th, who had previously struck up an admiring friendship with them, now turned their faces away and completely ignored them.

The army commander, Sir Arthur Wellesley, mentioned the regiment in particular in his dispatches to Sir Harry Burrard in the following terms, listing the regiments concerned;

"The valour and discipline of His Majesty's troops have been conspicuous on this occasion, as you who witnessed the greater part of the action must have observed, but it is a justice to the following corps to draw your attention to them in a particular manner".

In addition to this tribute, their efforts were rewarded by their first battle honour, Vimiero, to be emblazoned on their guidon. The Commanding Officer, Major Blake, received the following message from the Army H.Q. *"It is perhaps superfluous to observe that His Majesty has been graciously pleased and delighted to direct that this distinction be borne by the 20th Light Dragoons".*

The end of the fighting in Portugal came with the signing of the Convention of Cintra on 22nd August 1808, which was much condemned at home. Portugal was freed from the French who were permitted to evacuate that country with their 26,000 men, our ships conveying them to Rochelle. This number gives no idea of the enemy's available numbers and it was not until Vittoria that Marshall Soult's official

returns, found there, showed their strength at the time they left Portugal to be 335,223 men and 60,728 horses, proving that the 300,000 men, including all those of Spain and Portugal which we had at the commencement of the campaign, was not excessive. All the French had left by the end of September, 1808.

After the victory, the 20th Dragoons marched into Lisbon and took up their quarters in the royal stables at Belem Palace, where they stayed until the end of the year.

Sir Arthur Wellesley was relieved of his command before the Convention of Cintra, although he was a signatory to it. His place was taken by Lieutenant General Sir J. Cradock who was now in Lisbon and was joined there by General Sir Hew Dalrymple. In the same month of September, Sir John Moore arrived with reinforcements of 11,000 men and in October these were joined by additional troops which landed at Corunna, under the command of Sir David Baird.

On the 22nd December 1808, the 20th Dragoons were joined by the 14th Light Dragoons, having arrived from Falmouth. The whole formed a brigade under Major General Stapleton Cotton.

After Junot's defeat, and the British now being out of Spain, Napoleon once again invaded the country and took up his quarters at Vittoria. General Moore penetrated Spain as far as Salamanca, after being given false intelligence about the Spanish forces successfully opposing the French, whereas the Spaniards' regular army had received such a setback as to be temporarily non-existent.

Napoleon, supervising the operations in person, directed a combined movement of several French corps under Soult against Moore. The latter withdrew and crossed the mountains into Galacia and on to Corunna.

On arrival he was obliged to stand and fight before he was able to embark his troops into the waiting ships. He gave a good account of himself in the battle on the 16th January 1809 but was himself killed. He was buried on the field and Soult erected a monument over his grave with the simple inscription 'John Moore. Leader of the English Armies. Killed in Battle'. General Cradock, loyally desirous of supporting Moore, had ordered the 14th and 20th Dragoons to march through Almeida and join him. They started on the 25th December, a cold and wet winter's morning, when the men thought they would be celebrating Christmas in their quarters. After passing Santaram, the column moved east to Albrantes where they were called to a halt. The commissariat was having difficulty in supplying feed for the horses as well as the men. The Fourteenth's horses had landed in Lisbon only a couple of days before the march and, after being cooped up on board ship, they were not fit for a prolonged march in the awful weather conditions. It was not a promising beginning to an arduous campaign. Fortunately, the French were still in Spain but word came through that they were on the move towards the south of Portugal, on the road to Badajoz. Patrols were sent out and the 20th moved on to Elvas where they halted and stayed for a few days before returning to Albrantes. If the French came in force it was felt that these troops were too far from a point of embarkation and so the cavalry were withdrawn to Santaram and eventually to Coimbra. Here the 20th stayed for the remainder of the winter and the whole of the spring.

The French moved into northern Portugal and the Regent once again appealed for help to the British Government. Sir Arthur Wellesley was despatched with additional troops, including two regiments of cavalry, which reached the Tagus on the 22nd April 1809. Sir Arthur then took over the army from Sir James Cradock on the 24th April and began to reorganise his force where there was a shortage of everything - horses, mules, supplies and money.

The 20th Light Dragoons were brigaded with the 14th Light Dragoons, the 16th Light Dragoons and a Troop of 3rd Hussars of the King's German Legion, forming a Cavalry Light Brigade under the command of Major General Stapleton Cotton. This brigade was the only cavalry available to cover the advance of the Army in Portugal. There were two other cavalry regiments, the 3rd Dragoon Guards and the 4th Dragoons but these remained in defence of Lisbon, it being more convenient because there was such a shortage of forage to feed the horses and mules on the march, which was almost under way.

Brigadier Charles Stewart, who was Adjutant General of Sir Arthur's force, wrote of this period, *"As the troops began to arrive in and around Coimbra, the difficulty of finding forage for the horses and mules increased seriously. The markets, however, were good with the inhabitants freely supplying every article of provision at moderate prices, but the expense of supporting the army was enormous. It was calculated that the British Troops alone circulated in Coimbra a sum of no less than £10,000 a day and that the whole of the money spent by the Allies exceeded £100,000 a week".*

On the 5th May 1809, the army being at length assembled, a grand review took place and a most imposing and magnificent spectacle it presented. The whole of the troops were in the highest state of discipline and efficiency, with an ardent desire to meet the enemy. They were not kept in suspense very long for the first task that Wellesley had to do, was to clear Soult out of Oporto, which had fallen to him on the 29th March 1809.

On the 7th May, a movement was commenced in the direction of the Duoro, which had been seized by Soult on the same day as Oporto had fallen. Cotton marched with his cavalry towards the bridge over the Vouga, where he halted on the 8th. On the opposite side, a body of French soldiers were encamped under Francesca. A little

after midnight of the 9th-10th, Cotton crossed the Vouga and found the French camp deserted after being misled by his guides, and did not come up with them until some hours later. He found the enemy so strongly posted that he had to wait for the infantry to dislodge them. The footmen soon had things in hand and speedily put paid to the resistance being offered. The 16th and 20th Dragoons then followed in pursuit and took some prisoners and guns after cutting up the French.

It was a confusing affair with the cavalry having to keep to the road as the outer ground was too rocky for the horses. Major Blake was unable to get forward because of the congestion on the road and there were shouts of "Forward" while others were shouting "Back" and no-one knew which to obey. The cavalry were itching for a fight and so both the 16th and 20th found sufficient space to move up to the front and, once free of the column, put their spurs to use and galloped towards the retiring French infantry. With sabres flashing they were amongst the enemy troops, cutting them down and doing considerable execution. There were a hundred prisoners simply because the cavalrymen could not bring themselves to cut down men who offered little resistance. The field was scattered with dead Frenchmen but the squadron of the 16th had only a few casualties and the 20th went unscathed.

The French halted and formed up their infantry in a strong position on the Carvalhos Heights which commanded the road, thus checking any further pursuit by the cavalry. An orderly was immediately sent to the rear to request a greater force to be sent forward. In the meantime the squadrons of cavalry wheeled off to the right and threatened the enemy's left flank by taking a road which ran towards the village of Grijo. It was here that the 14th Light Dragoons made a brilliant charge and took many prisoners but the 20th took no part in this affair.

In his despatch to Lord Castlereagh concerning the passage of the Duoro, Sir Arthur Wellesley calls attention to the gallant conduct of the squadrons of the 16th and 20th Light Dragoons under Major Blake at Grijo on the 11th May 1809. With the exception of the 14th Light Dragoons, who took part in the passage of the Duoro on the 12th May, the cavalry was not engaged during the remainder of the campaign and the two squadrons of the Twentieth were sent back to Coimbra. There was some discussion about concentrating the whole regiment in Portugal but the remaining squadrons of the wing in Sicily could not be spared, so it was considered best to send the two squadrons to join their comrades at Messina. A number of other cavalry regiments were already arriving in the Peninsular, so the 20th were moved on to Lisbon for embarkation to Sicily.

After a long delay the regiment went on board at Belem and sailed down the Tagus into the stormy seas of the Bay of Biscay. The ships were scattered and the 20th took shelter into Carthagena where they enjoyed a placid anchorage with plenty of refreshments of every kind to ease the tedious time of the voyage. After a few days when the gale had abated, the ship set sail once again and reached Malta in September 1809 without further mishap and the stay there was further delayed before eventually reaching Messina.

Dropping anchor in the Bay of Messina, the men crowded the side of the ship taking in the beautiful scenery on a sunny day, fully looking forward to meeting all their old pals from whom they had been separated for so long. The boats were lowered and soon the men were on solid ground, shaking hands and rejoicing after such a long absence. The squadrons marched into their quarters and for some days the celebration continued with one long party. The men soon fell into the old routine of barrack life, with plenty of spit and polish mixed with mirth and joy, which was

sometimes interrupted by recalling the sad end of those old comrades who were missing.

The two squadrons of the right wing were under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Hawker, who obtained promotion on the death of Colonel Taylor and the whole regiment now came under his command. The Colonel of the Regiment was Lord Heathfield.

Before closing this chapter it may be appropriate to mention Lieut. Colonel Robert Wilson, still a 20th Light Dragoon, who was in the Peninsular. He volunteered to organise a Portuguese force which was named the Lusitanian Legion when Sir John Moore's army was being pressed in the north and, before the arrival of Sir Arthur Wellesley in Lisbon on 22nd April 1809.

Appointed Brigadier by the Bishop of Oporto, his command was independent of the British although they had been armed and equipped by them "*upon the account of the Prince Regent*".

The complete freedom of action suited Wilson and he persuaded General Cradock to permit him to move out of Lisbon where the British were garrisoned and march on to Villa Real. Not content with his move to this place, he crossed the Duoro and reached Almeida on New Year's Day 1809. After a short stay he marched his force to Ciudad Rodrigo and entered the town on the 7th January 1809.

Sir John Moore was in retreat at this time and Cradock was rushing reinforcements to him. On hearing the news of Wilson's position in direct line of the French advance towards Elvas, Cradock gave orders to the regiments in Almeida to leave the fortress and, if possible, to unite with Sir John Moore and if this was not practicable, to retire on Vigo. He also wrote to Wilson in a friendly manner advising him and the British

gentlemen under his command to retire, rather than shut himself up in a fortress. At this stage Cradock was reflecting on a widely written book on Napoleon's Egyptian campaign in which Wilson had accused the Emperor of murdering not only Turkish prisoners but some of his own sick men. Should he fall into French hands his fate might be unpleasant. However, Wilson was in no mood to desert his Portuguese comrades and put the advice of Cradock before his officers. They were all in honour bound to see the campaign through to the end, however black the outlook and, with the exception of one, they decided to remain. It would be highly disgraceful, having accepted that they were in the service of Portugal, to leave at this critical moment when they had to face the French.

As things turned out, Wilson believed that no danger threatened him and he wrote to Sir John Moore three days after the General had in fact died at Corunna, "*I do not believe the enemy have any intention of advancing in this quarter*". How right he was proved to be in later events.

Wilson frequently harried the French, his most important engagement having occurred at Banos immediately after the battle of Talavera, where with 3,000 infantry and no artillery, he fought 12,000 French infantry supported by 1,500 cavalry and 30 guns. His men gave them a bloody nose before being chased into the mountains by Estramadura, the scene of his previous encounters with the French.

Sir Robert returned to England at the end of 1809, there to take up further duties which Hutchinson had in line for him further afield and add to his distinguished career.

Nor should mention be omitted of the service of another 20th Light Dragoon officer, Captain, afterwards Lieutenant General, Sir Robert Arbuthnot, who entered the army as a Cornet in the 23rd Dragoons in 1797 and was brought into the Twentieth

in 1803. He served at the capture of the Cape of Good Hope under Colonel Wilson and was military secretary to General Beresford at Buenos Aires and subsequently acted in the same capacity in the island of Madeira. In the Peninsular campaigns of 1809-11 and 1813-14. Also served in Belgium and was present at Waterloo. He was eventually appointed Colonel of the 76th in 1843 and died in 1853 in his eightieth year.

10. SICILY - MEDITERRANEAN

The British Army in Sicily at this time (1809), Bunbury observes, was declining in morale even though the force had been increased.

General Stuart had taken over from two very popular Generals in Moore and Sherbrooke and his actions with the Court at Palermo had brought about some resentment, not only in the high command but also in the rank and file. Brigadiers Kempt, Acland and others had already sought employment in other fields and the grumblings were spreading. Meanwhile the unpopular Joseph Buonaparte had been succeeded at Naples by Murat, who at once prepared the French for a landing on Sicily. To forestall this, Stuart had in the past been inclined to strike a blow at Calabria and now announced his intention of taking possession of Ischia, thereby threatening Naples.

The news was received with mixed feelings by his Brigadiers but a force of 3,930 British and 9,530 Foreign troops were made ready for embarkation. These included 300 men of the 20th Light Dragoons and five regiments of infantry, a Guards battalion and the Light Infantry which made up the British force. The Foreign troops included the King's German Legion, Watteville's Regiment, the Chasseurs Brittaniques and with the Royal Corsican Rangers brought the total to 13,460 of all arms and ranks. Two British regiments, the 10th and 27th Foot, were to make a diversionary landing on the coast of Calabria.

After almost two weeks cooped up in the transports, when the horses began to suffer severely from the heat and want of water, the expedition sailed and a few days later the fleet cast anchor between Ischia and the mainland behind Baia. A

reconnaissance was made of Procida and Ischia and within twenty-four hours a British force was in possession of both islands.

Bunbury noted "*There we were, between 13,000 and 14,000 eating men, including officers and followers, some 1,500 horses and mules, upon a small island, extremely beautiful but yielding none of the supplies required by an army*". And there the troops remained in idleness for the next six weeks, bored stiff and waiting for their General to fulfil their wishes for some action. During this period the chief events which took place were those taken by the Royal Navy, which captured eighteen French gunboats and destroyed four others, the active efforts of H.M.S. Cyane under the command of Captain Thomas Staines. A number of prisoners were also captured from these boats, these being the reinforcements sent by Murat to try and hold the islands, which meant bad news for Naples.

However, the news from Sicily was not very encouraging. It stated that the island was in a state of panic owing to the false information that the diversion and demonstration against Scylla Castle had failed. Furthermore, it had been observed that there was increased activity taking place by the French in Toulon harbour and the island feared an invasion. In fact the two regiments which had landed on the Calabrian coast were successful and had destroyed all the guns, which Murat had collected for an invasion of Sicily, and thrown them into the sea, deep enough to prevent recovery. But it was all to no avail. Stuart's nerve was frayed and he ordered an immediate withdrawal from the islands on the 26th July 1809 and within three days the force reached Milazzo, only to find that things were normal.

So ended an expedition which cost a fabulous sum of money in freight, transport and supplies and from a military view was almost ridiculous in its shortcomings.

The Twentieth took up their old quarters in Messina and Pozzo di Gotto where, as already stated, they were joined in September by the four Troops from Portugal. During the autumn month of October, a detachment of the regiment was employed with the force under General Oswald in the Ionian islands. They were present at the capture of Ithaea, Cerigo, Zante and Cephanlonia and at the reduction of Santa Maura, during the following months in the Adriatic. Garrisons were retained in the islands where Collinwood harboured and revictualled some of his ships. The winter of 1809-1810 was passed by the Light Dragoons in patrolling the coast each day from their quarters in Messina.

In the ensuing spring the preparations for invasion from the opposite side of the Straits were continued and at the beginning of July 1810, Bunbury tells us it was estimated that nearly five hundred large boats, many of them carrying guns, had been collected on the shores of Lower Calabria, where they were held in constant readiness to cross over to Sicily. *"Murat had arrived in person and with that love of pompous display, had pitched a magnificent pavilion on the brow of the point of Pezzo, overlooking the Messina Channel and in full view of every British post from Messina to the Faro. Close behind were the huts of thousands of troops which were the flower of his army.*

By this time however, the engineers and staff officers of the British Army had not been idle. A chain of heavy batteries connected the Faro point with the fortress of Messina and these were supported by fortified posts and barracks. A squadron of four-sail of the line and several other vessels of war were anchored along the coast and covered those parts of the beach which were most exposed to attack. The British flotilla of gun-boats had risen to a hundred since the Neapolitans had been taken into British pay and lay clustered round the Faro ready to slip upon the flank and rear of the enemy's armada of small boats.

The peasantry displayed a hearty goodwill to render all the assistance in their power. They came down to the sea by their hundreds with their long spades, proffering their voluntary labour in throwing up the works of defence near to the shore.

Two strong regiments, the 31st and 35th, being the East Surrey and Royal Sussex, were brought from Malta to increase the strength of the British line and not a day passed without a skirmish of some kind between the opposing flotillas. This is how the British and French opposed each other in full battle array on either side of the Strait, which was so narrow that it was easy to see even small bodies of troops on the other side. Frequently the heavy guns from Murat's batteries sent over showers of shot which sailed into the air beyond the British defences.

The Court of Palermo showed not the slightest sign of alarm at the prospect of being invaded. Ferdinand IV and his wife were so obvious in their desire to see the British overwhelmed and expelled from the island of Sicily. There were 14,000 of our troops waiting and hoping for the attack which had so long been threatened.

Autumn had come and the dark nights were closing in to the advantage of the superior numbers of the enemy. During the night of 17th September 1810, two battalions of Corsicans and four of Neapolitans commanded by General Caviagnac, crossed the wider part of the Strait and reached the Sicilian shore about seven miles below Messina.

The movement was intended as a diversion but the enemy troops had been seen embarking at Scylla. Caviagnac's object on landing, was to gain the low mountain ridges and then come down on the rear of the British army while it was engaged with the main body of the French, which was landing further along the coast.

However, receiving the news of the landing, General Campbell galloped to the south and assumed command. The Corsican's had already come ashore and one of the battalions had pushed on towards the high ridges. Between the invaders and Messina stood the 21st regiment, the Royal Scots Fusiliers, commanded by Colonel Frederick Adam, with two 6-pounders guns and part of the 3rd Battalion of the King's German Legion with two companies of Rifles coming to his support. On the other side of the enemy, hastening from San Placido, were the Light companies of the Foreign regiments, amounting to about 400 men, commanded by Colonel Fischer. His troops had already opened fire on the boats and part of his force engaged the enemy on the ridges.

The day was breaking and it displayed to Campbell's view the whole state of affairs and put his plan of action into use. He immediately sent parties to secure the rugged paths through the mountains, keeping the 21st and part of the King's German Legion in reserve for a decisive stroke when the time was ripe.

The bells clanged from every small village church and the peasants grabbed whatever weapons were at hand and crowded on the hills, showing their hostility to the invaders.

The Corsicans on the ridge halted, waiting for support, while those on the beach were receiving the fire from Fischer's Light Infantry. Adam then pushed forward with his guns and those still in the boats put off from the shore, while others scrambled back into their boats, leaving more than 200 men behind on the beach to lay down their arms and cry for quarter. The Corsicans on the ridge were summoned to surrender and for a moment they hesitated until they saw Adam's column of eight or nine hundred men close in on them, with Fischer's Light Infantry on the other side.

Several of the enemy had been killed with more than 800 made prisoners, while Captain Robinson of the Royal Marines, captured four enemy vessels which he intercepted with his fast rowing boats. The loss to the enemy in killed, wounded or drowned was considerable while the British had only three men hurt from rifle fire.

While this affair was going on to the south of Messina, the main army of Murat was embarking under the eyes of our forces in their vast flotilla which stretched from the Punta del Pezzo to Scylla.

The whole of the British troops were at their posts, prepared to give the French a warm reception on landing. However, as the enemy discovered no support coming from the mountains behind the British positions, General Grenier refused the Divisions under his control to risk the attack and before the end of the day, the whole of the enemy troops under his command had returned to their quarters. Such was the conclusion of the invasion and the end of Murat's grand preparations. He left for Naples leaving orders for the withdrawal of his whole army and the return of his flotilla, where it was possible to elude the vigilance of the British cruisers.

It was a patrol of the 20th Light Dragoons which first discovered the arrival of Cavaignac's boats, near to the Faro as dawn was breaking. The dragoons saw what they thought were fishermen returning from their boats on the shore. They approached the figures in the half light and were amongst the nearest before they saw the uniforms and realised they were French soldiers. The dragoons immediately drew their sabres and, cutting at the men, galloped through them to raise the alarm at Messina.

A newspaper cutting gives the following announcement, probably dated 1811:

"Two Dragoons of the 20th Regiment, named Jacob Longman and John Green, have been rewarded, by order of Sir John Stuart, with a medal each, as a mark of his approbation of their gallant conduct in cutting their way through the enemy's infantry, who had disembarked on the morning of the 18th September of last year (1810), in the neighbourhood of Messina".

The medal bears the following inscription:

Obverse: From Lieutenant General Sir J Stuart, Commander of the Forces, to Jacob Longman (or John Green) of the 20th Light Dragoons.

Reverse: For the brave and active vigilance displayed on the landing of the Enemy, at St. Stephano, near Messina on 18th September 1810.

The regiment turned out and remained under arms during the hours of the affair but were not directly engaged. At this period the 20th remained in the barracks at Messina and Pozzo di Gotto.

Later in the year Sir John Stuart resigned the command and he was replaced by Lord William Bentinck, who was soon afterwards accredited as British Representative at the Court of Palermo, in place of Lord Amherst. The following appointment also appeared in the London Gazette on 12th December 1810:

> *20th Light Dragoons: Major General Lord William Bentinck from half-pay of the late 24th Light Dragoons, to be Colonel, vice Lord Heathfield, appointed to the command of the 1st Dragoon Guards.*

In 1811 Sergeant Landsheit writes of the comet which was witnessed by many in the regiment but it passed without any special comment in the annals of the regiment.

Lord William soon realised what was happening in the politics of the island and rigorously opposed the intrigues of the Court of Palermo and was disliked by them for his actions and opinions.

At this time two Troops of Foreign Hussars, composed of men from nearly all the countries of Europe, were collected from all the stations around the Mediterranean and formed into a squadron in Sicily. Lieutenants Jacks and De Ruvignes of the 20th Light Dragoons were given the temporary rank of Captain and placed in command. Sergeant Landsheit was promoted Squadron Sergeant Major and most of the non-commissioned officers were supplied by the 20th. These troops came under the overall command of the regiment as an additional squadron.

The regimental returns for the summer and autumn of 1811, show four Troops of the 20th at Messina and four Troops at Pozzo di Gotto, with two Troops in the depot at Maidstone. The later returns of December and January 1812 include the Foreign Hussars. The returns also mention that recruiting parties were at several northern towns in England including Sheffield, Wakefield, Newcastle-under-Lyne and other places.

Considerable alarm was caused in Sicily during the latter part of the year of 1811, when a remarkable eruption of Mount Etna shook the island. It started on the 27th October and continued with repeated tremors throughout the winter. Early in the year 1812, our relations with the Court of Palermo made it necessary to have a force of British troops in the neighbourhood of that city. Four Troops of the 20th Light Dragoons and some battalions of infantry were moved there. Soon afterwards Lord William, having waited some time for an answer to arrangements made with the British Representative and receiving no reply, decided to bring things to a head. Apparently King Ferdinand, having resigned his power to his son and promising to

send his Queen out of Sicily because of her intrigues, suddenly resumed the reins of government. He moved out of Palermo to a villa at La Favorite, about four miles out of the city. Here he arranged a grand fiesta to which everyone in Palermo flocked. A fancy fair was established and for some days a giant carnival was held in the grounds of the villa, thereby creating a form of bodyguard for the King's protection.

However, the night before a definite answer was due to be given to the British about carrying out his promise, Lord William acted quickly when the crowds made their weary way to bed. He ordered the 20th Dragoons to occupy all the approaches to the villa, supported by some infantry battalions and, seeing the situation the following morning, the Court acceded to the British demands. After this showdown, life on the island became more bearable and events returned to normal.

Sir Robert Wilson, on his return from the Peninsular, was promised a position in the Foreign Affairs Department and after a long wait, it came to fruition. In April 1812 he was promoted Brigadier General in the British army, having already had the appointment in the Portuguese service. He joined a Mission as military advisor under Mr. Liston, who was travelling to Turkey as British Ambassador. Wilson said goodbye to Jemima and the children and embarked on the "Argo", a frigate under the command of Captain Warren, on the 8th April 1812.

The first port of call was Cadiz where the Brigadier inspected the fortifications and attended the theatre. The Mission next called at Gibraltar, from where Wilson explored the neighbouring area of Spain and wrote letters to the Duke of Gloucester, Lord Grey and his friend Lord Hutchinson on 'such matters as I thought would be interesting to them'. Like himself, they were all Whigs with very liberal thoughts and minds.

After leaving Gibraltar, a fresh breeze blew them eastwards and into the Bay of Palermo, the journey having taken six weeks, on the 14th May 1812. Receiving relief from quarantine, the Mission proceeded to land during which time very heavy clouds broke and torrents of rain descended. Wilson writes in his diary the following entry:-

"Lord William Bentinck had procured appartments for us at the hotel as his house was full and almost every other place was occupied, there being 6,000 British in the garrison and amongst them were two squadrons of the 20th Dragoons..... Returning to dress I found Major Blake and my brother officers of the 20th whom I was delighted to meet, for I have not only a personal attachment to several but a strong 'esprit de corps'".

The Brigadier secured an interview with the Queen. She was no doubt glad to have someone to whom she could pour out her troubles, particularly to a handsome young general wearing the Cross of Maria Theresa, her mother. Soon she was showing him Bentinck's threatening letters and assuring him that she would die rather than see a revolutionary committee established in Sicily under the guise of a parliament. Wilson claimed that he was far too accustomed to the company of sovereigns to be influenced by their flattery. In his report to Bentinck, he counselled moderation and pointed out that it was unwise for Britain to impose her will on the Court of Palermo, even in the cause of freedom. However, as was his usual habit, he sent a full and detailed account of the whole proceeding to Lord Grey, which was not pleasing to Bentinck, who was rightly annoyed. He always believed that one cannot violate the dignity of man and felt that just as the English had a right to govern themselves, so had the Sicilians and the Spanish. The full extent of the intrigues in which Queen Caroline was involved with the French was not then known. Without questioning Lord William's honesty of purpose, Sir Robert characterises his

proceedings as "the most extraordinary that ever occurred in British foreign relationships with any European power". His meeting with the Queen must have been sympathetic for she invited him to their villa outside the capital.

Two days later he writes : *Rode to La Favorita, the King's private shooting box about three miles from Palermo; inspected afterwards the port and that part of the suburbs and at the appointed time presented myself on parade with the 20th, where I was much pleased to find the men in an order that was creditable to them, to their officers and to the army.* Then on the 20th May 1812: *My party has been increased by a corporal and four men of the 20th Dragoons. I found the Duke's order to that effect awaiting my arrival. They are all fine fellows, two of them went out under my command to the Cape.*

It is worth noting the names of these Dragoons as their service deserves more than a passing mention. They were Corporal Thomas Clarke and Privates John Allen (2nd), S Lawledge, J Matthews and W. Pickard. The Colonel had Allen as his batman and the travels and experiences of these are unique, not only in the annals of the regiment but of the army abroad.

The important service rendered by Colonel Sir Robert Wilson during the campaign in the Peninsular from 1812-1814 are matters of history but the fact that a few British Dragoons bore a part in the famous Retreat from Moscow had never been placed on record until fifty years later.

Having re-embarked the Mission, the frigate "Argo" quitted Palermo, called at Malta and Metylene, and reached the entrance of the Dardanelles on 12th June 1812, just as the French invasion of Russia was commencing. At Metylene, Sir Robert remarked that *"further acquaintance with these people has proved to me that the moralities are not regulated by the length of the petticoat".* Whilst there, aided by two

dragoons, two sailors, a lieutenant of Marines and a priest, he 'removed' a large Greek altar and had it put on board ship. He denies that this was pillage on the ground that he *'had the sanction of the chief person of the island and also of the priest'.* A footnote in his diary adds: *I gave it to Mr. William Hamilton, who set it up in Chelsea.*

Pending arrangements for his reception at Constantinople, Wilson, accompanied by his Dragoons, explored the district, then having received his instructions from the Ambassador, proceeded to visit the Grand Vizier at Schumla in the Balkans. Writing on the 30th July 1812, he describes his ride against time: *The first hundred miles presented a flat and naked country, fifty of them running along the sea-shore. The next two hundred and twenty were on partially wooded country and through the Balkan mountains. I reached Schumla in sixty-eight hours, but to ride such a distance without any repose, over a line of country that in some parts was all but impracticable in the heat of July, on lame and frequently tired horses, was an exertion beyond the strength of most men. My dragoons, indeed, executed the same undertaking but only one of them could pretend to any rivalry with me.*

The Colonel records that on his return, he and his escort of dragoons had ridden 425 miles, rowed six miles on the Danube and travelled eighty miles by carriage in the space of five days, including a nine-hour stay at Schumla. On the 1st August 1812 , Sir Robert and his escort reached Bucharest where he purchased a Russian kibitka for himself and procured country litter-cars for his dragoons. He then started again for the headquarters of the Russian army at Kiev, reaching there on the 10th August 1812.

At Kamienetz, he was obliged to leave one of his dragoons, Allen, behind in charge of the Governor, the man being too ill to continue the journey any further. No doubt

Sir Robert would miss his batman, who was a loyal and efficient servant. On the 14th August 1812, Wilson reached Smolensk where the two Russian armies effected a junction. It was asserted that one of the commanders, Barclay de Tolly, had the crafty idea to draw the French into the interior where they would later be overwhelmed by the rigour of a Russian winter. However, the Brigadier could see that the events had no tactical issue and it was becoming a *'war of marches without sufficient arrangement and method to avoid serious misfortune'.*

Sir Robert hurried to St Petersberg to press the subject on the attention of the ambassador, Lord Cathcart. He was charged by certain Russian generals with the delicate task of informing the Czar about the way in which Barclay de Tolly was conducting the army under his command.

Accompanied by a single dragoon, Wilson skirted the beseiged city of Moscow and *'rounded the burning city whose flames fired the whole sky'.*

The Brigadier was well received by the Emperor and especially permitted *'to interpose and intervene with all the power and influence he could exert, to protect the interests of the Imperial Crown wherever he saw a disposition or design to contravene or prejudice them'.*

At Woronowo on 1st October 1812, he writes:- *"At this place I found Allen and also my dragoons, who had just come in. It appears that since I left him at Kamienetz, he has experienced all the kindness that I myself have ever received ..... He is full of gratitude and astonished at such an extraordinary predilection for the English".*

The Brigadier and his dragoons were present at the battle of Borodino, after which there was open communication between the two armies in the form of a brief armistice. Ten days later at Tarruga, during the cessation of hostilities, after the

battle, Wilson writes:- *13th October 1812. "Day before yesterday I rode to the French posts, passing within half pistol-shot, accompanied by my dragoon and Colonel Potemkin, that I might introduce myself and the dragoon, who was at Borodino, to the knowledge of our friends of the enemy's army. As I resolved they should be under no mistake, I persuaded Potemkin to make some excuse and speak to a French officer, whom we saw by one of the vedettes, under some pretext or other. He did so and in the course of conversation, let him know who I was".*

In his diary dated 17th October 1812 - *"I sent one of my dragoons to a circle of French and Austrian officers, whilst I passed by with the Prince of Oldenburg, that they might see and communicate to others that we are here. They were much struck by his appearance and made many enquiries which he suitably answered. The dragoon was very well mounted, is an excellent horseman and a good looking man, so that the 'tout ensemble' was all that could be desired".* It would be optimistic to think that he might have been wearing the new coatee which had just been introduced into the Light Dragoons. It was blue for home service and grey for the hot climates of the east.

On the 24th October 1812 occurred the battle of Malo-Jaroslaveta, which cost the French so dear. Writing to the Duke of Gloucester on the 26th he says:- *"I had the good fortune to open the ball at Malo-Jaroslaveta".*

Throughout the terrible winter of 1812-13, Sir Robert and his 20th Dragoons were never absent from the Russian headquarters and they endured all the privations brought about by such weather. Sir Robert's entries of special interest to the regiment are few and far between.

In December 1812, we find him at Minsk with his dragoons *'very cold and chilled to the bone'*. He had been obliged to provide sheepskin clothing for them, the whole

party suffering from frostbite. From Minsk two of his dragoons were sent to Odessa, en route to Constantinople, with despatches for Mr. Liston, the British ambassador. An entry made at Warsaw, in which Sir Robert deplores the loss of a Piedmontese officer and two of his gallant dragoons, along with a faithful servant. He had despatched them on a mission to Constantinople and they were drowned in a storm in the Black Sea. A sad end for those who had endured so much in an environment which was completely alien to them. The dragoons were Corporal Thomas Clarke and Private S. Lawledge whose names have now been entered on the Regiment's Roll of Honour.

Later, on the 13th March 1813, he writes:- *"I much fear that my dragoon left at Potolzk is dead and also Baron Brinken, a Russian officer serving as my Aide-de-camp. The former was to have had the soldier's cross of the Order of St. George and I believe those who are still with me will be so decorated".*

A few days later he mentions that his orderly, Allen, had taken the fever at Fraustadt and that he was now left without a single Englishman. There is no account of what happened to the remaining dragoon which he should have had but this was the last reference to his escort of dragoons in Sir Robert's published papers. However, what is known about three of them is in a happier ending because Allen, that brave fellow who was stricken down with the pestilence survived to soldier on. He must have been very hardy or most fortunate because the epidemic wrought more havoc than the sword or the cold Russian winter. The others, J Matthews and W. Pickard, along with John Allen, all figure again in the muster rolls afterwards. John Allen was taken on pay in the regiment when in the island of Zante, but how he found his way back from Poland to the shores of the Adriatic, no-one knows. Having ridden through Russia and the Balkans it is not surprising to find these old soldiers using their initiative with the urge to join their comrades once more, no

matter how far they had to travel. Being away for so long meant that the plucky Allen missed receiving his award of the soldiers cross, for when the First Class Order of St. George was bestowed on Sir Robert by the Emperor, he was given two lower merit Crosses of St. George by the Czar for his two (at that time) dragoons, J. Matthews and W. Pickard, although their names are not recorded in Burke's as having received the award under 'Foreign Decorations'. At his investment Sir Robert would have wished for the presence of some officers from the regiment but the 20th Light Dragoons were so dispersed that it required all the Field Officers to be present and available for regimental duties.

Whilst at Minsk, in December 1812, Sir Robert was transferred to the 22nd Light Dragoons (being the late 25th) in India, as supernumerary Lieutenant Colonel, his place in the 20th being filled by Lieutenant Colonel George Wyndham, who was brought from one of the foreign cavalry regiments.

His brilliant services in Turkey, Russia, Poland, Germany, Italy, France and in Spain, will always be remembered in the annals of military history. The writer will remember him for his sympathetic attitude towards the rank and file and as a gentleman who threw away the 'cat'.

Sir Robert became a General and died in 1849 and was buried in Westminster Abbey. His wife Jemima lies beside him.

11. SICILY - MEDITERRANEAN

We must now return to the regiment which we left in the summer of 1812, with eight service troops in Sicily and two depot troops at home. The Foreign Hussars were still under the command of Captain Jacks, the Officer Commanding. It had been proposed to despatch an army from Sicily to the south-east of Spain, to co-operate with the army under Lord Wellington. However, owing to the state of affairs between Lord William Bentinck and the Court of Palermo, which brought an uneasy tension both in Sicily and in Italy, the project was abandoned. Instead a small force, which included two Troops of the Twentieth, the Foreign Hussars squadron, the Brunswick Hussars and some battalions of infantry, all under the command of General Maitland, was despatched to Minorca instead. Yet another small force, described in the regimental returns as "the Expedition", afterwards embarked at Palermo and proceeded to Sardinia, having in view a possible descent on the coast of Italy.

General Maitland's force gathered at Milazzo in June 1812 and, after a few days at sea in good weather, reached Minorca. The men and horses were landed and made their way to an encampment in the neighbourhood of Port Mahon, to await the arrival of the Spanish reinforcements from Majorca. After a few days the Spaniards arrived, the Expedition sailed for the coast of Catalonia, where a landing was made in the Bay of Blanes. This was a diversion made to draw the French troops to that place and, having served its purpose, the troops re-embarked and proceeded to Alicante where the force landed without experiencing any opposition. At Alicante the troops encamped outside the town and here the force remained until the spring of 1813.

The Troops of the Twentieth, with the rest of the cavalry, set up outposts in front of the town and had a brisk affair with the enemy near to Vincente on the 17th August 1812. The Twentieth suffered no fatal casualties but some horses were wounded. Minor clashes occurred throughout the autumn and winter without any great consequence to the regiment, losing only a few men. The returns for this last quarter of 1812, show the distribution as follows:- Headquarters and four Troops at Palermo, two Troops were still in barracks at Messina, with a detachment in the Ionian islands. In Spain there were two Troops at Alicante and at home the regiment had two depot Troops at Maidstone. The usual recruiting sergeants roamed around the public houses of Westminster, looking for easy prey to take the King's shilling.

Another change took place in the 20th Light Dragoons, for in February 1813 the following appointment was announced in the London Gazette:-

Twentieth Light Dragoons - Major General Sir Stapleton Cotton from the 16th Light Dragoons to be Colonel, vice Lord William Bentinck appointed to the command of the 11th Light Dragoons. Sir Stapleton Cotton was raised to the peerage as Viscount Combermere.

The force at Alicante was a strange medley of British, Hanoverians, Brunswickers, Swiss and Sicilians in British pay. The others were Calabrese, Italians and Portuguese which were augmented by the Sardinian force, a headache for any commander to organise into a fighting army against such a formidable foe as the French under Napoleon and his Marshals.

The regiment was now together again, the monthly returns for February 1813 show the headquarters of the 20th Light Dragoons and the whole of the regiment (a small detachment at Palermo excepted) as being stationed at Muchamiel, a suburb of Alicante, with the Foreign squadron under Captain Jacks, being at San Vincente. In the following month of March, the command at Alicante was assumed by Lieutenant General Sir John Murray, making the fifth of five successive commanders to take over the army at Alicante. All these changes took place within a short period of five months, so it was little wonder there was a lack of cohesion for a force on service.

On the 12th March 1813, the enemy was driven out of Alcoy and on the 15th March a cavalry force under Colonel Donkin, D.Q.M.G., with some infantry, dislodged the French outposts from the villages of Recayrence and Altaferas, situated at the back of the mountains around the Cove of Alcoy, then returned to Alicante. Murray next made preparations for an attack on Valencia by sea but, as happened so often before, delays and indecision became the order of the day. The troops who were ordered for the action were kept waiting until the 26th March 1813, when the news arrived from Sicily and the attack on Valencia was abandoned.

Fresh troubles had broken out in Sicily where the mad King Ferdinand, once again, set himself in opposition to the English commander Lord William Bentinck. Bentinck at once demanded the return of the British troops and consequently 2,000 soldiers, which included the headquarters and two squadrons of the 20th Light Dragoons and the squadron of Foreign Hussars, embarked for Sicily on the 5th April 1813. The French commander, Suchet, at once resolved to take the initiative against the remaining force and news of this reached the ears of Sir John Murray on the 10th April 1813.

The Anglo-Sicilian and Spanish troops were then in a position near the old Moorish castle of Castella, about three miles distant from the pass of Biar. It was held by an advance guard, composed of attachments of the 20th Light Dragoons and Brunswick Hussars with some German Legion riflemen and the Calabrian Free Corps. A couple of mountain guns made up the force, all under the command of Colonel Adams of the 21st Fusiliers.

On the 12th April 1813, Colonel Adam's force was attacked by a body of 5,000 French but, after a hard fight lasting five hours, was driven back with the loss of thirty prisoners and two mountain guns. The troops however effected their retreat in good order. On the following day, the scattered fighting at several places were repulsed at all points. "*A hard contested action, where all the success was due to the bravery of the troops. As for generalship, there was none and much blood was spilt to no profit*" wrote Napier. The only casualty recorded in the Twentieth on this occasion, was one man wounded. For six months after this affair the French were left unmolested.

Lord Wellington has strongly urged that siege should be laid to the fortress of Tarragona, with the strongest force practicable but Bentinck, dreading the prospect of the invasion of Sicily by Murat, had meantime recalled more troops from Spain, leaving very few of his original force in that country. Only 14,000 men now remained available for the enterprise, of which not more than 8,000 were British and German, with only 700 cavalry.

It seemed that the project against the fortress at Tarragona was doomed from the start. There were formidable guns, the battering train was powerful and the naval squadron was all that a commander could wish for in reducing the walls of a fortress. Admiral Hallowell had several battleships of the line, supported by frigates, bomb

vessels and gunboats, besides several transports but without the essential co-operation of all the services it meant nothing. Hallowell had no cordial relations with the generals, Quartermaster General Donkin had no friendly disposition towards Murray and Clinton and they had no kindly feelings towards the admiral or Donkin. Even the subordinate officers of both services had false notions about each other which added to the uneasy feelings which prevailed among the service chiefs. To cap it all, neither Admiral nor General had any hope of success simply because they had no clear understanding of Wellington's able plan for the operations.

On the 31st May 1813, the troops for Tarragona embarked at Alicante and after a pleasant sail on a smooth sea with a following wind, reached the Bay of Tarragona towards the end of day on the 1st June 1813. Because of a sudden change in the weather, the sea became rough and a heavy surf faced those about to land. The light was rapidly failing and soon the boats would be engulfed in darkness so it was decided that the best course of action would be to wait for better landing conditions. There was no improvement until a couple of days later when, on the 3rd June 1813, the troops and horses disembarked without any opposition from the French and the advance force pushed forwards towards the city.

During the following days, whilst the siege material was in the process of being unloaded from the ships, the cavalry, under Lord Frederick Bentinck, were engaged in reconnaissance in the direction of Barcelona. Four Troops of the 20th Light Dragoons and one Troop of Foreign Hussars were engaged in the forward area of Tarragona and it could be seen that the fortress was strongly held. On the 10th June 1813, some British spies informed General Murray of substantial French forces marching towards Tarragona as reinforcements. These consisted of 8,000 to 10,000 soldiers with fourteen guns and were expected the following day.

Murray, oblivious to the danger, continued to unload the stores and several mortars as if the French did not exist. Having these weapons in position, the firing began on the town the day being the 11th June 1813, at the same time the ships in the bay opened a bombardment.

Murray, having gained information from his scouts that the French under Maurice Mathieu numbering 3,000 combatants, were at Villa Franca and Suchet was closing towards the Col de Balaguer, did not appear to grasp the situation. His army was in jeopardy and he seemed to be numbed by the course of events. After leaving orders to storm the outworks that night, Murray returned before the zero hour for the attack and gave the situation some more thought before finally making up his mind. At eight o'clock that night Murray repeated his order to attack and at ten o'clock the storming party was in the dry bed of the Francoli, awaiting the signal to go forward. As the party prepared to attack, a counter-order arrived and the party was withdrawn from the position. The siege was then ordered to be raised and the guns were removed from the Olivo, in spite of protests from the artillery commander. Murray, trying to ease the frustration of the officer, then promised to leave the gun batteries in position until the following night. However, as events unfolded, it was obvious that without full support the artillery was in a hazardous position, so the guns were removed to the beach on the 12th June 1813.

The detachment from Valls arrived at the same time as Lord Frederick Bentinck came in from Altfella with all the cavalry and gave no inclination of the move to the Spaniards, under Copens. This was a selfish act as they relied on the cavalry for their support. All the formations marched independently to Cape Salou for embarking. An aide brought an order from Murray that all the horses were to be shot but Bentinck refused to carry out such instructions. He took his men and horses to the Col de Balaguer, followed by fourteen pieces of artillery, where the

transports were awaiting them. It was all confusion and a discredit to the British army. Eventually all was ready to hoist sail, having left eighteen siege guns and all the stores, including the siege material and ammunition, on the beach. Still there was no order to sail.

The main body of the French had meanwhile gone on to Tarragona so Murray had the option of staying or returning to Alicante. He called a council of war and it was decided to return but at this juncture, to the heartfelt joy of all, Lord William Bentinck arrived in Sir Edward Pellow's fleet and took over immediate command.

Lord William had at last managed the removal of Queen Caroline from Sicily, who had returned to Germany. He was still greatly worried about the threat to Sicily by Murat with his 20,000 men and supported by the large French fleet from Toulon. Fortunately the French scheme collapsed shortly afterwards on the departure of Murat, who assumed command of the French cavalry in Germany.

The transports and the naval escort were still in the bay, unaware that the French garrison of the fortress of Tarragona was out of ammunition and ready to be taken by a determined attack. However Lord William gave it much consideration and, under the circumstances, decided that an attack would not be carried out with the vigour it required and ordered the fleet to return to Alicante. It was in his mind that with good fortune he could strike a blow at Valencia on his way back, conditions permitting. However, the luckless expedition was doomed to failure and disaster. A storm sprang up and fourteen sail of transports were beached on the sands at the mouth of the Ebro. Suchet, sensing the British intention, made a forced march of sixty miles in forty-eight hours from Tortoza to Valencia, which effectively prevented any prospect of landing there. So the Anglo-Sicilian army returned to Alicante, completely demoralised, where they dribbled into the harbour in sixes and sevens

until the last transport limped in on the 27th June 1813. There they remained until the 8th July 1813.

The Spanish armies in the south-east of Spain had by this time been placed under orders of Lord William Bentinck and in correspondence with his Chief, it was proposed by Wellington that he should make another attack on Tarragona or Tortoza, providing there was means available for such an operation. Failing this, to make a general advance from Alicante and the south, so as to take the open country around Valencia. The British force should keep to the coastline where it was able to keep in communication with the British naval fleet for support.

Whilst the matter was under discussion, the French evacuated Valencia, which was immediately occupied by the British who pushed their headquarters to Vinares. At Valencia the British troops were surprised by the joyful inhabitants who welcomed them with open arms. The demonstration of greeting was something the troops had not previously met. The streets were garlanded with greenery from the trees and large plants. Leaves and petals were strewn on the road and bouquets of flowers showered down on the marching troops from the balconies of the houses. Music was being played by bands of stringed instruments and the wine flowed amongst the joyous gathering of the troops.

Soon after this occupation, the Col de Balaguer was secured and the mountainous ground on the left bank of the Ebro was covered by the army. To mark the success of the whole occupation, Tarragona was invested on the 30th August 1813, where the ground was taken much nearer to the walls than on the previous attempt. The British now waited for the fortress to fall and crown all the efforts of the past. Their cup of joy was not yet overflowing as Suchet had other plans, his army was still very strong and far outnumbered the British. The French Marshall marched towards

Tarragona and Lord William deemed it prudent to retire and covered by the 20th Light Dragoons and the Foreign Hussars, fell back on the Col de Balaguer.

Suchet, after blowing up the walls of the fortress, abandoned Tarragona and retired in the direction of Barcelona. Lord William quickly sent his troops into the footsteps of the Frenchmen and closely followed Suchet and established his headquarters at Villa Franca on the 5th September 1813. On the night of the 12th September, the British advance guard, under the command of Colonel Adams, was posted at the pass of Ordal which was situated about fifteen miles from Villa Franca, where an unexpected attack took place by a strong body of Frenchmen. The Colonel's force fought furiously for several hours throughout the night, trying to preserve the situation. The enemy was far too strong and Colonel Adams fell wounded early on, his second-in-command, Colonel Reeves directed his men with great bravery but he also fell wounded. There was still a gallant resistance from the remainder of the advance guard but they were dispersed after putting up a great fight.

On the following day, Suchet then attacked the main body at Villa Franca but it retired in good order and the men kept their ranks together. A charge by the French cavalry was met with remarkable resolution by the 20th Light Dragoons and the German Hussars, which stopped the attack from gaining any further ground. Lord Frederick Bentinck was in the mêlée with the troopers and engaged in single combat, Colonel Myers the commander of the French cavalry. Then Sir Frederick wounded his adversary and unhorsed him. during the course of which a French horseman galloped forward to give him a 'coup de grâce' from the rear. The sharp Sergeant Dickson of the Twentieth intervened at this point and cut down the Frenchman. But for this timely act the British cavalry would have lost their gallant commander. Sadly Sergeant Dickson was himself cut down almost immediately and was fatally wounded.

The French horse were soundly defeated with the loss of three hundred men. The casualty list of the British cavalry was also proportionally high, the four Troops of the Twentieth having borne the brunt of the fight. The regiment suffered the loss of Captain Hanson, one sergeant and seven rank and file killed and the wounded were four sergeants and twenty-three rank and file. Twenty-four horses were either killed or missing, with several suffering cuts and other injuries. A number of men had been reported missing at Ordal during the night fight but many of them came in the next day, having evaded the hunt by the Frenchmen. This hard contested affair added to the laurels of the Twentieth but compelled the British and the Allied troops to fall back on Tarragona.

Lord William now returned to Sicily and was succeeded at Tarragona by General Sir William Clinton, making the seventh change of commander in fifteen months. The remainder of the year was passed by the British in the villages around Tarragona and Venares.

The distribution of the 20th Light Dragoons at the end of 1813 had changed very little, with four Troops now at Tarragona, four Troops at Palermo, two Troops at Maidstone but now had a detachment in Egypt on remount duty. Captains H.C. Stapleton and H. Floyd left the regiment on exchange, dated 12th November 1813.

In Catalonia, General Clinton's force commenced with a sort of investment of Barcelona, where Suchet had his headquarters and this continued until the peace. On the 20th February 1814, a force consisting of detachments of the Twentieth, Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers, the 21st and 62nd Foot, three battalions of the King's German Legion and the 1st Greek Light Infantry, embarked at Palermo under the command of Lord William Bentinck and proceeded to Leghorn. The force landed on the 8th March 1814 and marched to Lucca, which was occupied by the British.

Lord William had talks with Murat which proved to be negative and after further unsuccessful attempts for co-operation, Bentinck moved to the coast, near Spezzia, where reinforcements were expected from the east coast of Spain. They were to be used in a general attack on Genoa, which was eventually carried by the 3rd Italians. The detachments of the Twentieth were at Punta del Greco and the Foreign Hussars were quartered at Marra. Shortly afterwards the latter were disbanded and the officers returned to the Twentieth to take up regimental duties. Those men who were desirous of returning to their homeland, received passports to carry them through the Austrian lines to their respective towns and the horses were returned as remounts to Palermo. With the horses went the detachments of 20th Light Dragoons at the end of May 1814, to join the four Troops of the regiment.

At the end of 1814, the four Troops of the Twentieth at Tarragona embarked for Palermo, bringing the regiment together again in Sicily where they remained for another nine months, with a detachment in Naples.

In April 1815, the 20th Light Dragoons were granted permission by H.R.H. the Prince Regent, on behalf of H.M. King George III, to bear on their guidon and appointments, the honour "Peninsular".

The regiment embarked at Malta for England in August 1815 and the following month its name was removed from the strength of the Mediterranean command but it is named in the monthly returns from Sicily and subsequently Naples up to the month of September 1815. The regimental accounts, however, state that up to June 1815, the regiment was at Pozzo di Gotto, which is just south of Naples and a detachment in Naples itself. In July 1815, the regiment appears to have moved once again to Barcelonna, near Messina, this would be preparatory to the move to Malta for embarkation.

The depot Troops under Lieutenant Colonel Wyndham, moved from Maidstone to Richmond and from there to Birmingham. It was here that the men who had been prisoners of war in France rejoined the regiment.

In August 1815, the depot Troops moved from Birmingham to Dorchester and in the following month of September 1815, the service Troops embarked at Malta in separate transports and, a few weeks later, landed at Portsmouth and Plymouth. The Troops then marched to Dorchester and Radipole where they joined up with the depot Troops.

A detachment of the Twentieth was left behind at Marseilles, which consisted of one lieutenant, one sergeant, one trumpeter, twenty-seven troopers and thirty horses, which joined up with the British force under Sir Hudson Lowe.

On the 4th December 1815, the regiment received orders to march in four divisions from Dorchester to Hounslow, where the detachment from Marseilles rejoined, bringing the number of all ranks to 941. With the exception of Captain Molesworth, D.A.Q.M.G. at Genoa and two or three privates serving as orderlies to Colonel, Lord Combermere, then commanding the cavalry of the Army of Occupation in France, the whole regiment was at home and together again. The establishment was now reduced to eight Troops.

The regiment remained at Hounslow barracks, with detachments at Richmond, Hampton Court and Kingston, until July 1816, when it marched to Bristol. In assisting the civil authorities, the regiment was split up, the headquarters and four Troops taking up their quarters in Bristol, two Troops went to Gloucester and two to Cirencester, with detachments at Haverford West, Narbeth and St. Clare. For the next nine months the regiment was constantly on the alert because of rumblings of

discontent. There was an undercurrent of civil disobedience throughout the area amongst the iron workers, which developed into a full blown riot fifteen years later.

From Bristol, the Twentieth embarked to Ireland in March 1817 and was stationed at Cork with sundry detachments in Tipperary and the adjacent counties, where little of any consequence occurred during their duties of aiding the authorities. In the spring of 1818, the 20th Light Dragoons removed to Cahir, furnishing several detachments in Limerick and Kilkenny with the headquarters remaining in Cahir. The Twentieth stayed in these many places until the end of the year.

Early in December 1818, in accordance with instructions from Horse Guards, Whitehall, the detachments were called in to Cahir barracks between the 12th and the 15th December 1818. The eight Troops, numbering in all thirty-two officers, two Troop Quarter-masters and 480 non-commissioned officers and men, were disbanded. The horses were transferred to the 2nd Dragoon Guards and other regiments in the Curragh and the remaining surplus to requirements went to the Commissariat for sale to outside sources. The staff and Troop clerks were transferred to Dublin and their services were retained until the regimental accounts were completed and closed in January 1819. So terminated a career of most varied and gallant service, extending over a period of twenty-eight years and from the regiment's officers, no less than thirteen were or became Generals and only Major M.W. Blake was serving at the close, who held a commission whilst on the Jamaica establishment. He died many years later whilst on half-pay of the 11th Hussars.

12. INDIA - ENGLAND - IRELAND

In 1858, during the Sepoy Insurrection, a number of cavalry regiments were raised by the Honourable East India Company.

At the end of the mutiny, on the 2nd August 1859 an "Act for the better Government of India" was passed by the British Government in which the East India Company was abolished. The Indian Government taking over all the responsibilities which were previously held by the Company. India then entered a new era with several states still in the hands of loyal princes but subject to the Governor-General and later, the Viceroy and the Indian Council.

The Company's European regiments were transferred to the Indian Government without consulting the men who, quite rightly, assumed that they would be discharged and re-enlisted under new terms of pay and with a free bounty. A number of men, owing no allegiance to the Crown, now wished to be discharged completely from the army. The regiments concerned were numbered one to five of the Bengal European Light Cavalry and some artillerymen.

The 2nd Bengal European Light Cavalry was stationed at Meerut and the men consulted with some artillerymen, who decided that being transferred to the Crown in this way, was not acceptable. A letter to this effect was sent by them to the Commanding Officer who informed Army Headquarters and it was there dismissed out of hand. This action caused greater discontent and rumblings were also coming from Lahore, Allabad and other cantonments, which developed into disobedience of orders and became known as the "White Mutiny".

On Sunday 1st May 1859, the very day on which the people of the United Kingdom were offering prayers of thanksgiving for the successful end to the Sepoy Mutiny, a

trooper of a cavalry regiment stationed at Meerut, reported to an officer that meetings of European Artllerymen and troopers of the 2nd Bengal European Light Cavalry had been held on the subject of their transference to the Crown without being enlisted and attested and receiving free bounty money - a procedure which they looked upon as illegal and unjust. The men were deliberating on the means to obtain a formal discharge from the service of the Company, prior to entering on any military obligation to the Crown.

When news of this was relayed to the Staff Headquarters, General Bradford and Brigadier General Horsford addressed the men. Firstly, the Artillery at their barracks, calling upon such men as were content to remain in the service of the Queen to step forward. Although the appeal was answered by about two-thirds of the men present, it was deemed advisable to deprive the regiment of its small arms and confine the men to their quarters.

The same procedure took place with the 2nd Bengal European Light Cavalry. However, it was quickly ascertained that a plan of resistance to the regimental officers had already been drafted and the malcontents were on the point of open hostility against the authorities. In a direct order from General Lord Clyde to the effect that the men were not to be confined to barracks, he told the men that he would support their complaint and sent Colonel Johnson to consult with the Governor-General. This wise measure put a different face on the issue and resulted in the re-establishment of order and discipline throughout the whole body of troops. It was reassuring to the men that a soldier in whom they placed their trust was understanding in their grievance.

The troops' letter was read and dismissed as being unlawful but it did result in new terms being laid down and those wishing to take their discharge could do so and the

remainder to be incorporated into the three cavalry corps which remained under the Indian Government. The 4th and 5th regiments were disbanded and those men remaining to be used as reinforcements to the remaining 1st, 2nd and 3rd regiments. One man was executed and a number were discharged.

The two hundred and fifty volunteers of the 2nd Bengal European Light Cavalry were now transferred into the newly raised regiment of the 20th Light Dragoons, which was founded at Muttra on the 20th May 1861, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Shubrick. The officers transferred en bloc from H.E.I.C. and recruiting went on in London for the rank and file, then the newly recruited men were sent out to India. The old regimental title once again had risen from the ashes, but it was not long before it was changed again.

The following terms were offered:-

1. That a man should not have his present terms of service altered except with his own consent.

2. That the men have the option of accepting General Service on the ordinary conditions of soldiers enlisted for the Cavalry of Her Majesty's Line Army, with the following rates of bounty: Over 4 years, Rs.50. Over 3 years but less than 4 years, Rs.40. Over 2 years but less than 3 years, Rs.30. Over 1 year but less than 2 years, Rs.20. With 1 year or less, Rs.10.

3. That any expenses caused to the man by his transfer should be reimbursed.

4. That no kit or compensation in lieu of kit should be given to him.

5. That soldiers volunteering would have the option of choosing whether their future pension should be reckoned according to the Regulations of her Majesty's Army or

according to those of the Indian Forces; their choice might be declared at any time within 3 months of the date of volunteering.

6. That volunteers should have the privilege of counting their past service towards completion of their contract service and of pension whichever regulations they might choose.

7. That men who had volunteered from Regiments of the Line into the Bengal European Cavalry of the Indian Army should have the option of returning to their old Line Regiment (if serving in India) or of joining any of the new regiments or of remaining like all men of the local Army in the Indian Service. But these men might not receive a bounty on electing to be transferred to British Regiments serving in India, having already received it on entering the Indian Service; but might receive it on volunteering for Her Majesty's General Services.

8. That N.C.O.s of the 4th and 5th Regiments of the Bengal European Light Cavalry volunteering for the new line regiments should carry their rank with them and be supernumeraries in their new regiments being absorbed in their respective ranks as vacancies might occur, in proportion of 3 appointments to every 4.

9. That those who preferred the then existing conditions of the Indian Service should be allowed to remain with a local regiment.

The 20th Light Dragoons were finally transferred from the Indian Government to the Horse Guards, Whitehall, on the 31st July 1862 when the title was changed to the 20th Hussars. The Company men had received the nickname of the "Dumpties", probably because of their stature and the sobriquet continued to be used until others were adopted - these being the "Xs" and "Nobody's Own". They are described as a Light Cavalry Regiment with a physical standard of height from 5ft 6ins to 5ft 8ins

and a chest measurement of 33 ins; the age of recruits not to be under 18 years nor to exceed 25 years of age.

The commanding officer also changed, now being in the experienced hands of Lieutenant Colonel Henry James Stannus. He was the third son of James Stannus, rector of Ballinderry Connor and Dean of Rossand, born 3rd April 1824. He was commissioned as cornet in the East India Company's Bengal Army on 31st December 1840 and joined the 5th Bengal Light Cavalry on 16th July 1841. He served his early days in Afghanistan and was present at the 'Forcing of the Khyber' and the battle of Mamoo Khai. He was with Sir Hugh Gough at the battle of Maharaipore and later with the Body Guard of the Governor-General Lord Ellenborough throughout the Sutlej Campaign. He was at the battles of Moodkee, Ferozeshah, Aliwal and Sobraon.

Stannus rejoined the 5th Bengal Light Cavalry in January 1946 and proceeded with an expedition to Kote Kangra against the Sikhs. He again joined Lord Gough and was present at the action of Ramnuggar and commanded the Escort of Lord Gough at the Battles of Chillianwallah and Goojerat, being severely wounded by a tulwar blow at the latter. He was appointed Deputy-Paymaster of the Meerut Division in 1843, which post he held until 1859.

In November 1853 he had become a brevet Lieutenant Colonel and in 1857 was present at Meerut during the Indian Mutiny. The second Lieutenant Colonel was Edward Charles Warner who was present at the battle of Punniar and the siege of Multan.

The first Regimental Sergeant Major was George Arthur Dunk who had spent all of his service from April 1849 on the North-West Frontier, having served with the 5th Bengal Cavalry (The Peshawar Light Horse) to being transferred to the 2nd Bengal

European Light Cavalry for one day only, when it was transferred to the Crown Forces under the Indian government. He remained with the 20th for 8 years and 254 days before being sent to the depot for his discharge, after 20 years-3 months Indian service.

The regiment was on the move in 1863 and was now cantoned in Sialkot and Lahore, from where they moved to Meean Meer in 1864. The strength of the regiment was still below the required numbers, the officers totalled 23, all from the East India Company's service and the rank and file amounted to 375 which included one hundred men from the 14th (King's) Hussars and other volunteers from regiments which had or were leaving India. In expectation of receiving further men, the Twentieth had more than a hundred spare horses. This was a surprising situation considering that other cavalry regiments did not have sufficient horses to mount all their own men.

For the British and Indian soldier there was always a demand for some kind of action required from them in this trouble fomented country. No sooner was the Mutiny settled, agitation brewed on the North-West Frontier. Several different tribes of Pathans occupied the whole of this mountainous area which bordered on Afghanistan and there was little harmony between them and the British. There were frequent raiding parties in which the Pathans carried off women and goods. Goats, sheep and camels were loaded with loot and taken from the villages in the plains up into the high ground. In order to carry out reprisals, the Indian Government sent troops with road building parties of pioneers into the tribal territory where they destroyed the Pathan villages. The army was always on uncertain ground when making these kind of expeditions. The tribes were defined by the areas they occupied and it was policy to make sure that the neighbouring

tribes were friendly or had entered into a treaty whereby the army could proceed into a particular territory without being attacked on its flanks.

The 20th Hussars were moved from Meean Meer to Campbellpore at the end of 1866 and prepared for service in that area of the North-West Frontier.

A force under the command of Brigadier General Sir Neville Chamberlain was assembled at Nawakila to deal with a large group of Hindustani fanatics who had been evicted from Sitana in 1858 by Sir Sidney Cotton. These people had settled at Malka which was situated west of the Indus in the Bunerwal territory. The army intended to push these Hindus out of Malka where, after three years of tranquillity, they began to disturb the peace and agitate against the British, urging the Buners to make war against them.

With a regiment of Artillery and an Indian Mountain Battery from Peshawar, the 1st Battalion Highland Light Infantry, five regiments of Punjab Native Infantry and a Gurkha regiment the force advanced into the Buner territory, hoping that the Bunerwals would remain neutral. The plan decided upon was to fall on the place from the north by a sudden march through the Ambela (then called Ambeyla) defile in the Chamla Valley so as to drive the fanatics towards the Indian plains to the south-west and into the arms of a force advancing from Sitana.

The expeditionary force was moving slowly into the Ambela defile, a long and difficult pass through the hills, when the Buner tribe, dwelling north of the Chamba valley, suddenly assumed a threatening attitude and were swarming on the hillside. To undertake a march from Ambela to Malka with so formidable an enemy on the flank, required a much greater force than that on the march and Sir Neville was obliged to halt in the defile. The Hindus had already been warned of the impending

force. They had marched to the exit of the defile and taken up a position where covering fire could be brought down on any force in the valley.

A number of small Mahommedan tribes, despite the difference in religion, actively supported them and the Bunerwals took up a hostile attitude. The inaction of the British force, waiting to formulate a new plan of action, tended to encourage the tribes and fighting took place between the opposing forces which continued for a month, in which time the 20th Hussars were employed from Campbellpore in escorting the supply columns and patrolling the lines of communication. The severe fighting in which the troops were engaged over this period resulted in 238 officers and men killed and 670 men being wounded.

The 20th Hussars resumed their activities of patrolling from Campbellpore and some of the officers were on detachment in other active areas of the frontier. In 1868 more trouble began in the Black Mountain district of Hazara where the Pathans were on the warpath once again. This was brought about by the lawless conduct of the Khan of Agror, a chief who owed his position to the Sikhs and had been permitted by the British to remain in possession of his lands after the annexation of the Punjab.

In order to keep a check on the activities and the evil practises taking place in Agror, a road was built through the territory and a police post was erected where twenty-two men were stationed in Aghi at the end of 1867.

Early on the morning of the 30th July 1868, a body of about 500 tribesmen attacked the police post but were driven off and reinforcements were immediately sent to their assistance. A force then at Abbottabad marched the 42 miles to Aghi in just over 24 hours and took the offensive against the hostile tribesmen, to drive them out of the Agror valley.

Fortunately the Khan of Amb rendered loyal service to the British and led a contingent of his own men against the rebels and dissuaded the other tribes from taking an active role against the British. The situation was such that it required a strong force to subdue the Pathans. Three batteries of Royal Artillery, two British Regiments of Foot, the 19th and 6th, supported the remainder of the division which comprised of Indian troops, took the offensive and after some skirmishing and bombardment from the guns, the tribes rendered their submission.

A good deal of sniping continued which caused casualties until the whole division then marched through the tribal territory and, after some sharp battles for the high ground had taken place, the British felt that sufficient action had shown the strength of the army and returned to Aghi on 22nd October 1868. The total British casualties during the operations were five killed and twenty nine wounded. During this three-month period the 20th Hussars had marched from Campbellpore to Abbottabad and patrolled along the line of communications but were not involved in any action against the tribesmen.

The 20th Hussars remained on the frontier for seven years and after the Hazara Campaign the regiment moved to Ambala where it remained until 1872 doing the routine training and patrols but with no chance of honour and glory for this now very mature regiment.

In the meantime the regiment changed its commanding officer, Stannus having left for the United Kingdom in April 1870. In December he returned to India and the 20th Hussars, now to command the Umballa Division but in 1873 he returned again to England. In December of that year he appeared in the Army List as a Major General.

13. EGYPT AND SUDAN

Orders were received for the return to the United Kingdom and the regiment then entrained for Bombay, probably one of the first regiments to use the new rail line to the port, and embarked for home. On arrival at Southampton they marched to Colchester and then, after two years, went on to Aldershot in 1874.

It was at the latter station when the 20th Hussars were graciously pleased to receive the official recognition of inheriting the 20th Light Dragoons battle honour "Peninsular", being the legitimate descendant of Colonel Taylor's old regiment. The regimental colours were also the same, being blue, crimson and yellow. The busby bag was crimson and the plumes scarlet.

The regiment enjoyed the south coast at Brighton for three years, having a spacious and beautiful training area on the Sussex Downs besides helping Excise men on the coastline. However, it came to an end when industrial disputes arose in the north of England. The regiment moved to Leeds in 1879 where they assisted the civil authorities in keeping the peace for a year and then moved over the sea to Ireland, where the regiment took up its residence at Newbridge.

The moves in Ireland were frequent and the Twentieth was split into Troops which occupied various small towns and villages in the Curragh. In 1883 the regiment marched to Cahir and the following year it went on to Ballincollig. In the meantime, from 1881, the British army was involved in the Sudan at the same time as the Transvaal Boers raised the standard of revolt in December 1880 and wiped out the scattered detachments of British soldiers in the Colony. The British Government, fearing a protracted struggle of duration with the Boers, especially should those in the Orange Free State and Cape Colony support those in the Transvaal, granted

them virtual independence which resulted in a severe blow to British prestige. It brought peace with the Boers for the time being and released the reinforcements under Sir Evelyn Wood and Sir Frederick Roberts who were on their way to the Transvaal, to be used in Zululand and the Sudan.

Britain's involvement in Egypt began at the outset with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. It was a strategic link with the passage of ships to India and it had to be protected. Furthermore, Britain did not wish the canal to be totally in French hands because of the threat to India.

There was also the question of bank loans made by British banks and the repayment of these had to be secured. The Khedive, having overspent, put Egypt into an economic crisis and Disraeli, the British Prime Minister, seized this opportunity of gaining some control in the Canal Company by investing four million pounds. At the time, it was so urgent that the money was borrowed from a private source to be repaid later by the British Government.

Another reason why Britain went into Egypt was to try and suppress the slave trade. This inhuman transaction was carried out by Arabs, sympathetically assisted by some Egyptian officials who, apart from turning a blind eye to the issue, were making a fortune out of this illicit activity. These Arabs scoured the Sudan and bled the country of thousands of males and many women were also sold into captivity to be servants or for brothels.

In Cairo, Colonel Arabi Pasha, the Egyptian War Minister, was at odds with the Khedive Tewfik for not ousting the military officers who were corrupting the whole ruling community in the capital. The Colonel spread the word of his displeasure throughout the souks and bazaars where the mobs agitated, escalating violence

throughout the main towns. The Anglo-French communities began to flee the country and the businessmen, whose money was at risk, clamoured for action.

In August 1882 the Adjutant-General, Sir Garnet Wolseley, was despatched with a force of two infantry divisions and a cavalry brigade to oppose the mutinous Egyptian army under Colonel Arabi Pasha. Before Wolseley had landed his force from the Red Sea, Admiral Sir Beauchamp Seymour had noted that the Egyptian army was massing several coastal gun batteries into position on the sea front at Alexandria and demanded the withdrawal of this artillery. His letter was immediately rejected and salvos from the guns of the British fleet answered this refusal by an accurate bombardment of the gun positions.

The French squadron under Admiral Conrad, alarmed at this aggression, beat a hasty retreat towards Port Said. The Khedive was also shocked but made no attempt to call a halt to the action. He remained in his palace and shut himself away from the war which was rapidly overtaking his country.

After ten hours the systematic fire destroyed all the Egyptian batteries but not before they had given a good account of themselves, having hit several of the British ships. The Royal Marines then went into Alexandria to put out the fires. In the process several looters were shot and martial law was declared. Arabi mustered his army around Cairo and took over the government of the country. He cancelled all overseas payment of debts, confirming the fears of the businessmen and threatened to block the Suez Canal, but it was too late. Wolseley's men were unloading the horses and guns at Ismailia with 17,000 troops on shore and all was in readiness to march across the desert by the 26th August 1882. In the meantime Arabi was expecting an invasion force from Alexandria which turned out to be a diversion, made by Major General Sir Edward Hamley and his division. The Egyptians dug in

a defence line at Tel-el-Kabir to cover Cairo and 25,000 men were ready to defend the city.

Colonel Redvers Buller, who was in charge of Intelligence, made the startling discovery on a reconnaissance, that the Egyptians left their defence posts at night and settled down in their bivouacs to sleep. This information decided the strategy for the attack. Night fighting was always a precarious undertaking but Wolseley ordered his scouts forward with strict emphasis on caution and silent movement. With his naval navigators out in front, directing the force across the flat desert, Wolseley's men noted that it was the 13th day of the month, was this an omen of danger?

The advance was led by the Highland Brigade, the Camerons, the Gordons and the Black Watch, followed by the Guards Brigade with the cavalry bringing up the rear and the flanks. When the outline of the Egyptian positions came into view, the men prepared for action and, as the dawn came, the attack went in and soon the enemy soldiers were winkled out of their trenches and were running for their lives. The cavalry was unleashed like greyhounds and they cut down the Egyptians who tried to make a stand. One trooper of the 19th Hussars, having his horse shot while forming line, was so anxious not to miss the charge, he ran back to the reserve horses, mounted and galloped forward to take his place in line once again. For a second time his horse received a fatal shot, throwing the trooper to the ground. Picking himself up, a riderless horse galloped towards him and, grabbing the bridle, he once more went into the charge. The trooper did not receive a medal for his gallantry but his Commanding Officer presented him with a special silver bar on which to suspend his Egyptian Medal and the Khedive Star.

With his army routed, Arabi made his way to Cairo with the cavalry snapping at his heels. He was caught and arrested on the 14th September 1882, then tried by court-martial which sentenced him to exile. He was shipped off to Ceylon where he remained for ten years before returning to Egypt. By then the country was more on an even keel and everyone had forgotten about Arabi Pasha.

Now that Britain was left in control of Egypt they had also acquired the Sudan. The Khedive was discredited and Turkey had no more interest in the country apart from receiving the annual tribute. So it came to pass what Blunt had warned the nation against and the very situation which Gladstone and his Government had feared. It was now left for the British to organise the army which it had almost destroyed and to retrain the men.

The first move was to strip all the Egyptian officers of their rank and send them to serve in the Sudan under a newly appointed officer, General Hicks. The Egyptian army's command was given to Sir Evelyn Wood V.C. who was known as 'Sirdar'. Several British officers were posted to Egypt and the Sudan to try and mould some efficiency into both armies as foreboding clouds gathered in the desert to the south.

In the Sudan, General Gordon had already crossed swords with the slavers but his efforts, although carried out with great zeal, came to naught and, being frustrated with insufficient well-trained Sudanese troops, he made his way home to England, a very disappointed man.

It was at this time that a religious fanatic, known as the Mahdi, raised an army of Dervishes to oppose the British. One of his commanders, El Obeid, met and destroyed a small force commanded by Hicks and officered by the British, who all perished with the men, leaving Khartoum in an isolated position. In 1883 the British government persuaded General Charles Gordon to return as Governor to the

Sudan and take up residence in Khartoum with the object of negotiating the evacuation of the Sudan. Instead of leaving the country when the opportunity was offered, Gordon elected to remain in Khartoum with just a handful of native troops, until the town was completely isolated with the Dervishes knocking on the door. Colonel Stewart had already left in the hope of bringing help but he met his doom on the Nile.

The British government, under Gladstone, dallied and tended to ignore the plight of Gordon under many pretences and then sent a relief force under Wolesley in the autumn of 1884, to save him. Wolesely proposed to send a powerful 'River Column', commanded by General Earle, up the Nile in boats. He would also sent a smaller force, a more mobile 'Desert Column' under General Sir Herbert Stewart, which would march from Korti to Shendi. The two columns to meet up there and march on to Khartoum.

The Light and Heavy Camel Regiments would be a trying time for the men. The soldiers would have to care for the camels, truculent beasts at the best of times but ideal for the desert where they were capable of withstanding the conditions of the march. Horses were ruled out because of their consumption of so much water which could not be carried. Nevertheless some of the best horses which were obtainable did accompany the force and were used in the advance party. They made good time on the firm sand and the gravel stretches of the Bayuda Desert. In addition to the cavalrymen, guardsmen and riflemen would go as mounted infantry.

The first men of the 20th Hussars comprised of a 43-strong detachment, selected for their ability to serve with the Light Camel Regiment. This was one of the mounted corps formed to take part in the expedition which disembarked from the troopship 'Deccan' at Alexandria on 7th October 1884. The regiment saw little of the Mahdi's

army, being employed in protecting the lines of communication. Obstructions with cataracts and small waterfalls on the Nile, delayed the relieving force of any urgency and progress was slow. Before Wolesley could reach Khartoum, Gordon was killed on the fateful day of 20th January 1885. The expedition was so near, yet too late and now it had to face the dangers of withdrawal to Egypt which was accomplished with but a few casualties. The Light Camel Regiment returned to Cairo where it was disbanded and the 20th Hussars detachment returned to England and joined up with the regiment. Strangely, only forty-one men were awarded the Egyptian Medal with clasp, the Nile 1884-5. Meanwhile the British government had decided to lay a railway from the Red Sea port of Suakin to Berber on the Nile, a distance of 200 miles.

A Field Force, under Major General Sir Gerald Graham was assembled to protect the enterprise and in February 1885, two squadrons of the 20th Hussars, comprising 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'E' Troops, embarked at Portsmouth for Suakin where they arrived early in March 1885.

Graham's orders were to make the best arrangements he could for the destruction of the power of Osman Digna, a former Arab slave-trader who now commanded a large force of Dervishes operating in the neighbourhood of Suakin. On the 20th March 1885 Graham moved out into the desert to destroy the Dervishes at Tamai and sent a squadron of the 20th Hussars to reconnoitre the high ground at Hasheen, where they found an enemy outpost. A brisk action followed in which the Dervishes were put to flight after many had been killed. The British force suffered 45 casualties during the action, after which it returned to Suakin. The 20th Hussars then joined the rest of the regiment in Cairo.

The last of the Egyptian garrisons in the Sudan, Kassala, fell to the Dervishes. Two days after the affair at Hasheen, Major General Sir John McNeil marched with his brigade on Tamai. While encamping at Tofrek, the force came under surprise attack and only the steadiness of the infantry, using the long range rifles, saved the day in a confused and desperate battle. The squadron of the 20th were only on the fringe of the fighting but took part in the advance on Tamai, which was burnt to the ground before the British returned to Suakin. The strength of the Dervish army brought about the abandonment of the railway and all plans, at that precise time, of any British move forward in that direction. Embarking from Suakin, the 20th Hussar squadrons joined the newly arrived 'G' Troop of the regiment in Cairo. In all, 151 Officers and men had earned the award of the Egyptian medal with two clasps, Suakin 1885 and Tofrek. One Troop of the regiment was stationed at Wadi Halfa and Korosko but were soon to be on the move. After a rest which was to the benefit of the horses as well as the men, the regiment was ordered south along the Nile in July 1885. The five Troops travelled independently towards Assuan (Aswan) and were followed by 'H' Troop which had reached Cairo on 4th August 1885. Troops 'd' and 'F' also landed from England and were pushed forward as a Dervish army was again threatening Egypt along the southern border.

By mid-December 1885 the enemy had reached Kosheh and was confronted by the Cameron Highlanders with some Egyptian regiments who had occupied the small town. The British brigade as Assuan, reinforced and termed the 'Frontier Field Force', was hurried towards Kosheh under General Sir Frederick Stephenson.

On 31st December 1885 he launched a dawn attack at Ginnis and a squadron of the 20th Hussars (about 110 men) led the advance into the enemy hordes. The Dervishes gave way before them and streamed away in full retreat, with the Twentieth and

Egyptian cavalry in full pursuit, cutting them down and leaving a trail of black shrouded dead. This was the last action fought by British soldiers in the red coat.

Unfortunately no clasp was issued for the battle of Ginnis but the Egyptian medal was awarded to those who had not previously qualified for the decoration. Nevertheless, the gallant conduct of the squadron is well remembered.

During 1886 the Troops of the 20th Hussars relieved each other between Cairo and the southern border forward bases of Wadi Halfa and Assuan. It was constant patrolling but by February 1887 all but two Troops had been withdrawn to Cairo. The barrack life at Abbassia helped both men and horses recover from the rigours of the desert and at times a little enjoyment came their way. Gradually, throughout the year, drafts returned to England until only one squadron remained, which was reinforced by fresh men and commanded by Major William Erwin.

An Egyptian garrison had always been stationed in Suakin and as the year of 1888 drew towards winter, the Dervishes again besieged this Red Sea port. The 20th Hussars squadron in Cairo now comprised of 135 Officers and men were dispatched to Suakin along with other reinforcements under the command of General Grenfell. No sooner had the Twentieth landed, they saddled up and were part of a sortie, led by Colonel Herbert Kitchener, towards Gemaizah. The infantry in front, drove the enemy out of the entrenchments and, as they retreated, the 209th Hussars, with the other cavalry, charged the Dervishes causing many casualties until the whole black swarm of natives was completely routed from the village and surrounding area. After which Colonel Irwin proudly led his men back to Suakin. Fort this action five offers and 130 men were awarded the clasp 'Gemaizah'.

With the dispersal of the Khalifa's followers from the vicinity of Suakin, the 20th returned to Cairo in January 1889. By July another Dervish army, led by Sheik

Naguimi, advanced towards the Egyptian border from the south and was driven back at Argin, near Wadi Halfa.

The 20th Hussars were hurried up the Nile in barges and landed at Toski on the 1st August 1889. Almost immediately the 20th were in action and engaged the enemy, charging them time and time again. It took almost six hours before the Dervishes gave ground and were finally routed with great loss. After this mainly cavalry action, 95 officers and men of the regiment received the clasp 'Toski'. Soon afterwards the 20th Hussars were ordered back to Abbassia barracks and, early in 1890, the squadron embarked for England and joined the regiment at Aldershot where they had just arrived from Norwich. So closed the Egypt-Sudan War and the regiment received the battle honour 'Suakin 1888' for its services in the war and also inherited that of 'Vimiera' in respect of the earlier gallant charge of the old 20th Light Dragoons in the Peninsular campaign.

After being in Aldershot for three years the regiment moved to Colchester. In 1895 the 20th moved back to India after receiving orders to embark at Southampton. On arrival in Bombay the 20th entrained for Mhow where they took over the horses of the 7th Hussars, that regiment having left for Natal in South Africa.

It was a period when the British army was stretched to its limit, with trouble brewing in Africa, not only from the natives but also from the Boers. In the Orange Free State the British were being treated as foreigners in spite of all the finance which had been ploughed into the gold and diamond mines. In fact most of the money in the republics was furnished by businessmen from Britain but they were still denied all civic rights. It was a policy which did not augur well for the future of any peace in the country.

News came through of the sad demise of General Stannus who died on the 20th May 1898 in Ebury Street, London, at the age of 74 years.

In India the army had been skimmed of many regiments despite the lessons of the past Mutiny. The Russians were a threat in the north on the border of Afghanistan. The tribes from the latter were having to be kept in check along the North-West Frontier province. King Thibaw threatened from the east in Burma and control of all the countries which were being administered (or where the British Army were garrisoned) was being treated with impunity and obedience to law and order was gradually being eroded away.

The Boers in South Africa made no secret of extending their domination over the whole of the States and the treatment suffered by the British in Natal was a signal to the British Government that action was required. Reinforcements were rushed to the borders of Natal and it became obvious that the British would invade that republic to protect their fellow nationals.

After representations from Kruger to remove the threat of the army from the borders had been contemptuously rejected, the Boers declared war in October 1899. At the beginning of this South African War the British were outnumbered, having only 20,000 troops to the 60,000 Boer Commandos.

The Boers streamed from their republics and advanced on all points, over-running or by-passing any resistance from the British. Within a few months the isolated garrisons of Kimberley, Ladysmith and Mafekin were beleagured and the forces of Lord Methuen and General Buller had been severely repulsed in their efforts to relieve these towns and had suffered many casualties. However the troops holding these places were no pushover and their fighting capacity had been grossly under-

estimated by the Boers, who were likewise repulsed with a bloody nose. The 1881 success of the Boers and the poor showing put up by Lord Chelmsford against the Zulus, gave them a false sense of the fighting qualities of the British Tommies.

Gradually throughout the coming year, the British having relieved Kimberley by a magnificent charge by General French's cavalry division, Ladysmith and Mafekin were also relieved. The war was now taking toll of both men and horses on both sides. The Boers were proving elusive and a change of tactics was required in spite of the many successes achieved by the British. Lord Kitchener took over the command from Lord Roberts and units were split to form mobile columns, the object being to defeat the Boers at their own game of commandos, striking rapidly and then disappearing like guerrilla bands. Kaffirs brought in some information as to where the Boer laagers were supposed to be situated but quite often the source of intelligence proved not only unreliable but dangerous. Many patrols were led into ambush and the casualties of horses proved to be as serious as those sustained by the men.

The drives by parallel columns did not have the desired effect and successes were becoming too few. Farms were burned and the livestock rounded up on these patrols. Quartermasters eked out the rations and paid the rewards to native chiefs but it was all in vain. The Boers were proving to be a difficult enemy and would not stand and fight a battle. The operations had to have a new strategy so that the army could get to grips with the enemy.

In the end it was decided to build blockhouses in lines, the distance apart being within range of binocular sight and the gaps would be filled by stretches of barbed wire entanglements. Tins and other impedimenta would hang from the wire to give some sort of alarm at night or in a dust storm. During the day pickets would occupy

trenches dug at intervals behind the wire. The cavalry would then drive the Boers towards the blockhouses, where it was hoped that the defending troops would open fire from the enclosures or entrenchments and cause heavy casualties.

So many troops were required for this type of warfare that Kitchener was running short of reserves and he required reinforcements. Every establishment throughout the Empire was squeezed to supply mounted men and numbers of mounted infantry were already employed with the cavalry. Major N Legge of the 20th Hussars was killed while commanding one of these battalions on detachment. Lieutenant H.R. Lee was wounded when attached to the 16th Queen's Lancers.

The 20th Hussars had been stationed at Mhow in India since the hostilities in South Africa began. After two years of waiting the regiment had almost given up all hope of taking part in the actions, when the call came for them to prepare for embarkation.

Orders were received on the 22nd November 1901 and the regiment spent Christmas at sea in two ships, the Saint Andrew and the Custodian, being at a total strength of 22 officers, 666 rank and file, 71 chargers and 668 troop horses.

After disembarking at Durban the regiment travelled by rail to Newcastle where training for both men and horses took place in order to reach a degree of fitness. This was most important for all concerned before facing the long treks. After a short period the 20th Hussars shook off the idleness of the sea voyage and began the ride to Perdekop which took them ten days of uneventful travelling. A blockhouse line had been constructed from Harrismith along the central railway line to the north between Frankfort and Heilbron. De Wett and his commando were known to be operating inside the enclosed area. At the beginning of February 1902, just prior to the arrival of the 20th, a drive against him had resulted in the capture of 300

prisoners and the cavalry were hoping to put a great deal more in the bag but de Wett made his escape by cutting his way through the wire to the south.

Another drive was then arranged from the north to the south which started on the 21st February 1902. This time the 20th Hussars took part, advancing south from Perderkop with two squadrons forward in extended line, ten paces between each man and the third squadron concentrated in support for any eventuality. At the blockhouses were dismounted men who were entrenched at intervals along the wire to provide fire support and the operation proved a success. The bag of 400 prisoners made it a credible performance, the laurels being claimed by the men at the blockhouses but, without the 'beaters' it could not have been possible. As the 20th had only just arrived on the veldt their action in the sweep brought credit from the commander. These mobile sweeps continued on a much larger scale, one of which captured 735 Boers and 28,000 head of cattle, enough steaks and beef stews to last a long time. Another 65 Boers were killed while trying to break out of the laager and it was obvious that such losses could not be sustained much longer by the burghers.

After such a hard war in which the Boers gave a good account of themselves against such a powerful nation, their commanders were reluctantly arriving at the conclusion that it was senseless to go on with the war and the commando leaders were riding round the laagers in order to find out what the general feeling was amongst the men. The burghers in the towns were all demoralised and there was little fight left in their attitude towards the continuation of hostilities.

A peace conference between British and Boer delegates had assembled at Vereeniging on 15th May 1902 and lasted a fortnight amid a great deal of speculation. A peace treaty was signed at Pretoria on 31st May 1902 when orders for a 'cease-fire' was sent out to all formations on both sides. There continued to be a

few skirmishes but the order came as a great relief to many of the Boer farmers who were intent in picking up what was left of their farms and getting back to work. The 20th Hussars went into camp at Pretoria and settled down to the old routine of soldiering under canvas. A number of men where sent home on leave and others received their discharge from the army, glad to be going home after so many years in India and South Africa.

In the New Year of 1903, the Boers arrived at the regimental camp at Pretoria for the purpose of purchasing some of the horses which were no longer required and this was a sure sign of the regiment leaving South Africa.

On the 28th March 1903, the 20th packed their bags and embarked on the troopship 'Dunera' at Durban and, with their fellow cavalrymen of the 14th Hussars, sailed for Suez. Here the 20th Hussars disembarked, leaving the 14th Hussars to sail on home to Aldershot. The 20th began the journey to Abbassia Barracks at Cairo and not, as anticipated by many of the men, to resume the tour of duty in India. Once again the spit and polish of peacetime resumed, although they were greatly assisted in this by the Egyptian servants.

In 1904 the 20th Hussars left Egypt and sailed for home, going into their new abode at Preston Barracks, Brighton, with the depot Troop still at Canterbury. The regiment was brigaded with the 7th Dragoon Guards, more popularly known as 'The Black Horse' and the 14th Hussars, the 'Hawks', forming the 2nd Cavalry Brigade. Two years later the regiment relieved the 14th Hussars at Shorncliffe while this regiment embarked for India.

Various changes in arms and equipment took place throughout the cavalry as a result of experience gained during the Boer War. A new straight, thrusting sword

was introduced in 1908 and the universal portmouth bit replaced the combination bit on the bridle. The short Lee-Enfield rifle became standard issue and the ninety round ammunition bandolier was worn by the men. A bayonet was also issued to be used when dismounted, a source of amusement to the men and little did they think that the arm would be used in earnest within a few years.

In this year of 1908, the regiment moved over to Ireland and took up the duties of garrisoning the Curragh. A draft of seventy-two men had just been sent to the 14th Hussars in India so a certain amount of recruiting took place. The Irishmen were always welcome in the cavalry as they became particularly good horsemen.

Rumblings of war were coming from Germany where the Kaiser began a rapid expansion of his navy. A number of warships to match those of the British Navy were already under construction in the shipyards and plans for a number of U-boats were given priority. With the threat of war in the offing, arrangements were being made for assembling large numbers of horses for the cavalry without incurring a great deal of expense to the government.

In 1909 the 20th in Ireland were ordered to try out a scheme whereby trained troop horses were let out to farmers and other civilians free of charge. This arrangement was on the understanding that the horses would undergo periodic inspections by a staff of officers for the purpose and be called in for a month's training each year. The regiment was meanwhile issued with fifty additional remounts above the normal establishment for training. The scheme apparently proved to be successful, for the number of horses let out to civilians was later increased to seventy-five.

In 1911, the 20th Hussars returned to England and were stationed at Colchester where the regiment was inspected by the G.O.C. Eastern Command. It was during the visit by the General when it was noticed there had been a contravention of the

dress regulations. In 1893 the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Lord Beauchamp, changed the busby plume from scarlet to yellow, both in wear by the officers and men and also the throat plume of the horses. Following the inspection an order was received by the regiment to revert once again to scarlet, much to the astonishment of all ranks.

The Commanding Officer then sent a letter suggesting that the Dress Regulations had not been amended. This letter was promptly answered, which stated that the regulations were correct. Having such a forthright reply, a further letter from the regiment was sent in a more conciliatory tone which implied that such a change would bring about a great deal of expense to both officers and the regiment. Such a plea brought about a change of heart by the War Office, conceding that it was not their wish to bring about any kind of financial hardship and therefore an amendment under Army Order 122 dated 1912 granted the yellow plumes as official dress.

The regiment sent a detachment of one hundred men for the coronation ceremony of King George V.

The 20th Hussars were now in the 5th Cavalry Brigade, commanded by Brigadier General Sir Philip Chetwode, the Royal Scots Greys and the 12th Lancers completed the formation. The regiment was linked to the 14th Hussars in India for being fed with drafts of men when necessary.

The practise of boarding out the horses to civilians continued and the docking of horses tails was expressly forbidden by the army. This cruel practise was made quite clear to the civilians before any horses were taken away.

The political scene in Europe was anything but peaceful. The friction between France and Germany was steadily building up to a point when war was something of possibility. The German gunboat 'Panther' arrived at Agadir in Morocco, part of the French Empire, with the purpose of looking after the interests of German nationals. In exchange for recalling the 'Panther' the Germans demanded part of the French possessions in the Congo.

Britain immediately came to the aid of France and a speech by the Prime Minister made it quite clear that the British would take up arms in defence of either country's interests. As Germany was not prepared at this stage for crossing swords with either Britain or France, the 'Panther' was withdrawn.

In 1912 Italy went to war against Turkey with the object of taking Tripoli but immediately made peace when Turkey was driven back to the defences of Constantinople. The Balkan wars in 1913 put paid to any hope of peace and the flames began to spread further afield. Serbia and Greece attacked Bulgaria and, in June 1914, the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated in Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia, by a Bosnian Serb. Austria, assured of support by Germany, went to war against Serbia.

Serbia then appealed to Russia for aid and the Czar ordered general mobilisation. This was immediately followed by Austria mobilising and a German ultimatum to Russia for the cancellation of mobilisation or to take the consequences.

On 1st August 1914, both countries were at war. The British Foreign Secretary made great efforts to preserve the peace and this appeasing attitude against war led the Germans to believe that Britain would keep out of the conflict.

Germany had previously been unhappy about the fortresses along the French border and on 31st July 1914, delivered an ultimatum to France to dismantle them. They then asked Belgium for free passage through their country and, being refused, the German army invaded and violated the Belgium Neutrality Treaty of 1832 which had been signed by Britain, France and Russia, as well as Prussia and Austria. Britain then delivered an ultimatum to Germany for the withdrawal of the invading troops. This ran out on 4th August 1914 at which time Britain was at war with Germany.

The 20th Hussars were enjoying the week-end fine weather in Colchester. The regiment marched to the Garrison Church on the Sunday in all the finery of the old blue and yellow frogged tunics with the scarlet -plumes on the busbies blowing in the breeze. The band was playing under the direction of Mr Hartley and the men were looking forward to returning for the remainder of the day and lazing on their beds. No-one had any thoughts of what the morrow would bring or that this would most likely be the last time the regiment would be on parade wearing such colourful uniform ever again. It was a Bank holiday weekend and the public went round the stables, viewing the horses whilst the band played to them on the barrack square.

On Tuesday afternoon the main guard at the barrack-gate was surprised when a telegraph boy, dressed in his blue uniform and forage cap, dismounted from his bicycle and produced a telegram from his shoulder pouch, then marched into the guard-room. It was 5.30 p.m. on 4th August 1914 and the telegram was from the War Office, the Northern Command Headquarters in York. The message contained one word - "mobilise", authorised by H.Q. 5th Cavalry Brigade. The 20th Hussars were well up on strength compared to some of the other cavalry regiments, having 24 officers and 519 other ranks.

14. THE GREAT WAR 1914 - 1918

MONS AND THE RETREAT FROM THE SOMME 1914

The regiment was brigaded with the 12th Lancers and the Royal Scots Greys in the 5th Cavalry Brigade, under Brigadier General Sir Philip Chetwode. Bt., the other two regiments were stationed at Norwich and York respectively. The regiments were well known to each other and a good feeling and mutual confidence existed between the three regiments which augured well for the support and tasks they were about to face.

When the order to mobilise was received, the reservists arrived in drafts from the depot of the 14th and 20th at Scarborough within a few days. The depot was now the 13th Reserve Regiment of Cavalry, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel A.M.B. Jones. A remount depot was established at Middlewick from where horses arrived at the stables in Colchester, to bring the regiment up to strength.

The regiment was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel T.G.T. Edwards and the Second-in-command was Major G.T.R. Cook, the Adjutant, Captain G.A. Sandford, who marched the regiment to St. Botolph's railway station on Sunday 16th August 1914 and entrained for France, embarking at Southampton.

On disembarking at Le Havre, a couple of accidents occurred which could have had a distressing start to the campaign ahead. Lieutenant J. Goodhart and two horses fell down two decks into the hold of the ship but escaped with just a few cuts and bruises, and Sergeant Lee's horse slipped out of the cradle straps when being lowered by crane and dropped onto the quay. Fortunately it was quite near to the ground. The horse scrambled to its feet and, in a panic, jumped into the sea. It swam out to the harbour mouth and then returned to the ship where it became

wedged between the ship and the quayside. Without hesitation, Lieutenant J.K. McConnel grabbed a long rope, wrapped it around a capstan and lowered himself down and placed the rope around the horse's belly. The onlookers then formed a line and pulled the horse to safety. So an act of gallantry was early demonstrated in this rescue at great personal risk, showing man's love for a horse.

The regiment entrained for Limont-Fontaine where they went into billets. The 20th Hussars had a number of French army interpreters and an artillery liaison officer attached and prepared for the front. The first encounter came on 22nd August 1914 when two patrols under Lieutenant's Thompson and Goodhart set off in different directions to make contact with the enemy, known to be a few miles in front of Binche.

Thompson came across a German cavalry patrol and immediately galloped for cover towards a wood when Private O'Shaughnessy's horse was hit and fell. In their haste to report the contact he was left behind, much to the concern of his comrades. However, five days later, into the village walked a bedraggled looking man who was none other than the Irish lad, O'Shaughnessy, come to rejoin his regiment. He had made his way under cover to a farm where he found some old garments in a barn. Pulling some trousers over his breeches, discarding his spurs and donning a very large overcoat which covered his tunic, he started to find his way back to the regiment. Going through a village he stumbled into a German patrol. On being questioned by them, O'Shaughnessy pointed to his ears and mouth, pretending to be deaf and dumb. The Germans just laughed and permitted the old tramp to proceed on his way.

Goodhart's patrol was informed by a French cyclist that there were Germans not far up the road in a village. Advancing cautiously towards a level crossing near the

village, Goodhart ordered his men to dismount and take cover, with strict orders not to fire until he gave the order. A German cavalry patrol was coming up the hill, steadily walking into an ambush but one of the men could not resist having a shot at the nearest German, which to him was a sitting target. In his inexperience of warfare he blazed away with his rifle without stopping to take careful aim. He missed all the Germans who broke for cover. Goodhart shouted to his men to mount and get out of the situation as quickly as possible. Seeing all his men galloping away he quickly followed but, on turning his head, saw a German within a few yards on his tail with a lance. Drawing his revolver he fired and then dug in his spurs whereupon his fleet-footed horse left the German well behind. Only later did the smiling Lieutenant admit that his revolver was not loaded. He missed the opportunity of being the first man in the regiment to draw German blood, his "scout" may have been the first man to have fired the first shots in the British cavalry, an inglorious beginning.

The following day Lieutenant Soames, with his patrol, encountered some Germans and exchanged shots, resulting in him being killed and one of his men was wounded, with two missing, presumed taken prisoners of war.

The Brigade was in retirement and the retreat from Mons was now falling back on all fronts. The 20th Hussars were not pressed in the move to the rear owing to the German army under Von Kluck changing direction in it's forward thrust.

The regiment took up a position on the Mons - Mauberge road to cover the retirement of the 2nd Infantry Division and received a few casualties from the German shelling but none killed. After twelve miles marching slowly and passing through the infantry at Hargines, the regiment went into billets for the night.

At Hannappes the regiment moved in a north-westerly direction and sent out patrols under Lieutenants Upton & Hall to contact the enemy who had penetrated some woods which 'A' and 'B' Squadrons were moving towards. In engaging these Germans, both squadrons encountered some casualties.

Lieutenant Upton sent in a message to say he was contacting some Belgians in Bussigny but they turned out to be Germans and he, with one man, were taken prisoner. Their period in captivity was to last four years. Private Death escaped with a bullet through his rifle bucket which saved the life of his horse and him from prison camp. Lieutenant Bairstow then lost contact and went missing with all his patrol.

The Germans captured St Quentin and the French were falling back fast. The regiment moved about twenty five miles to the rear where they reached Autreville and there went into billets. A welcome surprise was the return of Lieutenant Bairstow with all his patrol safe and sound.

At the end of the month, on 31st August 1914, the regiment had a leisurely march on a glorious summer day as if everyone was at peace with the world. After crossing the Aisne below Soissons the regiment halted for a couple of hours on the southern bank and made the most of such a break. The horses were off-saddled and taken into the shallows of the river for a cooling off. The men enjoyed a bathe in the water and everyone was refreshed. The men went into billets that night at Dommiers and St. Pierre Aigle, feeling in a happy mood. Early next morning, the 1st September 1914, Lieutenants Hall and Sparrow were sent out to watch the river crossings at Ambleny. They took up a position on a hill which gave them a very good view of the Aisne valley and the bridge at Le Port. At 7.30 am large columns of German troops could be seen moving south and a squadron of German cavalry crossed the bridge

and advanced along the Ambleny road. Gaining this valuable information, Lieutenant Hall gave the order to retire before the road to St.Pierre - Aigle was cut off. Riding down the hill towards Ambleny and, just as the patrol reached the road, a car full of German officers passed them, travelling fast from the south, taking both sides by surprise. There was only time for the troops to hurl abuse at them and probably the officers returned the compliment.

Lieutenant Hall retired to Coevres where he wrote his report and sent it to St.Pierre-Aigle and, just in case any German officers returned that way, laid an ambush with the intention of giving them a good reception. However the orderly returned before he reached St. Pierre-Aigle with the news that the German squadron was moving out of the village towards them at Coeuvres. Lieutenant Hall ordered his men to mount and moved off to try and find the regiment by another route.

Finding evidence of a battle near Soucy, which was occupied by the Germans, they witnessed further fighting on a hillside nearby with the British infantry putting up a fight against superior numbers. The patrol then made for Mont-Gobert where they were seen by a German patrol who dropped their lances to the engage and charged forward. Private Hayhurst, acting as rear point, immediately drew his sword, wheeled about and went at the Germans alone. Such an unexpected attack coming from a lone swordsman took the Germans by surprise and they turned around and galloped back to Soucy. Hayhurst's gallant action was awarded by promotion to Corporal and later this brave chap was killed near Vermelles in 1916.

Reaching Mont-Gobert, the patrol threaded its way through the village towards the Foret de Retz. There were several groups of German cavalry just short of the woods but Lieutenant Hall marched his men boldly through them and wended his way

through the bushes and undergrowth of the forest. Taking the lead himself he saw a man in front and quickly drew his revolver and stalked the fellow. He turned out to be a sentry from 'A' Squadron and Hall was never more pleased to meet a British soldier saying that it was the finest sight he had seen since leaving England.

Lieutenant Sparrow despatched a report to the Commanding Officer thinking the regiment was still at St. Pierre-Aigle. He then made his way back after some difficulty in skirting a village full of Germans. On his way he met some British infantry and informed the officer in charge that he could not go south because of Germans and the infantry officer thanked Sparrow for his advice and told him that he could not go north because of the Germans. History does not relate what happened to the infantry. However to complete the reunions, Lieutenant Sparrow's patrol returned at the same time, after experiencing some luck on his reconnoitre.

During the afternoon an attack by Jaegers and German cyclists developed against 'A' Squadron and the C.O. issued orders to retire. Some difficulty was overcome in extricating 'C' Squadron from their position and with 'A' Squadron acting as rear-guard, they accomplished it with well-judged bursts of fire which prevented the enemy from pressing the regiment.

During this action Sergeant Cook was wounded and he had a very uncomfortable ride in pain and was feeling bad on reaching the ambulance. Here his little mare, on which he had won the Sergeants Lightweight Point-to-Point, was led away. Cook enquired as to what was going to happen to it. He was told it would not be returning to the regiment but was to be given to an infantry officer to ride. On hearing this, the plucky sergeant decided that the welfare of his horse came before his own and he jumped out of the ambulance, mounted his mare and rode back to his squadron where his wound was dressed and he took a rest. This kind of action exemplified the

devotion a cavalryman had towards his horse and it was not uncommon to find such acts during the course of a man's service in his regiment.

Retiring down the Villers Cotterets - La Ferte Milon road to Bourgfontaigne Farm they found the rest of the brigade and went into billet at 11 p.m. in La Villeveuve. Saddling up at 3 am and waiting in a cornfield for some hours until 9 am the regiment managed to have a few more hours sleep, making themselves comfortable among the sheaves of corn which had been cut but not gathered.

With the 12th Lancers leading the way, it was a leisurely march to Trilport on the south bank of the Marne. On the way the regiments of the brigade came upon a large ration dump which had been left behind for another brigade that failed to find it. The 20th Hussars made the best of this opportunity to bolster their rations and carried away as much as the saddle bags and haversacks could store, apart from eating anything handy. The ammunition limbers on the machine-gun carts were also loaded with tins of bully-beef and McConichies stew, then the rest was put to the match, making quite a blaze, rather than leave it for the Boche to eat.

The regiment spent the night at Trilport and the next morning, the 3rd September, the Brigade crossed to the north of the Marne at Changis. 'C' Squadron was on high ground over-looking the river Ourcq and, north of their position, Lieutenant Sparrow's Troop occupied the crossing over the Ourcq where a German patrol was approaching. His troop opened fire and this checked them, only to be answered by some German guns which shelled 'C' Squadron causing some casualties and Corporal Garness was killed.

The position of the squadron was very exposed so Captain Mangles withdrew to Jaignes where the men dismounted and opened fire on the German cavalry, who were also dismounted, and tried to take the village. This action by 'C' Squadron

enabled the brigade to retire across the river and by this time 'J' battery R.H.A. came into action and exchanged artillery fire with the Germans. 'B' Squadron was sent forward to cover the retirement and suffered a number of men killed, including Captain S.H. Cristy, a sad loss of good men and a very capable officer. The last man to cross over the bridge was Colonel Edwards himself, having ascertained that all the men on patrol, the last of the regiment, were safely across and then the bridge was blown.

The regiment then marched another four miles and bivouacked near Rue-de-Vrou, but some were lucky and found a barn to bed down in. To make sure that all the bridges over the Marne were blown, patrols were sent out from 'A' Squadron which were commanded by Lieutenants Bairstow, Galbraith and Silvertop. All the patrols made contact with the Germans only two miles from where the regiment was situated and at Courcelles, in one exchange of shots, Lieutenant Bairstow was severely wounded. Having received this information, the brigade saddled up in a hurry and moved to a rearguard position, R.H.Q and Brigade H.Q. being at Doue. 'A' Squadron and the Machine Gun Troop were nearby and 'B' and 'C' Squadrons were at Soulsey and Montgoins.

Some German squadrons of cavalry approached 'C' Squadron's position and Captain Mangles ordered his men to hold their fire. Consequently the Germans did not see any position to fire at and could not risk an attack.

Lieutenant Goodhart's 4th Troop of 'C' Squadron had a shot at a German motorcyclist about fifty yards away and not one shot registered in spite of the fact that the rider stopped and turned about, after which he proceeded back along the road and escaped capture. Perhaps there was some justification for the notice which was chalked up on the wall in the butts of the rifle range at Lydd some years ago,

"Haldane diddled, or, How 'C' Squadron got their service pay". Meaning of course that a dummy round was punched into the target to give the men of 'C' Squadron a good score. It would actually have been more apt if it had said "Fix bayonets and Charge, it's your only chance".

After watching German soldiers getting out of omnibuses and deploying for an attack, the brigade was ordered to take up a rearguard position, the Scots Greys and the 12th Lancers having already retired. The regiments took up strong positions around Doue, some of them being shelled as they were leaving their old positions. 'J' Battery responded with a few rounds which steadied the enemy and the retirement continued through Coulommiers. The move to the rear was steady and the enemy was repulsed by rearguard actions of the infantry.

Eventually the regiment reached Segres where Lieutenant R.M. Thomson recalls that it was in this village where he slept in a bed for the first time since landing in France.

The regiment had been engaged against Von Marwitz's Cavalry Corps which was guarding the right flank of the German 1st Army under Von Kluck and the engagement continued throughout the battle of the Marne and the retreat from Mons.

THE MARNE AND THE AISNE

On 6th September 1914, the Hussars saddled-up and as advance guard to the brigade, pushed forward. The 12th Lancers became engaged at Ormeaux and 'B' Squadron was sent to their support and lost five men.

It would appear that the Allied push forward was causing the Germans some discomfort in their retirement and much equipment was left behind.

In order to travel light, all sorts of items were jettisoned and the Q.M. staff and the transport drivers were reluctant to part with some of the loads such as shovels and picks which would be required in the future. This kind of waste really hurt Lieutenant Quartermaster Adams. However it was felt by everyone that they would finish the war by Christmas but there was going to be much regret in the not far distant future months.

On 7th September 1914 the regiment marched through Mauperthuis, Chailly, Charcot and on to Rebais. Some German stragglers were overtaken and mopped up, Lieutenant Sparrow tried his hand with his revolver and shot a German cyclist. 'C' Squadron were acting as right flank guard and met up with some patrols of Uhlans, who fell back as they approached. There was some delay as the advance points reached a bridge, the leading 'eye' was shot dead from a house covering the bridge. The house was attacked but the Boche had flown, leaving the bridge intact. Shortly afterwards Corporal Goring killed two Uhlans and took their lances as trophies in the hope of eventually taking them home.

On arriving at Rebais, the Germans had already left after an officer's patrol from the Royal Scots Greys had been ambushed. Most of the men, including the officer, had been killed. The Germans had looted the village and threw all the furniture out into

the road and then set fire to a number of houses. The 20th remained there for the night and set off for the river the next morning and found all the crossings of a stream strongly defended. Nearing Petit Morin the regiment came under shell fire to which 'J' Battery replied and put some German cavalry under fire at one of the crossings. An infantry brigade came up to remove the Boche but progress was slow, after which the foot regiments captured some prisoners and machine-guns at Petit Morin.

The regiment marched on through Boitron and crossed the Marne by a bridge of boats between Nogent and Saulchery, then went on to Domptin where they went into billets. After being addressed by Field Marshall Sir John French, the regiment resumed the pursuit on the 10th September 1914, acting as advance guard with 'B' and 'C' Squadrons out in front. Patrols under Lieutenants Peploe, Carew and Hall approached Marigny and, pushing through the village, encountered some German stragglers in a wood, which was soon cleared.

'C' Squadron was out on the right flank, broadening the advance front and, nearing Veuilly, saw a convoy of vehicles, carts, etc. moving out slowly. Captain Little sent a patrol forward which reported back that the convoy was escorted by infantry. As the brigade changed direction on the left it was necessary to keep both 'A' and 'B' Squadrons in their original positions otherwise the regiment was quite capable of shooting up the convoy and doing some damage in Veuilly.

Eventually an infantry brigade moved up and attacked the Germans in the village. Almost all the Germans were killed but it took some time to clear the village whereas, if the squadrons had been used to turn the German left flank, the village would have been taken much quicker.

After the Greys and the 12th Lancers had advanced on the left and cleared a wood of some German infantry, the 3rd Cavalry Brigade, under General Hubert Gough, came up on the left of the 5th Cavalry Brigade and both brigades came under his command. The whole force then advanced on Marizy St.Mard.

On 12th September the brigade marched via Hartennes, Chaerise and Ciry to the south of Chassemy. The 3rd Cavalry Brigade was attacking Brenelle and the 5th was about to join in when the occupants surrendered. There appeared to be a good many elderly men amongst them and this gave the false impression that the Germans were running short of reserves. The capture of the village gave the British possession of the high ground overlooking the Aisne from the south. The regiment went into billets at Braine where Captain R. Osborne, Staff Captain to the 1st Cavalry Brigade, visited the regiment. He was one of the 20th Hussars detached officers and was looking for some rations he had collected for the 1st Cavalry Brigade which had been left in Braine. He was rather put out when told that the 20th, his own regiment, had eaten them. Osborne brought the sad news of how Major J.S. Cawley was killed at Nery. He was also a 20th Hussar detached to 1st Cavalry Brigade as Brigade Major.

The battle of the Marne was now ended and on the 13th September 1914, the 3rd and 5th Cavalry Brigades were formed into the 2nd Cavalry Division under General Gough. On the 14th, orders were issued to continue the pursuit and, crossing the bridge at Vailly proved to be a hazardous march which had to be made with the men leading over the horses in single file under German gunfire. Having reached Vailly, the infantry position there was put under intense artillery fire and the Brigadier ordered an immediate retirement. This meant undergoing the precarious bridge crossing once again and this resulted in the regiment having ten casualties. By the time it was the turn of the 12th Lancers and the Scots Greys to cross, the fire had

really become intense, so the two regiments remained in Vailly until the afternoon. They then split up into Troops and crossed as quickly as they could. In spite of such precautions the two regiments suffered more casualties than the 20th Hussars.

The Battle of the Aisne had now begun in earnest and with it came trench warfare. 'C' Squadron and the Machine-gun Section were sent to hold a crossing over the Vesle and dug-in with the assistance of the Royal Engineers. The squadron was shelled from Condé Bridge and were withdrawn on the morning of the 17th September. Private Dawson was killed and a number of horses suffered the same fate.

It seemed a long time since leaving Colchester and so much had happened during the one month of active service. Reinforcements arrived, numbering 63 men and 59 horses under Lieutenant Maule, a 14th Hussar officer attached and Lieutenant Heap, who were posted to 'A' and 'B' Squadrons respectively. On 19th September Lieutenant Dodgson joined 'A' Squadron. The rôle of the 2nd Cavalry Division was to send detachments to watch the Condé Bridge and was withdrawn on the morning of the 19th September when the situation seemed quiet. The regiments moved back to Lesges until word came through on the 27th to say that the enemy were crossing the Condé Bridge in large numbers. However, after a bit of a flap this proved to be false and the 20th returned to the billets. On 30th September the brigade was withdrawn from the Aisne and prepared to march into Flanders.

THE FIRST BATTLE OF YPRES

The 2nd Cavalry Division moved out the day before the 1st Cavalry Division and marched in easy stages from the 30th September through Arcy St.Restitue, Oulchy-la-Ville, Marolles, Raray, Méry and Mailly, spending the night in billets at each place. It was in Mailly on 6th October that the S.S.M. Wyborn, S.S.M. Hatton and

Sergeant Poole were granted commissions and were posted to 'A', 'C' and 'B' Squadrons, none staying with their original squadrons.

The Signals officer found the billets here at Mailly and put the officers mess in a schoolhouse without any furniture with the exception of a few desks, whereas 'B' Squadron found themselves in a palatial château. Needless to say the signals officer received the ire of his brother officers and soon lost his job, which was taken over by Major Cook.

On 7th October 1914, the 20th Hussars marched through Amiens where the regiment billeted just north of the town, after which they passed through Domqueur, Humiéres and Rombly on consecutive days. After meeting up with some French territorials at Aire, the 20th marched to La Belle Hôtesse where they halted for the night of 11th October 1914.

The morning of the 12th October was foggy and the 20th were the leading regiment of the brigade with 'A' Squadron as advance guard. 'C' Squadron, along with the Scots Greys and supported by the Royal Horse Artillery, made a frontal attack against Mont-des-Cats, which was held by about fifty Germans. The 5th Brigade discontinued their attack and the hill was finally taken by the 3rd Cavalry Brigade.

This was Flemish-speaking country and the British were finding it difficult to make themselves understood by the villagers however, the Tommy was compensated by finding some good beer which was a change from the French wine.

The regiment advanced on the 13th October as far as Boesechoepe and Berthen, then came in contact with the German patrols when exchanges of fire took place. This resulted in 'B' Squadron taking two prisoners. In the evening, the 20th Hussars retired to Abeele station for the night, where the station master showed his

kind generosity in supplying some very sweet champagne which did not suit all tastes in RHQ.

On the 14th October, the regiment marched to Kemmel where the 3rd Cavalry Division was assembled. This division had landed with the 7th Division at Ostend and some biggish action was promised for the following day.

On the 15th, the brigade rendezvoused at Wyschaete. Lieutenants Thompson and Sparrow went out with patrols to reconnoitre the crossings over the river Lys at Comines and Wervicq. The bridge at the former place was blown but the one at Wervicq was still intact. Lieutenant Sparrow's patrol had an exciting encounter with some Germans and was nearly cut off from his return road, however they were able to jump a wire fence and evaded the pursuing Germans.

The brigade advanced to Oost-Taverna with the 20th being directed on Comines, 'C' Squadron guarding the left flank and occupying Hollebeke and Houthem. Lieutenants Thompson and Goodhart's patrol had to winkle the Germans out of these places which then helped 'A' and 'B' Squadrons to advance along the Kortekeer Beck, one squadron on each bankside, in a dismounted rôle.

The enemy, small in numbers, fell back before the regiment, after which they were ordered to retire. They picked up their horses at Garde Dieu and marched back to billets in Kemmel. The following morning, 10th October, the 20th Hussars advanced once more to Oost-Taverne, the Scots Greys were watching Comines and Houthem and the 12th Lancers were at Garde Dieu.

On 17th October the 20th were detailed to hold the outpost line from Halte to a point on the Hollebeke - Zandvoorde road, stretching about one and a quarter miles. 'B' Squadron occupied a farm with Troops in some trenches which already existed and

'C' Squadron was in support. 'A' Squadron and Regimental Headquarters were in billets to the north-west of Houthem. In the farm lived a very beautiful lady, described as 'exceptionally exquisite, by some of the officers in 'B' Squadron. 'To preserve the *entente cordial* the C.O. gave orders that all the officers were to regard the farmhouse as out of bounds and to remain in the trenches all night. Apparently he did not trust his officers as nothing was said to the men in the squadron.

Early on 18th October 'A' Squadron relieved 'B' Squadron in the trenches and nothing was said about the lovely female. It had been a quiet but very cold night and in the afternoon the regiment was ordered to capture and hold Tenbrielen, which was accomplished without too much trouble. The German snipers were cleared from the houses and the place was put in a state of defence. The horses were then sent back to Houthem and, after spending the night without being molested, the regiment was relieved by the Scots Greys on the morning of 19th October 1914. From Ten Brielen, the 20th Hussars pushed on to America where they moved into a position on the flank of the 7th Division, in a move on Menin. After being intermittently shelled all day, the regiment marched back to billets for the night at Kortewilde.

Moving back to America the next morning, the regiment saw a great deal of shelling on both sides. The patrols were out towards Wervicq where they were in contact with the enemy, then suddenly the regiment was ordered back to Oost-Taverne to support the 4th Cavalry Brigade. The Germans were attacking from Warneton and 'C' Squadron was sent forward to a position covering the left of the 4th Cavalry Brigade. No sooner was the squadron in position when shells poured down on them from the British artillery which had mistaken them, from the observation post, for Germans. The bombardment was pretty heavy and a number of casualties were reported as the wounded were treated in the aid post. These included Captain

Barne, Lieutenant Hatton, Sergeants Killik and Goodwin, Corporal Finley and one private.

Orders were received to occupy a defensive position on the Oost-Taverne-Warneton road just as the light was fading. The regiment's position faced south-east, next to a farm which became known as 'Edward's Farm' and orders were given to dig-in. Having dumped all the picks and shovels when lightening the load on the Marne pursuit, the regiment was now to rue the day. Using bayonets, mess-tins, knives, forks and enamel plates, the men began to scoop out the earth but it was a slow job. A few picks and shovels were collected from the inhabitants of Oost-Taverne on loan, but it was an uphill struggle and the effort would have been beyond them but for the help of the Royal Engineers. After digging all night, the dawn light revealed the squadrons to be situated on a downward slope, in full view of the enemy. Being situated next to a farm, on a dangerous salient, was an invitation to all the Germans to saturate it with shells.

The regiment immediately evacuated the position and took up a defence line on a ridge to the rear of the farm. It was occupied by the 12th Lancers but with a bit of tightening up of their line, the regiment was squeezed in. It was ironical that the position vacated was immediately in front of the 12th Lancers which would have masked their fire if the regiment had been attacked.

The 20th Hussars were feeling more secure on the ridge and here they dug some really good trenches which caused some amusement to the Brigade Major, simply because they resembled the drawings in the Engineering Manual. Lieutenant Wyborn, who was responsible for constructing the trenches felt quite pleased with the men's' efforts and did not share the laughter. If anyone had the last laugh it was him when the shells came down and the men were under good cover. The next three

years would show the cavalrymen more in line with the infantry when it came to using the pick and shovel in digging and filling sand-bags.

Meanwhile the horses were left behind at Oost-Taverne, under the charge of Lieutenant Thompson.

On the 22nd October, a company of Indian troops relieved the Scots Greys who went into support, fortunately missing a great deal of shelling that night. A German reconnaissance party came up against 'A' Squadron on the left and were repulsed. The Indian soldiers made bursts of rapid fire throughout the night but no enemy troops could be seen. Morning light revealed half a dozen cows lying dead in front of their position!

On the 23rd October, there was some shelling which set fire to the farm where R.H.Q. were situated and had to be moved to another farm further to the rear but much handier for communicating with Brigade Headquarters and the other regiments in the brigade. On the afternoon of the 26th October the regiment mounted and prepared to support an Indian attack in the direction of Houthen but it came to naught and the regiment was not employed.

For the next few nights there was increased activity from the German trenches and patrols became more frequent. The Commanding Officer made it a practice to withdraw two Troops out of the forward trenches and to let them rest in a more comfortable area at the H.Q. farm. On the 30th October two troops of 'B' Squadron were resting when a heavy bombardment with increased sniping began. Germans in the rear trenches were seen to be advancing. It appeared to be a preliminary of something big in the offing, so 'B' Squadron were ordered back to the trenches. During the morning Lieutenant Carew was killed by a sniper's bullet.

After midday, the 12th Lancers were obliged to retire in order to conform with the line to their left, where it was under heavy attack. The 12th had to evacuate the convent which was used as a machine-gun and observation post. This exposed the left of the regiment which could be enfiladed, so the Commanding Officer withdrew the 20th Hussars to conform with the line.

As the afternoon drew on and the 12th Lancers, see-sawing to and fro from their position, making each regiment re-occupy the old positions, the Germans opened fire from the convent. This soon made a hasty retirement necessary and 4th Troop of 'B' Squadron, now commanded by Sergeant Bassinthwaite, covered the move to the rear. The Troop held up the Germans with great determination until being overwhelmed and all, except one man, were killed or taken prisoner. This delaying action, assisted by the Machine Gun Section under Lieutenant McConnel, enabled the regiment to retire on Oost-Taverne where a new line had been established. However the Indian troops, who had suffered considerable casualties, had retired too far to the right which left the 20th Hussars flank exposed, so the Brigadier was obliged to withdraw the Brigade to another position which had previously been chosen. Fortunately the trenches had been partly dug-in so the situation was better than the last position and the night was spent finishing off the digging.

During this withdrawal, Lieutenant Micholls of 'A' Squadron was hit in the stomach and, being a big man, it proved to be a heavy task carrying him on a stretcher. He was quite cheery about it and admitted, with a smile on his face, that his tummy was the biggest part of his body. The casualties this day had been one officer and three men killed and one officer and eight men wounded. In addition, seventeen men were missing, all of 4th Troop, 'B' Squadron.

The trenches were now in good shape, the regiment having obtained a supply of picks and shovels from the Q.M. It was reassuring to be under cover as a considerable amount of shelling was seen to the left of the 20th Hussars, around Messines, but their front was quiet. This spell of peace in the immediate vicinity enabled a French company to arrive in support of the regiment. The infantrymen immediately began to dig trenches in front of 'A' Squadron, much to the astonishment of the Squadron Leader.

Forward of the 20th Hussar's position was a small wood and 'B' Squadron was situated so as to cover one edge of it and 'A' Squadron had 4th Troop, under Lieutenant Silvertop, covering another edge of the wood.

On the 1st November at one o'clock in the morning the Germans made an attack with columns marching through the wood. Silvertop's Troop opened up with rapid fire at just a few hundred yards and claim to have done considerable execution. Eventually the enemy drove in the left of the 4th Cavalry Brigade and occupied their trenches, which enabled them to enfilade the 'B' Squadron position. Captain Little therefore withdrew a short distance which made a gap, consequently filled by some French troops. R.H.Q. and 'A' Squadron in the centre were able to hold the salient thus created but the regiment's line had been stretched.

The Germans now occupied not only the trenches held by the 4th Cavalry Brigade but also the village of Wystchaete, which put them in a dangerous salient, for the 1st Cavalry Brigade still held the Messines Ridge south of the village and the 20th Hussars were holding ground north-east of that place.

General Chetwode ordered the 12th Lancers to counter-attack Wystchaete at dawn and Captain Little took his 'B' Squadron with them. This action was completely successful and the village was cleared after very little resistance. This brought the

British troops back to the trenches which had been occupied by the Household Cavalry Regiment on the left of the 4th Cavalry Brigade.

Captain Little and his squadron drew a great deal of satisfaction from this conquest, which they felt was just revenge for the loss of their 4th Troop. The Squadron Leader shot a German with his revolver and found it hard to believe, based on the evidence of his efforts on the range. The members witnessing it thought the German was a very unlucky man and Captain Little readily concurred with their opinion.

After this affair it was the turn of Sergeant Ned Gray, who was a crack shot. He spotted a German looking out of the window of a windmill and with a mouthful of expletives, raised his rifle and took aim. The rifle cracked and the German did a neat somersault out of the window, much to the applause of the onlookers. The 12th Lancers and 'B' Squadron were ordered to retire when the enemy began shelling their trenches.

The village of Wytschaete was handed over to the French who, at that moment, came under a bombardment of "Black Marias" or "Jack Johnsons", so called because of the black smoke they created when exploding. The French took a dim view of being left to take this kind of punishment and the 'entente cordiale' was in danger of being shattered. The situation was saved by Lieutenant McConnel who kept his machine guns in action until the strafing by the Germans was brought to an end and he was able to explain the position to our French ally. For this action in covering the retirement of the regiment he was deservedly awarded the D.S.O. and Captain Little was also granted this decoration for his action in the Wytschaete affair. The casualties at the end of the day were not so heavy but among them was Lieutenant Silvertop, who was wounded during the withdrawal.

Picking up the horses at Voormezede, which had been waiting there since the 30th October, the regiment marched to billets at Mille Ruis, having ridden through the villages of Kemmel and La Clytte. Here some reorganising took place in the 20th Hussars. Captain Darling, the Signals Officer was dispensed with and he was posted as second-in-command 'A' Squadron, vice Lieutenant Micholls.

On 2nd November 1914, and for the next two days, the regiment moved to Kemmel Hill and later on to Dranoutre, then to Neuve Englise.

From here the regiment spent a night in the trenches which had been vacated by the 1st Cavalry Brigade, after which the 3rd Cavalry Brigade relieved them on the 4th November. In thick fog the regiment mounted their horses and returned to Neuve Englise, where they went into billets for the night.

For the next few days the regiment was in a relaxing situation and some of the squadrons managed to have a game of football in the area of Wulverghen. Being next to the French brought about a sharing of some of the defensive positions. The horses were back at Dranoutre where the regiment rejoined them on the 9th November 1914. Eventually, after marching back to Wulverghen, the 20th Hussars were relieved by the 16th Lancers. It was wet and cold, typical November weather but fortunately it was a quiet period for a few days and the regiment stayed at La Creche until the 19th November when they moved up to Kemmel. By now the weather was really cold and, after leaving the horses in the snow, the different squadrons marched on foot to the trenches and relieved the French Chasseurs Aplins. The Frenchmen were astonished to find the number of officers the regiment had in proportion to men. A French sergeant had commanded a line when 'A' squadron took over with a major, one captain and three subalterns. The sergeant was quite aghast and wondered what the reaction would be when the officers saw

the state of the trenches. He remarked that his dug-outs were not very nice for a commandant. The Germans were only seventy-five yards away and there was no communication trenches. Men just walked up to the front trenches and jumped in, regardless of any snipers and there was ice and snow on the ground which created a good silhouette for the enemy. The crackling ice and the talking that went on, made a disturbance which could be heard a couple of hundred yards away, yet the Germans remained silent. The trenches had "overhead cover" which gave some protection from mortar bombs. All firing was done through loop-holes and barbed wire in front of the trenches was almost non- existent, leaving the possibility of a surprise assault unimpeded. To try and mount rapid fire in such a situation would be almost impossible through loop-holes where sighting a rifle took too much time.

The 20th Hussars remained in the trenches all day and night with plenty of sniping by both sides. The artillery remained quiet although Germans could be seen about half a mile away preparing and repairing trenches.

About half a dozen casualties were reported from the sniping and, just after midnight on the 22nd November, the regiment was relieved by the 5th Dragoon Guards. This was the last experience of trenches in the First Battle of Ypres.

The horses had been brought up to meet the men and they rode back to some billets at Steenwerk, the roads being icy and very slippery made it a relief to arrive back safely. The regiment then remained in warm billets until 5th January 1915.

The 20th Hussars set about reorganising things in the eight weeks from the immediate front. Reinforcements arrived to replace the casualties and bayonet practice became one of the main training exercises. 'B' Squadron had the real experience of this type of combat at Wytschaete, where they did great execution but it was rough and ready. There was no "two inches" of steel now being recommended.

The men just pushed the bayonet, to the hilt if possible, and for good measure some of the soldiers pulled the trigger, having "one up the spout".

Attention was paid to the fitness of the men and all sporting activity was encouraged within the scope of the wintry conditions. Football matches were played but nothing was mentioned about cross-country runs, it may have been too much of a temptation to take time out with the village girls, who were also missing male friends and husbands. Physical training was held in the mornings and tug-of-war helped to strengthen the mens muscles.

On 2nd December 1914 the 20th Hussars were inspected by His Majesty King George V and on the 7th by the Commander-in-Chief. Leave was started, which at first was confined to seventy-two hours on landing in England. So the winter was being passed pleasantly , away from the shells and discomfort of the mud in the trenches.

NEUVE CHAPELLE, YPRES, ARRAS & LOOS 1915 - 1916

On 15th January 1915 the regiment was withdrawn two days march further west to Fauquemberguers and Renty. The men regretted leaving warm billets but were pleasantly surprised to take up more comfortable billets where they stayed until 3rd February 1915. On this day, the regiment saddled-up and set out eastwards towards the Ypres sector, stopping at night near St. Venaut and arriving the following day at Verte Rue, north of Merville.

The Cavalry Corps relieved some French troops, who went into reserve, and now came under the command of General Foch of the French Northern Army. The 2nd Cavalry Division formed two dismounted brigades under General Bingham and General Chetwode.

The first brigade "A" consisted of the 4th Cavalry Brigade plus the 4th Hussars and two squadrons of the 5th Lancers. The second brigade "B" consisted the 5th Cavalry Brigade plus the 16th Lancers and one squadron of the 5th Lancers. Intensive training took place in infantry work and bombing squads were organised. The making of these bombs was elementary, made from filling jam and stewed meat tins with nails, bolts and stones, then fitting a gun-cotton primer with a fuse. The art of throwing was sometimes precarious and the bombs did not always detonate as was expected. This was due in part to the distance thrown by hand was restricted according to the strength and technique of the thrower. However, the bombs served a good enough purpose and they were well worth the effort.

On the 13th February 1915, the regiment was moved by omnibus to Ypres where they were deposited in the market place, near to the Grand Cloth Hall. The men

went into various billets within the area as Ypres had still many houses and hotels intact, even after being shelled.

The brigade was held here in reserve and the population was doing it's best to carry on as normal in spite of the circumstances. Market traders were doing brisk business with Belgium lace, regarded as some of the finest of its kind in the world. The troops were exercised in small parties in an attempt to conceal the number of soldiers occupying Ypres. The men were instructed to take cover immediately any warning came of enemy aircraft being active in the area.

The 27th and 28th Divisions had newly arrived in France and were holding trenches to the right of the 2nd Cavalry Division. The infantrymen were having to do a good deal of fighting and the ground defences were continually changing hands. It was attack and counter-attack all the time and the cavalrymen were anxious witnesses. The order came to standby and be in readiness to support these two divisions, however they were not actually moved up to them.

On the evening of the 18th February 1915 "B" Brigade relieved "A" Brigade in the trenches and the 20th Hussars took over from the Oxford Yeomanry. Lieutenant Colonel Edwards was still in command although a number of exchanges took place within the Troops. Captain Little was still recovering from his broken collar-bone while on home leave. The R.S.M. was Mr Austin and all the S.S.M.s were new, only the S.Q.M.S.s remained the same as on mobilisation.

On the Ypres front "A" Squadron was on the right, in contact with the Royal Scots Greys and "B" Squadron on the left was in touch with the 12th Lancers. "C" Squadron acted in Brigade Reserve, situated in some rudimentary dug-outs. The trenches were really breast-works, in a wood east of Zillebeke. The German trenches varied in distance from the wood, the nearest being about forty yards away

and furthest was probably a hundred. The intervening ground was covered with a mass of fallen trees which made it difficult to carry out a rush attack. Being so close meant no artillery so it was comparatively quiet. The only cover for the regiment was from the trees which broke the cold winds. The trenches were very dry and well provided by trench-boards, which pleased the men.

Regimental Headquarters occupied a shanty hut at the rear edge of the wood. It had a few grass sods and some earth thrown over it and this acted more like a camouflage rather than protection from artillery shells. Some wire netting covered the whole as a protection from bombs. Captain Mangles came to make a report and, on seeing the netting, asked Sergeant Major Lee if he kept birds in the cage. The retort was quick, "No sir, rabbits!".

There were attempts made at sniping but the targets were few and far between so Sergeants Gray and Curran of "B" Squadron went out on a raid and managed to get behind the German trenches, where they shot a German. The enemy retaliated with a bit of sniping but no-one suffered.

Mortars would have been an ideal weapon in such a situation and attempts were made to try and construct something to throw bombs but the range was too far and the attempts fell short. With some of the regiment's men in the forward trenches, the Squadron Leaders let them know, in no uncertain terms, that the idea must cease.

Things were fairly quiet until the morning of the 21st February 1915. At about 6.30 am the Germans blew up a trench occupied by the 16th Lancers who were on the left of the 12th Lancers, then they rushed up to the trench and occupied it. The 16th suffered heavy casualties, including ten officers. With such a loss in leadership, the responsibility was falling on the shoulders of the NCOs and the practise of having so

many officers in the trenches needed some adjustment. "C" Squadron of the 20th Hussars was immediately sent to the 16th and placed under the orders of Colonel Eccles, with the intention of counter-attacking. A company of French infantry also came up in support, but permission was required before committing them into action.

It was 10 am before the counter-attack started and by this time the Germans had organised themselves and were prepared to receive them. As soon as the 16th advanced, the fire became very heavy and both "C" Squadron and the French were stopped in their tracks within fifty yards of the German trench.

The French had many casualties, including the Company Commander who was killed. In "C" Squadron, seven men had been killed and Captain Mangles, Lieutenants Sparrow and Goodhart, together with Privates Button, Conley and McDonald were wounded. Lieutenant Thompson being the one officer left unscathed. The men went to ground where they were stopped and managed to find a certain amount of cover. They remained there until after dark before being withdrawn. Sergeant Sime of "C" Squadron was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his gallantry in bringing back some of the wounded men.

In the meantime another trench had been dug in the rear of the former one and a plan was devised for bombing the Germans out of the trench which they had captured. Lieutenant McConnel went forward and made an attempt to blow in a German sap which ran close up to "A" Squadron's trenches. He managed to drop some charges of gun cotton into the sap and detonated them but it was never discovered what damage had been effected. On the morning of the 23rd February 1915, Lieutenant Barr was killed by a German sniper.

That night the whole of the 2nd Cavalry Division was withdrawn and the regiment returned by bus to Verte Rue and then, a few days later, back to Renty and Fouquemberguers. The latter place was typically named in their own barrack-room language by the troopers! Here they stayed until the 9th March 1915 when the Division prepared for an attack the following day on Neuve Chapelle. The village was quickly captured and several German prisoners were taken, then sent to the rear along with many British wounded.

The night was spent in Rouge Croix, where most of the men slept in barns and the officers shared a large room at the farm. A complaint was lodged about the meal being served up to the officers that night. They wanted to know why the men of the squadrons had omelettes, whereas Headquarters had none. Sergeant Major Lee, in one of his witty replies to the Commanding Officer, informed him in a Mrs. Beaton style on cookery hints "Sir, you cannot make omelettes without eggs".

A push forward began on the 11th, when the 20th Hussars were stood-to all day without being committed. On the 12th, the regiment was hastily rushed with the infantry to take up the pursuit. Word was passed down the line to see that swords were clear of haversacks or feed bags, to enable a quick draw being made easily. The men's morale was raised in the hope of getting in with some real cavalry action. As the Scots Greys neared the front line, they found that the report was too hopeful and somewhat exaggerated as the infantry were held up everywhere.

The regiment returned to Verte Rue and stayed there until 23rd April with the 2nd Cavalry Division. This was St. George's Day so they held a Horse Show for some entertainment. Major Little returned to the regiment and went back to 'B' Squadron while Captain Darling took over command of 'C' Squadron. The command of the

division was also changed, Major Kavanagh took over from Major General Gough, who went to the 7th Infantry Division.

Later on, cyclists, acting as dispatch riders, informed the squadrons which were out on exercise, to return immediately as a gas attack had taken place against some French Colonial troops in the area. This was a totally new weapon in warfare and, without respirators, the men just stuffed a piece of cloth or a handkerchief over their noses and mouths.

The regiment marched to Boeshepe, near Poperinghe. Patrols went out under Lieutenants Whidbourne, Conant and Hall from 'B' Squadron to reconnoitre routes through to different points in the line. In the evening the regiment returned to Vlamertinghe where the horses were left and the squadrons were organised into a dismounted regiment ready to take over any trenches.

On the 26th April 1915, the 20th Hussars marched through Ypres and occupied the trenches at Potijze. Shelling took place as the men were moving in and S.S.M. Smith of 'C' Squadron was wounded. On the 29th the regiment moved to other reserve trenches where there was more shelling and one of the dug-outs occupied by H.Q. of 'B' Squadron was hit. Three men were killed, including Corporal Stanesby, a good footballer. On the 2nd May the regiment was withdrawn, during which another gas attack was launched by the Germans. Fortunately the wind changed just as the Royal Dublin Fusiliers moved into the trenches. This was a regiment of very stout fellows who were ready to give the Germans a good reception after the gas attack. The regiment then marched back ten miles to Ouderdom, some of the squadrons being shelled on the way.

The next day, pleased to be back with the horses, the regiment marched north of Cassel to Ledringhem. This was beautiful fresh countryside and looked very

pleasant after enduring the heavy shelling and the stench of dead horses and cows at Potijze cross-roads. The most remarkable occurrence, which pleased the troops there, was to hear the delightful notes of a nightingale which gave them it's song for many nights.

The 20th Hussars left Ledringhem on the 7th May 1915 and marched back to the old billets at Verte Rue and, two days later, settled down to a well earned rest, for both men and horses. Then came the news of the big Allied attack at Arras. 'B' Echelon joined the regiment, bringing stores, etc. It was about this time when the first respirators were issued. They were merely pads of material soaked in a chemical. On the way to Verte Rue, the Echelon had come under shell fire and suffered some casualties; Privates Fleming, Collins and Baker were wounded and evacuated to hospital on the 10th May.

The Germans made another gas attack just east of Ypres and, during the night, the 5th Cavalry Brigade was moved by bus to Vlamertinghe once again. On the following morning, the 14th May, the 5th took over the trenches of the 3rd Cavalry Division. Just prior to being relieved, some of the units of this division made a brilliant counter-attack and, in the word of the Essex Yeomanry, "Chased the Germans clean out of the country".

The regiment took over from the 3rd Dragoon Guards who had suffered heavy casualties, the Colonel was badly wounded and only two officers remained. The trenches were in a shocking state, having been exceptionally damaged by shell fire. During the night the 20th Hussars dug a new trench line forward of the old trench and about half a mile from the enemy. The infantry assisted in digging communication trenches leading back to the old trenches. All three squadrons were in the front line where they remained until the 21st May. Patrols went out every

night but never made contact with the Germans as they were too far away. There was occasional shelling and sadly, among the few casualties were Sergeant Tester killed and Sergeant Curran wounded. The regiment was relieved that night by an infantry regiment and marched back to huts in Vlamertinghe.

During the night, at about 3.30 am on the 24th May, the regiment was alerted and rushed to turn out. The air was full of gas which had drifted over from another attack east of Ypres, where the 1st Cavalry Division was under fire. The 9th Lancers and the 18th Hussars had taken the brunt of this action and heavy casualties had been suffered by both regiments although the whole division had taken a pounding.

The 2nd Cavalry Division moved up that night and relieved them, the 5th Cavalry Brigade was in reserve and occupied dug-outs and ramparts at Ypres. The regiment sent out working parties each night to improve the trenches in the front line. After four days, the 20th Hussars were relieved by the Essex Yeomanry of the 3rd Cavalry Division and returned to Verte Rue on the 30th May 1915.

The following day the regiment marched to Zuytpeene where the men did well in comfortable billets and the horses, although outside, fared better out in the good weather, rather than being in cramped and stuffy, ill-aired barns. The summer months were spent in sending working parties out to construct second and third lines of defence, while the western front adopted a holding position. The Germans were occupied in the east against the Russians so there was no great pressure at this time and it was an opportunity to do some reorganising.

Lieutenant Hall had left the regiment in June for the Royal Flying Corps and, after three months training as an observer, returned to duty as signals officer. In July, Lieutenant McConnel left to take up duties as an instructor at the Machine Gun School and Lieutenant Stout replaced him in the Machine Gun Section. On the 6th

August 1915, the regiment moved a few miles to Wittes and Warne, north of Aire. Brigadier General Chetwode had taken over the 2nd Cavalry Division, Lieutenant Colonel Wormald of the 12th Lancers took over the 5th Brigade and Colonel Bulkely-Johnson of the Greys commanded the 8th Brigade.

As is the normal practice with regiments during rest periods, the troops were encouraged to play sports and the officers indulged in a bit of polo, although the pitted and rough ground was not really conducive to good play.

The squadrons reorganised, as far as possible, to have their own coloured horses but it was nor one hundred percent practicable. Swimming the Aire canal was also good practice for the men and horses for the day when that "gap" developed and the waterways and rivers could be taken in their stride.

On the 21st September, the regiment marched to Estrée Blanche and then on to Equirre on the 24th. The next day they marched to Cauchy à la Tour where they went into billets until the 29th, when the regiment was withdrawn to Nédonchelle. The 2nd October brought another occupation for the regiment when thirty men under Captain Beech were chosen to make up a divisional party for clearing the battlefield of unexploded shells and mines, etc. Volunteers were not lacking for the task as the men were thinking of gaining a few souvenirs from the dead. However, the job proved to be a most unpleasant business of digging and burying the blasted and bullet-ridden bodies of the dead. Sadly for them they were mostly British.

More changes took place in the 5th Brigade when the Brigade Commander was killed by a shell and Colonel C. Campbell of the 16th Lancers succeeded him. Colonel Edwards was given an infantry brigade and Major Cook took over the 20th. Major Richardson went to R.H.Q. as second-in-command and Captain Sanford took over 'A' Squadron, Lieutenant Hall became Adjutant and Lieutenant MacIntyre left 'C'

Squadron to take over as Signals Officer. Lieutenant Goodhart was welcomed back to the regiment and went to 'B' Squadron and Lieutenant Sturt joined and went to 'C' Squadron. Captain Micholls was also greeted back and went to 'B' Squadron as second-in-command.

As the cold weather approached, the cavalry were withdrawn from the front and went into winter quarters, the 20th Hussars moving to Bourthes and then in the neighbourhood of Moncavrel. Here the regiment was most comfortable with good billets and all the horses under cover. 'C' Squadron officers were the lucky ones this time, striking it rich with a large château.

Myles Thompson took over as second-in-command of 'C' Squadron when Captain Barne went on the Staff and on the 9th November, Captain Sanford took over as second-in-command of an infantry regiment and Captain Micholls took over 'A' Squadron.

It was a month of change which tended to disrupt the normal routine in the regiment. The billets were rearranged on the move to Fauquemberges and Renty, and all the squadrons changed places before settling down to training.

Major Richardson took over the 26th Northumberland Fusiliers and the Cavalry Corps was now in the hands of General Bingham. The infantry training brought about a fresh organisation of the Cavalry Corps which formed a dismounted division. It was commanded in turn by the three divisional commanders, the whole coming under General Bingham. The division was split into three dismounted brigades which, in turn, had three dismounted battalions, one from each cavalry brigade, commanded in turn by the three commanding officers. Then the battalion comprised of three companies, each found by a cavalry regiment and commanded by a Major or Captain. Each company had six platoons, two from each squadron.

The 20th Hussars were in the 5th Dismounted Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Collins of the Royal Scots Greys. They were now under command of Captain Micholls with Captain Beech as second-in-command. Lieutenants Read, Balfour, Goodhart, Mann, Thompson and Sturt commanded the squadron platoons.

On the 7th January 1916, soon after this formation had occupied some huts at Vermelles, Captain Micholls left and was replaced by Captain Darling. The other officers were also relieved from time to time and, in his turn, Colonel Cook and R.H.Q. 20th Hussars took command of the battalion.

The front line trenches lay towards Hulloch and the battalion spent it's time in the support trenches and front line.

The British Army now had the "Mills Bomb", a hand grenade which matched the stick grenades, commonly known as "spud mashers", which the Germans used to good effect. Bombing parties were picked from men who could throw the grenades a good distance and were of fighting quality.

This area had been occupied by the Germans but, after Loos, they were pushed back and so now the regiment held the old reserve trenches of the German line. The dug-outs were well made in the chalky soil and took little work to maintain. Working parties were sent out each night to improve the trenches which were regularly damaged by the German shells. Fortunately this artillery fire inflicted very few casualties and Lieutenant Jeffrey, who had recently joined from England, invented a form of sling with which to hurl the grenades, in answer to the German stick bombs.

The machine guns were well organised in defence and there was no attack until 13th February 1916 when the regiment exploded a mine in front of a feature called the "Hairpin", and the Germans exploded three mines in the neighbourhood, making a

line of craters across the front. The Germans immediately made a bombing attack across the craters but Lieutenant Hatton, the 20th bombing officer, attacked in like manner, almost simultaneously, and drove the enemy back to the far lip of the crater. Lieutenant Jeffrey also led a bombing attack on the "Hairpin" and was killed. Trench mortars were used to give covering fire but the range was hopelessly short and they were requested to cease fire. The machine guns did very good work by bringing flanking fire to bear along the edges of the crater. The casualties were Lieutenant Jeffrey and seven men killed and two men wounded. That night the regiment used thousands of bombs and morning light brought some peace as the fighting died down.

On the 15th February 1916, the 20th were relieved by the Essex Regiment and all the cavalry were withdrawn to billets at Fauquembergues. Major Hurndall joined here and took over 'A' Squadron after serving in the Dardanelles with the Berkshire Yeomanry and then held a staff job.

During March the Cavalry Corps ceased to be such and each Cavalry Division was posted to an army. The 2nd Cavalry Division went to the 2nd Army, which meant a move from Fauquembergues to Licques, situated about fifteen miles from Boulogne and, from April, the cavalry took up training. This continued throughout the summer of 1916, practising "gap" tactics in the hope of a break-through when the cavalry could enter into a full-blooded role.

A few changes took place in March, before this move, when Sergeant Beavon was given a commission and sent to an infantry regiment. The R.S.M., Mr Austin, was also commissioned and posted to 'A' Squadron and S.S.M. Rabjohn replaced him as R.S.M. In addition, Major Sidney of the Northumberland Hussars Yeomanry joined the 20th Hussars and was attached to Regimental Headquarters.

In June 1916, the 2nd Dismounted Brigade was hastily moved by motor bus to Reninghelst, in support of the Canadians who had lost some trenches near Zillebeke and suffered heavy casualties.

Lieutenant Colonel Cook and R.H.Q. took the 5th Dismounted Battalion to support a counter-attack by the Canadian Corps during the night of the 18th June and regained some ground. The regiment was fortunate in not being turned out as the weather was atrocious, with pouring rain making the ground most difficult. The Canadians re-took all their positions and it proved to be a successful night.

On the 20th June the regiment returned by bus to Licques and preparations were being made by the 2nd Army for the big offensive on the Somme. Taking up quarters at Vieux Berquin and Verte Rue, parties were sent to work in the mining operations near Kemmel. These had as their objective, the blowing up of the Messines Ridge, which was done a year later.

Each cavalry regiment now had more than its normal complement of men and could be sent as various working parties without interfering with the strength as a mounted cavalry regiment.

On the 6th September 1916 the 20th Hussars left the 2nd Army for the Somme to join in on a fresh offensive.

The dismounted party under Major Sidney, went by train to Carnoy near Albert, where they worked on the cavalry track by which they were to cross the trench system. On the way to the Somme, which took several days, the Brigade carried out a scheme on the line of march. The C.O. and Squadron Leaders made a trip over the battlefield where the August offensive had already taken place. Such historic places like Delville Wood and High Wood, where so much action took place, were visited

and the picture of devastation told its own story. The high ground permitted a good view of the broken trenches and churned-up earth, over which the cavalry would advance if the next push was a success.

Another four days was spent in camp and nothing happened except for heavy rain which made things very unpleasant. Lieutenants Bland and the two Woolf brothers went out on patrol and made contact with the party at Carnoy but nothing occurred and they returned.

The 2nd October saw a move to a camp near Morlanbcourt and the heavy rain made the "Cavalry Track" almost impossible to negotiate. The infantry and artillery had some difficulty in bringing up supplies and the regiment sent a number of pack ponies and horses to help them. The conditions were so bad that the intended cavalry scheme was abandoned and, on the 8th November, the regiment moved out. After a March to the south of Hesdin, the 20th went into winter quarters. Some went to Wail where the squadrons made themselves as comfortable as possible and waited for further developments.

General Chetwode had left the division for Palestine, under General Allenby, and General Greenly took his place.

Further changes took place in December when Sergeants Aston, Bliss, Clifford, Cook and Partridge were all commissioned in the infantry. A report came in about Sergeant Gray who was commissioned during the summer. He had distinguished himself at the battle of the Somme, particularly at Le Sars.

ARRAS AND LEMPIRE 1917

On the 10th January 1917 the brigade, less the 12th Lancers, moved nearer to the sea at Nempont where training on the sands was carried out. Everyone was now looking forward to the Spring offensive.

The shortage of oats and other feedstuffs caused great concern and the horses suffered as a consequence in the coming battle.

Once again some changes took place in the regiment: Major Little went home to the 13th Reserve Cavalry Regiment to train officers for two months and on his return he went to R.H.Q. Major Sidney went to command a Yeomanry regiment and his place was taken by Lieutenant Hall who became temporary Captain. Lieutenant Goodhart became Adjutant and Lieutenant Ogilvy went to 'B' Squadron as second-in-command. Lieutenant Peploe rejoined the regiment from 9th Signal Troop and Lieutenant MacIntyre left for the 2nd Signal Squadron. Captain Barne left his staff captain's job to become an observer with the Flying Corps.

The regiment left Nempont for action on 5th April and stayed that night at Fond de Val. The 5th Machine Gun Squadron, under Major Martin, formed a unit in the Brigade, with Lieutenants Stout and Askin commanding the 20th Hussars sections. Major Little left for the "cage" of senior officers where they were ready to replace any casualties which might occur among the commanding officers. This Cavalry Corps "pool" of reserves was a most useful idea which worked well during an action.

The regiment left Fond de Val on the 7th April for an area south east of Arras and, after going through a number of places in pouring rain, arrived at "Telegraph Hill", where the whole of the 2nd Cavalry Division was concentrated, with the 3rd Cavalry Division to the left.

Telegraph Hill was some high ground to the west of Tilloy-les-Moufflains and had been taken that morning by the infantry. It had been a success but not so for the cavalry to be launched that night.

There was very little shelling, but one shell fell in the rear and landed on Lieutenant Glover's Troop of 'B' Squadron. Four men were wounded and the Troop Leader was so badly affected that he had to report sick a day or so later. Lieutenant Wyborn went out with a patrol to get in touch with the infantry but in the evening the regiment was ordered back to Wailly. The weather was atrocious, varying between cold rain, sleet and snow, making the cavalry track very precarious. In the dark it was impossible to avoid filled-in shell holes which had become a slimy bog. A good many horses which fell into them never came out and died an agonising death of exhaustion and freezing cold. Those horses which were not fit had no chance in their efforts to struggle free and it was a heart-breaking experience.

The congestion on the road caused continual checks and hold-ups until the regiment eventually reached Wailly at 3.30 am on the 10th April. The horses were pegged down with the snow still on the ground and the men laid out in the open. About noon the horses were saddled up and the regiment moved off once more for Telegraph Hill, hoping to move through the gap that evening. At 5pm the 3rd and 5th Cavalry Brigades moved forward on receiving a report that Monchy had been taken. The regiment trotted through Tilloy-les-Moufflains then formed "line of Troop columns" and broke into a canter, making for the gap in the wire, closing in when reaching the obstacle and, once through, immediately deployed again.

It may have been a fine sight to see so many cavalry regiments in open order, moving at a brisk pace over open country but then the enemy guns opened up and shells began to fall. A warm reception was expected by everyone until the snow

began to wisp through the air and it gradually grew into a blizzard. The whole landscape was blotted out and direction became difficult, the shelling stopped and the cavalry pushed on, taking the trenches in their stride. They hoped to be soon passing through the infantry until a sudden halt took place. A line of wire appeared in front and a number of horses became entangled in it. The wire cutters were brought up and they had a busy time cutting them free. This was the objective and there was no more forward movement. Contact was made with the infantry and it was obvious that this was not the situation for the cavalry. In the meantime, the advanced patrols of the Germans had made a hasty retreat back to a very strong line and further attack was out of the question.

The British infantry were tired and cold, the cavalry were in a deplorable situation and after a report was sent back to Headquarters, they were told to spend the night where they were in the hope of continuing the advance the next morning. The men and horses stood together in mud, covered with snow, a bitterly cold wind was blowing and shells fell intermittently throughout the night. The poor horses had to remain saddled, there was no feed or water for them and the men stood to their heads with the reins in their hands, frozen stiff to the ground. It had been the worst night of the war.

As time went on, hope came in the form of some pack horses but it was a hopeless task. These small horses, under Lieutenant Davy, returned to the Divisional Dump for more supplies. An attack was expected from the Germans at dawn, so machine guns were brought forward by these grand little horses but many were so exhausted they could not make the awful journey.

As the morning light broke through the sky, the brigade was sheltered from sight and a certain amount of shell fire, by a fold in the ground which took the form of a

valley. Only the 12th Lancers and 'E' battery R.H.A. were in view of the Germans and soon came under enemy machine gunfire. The fact that the 5th Cavalry Brigade stood behind the infantry posed a threat to the Germans and their expected dawn attack did not materialise.

The steadiness of the troops was admirable and the prospects of further advancement had now diminished so the order to retire towards Tilloy was passed to the cavalry. Lieutenant Wyborn and Lieutenant Woolf stayed out with patrols and continued sending in valuable information until the 5th Brigade was relieved by the 4th Brigade and the whole moved back to Divisional Reserve on Telegraph Hill. Then the whole division was moved out and the 20th Hussars marched to Wailly where the horses were picketed and the men found cover in the ruined houses. The casualties to the regiment amounted to Lieutenants Ogilvy and Glover and five men wounded. One man died and thirty-seven horses were either killed or died of exhaustion. The whole brigade lost 447 horses, which was considered light in view of all the circumstances. On the 12th April 1917, the 20th Hussars moved back to Grincourt to reorganise and take in remounts. A letter was received by the Brigadier from General Greenly which congratulated the 5th Cavalry Brigade in the following terms:

I wish to express to you and all ranks of your command, my admiration of the behaviour of the 5th Cavalry Brigade yesterday and today, under most trying conditions. Your support to the infantry was of great value to the general situation at a time which, without you, might at any moment become critical in the event of a counter-attack. Dated 12th April 1917. The Brigadier added to these remarks, *The Brigadier, while deeply regretting the losses sustained by the brigade, wishes to place on record his keen appreciation of the fine soldierly conduct and high standard of discipline displayed by all officers, N.C.Os. and men.*

It soon became apparent that there would be no opportunity for the employment of cavalry in the Arras battle. The Cavalry Corps was accordingly withdrawn to comfortable billets.

On the 20th April 1917, the 20th Hussars moved to the area Outrebois- Mezerolles-Barly. Here both men and horses recuperated from the past front line conditions. There was plenty of forage and feed for the horses. The green grass alongside the country lanes and woods was eaten with gusto by the horses, long starved of such fine fare. Gradually the horses put on flesh and condition and exercise muscled them to fitness.

On the 23rd April, St. George's Day, Captain Barne M.C. was shot down and killed while serving with the Flying Corps. By his death the regiment lost a fine cavalry officer who was greatly loved by his fellow officers and men alike.

On the 6th May, Captain Silvertop rejoined the regiment and went to 'C' Squadron as second-in-command, with Lieutenant Thompson going from 'C' to 'B' Squadron. The Cavalry Corps took over a portion of the front line east of Peronne.

The regiment left Outrebois on the 12th May 1917 and on the 15th arrived at Tincourt. This was the village which had been mostly destroyed by the Germans during their retirement early in the year. However, it proved to be much more comfortable than the usual billets and the horses prospered and enjoyed unlimited grazing.

A trench party was ordered on the 17th May, consisting of fourteen officers and 324 other ranks under Major Little, and travelled to Lempire a few miles away, where they went into billets. There was nothing palatial about living and sleeping in the cellars of ruined houses but at least everyone was under cover.

While the Cavalry Corps held this line, the squadrons were separated in detached posts and not in continuous line. Working parties were supplied each night by the 20th Hussars when in reserve.

On the 24th May, all the squadrons went into the front line and R.H.Q. remained at Lempire. The sector was fairly quiet but on the 26th May some heavy shelling took place in Lempire and 'A' Squadron suffered some casualties. The German line was actually a kind of forward outposts in front of the much vaunted Hindenburg Line. The wire of that famous line was well in view of the 20th Hussars position. Scouting troops went into the no-man's-land each night to see if there was any activity with the Germans. On the 29th May, a patrol under Lieutenant Davy brought in some useful information as to the enemy's activities. Changes kept taking place and on the 31st May the 20th Hussars were relieved by the 16th Lancers. The regiment returned to Lempire as reserves. On the 3rd June, Captain Smith, the regimental Medical Officer was wounded and this popular officer left the regiment. The 20th Hussars once again went back to the front line and relieved the 16th Lancers. During the night of 9th - 10th June, the Scots Greys on the left of the regiment, put in a very successful raid on Gillemont Farm, which was a ruin held by the Germans. In return the enemy made a concentration of heavy shelling in the regimental area and caused a few casualties. After relieving the 16th Lancers, the 20th Hussars were withdrawn altogether and their place was taken by the 3rd Hussars on the 15th June 1917.

The regiment went back to Tincourt for ten days training during which time more changes took place. Major Hurndall left for a staff job and Lieutenant Peploe took over 'A' Squadron, Lieutenant Woodman became his second-in-command. On the 27th June, 338 other ranks, commanded by Colonel Cook, went up to Lempire. The Colonel took over the sector, which was occupied by three squadrons of the 20th

Hussars and two squadrons of the Oxford Hussars Yeomanry and the following day they went into the front line, relieving the 3rd Hussars.

The trenches were soaking with water after violent thunderstorms and it meant all hands on the pumps and baling buckets to try and make them dry. On the 4th July, the 3rd Hussars relieved them to go into support and Major Sidney took over from Colonel Cook. On the 12th July the regiment returned to the Outrebois-Barly area, having passed through Suzanne, Morlancourt and Estrée Wamin. More organising took place on the 1st August when a new Signal Troop was formed from the squadron signallers and this remained with R.H.Q.

Lieutenant Sturt left for the Cavalry Cadet School at Netheravon as an instructor. Intensive training took place now the harvest had been collected and the anti-gas measures were practised for half an hour each day until the men became used to acting with the respirators in use.

Towards the end of September a working party, comprising of Captain Silvertop, Lieutenants Leslie Jones and Jimmy Lethbridge, with 108 men went to Les Brebis and came under the command of Major Sidney, it being styled a battalion. In October 1917, a big offensive was launched by the 2nd and 5th Armies in the area east of Ypres. There was some hope of using the cavalry but it was not to be. The regiment advanced no further forward than Siracourt, near St. Pol.

Lieutenant Galbraith left for Egypt and on the 18th October, Captain Peploe was struck off the strength as sick. Captain Sanford, who had been wounded while serving with the infantry, joined the regiment and took over 'B' Squadron and Captain Hall went to command 'A'.

The regiment went into winter quarters further south to Wailly and Tilloy, near Amiens. It was the 20th October and winter was upon them. Lieutenant Quartermaster was promoted Captain and Captain Darling of 'C' Squadron went home to help train officers with the 5th Reserve Cavalry Regiment. Captain Silvertop took over 'C' Squadron with Lieutenant Bland becoming second-in-command.

THE BATTLE OF CAMBRAI - NOVEMBER 1917

The regiment was not in winter quarters for very long. The Cavalry Corps was to take part in General Byng's famous attack in the direction of Cambrai.

The 5th Cavalry Brigade moved on the 15th November, the regiment marching to Le Hamel. A further march was made on the 20th November to Saulcourt, which was the assembly area.

At 'zero hour' the attack was made largely by the use of many tanks and these surprised the Germans. At first the advance was a success with the infantry pouring through the gap in the wire made by the tanks. This was to be the role of the cavalry but a strong counter-attack by the Germans soon put an end to the theory and the cavalry were left standing in the cold and wet throughout the night.

On the evening of the 21st November, the brigade moved back north of Saulcourt. The going was grim for the horses and the wire and telephone wire proved to be a great hazard. Lieutenant Davy's horse had wire wrapped around its legs and in its effort to free itself, it kicked out and broke the Lieutenant's arm. The horses were watered at Hendecourt on the way back and this was their first drink for 40 hours. The bivouac was reached at 10 pm. On the 22nd it seemed that the attack was held up and the cavalry, after standing to, were not required. The regiment remained north of Saulcourt all day, ready to support any threatened point in the line but there was no prospect of them ever being used and on the following day the brigade moved to a camp near Fins. It was a cold night and the 24th was thoroughly wet and miserable and, when the next day dawned, the whole 2nd Cavalry Division marched to Ribcourt.

On the arrival of the 4th Cavalry Brigade, orders were issued to them for a dismounted attack against the enemy northwards from Bourbon Village and the 3rd and 5th Brigades were prepared to exploit any success but it all came to naught when the orders were cancelled. Instead of any mounted action by the cavalry, each brigade had to supply a dismounted battalion and the horses were taken back to Fins.

The 5th Brigade found a battalion of twenty-two officers and six hundred other ranks under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Collins of the Royal Scots Greys and the company from the 20th Hussars comprised five officers and two hundred and eighteen other ranks, commanded by Captain Silvertop. The attack was successful at first, then came the heavy German counter-attack and both infantry and cavalry were pinned to the ground. In places they had to give up ground for which they had fought so hard. To add to all the discomfort of shelling and the wet and cold, it began to snow heavily during the afternoon. The Medical Officer, Captain Cleveland, and nine other ranks were wounded and on the eve of the 26th the company moved to reserve dug-outs. During the night the 40th Division were relieved by the 62nd Division and each of the cavalry battalions were attached to its different brigades. On the evening of the 27th the three battalions took over the front lines. During the process of relieving the West Riding Regiment, considerable shelling took place and Captain Silvertop was killed and both Wolfs were wounded, Captain C.N.S. Wolf dying in hospital soon afterwards.

The relief was completed about midnight with the 12th Lancer company being on the left and the battalion of Scots Guards were on the right. The trenches were shallow but by now the 20th Hussars had become expert navvies with the pick and shovel and soon had the line dug in spite of continual annoyance from the German machine guns. Throughout the 28th November, the position was subjected to heavy shell fire

gap. For his action he was awarded a bar to his D.S.O. However, Sergeant C R Keatley, Sdlr/Cpl. T E Holden, Pte. J Hancock and Pte. F C Leventon were killed in the action at Gouzeancourt on 30th November 1917.

On the 1st December 1917, Hodson's Horse and the Middlesex Regiment took over the front and the 20th Hussars went back to camp, well satisfied with their share of the work. For a few days the regiment sent a working party to dig trenches and on the 4th December a dismounted company, under the command of Captain Sanford, went in support of some of the 1st Cavalry Division near to Revelon Farm. The following day was quiet and the company was withdrawn.

The next day the regiment left the battle area and went into billets north-west of Amiens, where they settled down to a couple of weeks of well earned rest. The Division Commander once more sent a message of congratulations to all ranks in the Division, especially remarking on the good condition of the horses and their efficiency in work.

On the 18th December 1917, the Dismounted Company, under Captain Sanford, left the regiment once more to take its place in the trenches, taking over from the Royal West Kents on the 20th in Cote Wood. The company remained until 29th January 1918 when they rejoined the regiment at Hornoy and Vraignes. In the meantime Captain Sanford was promoted Major.

which resulted in more casualties with five other ranks killed and twenty-four other ranks wounded, as well as the two officers, over the two days. Early on the morning of the 29th, the 5th Dismounted Battalion was relieved, the horses were brought up and the trench party rode back to Fins.

General Greenly sent a message to the troops stating that General Sir Julian Byng had paid a personal visit to the 2nd Cavalry Division, expressing his warmest thanks for the valuable service they had rendered. The next morning the regiment devoted time to having baths and a clean-up of themselves and their equipment but the relaxation did not last very long. A message of urgency was received by Colonel Cook from a Divisional Staff Officer, stating that the Germans had broken through the line and occupied Gouzeancourt.

The 5th Cavalry Brigade quickly mounted and made for the high ground south-west of the place. Patrols were sent out and they reported back that the line was being held by a depleted company of Royal Engineers, with the Germans just a few hundred yards in front of them.

Colonel Cook reinforced the R.Es. immediately with the whole regiment and the Brigadier then ordered an advance to try and restore the situation. The regiment fixed their bayonets and began a dismounted advance for more than half a mile, killing several Germans on the way. However, the push was halted owing to enfilade fire and no further progress was possible. The 5th Brigade was then withdrawn but the 20th Hussars remained throughout the night, being supported by a squadron of the Scots Greys. The right of the regiment was in touch with Hodson's Horse from the Indian Cavalry Division and on the left were the Coldstream Guards. Further over to the right was a gap in the line so Major Little quickly collected the remnants of three companies of infantry who had lost their officers and filled the

THE GERMAN SPRING AND SUMMER OFFENSIVE - 1918

At the beginning of February 1918, the Cavalry Corps moved forward to the area of the 5th Army which was on the right of the British line. The 20th Hussars moved from Hornoy on the 4th February for Athies, south of Peronne, where they arrived on the 6th and went into huts. Here they awaited developments as the 2nd Cavalry Division were Mobile Reserve to the Cavalry Corps.

On 5th March, a dismounted company of 224 all ranks under Captain Hall, went to Vermand, north-west of St.Quentin, where they were employed in constructing trenches. It was expected that the Germans would attack this part of the line. The company then rejoined the regiment on the 11th March. On the 13th Captain Thompson went to England on the sick list and was replaced by Lieutenant Woodman in 'A' Squadron.

The 14th March saw a new title for the Brigade which was now called the "Dismounted Brigade Group", under the command of Colonel Cook. Other changes took place as General Campbell went to hospital in England and Colonel Collins of the Scots Greys took over the 5th Cavalry Brigade. On the 20th March a warning was received to "Prepare for attack" and the next morning Jussy was heavily bombarded and the troops moved clear of the village. The following night this part of the line had to retire at midnight.

The 3rd and 5th Dismounted Brigades were at the disposal of the 14th Division and the whole force retired behind the Crozat Canal, the 5th covering the withdrawal. The title of "Dismounted Brigades" was now used instead of "Dismounted Battalions". This move to the rear was carried out without incident and the 5th took up a position in a sandpit between Faillouel and Jussy. The 20th Hussars and a

couple of squadrons from the Royal Scots Greys were on a railway embankment with eight machine guns close by, south of Jussy. The 12th Lancers squadron was still at the sandpit.

The following morning the infantry reported that they had made a local counter-attack and cleared Jussy of the enemy. However, the Germans were not far away and kept up a heavy bombardment and it was reported that they had broken through further along the line near Mennessis. Just before mid-day, Major Little was sent to collect stragglers and soon had a little army of his own when one squadron of the Scots Greys, one squadron of the 12th Lancers and one regiment of the 4th Dismounted Brigade were ordered to join him. Major Little was about to put in a counter-attack when the fog lifted, revealing a stream of Germans pouring round the left flank, which was completely in the air. The line of the Faillouel - Flavy road was then held successfully for two hours. At the end of that time the Brigade was ordered to concentrate on Faillouel. At about 3 pm the enemy once more discovered a gap and started to push through, leading to a retirement being ordered to the edge of a wood south-west of Faillouel. At 4 pm some French troops came up in support and then the Brigade was withdrawn to La Neuville-en-Beine, where they went into billets.

On the 23rd March 1918 an attempt was made to form a mounted force out of the cavalry. A regiment was raised from one hundred men out of each brigade and placed under the command of Captain Bonham of the Royal Scots Greys. The next day the led horses and transport moved south and additional horses were sent from the 5th Cavalry Brigade in an effort to pick up the 5th Dismounted Brigade, who were marching from La Neuville. The 4th and 5th Dismounted Brigades, after supporting the 43rd Infantry Brigade, were all relieved by French troops. However, during this movement, the French themselves began to drop back and all retired on Buchoire.

Tired and hungry, with little rest, the British troops met up with their horses at Beaurains about midnight. Here they organised themselves into two regiments, one from the 4th Brigade under Captain Herman of the 6th Carabiniers and the other from the 5th Brigade under Major Little. The whole came under the command of Colonel Cook and was to be known as "Cook's Detachment" which joined General Harman (G.O.C. 3rd Cavalry Div.) at Lagny.

On the 26th March the detachment held a line from Cuy to Culagny and Scéancourt in conjunction with some French troops. The French withdrew from Lagny and the 20th Hussars and one squadron of the 16th Lancers then worked their way up the main street, then dismounted and established themselves half-way along it. Now both sides were in Lagny and, somewhere to the left the Germans had found a gap and began pouring through it. Being without reserves there was nothing that could be done and therefore a retirement was ordered amid some heavy artillery fire and the 20th Hussars suffered some casualties, among them was Colonel Cook who was killed. The Detachment marched from Thiescourt to Elincourt, where they joined General Harman and the following day they received orders to return to the 2nd Cavalry Division. They marched south via Coudun to Venette and found the rest of the 5th Cavalry Brigade and the 20th Hussars went to Ardy, once again united, having taken back the men from Cook's Detachment.

That was the battle which the Dismounted Brigades performed but it will be remembered by the 20th as the battle in which they lost their Colonel.

Now it will be recalled that from the remainder of the men who had been left behind with the led horses of the regiment, efforts were made to form some mounted regiments from all the Brigades. The 5th had a hundred men from each regiment which formed a regiment under Colonel Fane of the 12th Lancers. Similar regiments

were formed from the 3rd and 4th Brigades, making a cavalry brigade which was placed under the orders of Brigadier General Pitman, which marched north-east to Pontoise. The 20th Hussars contingent was commanded by Lieutenant Bland but at Pontoise, Captain Hall joined and took over command.

Colonel Fane's regiment marched to Chiry where orders were received to take Mount Renault but, on approaching their objective, they found it had already been taken by the French. Early on the 26th March the French were compelled to evacuate Noyon which was quickly occupied in strength by the enemy. Captain Hall sent 'C' Squadron detachment, under Lieutenant Bland, to occupy Hill 160, north-west of Labroye.

It was reported that the enemy were advancing in large numbers along the Noyon - Labroye road. Colonel Fane sent a message to concentrate at Passel, as General Pitman's brigade had left to meet the threat. By now the Germans had penetrated between Captain Hall and Lieutenant Bland, who successfully withdrew his 'C' Squadron men without too much difficulty. The ground was then taken over by the French and Colonel Fane marched his men to Dive-le-Frome where he joined General Pitman.

The 20th Hussars were ordered to hold Hill 104 with one squadron but the enemy had already taken it. The regiment then took up a line just short of the hill, taking a few casualties and then the horses were sent back to Ville and the men joined them towards midnight. Here the regiment mounted and marched to Chiry during the early hours of 27th March, where they entrained and joined the 5th Cavalry Brigade a few hours latter at Venette. The 2nd Cavalry Division left the 3rd Army Corps area and were complimented both by the G.O.C. and the French Commander for the work they had done so well.

Colonel Little had assumed command of the 20th Hussars. There were a number of surplus horses due to casualties so these were left with 'B' Echelon as the regiment moved off after a report of a breakthrough at Montdidier. It turned out to be a false alarm so the 2nd Cavalry Division went into billets on the 28th March and the 5th Cavalry Brigade went into reserve.

On the 29th, patrols were sent out to effect a liaison with the French 56th Division, who reported the situation well in hand. The 5th then went into billets at Cagny and La Boutillerie, just outside Amiens, with the 20th Hussars going to the latter place. On the 30th the march continued to the Bois L'Abbe in pouring rain, where they remained all day. The Scots Greys were sent to support the infantry near Bois de Hangard and the 12th Lancers were detailed to help in a counter-attack with the 9th Australian Brigade. The 12th earned the very highest praise for their support from those very worthy fighters.

The 20th remained in the wood and organised a dismounted company of 138 men under Captain Hall. On the evening of the 31st March, a warning order was received that the 5th Dismounted Battalion, with two other battalions and a 2nd Field Squadron R.E., would counter-attack the wood known as "Rifle Wood".

Moving forward in three waves, the 20th Hussars being in the second wave, a rapid advance was made amidst enemy machine gun fire which caused them many casualties. Captain Hall's subordinate officers, Lieutenants Taylor, Austin and Fairbrother were all wounded. The position was held until almost midnight when the cavalry were relieved by the infantry. This affair cost the 20th Hussars three other ranks killed with three officers and thirty-nine other ranks wounded and one man was missing. The Scots Greys and the 12th Lancers were equally successful in

reaching their objectives for which the 2nd Cavalry Division received the warmest thanks from General Rawlinson.

On the 2nd April 1918 the 5th Cavalry Brigade was moved back to Camon, just east of Amiens. On this day the Brigade Commander, Brigadier General C.L. Campbell died in England and Brigadier General N.W. Haigh of the 6th Inniskilling Dragoons took over the command.

Reinforcements arrived from the Yeomanry Regiments and with them came Lieutenants Potts and Page who were welcomed into the regiment.

THE BATTLE OF AMIENS - AUGUST 1918

On the 3rd August 1918, the regiment was enjoying a race meeting which had been organised by a Tank Corps unit when a message ordered the 5th Cavalry Brigade to march the following evening. In the next 24 hours the regiment was fully occupied in moving itself from a rest period into a state of fighting fitness, ready to fire into action. The Quartermaster, Bill Adams, and Squadron Q.M. Sergeants issued all the equipment which in the past had been hoarded but was now too much for the Q.M. to carry in his G.S. Waggons. Much had to be cast aside and consigned to the salvage dump. Even the men had to throw away much of what could not be carried in the saddle-bags or haversacks. It was a question of travelling light because the 4th August was to be the day for which the men had been waiting for a long time.

The next day the 20th Hussars were buoyed up on parade and moved off through the night to avoid detection of any enemy aircraft. Arriving at Raye-sur-Anthie, the men went into barns and the horses were concealed under hedges and trees in some orchards. A commotion was created by 'C' Squadron, having to make a hasty retreat

from their particular back garden where the horses had disturbed a wasps nest and began to get fractious.

During the following night the regiment moved into bivouac west of Ailly-sur-Somme where the Brigade was concentrated. Horses and men took cover in the woods and all movement was kept to a minimum on the 7th August.

The offensive began the next day by the French 1st Army on the right and the British 4th Army on the left, which took the Germans completely by surprise. General Ludendorff described the 8th August 1918 as the blackest day of the whole war for the German Army.

During the morning it became known that the attack by the infantry, supported by some whippet tanks, had been a great success and both the 1st and 3rd Cavalry Divisions had passed through them and taken up the pursuit. Later reports showed that the 1st Cavalry Division had advanced over open plain, carrying all before them with little opposition. The 5th Dragoon Guards were reported to have captured a train full of German soldiers. The 3rd Cavalry Division turned south over the river Luce and were engaged in very difficult wooded country which delayed their advance and one of the brigades had to make a dismounted attack. The ground was most unsuitable for mounted troops. The 20th Hussars advanced in an easterly direction, leaving the Bois de Hangard to the right where the ground, as already stated, was less suitable. The regiment passed a number of dead Germans and many guns and vehicles which had been abandoned by the enemy.

In the afternoon a halt was made just south of Ignaucourt, waiting to support the 3rd Cavalry Division who were not making much progress. It was obvious the Division was fighting magnificently and so the 5th Cavalry Brigade remained idle all

afternoon and at 9pm the regiment pegged down for the night on the ground where they had reached.

The 9th August, orders were for the 1st and 3rd Cavalry Divisions to be withdrawn and for the 2nd Cavalry Division to co-operate with the Canadian Corps between Amiens - Roye road and the line Vrely - Fouquescourt - Hattencourt. The 5th Cavalry Brigade were detailed to operate on the right and the 3rd on the left, with the 4th in reserve.

Patrols were sent out to the east of Beaucourt to make contact with the infantry. Lieutenant Potts came back and reported that the Canadian infantry were in touch with the enemy between Le Quesnel and Beaufort. A report stated that Beaufort was in British hands but, in view of the very clear report of Lieutenant Potts, this was not possible.

The Brigade was launched and the 20th Hussars were given Beaufort as their first objective. The Scots Greys were making for Le Quesnel. 'C' Squadron were in advance, being watched by the C.O. and the Squadron Leader, as Lieutenant Mann and his Troop came under machine-gun fire. A Tank Corps officer then came up and reported that the whole of the flat ground area was under machine-gun fire. In view of this drenching fire, Colonel Little decided not to advance directly on Beaufort but deviate into a deep gully which afforded some protection and 'C' Squadron were accordingly directed to this cover. There were wire fences in the way which made things worse but the squadron put their horses into a gallop and made their best way towards the gully, being now under intense machine-gun fire. The bullets kicked up the dust on the ground in front of them and several horses were brought down. It was a heart-rending scene to see such beautiful chestnut horses kicking in the throes of death but mercifully when the squadron arrived in the gully no

casualties were reported among them and those who had been dismounted managed to make for cover. Sadly, the little pack pony which was carrying the Hotchkiss gun dropped dead just as it arrived under cover. It had died from its exertions. The men handled the pony gently as they unloaded the gun and it was soon in action against the German machine guns but then their artillery ranged on the area with good effect. One shell fell near 3rd Troop and killed three of their horses.

The gully was full of Canadians who were just lining up with some tanks to attack Beaufort. Lieutenant Mann came in with his Troop and reported that the German machine-guns were commanding the head of the gully and it would be impossible to debouch without sustaining casualties.

This state of affairs was reported to the Colonel and he eventually ordered the squadron to rejoin the regiment. Once more the men galloped over the open area and made for the rendezvous at Le Quesnel. It was found that Captain Darling had symptoms of gas and he became quite ill, so he was evacuated. The next day he was sent home on a month's leave so that he could recuperate. He also took advantage of this break and was married to his waiting fiancé. Lieutenant Cooper-Bland took over command of the squadron.

After some hours the regiment followed the infantry into Beaufort and became engaged with the enemy troops who put down such heavy fire that they could go no further. 'C' Squadron made a gallant reconnaissance with Lieutenant Burt taking his 2nd Troop forward but it was a hopeless attempt under such galling fire and they had to give up the attempt and retire. Had some whippet tanks been in support, as promised, the situation would have been quite different and an advance would have been possible.

On the 10th August 1918, the regiment was relieved by the 3rd Dragoon Guards from the 3rd Cavalry Division. The 5th Cavalry Brigade was then able to concentrate in a wood north-east of Beaufort which proved to be a most undesirable place. The air was filled with gas, making it difficult to breathe and the horses were in a similar plight. In addition they could not graze because the grass was contaminated. Of course no-one could make the poor animals understand their predicament and the horse-handlers had a hard time trying to control them. The following evening the regiment was withdrawn to Ignaucourt where they were bombed during the night. However there were no casualties and the stay lasted until the 15th August when the Cavalry Corps was withdrawn completely.

The regiment marched that day to St. Sauveur and went on through the night past the silhouette of the gaunt ruins to Fieffes where they arrived on the 17th, tired and hungry. The men fed the horses and had a meal, then made the best of their stay, resting and trying to catch up on some sleep. After a halt of some hours throughout the daytime, the regiment saddled up and proceeded to Labroye during the night and arrived in the early hours, well before dawn. Here the 20th Hussars were split up into smaller detachments and employed as Divisional Cavalry during the remainder of August.

'A' and 'B' Squadrons were the first to go; the former to Grouches under 6th Corps and the latter to Amplier under the 4th Corps. On the 20th August, 'A' Squadron moved to Humber camp where Lieutenants F. Davy and Brownrigg went in charge of the detachments for duty with the 3rd Division and to a battalion of Tank Corps, employed as despatch riders during active operations. They suffered a few casualties in men and horses in carrying out their special duties. On the 23rd an attack was made by the infantry, supported by parties from 'A' Squadron under Lieutenants Page and Davy. Meanwhile, Lieutenant Brownrigg's Troop was now

with the 2nd Division at Gomiecourt and Lieutenant Dodgson's Troop was at Ransart, working under the Guards Division. A week later the Troops were once more gathered together with 'A' Squadron and rejoined Regimental Headquarters at Warlincourt.

'B' Squadron sent three Troops off on detachments; 3rd Troop going to the 15th Infantry Brigade, 1st Troop was at Fouquevillers with the 5th Division and 4th Troop went on to reconnoitre the line Ablainzeville - Achiet le Grand. The 2nd Troop also left Amplier a little later to join 63rd Division, so the Squadron was well and truly divided and they were kept busy throughout this period on liaison duties and inevitably suffered a number of casualties to both men and horses before they all rejoined R.H.Q. on 31st August, exhausted but happy to be back with the regiment. 'C' Squadron had 1st and 4th Troops under Lieutenants Mann and Potts with the Provost Martial of the 3rd Army. 2nd and 3rd Troops, under Lieutenants Burt and C.K. Davy, were out at Humber camp, all chiefly employed in escorting prisoners of war back to the provosts. On the 24th August the squadron was sent to the 5th Cavalry Corps as Corps Cavalry escorts. The 1st and 4th Troops were attached to 38th Division, and the 2nd and 3rd to 21st Division and 17th Division respectively. After various duties in keeping contact with the German rearguard, the Squadron withdrew their Troops and made their way to rejoin the regiment at Warlincourt, which they reached on the 31st August.

THE LAST PUSH - 1918

The 20th Hussars remained at Warlincourt until the 6th September, the area on which the 5th Cavalry Brigade was concentrated just south of Albert. Here the Brigade waited in the hope of exploiting any breakthrough of an attack which was being made by the Australian Corps. However, this was not successful and the

regiment marched to Behencourt where they stayed until 26th September, undertaking training for open warfare. A number of officers joined here from the U.K. including the happily married Captain Darling and Lieutenants Taylor, Leslie Groves, Read and Jackson. The regiment lost Lieutenant Woodman who was seconded for duty with the Signal Service.

All was going well in the front line and on the 26th, the regiment left Behencourt, full of confidence and ready for the last big offensive of the war. They marched to Cerizy where they stayed the night in the ruined houses of the village. The following evening the march was continued to Le Mesnil where the regiment stayed for the remainder of the night in some tin huts. The British had built these before the German offensive. The regiment stayed put the whole day of the 28th and moved the next morning to take part in the coming battle.

The American Corps and Australian Corps were attacking the Hindenberg Line beyond Roisel. As soon as the 5th Australian Division reached the Beaurevoir Line, the regiment was to pass through them. The march began for the start line through Roisel, where the horses were watered, and on to Hargicourt, which was situated in a valley providing cover for both men and horses.

Here everything was ready for the jump-off, the regiment being in Brigade Reserve but 'A' and 'B' Squadrons were detailed to destroy the railway line at Bohain and Busigny in the event of the breakthrough.

We soon heard that the infantry attack was held up and, as the day wore on, it became evident that the 20th Hussars would not be committed that day. The ground where the regiment was situated had been shelled all day and it was in a terrible state with all the shell holes filled with water, making movement very precarious for the horses. If any horse slipped in there was little chance of them surviving being

drowned. One Troop of 'C' Squadron suffered severely from gas poisoning as a result of drinking tea made from water in a shell hole. Unfortunately, some of the Sergeants Mess drank the tea and by night every member of the Mess had gone sick except Sergeant Major Adams, who grimly stayed at his duty and suffered agony. This was really a catastrophe which rendered the squadron almost inactive but for one Troop which had been detached at the time. The other healthy member was a sergeant who had just returned from leave.

It began to rain when the regiment was ordered back to Roisel amid great congestion on the road. Movement was at a snail's pace and the skies opened, the rain coming down in sheets.

The regiment was soon on the move again, this time to another valley north-west of Verguier. The 5th Brigade was now under orders from 9th Corps. What was left of 'C' Squadron, consisting of two officers and about forty men, was sent on duty with the 32nd Division.

The Hindenburg Line had now been captured and also the line at the Canal de St.Quentin. The part of the line which the 20th Hussars were allotted was running through Nauroy and Magny la Fosse. 'C' Squadron reported to Major General Lambert, who explained to the Squadron Leader, that the squadron was required to pass through the 32nd Division after the attack and keep in touch with the German rear-guard. Colonel Little and the O.C. 'C' Squadron were briefed on the salient features of the attack and as soon as the brigade to which 'C' Squadron was attached had reached their objective, they were to move forward and fill in a stretch of the trench and clear the wire at a point just south of Joncourt. The squadron would then pass through and get in touch with the enemy. The success of all this was to be

signalled by a white rocket fired into the air and it would be the signal for the squadron to start.

In accordance with these arrangements, the Squadron Leader and Lieutenant Mann watched the proceedings. A creeping artillery barrage moved forward and the infantry advanced. The Germans retaliated by putting down a barrage of gas shells which necessitated the squadron holding back further than they wished, in spite of the men.

As time passed and no white flared rocket had been observed, the Squadron Leader became impatient for news and so he rode over to the Infantry Brigade H.Q. to find out what was happening. He was informed that the objectives had been taken and the cavalry could move forward. At the same time he was handed a fresh lot of orders from General Neil-Haigh. These required three patrols being sent to points named, all situated south-west of Ramicourt and that these patrols should remain out as standing patrols all night. The patrols were quickly detailed under S.S.M. Adams, Sergeant Brook and Lieutenant Mann then despatched on their missions, while the Squadron Leader took the Hotchkiss gun sections to Magny la Fosse. Here he intended borrowing another Troop from the regiment, being so short of his own men. This Troop, along with the Hotchkiss Sections, were to support his standing patrols but they were still in the rear. The Brigade Major said he would go and see Colonel Little and ask him to send another Troop. In the meantime the O.C. borrowed half a dozen men from the 12th Lancers and galloped forward towards the gap in the wire. On arrival he met Sergeant Major Adams returning with his patrol after coming under heavy machine-gun fire from the German positions. Almost every man had been hit and required treatment. It was a gallant attempt amidst a swarm of German machine-gun nests and fortunately saved Lieutenant Mann from making a similar attempt. In spite of being hit in the leg, Adams was intent on

going forward once more to look for one of his patrol who had been wounded and was left behind. It required a very stern warning from the Squadron Leader to deter him and be induced to go to the First Aid Post for treatment to his leg wound.

No-one was surprised to see the Sergeant Major limping back to the squadron the next morning with his leg bandaged and ready to carry out his further duties. That day, as the squadron was rallying, Lieutenant Jackson's Troop from 'A' Squadron arrived to support them but it was useless to try and push forward. That night the whole brigade pegged down near Magny la Fosse, during which the Brigadier received orders from the 9th Corps H.Q. to push one regiment through the gap during the following morning. General Neil-Haig pointed out that in his opinion such an operation would be doomed to failure and would have no chance of success. In view of this the operation for the 20th Hussars was cancelled. Later in the day the 12th Lancers made an attempt to advance and suffered heavy casualties and had to retire. The 3rd October was expected to be quiet but before mid-day news was received that an attack by the 46th Division was going well. The regiment was rushed off to Perusals but found the infantry were held up and cavalry could not be employed. During the afternoon a German counter-attack developed against Montbrehain. The ground where the regiment was assembled came under fire and Lieutenant Mann was killed and Lieutenant Leslie Jones was wounded. Lieutenant F.K. Davy and three other ranks were badly gassed. The regiment rejoined the remainder of the brigade east of Magny la Fosse. In the evening Colonel Little hastily formed a dismounted battalion from the brigade after hearing a report that the enemy had established themselves on the railway west of Preselles but it turned out to be a false alarm. The effort was not wasted because the infantry in the neighbourhood were very weak and the battalion occupied the line. The 12th Lancers and the Royal Scots Greys were in the front line and the 20th Hussars were in

support when, after a quiet night, the battalion was relieved by some infantry during 4th October. That evening the brigade was withdrawn to Le Verguier where they remained until the 8th October. That day 'A' Squadron were sent as far as the Ramicourt - Bohain railway line on receipt of a report that the 3rd Cavalry Division had gone through the gap at that point. Like many of these reports it turned out to be untrue and the squadron rejoined the brigade south-west of Magny la Fosse. The regiment was now prepared to take part in an advance of the Cavalry Corps on Le Cateau.

On the 11th October, 'A' Squadron were sent forward to keep in touch with the infantry of the 9th Corps between Molain and Andigny les Femmes. No advance was possible but Lieutenant Jackson was killed while in charge of a liaison patrol, the 20th Hussars had lost a good officer.

The following day the 5th Cavalry Brigade was split up, each regiment being sent to a different corps as corps cavalry. The 20th Hussars were allotted to the 2nd American Corps and moved to Sabliere Wood, north-east of Bohain. It was a cold, wet and uncomfortable place and there seemed to be no likelihood of being immediately required for active operations. Colonel Little, whose concern was always the care and comfort of his men, requested a billet for the regiment. After some exchange of views the Americans agreed for the men to be quartered in some tin huts which were at that time occupied by some American battalion who were ordered to move out. Captain Sparrow was sent with an advance party to take over the huts and found that some of the American soldiers were still in possession. Some of the men from the 20th Hussars were heard by their allies complaining about the slowness of the evacuation. Some wise-cracking Yank "guessed" that they need not be in too much of a hurry, seeing that the British had been trying to take the Hindenburg Line for three years, whereas they had done the job in fifteen minutes.

The place was in fact rather unsavoury and looked more like a tip than a place of abode but working parties swept up the place and soon turned it into a clean living space. Much rubbish was buried and this included some dead horses that had been left lying for some days. They were bloated and stinking with a risk to the men's good health. It must have turned the stomach of the O.C. 'C' Squadron because he became sick and was evacuated home. Captain Sparrow took over the squadron on the 14th October.

During the 15th and 16th, 'C' Squadron went on duty near Busigny to the 27th American Division. The next day the 2nd American and 13th British Corps put in an attack on the line of the canal running through Catillon. All the squadrons were employed in finding liaison patrols and despatch riders for this formation. The attack did not meet with much success and the regiment withdrew the men and returned to Vaux le Pretre in the evening.

The attack was resumed the following day and the infantry progressed for nearly two miles but again there was no opportunity for employing cavalry and after another two days, the whole of the 5th Cavalry Brigade was reformed with the detached regiments on the 21st October and went to the 1st British Division.

During the next few days two Troops from 'A' Squadron were attached to the 2nd and 3rd Infantry Brigades who were making a local attack and on the 26th October, two Troops from 'B' Squadron were working with the 6th Division. The 5th Cavalry Brigade moved to Le Verguier without the 12th Lancers and 20th Hussars whose several Troops were otherwise occupied. The regiment remained at Vaux le Pretre and came under the 32nd Division on the 1st November.

On the 4th November the 32nd Division attacked the Sambre and Oise Canal with the 20th under orders of the 97th Infantry Brigade. 'A' Squadron were detached and

came under orders of the 46th Division at L'Arbre du Guise and remained until after the 'Cease Fire' on the signing of the armistice.

On the 5th November the 97th Brigade passed through the leading brigades with the 20th Hussars going with them. 'C' Squadron was employed during the subsequent advance, with eight machine-guns under Captain Sparrow being lent to the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders. The latter squadron was to protect the left flank of the infantry. Two Troops advanced as far as La Basse Mariolles where they were held up under heavy machine-gun fire but, in spite of this hazard, the squadron succeeded in capturing three German prisoners.

In the meantime, two Troops under Lieutenant Bland acted as advance guard to the Border Regiment. They pushed forward and took Favril where they captured two big eight-inch guns and forty-nine prisoners. To make his day, the Troop Leader was found being affectionately welcomed in the arms of the prettiest girl in the village. All good things had to come to an end - 3rd Troop was ordered to push on another two miles before being held up by German machine-gun fire and had to be relieved by the infantry. 'C' Squadron had two men killed and Lieutenant Denchfield and two other ranks were wounded. The remainder of the regiment had advanced to Rue Verte where 'C' Squadron rejoined.

On the 6th November the regiment passed through the infantry but found the enemy holding Petite Helpe. The stream in front of the village was un-fordable and all the bridges were blown except one by which the regiment crossed. A strong German outpost line was met north of the stream and no more progress was possible that day. The night was spent in some farms about a mile and a half east of Maroilles. The 25th Division had reached the line of the Dompierre - Cartigny road so the 97th Brigade advanced to that line without meeting any enemy opposition.

On the 7th November the advance was continued, with the regiment once more passing through the infantry and approached Avesnes. However, before the forward scouts had come within one mile of the village, they came up against a line of German machine guns posted directly to their front. The patrols waited for the infantry to come forward before taking up a position in the rear. No further advance was made that day so the regiment left patrols out in front to keep in touch with the enemy. While in command of one of these patrols, S.S.M. Adams was eager to make contact and galloped into the midst of a party of Germans and was wounded, then taken prisoner. The regiment suffered other casualties when the Medical Officer, Captain Clark, was killed along with Private Watkins and seven other ranks were wounded. It was a gloomy night as the regiment made its way to Autreppes where they stayed and bedded down for the night.

In the morning patrols were sent out but the German line still held them up until midday when the infantry worked their way into the northern part of Avesnes and the Germans were forced to evacuate the town without too much of a fight.

The mounted patrols which had been out and held up, belonged to 'B' Squadron under Lieutenants Michell and Ralli. They now pushed on, skirting the town, one patrol going around to the north, the other round the south and met up at Flaumont. The 97th Infantry Brigade advanced directly through the town and dug-in on the eastern edge of the outskirts. The 'B' Squadron patrols were then withdrawn and on the way back Lieutenant Ralli's patrol were returning alongside a railway line where a truck was burning fiercely. Unbeknown to them, the truck was full of ammunition and other explosives. Just as the patrol was passing through the smoke it exploded, throwing steel debris over the patrol. One man was killed instantly and Lieutenant Ralli was badly wounded along with two other men of the patrol. Sadly, the Troop Leader died in hospital on the 14th November when the fighting had

ended. It was particularly distressful for his family because they celebrated the Armistice without having been informed that he was even wounded.

The 46th Division, who were on the right of the 32nd Division, failed to advance at first so the 20th Hussars were employed to form a defensive flank facing south in case of a counter-attack. Eventually the 46th Division came forward into line and the regiment was withdrawn, making its way to Belle Fontaine for the night.

The 20th Hussars were on the move again next morning and at 7.45 am they passed through the infantry once again and advanced without opposition through Flaumont, the northern edge of Semaries and Rempsies to Pont de la Ville. The regiment went on rapidly, outstripping the maps that they had recently been issued with and they were five miles in front of the infantry, who were left doggedly trying to keep pace with this rush forward. It seemed that they had also out[paced the other British regiments that were on their flanks. The German retirement was hurried but the 20th were keeping up with their rearguard and were still in touch when they reached Touvent and night came in to give them a little respite, both men and horses reaching the point of exhaustion. The regiment spent the night at Pont de la Ville, being only the second time they had been completely isolated from other British Troops.

During these latter operations the regiment was commanded by Major Sandford, with 'A' Squadron on detachment. Colonel Little had taken charge of the 5th Cavalry Brigade in the absence of the Brigadier.

By morning of the 10th November, no orders had been issued to R.H.Q. as all the bridges west of Pont de la Ville had been destroyed and a great deal of damage had been caused on the roads by heavy shell-fire and forward movement was very difficult. In view of this situation without orders, Major Sanford took the initiative

and decided to move forward during the morning and therefore sent out patrols as soon as it was light. Pressing on, they soon located some German machine-guns in the Bois de Nostriment.

The regiment moved towards the wood and turned this southern flank which made the enemy withdraw. As the patrols moved forward they discovered a continuous line of German machine guns running north and south along some of the high-ground north-west of Eppe Sauvage. An order reached the regiment informing them that they were now part of a force known as 'Bethel's Force' which consisted of the 5th Cavalry Brigade and two infantry brigades which were to act as advanced guard to the 4th Army.

The regiment moved to the assembly area and on the 10th November 'Bethel's Force', named after General Bethel, was to form a bridgehead beyond the Beaumont stream from Renlies to Fourbochies, which changed the direction of the advance from the east to the north-west.

The 20th Hussars sent out a fresh advance guard which was soon in touch with the Germans just north of Bois de Toutvent. The regiment reported a line of machine-guns which was a continuation of the line already met in the south.

The 12th Lancers on the left were held up by a similar line of machine guns west of Sivry and no further advance was possible until the infantry made a break through. The 5th Cavalry Brigade were now operating across the border into Belgium and no British Troops had been in this northern part of the country. The previous place where the British had been pushed back from, was Bench which lies about fifteen to twenty miles south of the regiment's present position. In the evening they retired to spend the night at a farm south-east of Claire Fay's. Although only a mile from the

German front line the men felt quite safe tucked up in their blankets, for the Germans had very little fight left in them.

The roads had taken a heavy pounding and were so badly damaged and churned up all the way to the forward position that it was not possible to bring up the rations which were so earnestly looked for by the men. They had reached rock bottom of the iron ration reserve and were hungry. It was a case of getting tucked into the bully beef and hard biscuits and hoping that somehow the pack horses would manage to pick their way through the rubble and debris. The countryside was not fruitful enough for anything to be gleaned from it now that winter had set in and the villages had little for themselves.

The next morning, the 11th November 1918, the patrols were being sent forward when, at 9.30 am a message was received from the 66th Infantry Division announcing the impending Armistice which would come into force at 11 am. The regiment was instructed to push forward as far as possible during the intervening couple of hours. Lieutenant Dawnay of 'B' Squadron and Lieutenant Burt were sent forward with their patrols to fulfil this mission. By 11am, the appointed hour for the "Cease Fire", Lieutenant Dawnay had not made any contact with the Germans but Lieutenant Burt was engaged at that time precisely, stalking a German machine-gun near Sivry station and a Staff Officer had to use some strong persuasive language in letting the patrol know that the war was now at an end and they must desist from their aim in destroying the German gun-post.

So it can be claimed, (quite legitimately) that the 20th Hussars were one of the last regiments in action which couples with the fact that they were one of the first to engage the Germans at the beginning of hostilities in France. No doubt this kind of

distinction had been claimed by other regiments, none of which brought them any laurels.

Now let us turn back the clock and recount the activities of 'A' Squadron from when they were detached from the regiment. It will be remembered that Captain D'Arcy Hall had orders to take his squadron and join the 46th Infantry Division. He accordingly reported to the Divisional H.Q. situated at L'Arbre du Guise. At 4 am on the 5th November, the squadron crossed the canal at a lock south of Catillon and in less than two hours they passed through the infantry outposts and advanced towards Prisches. Two mounted patrols were sent forward towards Petit Be'ard and Le Sart respectively but both were held up by machine gun fire. The squadron was then ordered to co-operate with the 138th Infantry Brigade in taking Le Sart. They moved round the southern flank of the village and the Germans left the place which the squadron then occupied until relieved by the infantry. They then returned to the billets at La Groise around 4 pm. The squadron had one man and three horses killed.

On the 6th November, 'A' Squadron left the billets at 4 am and Lieutenant Dodson went forward with a patrol, passing through the 139th Infantry Brigade. He reported back that the German outpost line was positioned a short distance to the east of Prisches. The squadron, unable to go any further, spent the night at Petit Be'ard. The next day the squadron, moving during the afternoon, now came under 137th Infantry Brigade.

At 5 am. On the 8th November, they advanced from Catigny and made contact with the enemy holding a line half a mile east from the Avesnes-Etroeungt road and then were relieved by the infantry who could make no further progress for the rest of the day.

The 9th November saw a change for the squadron which received orders from the G.O.C. 46th Division to support a squadron of the Royal Scots Greys, who were east of Sains du Nord. After contacting the Greys in the afternoon, they reported that all the bridges were destroyed and could advance no further so 'A' Squadron turned back and spent the night at Sains du Nord.

On the 10th November Captain D'Arcy Hall was informed that 'A' Squadron had a further change and was now under "Bethel's Force" but received no orders so they remained where they were.

As dawn came on the 11th November, still no orders came but the Squadron Leader had learned that General Bethel was billeted at Solre le Chateau, so he marched the squadron there and reported to the General at 9.30 am. He then received orders to join the 199th Infantry Brigade at Clair Fayts, his instructions being to make contact with the enemy near Sivry. On nearing Sivry the squadron was met by the Brigade Major of 199th Brigade and came to a halt. The time was now 10.50 am and he informed Captain D'Arcy Hall that the war would end at 11 am when all hostilities would cease. The Squadron Leader gave the news to the men and, knowing that the regiment was not very far away, turned his squadron to rejoin with the 20th Hussars. On his arrival he found Major Sanford and most of 'B' and 'C' Squadrons still awaiting the arrival of the ration wagons.

At 11 am all the trumpeters of the regiment were assembled outside Regimental Headquarters where they sounded the "Cease Fire" . Everyone looked at each in unbelievable silence and tried to realise that, after the daily anxiety of facing death, it was all over and one of the greatest chapters in world history was now closed. There was little cheering and many were breathing a sigh of relief that the threat to life had ended and wondered what would happen next. The immediate and pleasant

sight was that of the rations wagons breasting the ridge before the echo of the trumpets had faded away. They were greeted with greater enthusiasm than the armistice itself as the men looked forward to a decent meal. Now the regiment began to smarten its image, the order of the day being plenty of spit and polish. Apart from the men tidying themselves, more care was given to the horses and with better feeding and grooming their coats began to shine and look healthy.

The standstill over the next couple of weeks was to enable the German army to clear from the fronts and not so much as to prepare for the Christmas festivity. After nearly three weeks the British Army crossed the German frontier on the 1st December 1918 and the 20th Hussars marched to Burg Reuland and went into quarters.

The business of demobilisation commenced and quite naturally everyone was looking forward to being home for Christmas but there was disappointment for many, especially for those who elected to soldier on.

At the beginning of 1919 many men were drafted to other regiments about the same time as the regiment moved to Le Sart. Here some of the officers organised a point-to-point meeting which gave pleasure to all the troops in the area. The 20th Hussars were no mean horsemen and they were successful in a number of the races.

With a cadre of only 135 all ranks, the regiment returned home and went to Colchester, the same barracks from which they left in 1914, sadly depleted by many who had found their resting place on foreign soil. It was hoped that peacetime soldiering could be resumed once again but, after a short period of time, things were to change.

15. EGYPT AND TURKEY 1919-1922

Recruits and drafts of men from other regiments brought the regiment up to active service strength. Training was intensive until the summer of 1919 when the 20th Hussars received orders from Whitehall for overseas service.

In July 1919 the regiment had 16 officers and 433 rank and file when they embarked at Southampton for Egypt under the command of Lieutenant Colonel M.C. Richardson. On arrival at Port Said the 20th Hussars went into camp at Tel-el-Kabir.

As soon as the regiment had settled down to desert life, General Sir Edmund Allenby inspected them, during which the Mons Star medals were presented to twenty-four men who were still serving. This number shows to what extent the regiment had depleted from the original five hundred who would have qualified for the award, not only by the casualties sustained but by those war-time men who had left the regiment.

To avoid the boredom of living in the sand covered wastes some entertainment was organised and, after a lapse of five years, the Sergeants Mess held their annual sports day on the 24th May 1920, the old Empire Day. Owing to the unsettled state of things, the sports could not be up to the pre-war standard. The scene lacked buntings, flags and the usual crowd of spectators which it formerly attracted, especially the married families, but the organisers provided some pleasure for the troops. At least there was some fun to look forward to. In the dismounted sports, each of the field had to be handicapped according to the number of years service which each man had served. There was quite a difference in the ages as there were now many young sergeants who became Mess members in a short time with rapid

promotion. It was in the tug-of-war that the latter youngsters showed their metal as they pulled over the old large-waisted heavies with ease, proving the old adage "Youth will have its day".

The following day the regiment showed its high standard in the equestrian art. A large crowd had gathered for these events, which included a party of Russians, Indian troops, an element of Egyptians and also a couple of attached Australian officers. One big surprise of the day was to see the W.O.s and Sergeants Mess plate on show.

To conclude the cool, evening session, the band had their race in which they all carried their instruments and attempted to play them. This form of comedy brought about a great deal of laughter. Everyone went away expressing satisfaction at the way the whole affair had been staged and it allowed some relaxation before the real work began.

The British forces were fully stretched after demobilisation, like previous governments in British history, there was haste in cutting down the expense of keeping a large army.

Training was carried out throughout the cooler months of the winter and 1920 bloomed into a troubled world.

Britain had forces in the Baltic for the North Russian Expedition against the Bolsheviks. The army was also committed with the 3rd Afghan War and the troops in India were busy on the North West Frontier with the Waziristan campaign. In Iraq came the Arab Insurrection brought about by the new boundaries which the Arabs just ignored. For hundreds of years their nomadic life had led them to graze their herds of goats and camels wherever grass or fodder was available. It was a

migration over desert which knew no bounds but now it had its limits and Arabs from the other side raised objections so they fought with each other for the precious grazing grounds.

The Peace Conference in Paris was responsible for setting the new boundaries, the conquered countries being the sufferers in Europe and Asia Minor. The Treaty of Sevres partitioned Turkey and this was signed by the Sultan's government in August 1920, although Mustapha Kemal and his Nationalist Party had already repudiated the terms. The influence of this man and his followers was growing rapidly and they held the real power in Turkey.

Eventually the Nationalists broke out into open revolt and concentrated in the Ismid area where their greatest support had gathered. The whole of the south coast of the Sea of Marmora was under their control and it was an anxious time for the Allies whose armies had been demobilised. The only place which was of first concern was Constantinople where contingents of French, Italian and British forces were in occupation to enforce the Peace Treaty. The Greek forces eventually took over but much was to happen before then.

General Sir Edmund Ironside was sent to command a British/Indian force which was to stop any infiltration further south into the Ismid peninsular and the shores of the Aegean Sea.

The 20th Hussars left Egypt to join the 'Army of the Black Sea' on the 28th June 1920. Lieutenant Colonel M.C. Richardson commanded the regiment at a strength of 13 officers and 523 rank and file, 2nd Lieutenants J.Wrangham, M.M.Neill and E.R.Kimbell having joined.

The Turks meanwhile had occupied Gebze which is a small Turkish town near the Sea of Marmora, about twenty-five miles east of Constantinople. It is essentially Oriental, the streets being ill-kept and the houses in a delapidated state. Except for the fact that it lies close to an important railway bridge which had been damaged by the enemy, it was of little importance. Its interest, as far as the British were concerned, was that 350 Nationalist troops "were reported to be holding it with posts established on Point 318 and Beglik Dagh"; the last two mentioned formed part of a ridge which dominates the town on the north-western side by some 100 metres.

Arrangements were made to collect a mobile force of the 20th Hussars, a 4.5" Howitzer Battery and the 35th Garhwali Rifles in the defended camp of Tuzla, which is about seven miles west-north-west of Gebze. The infantry, supported by the artillery, were to make a direct advance on Gebze, taking Beglik Dagh and Point 318 in succession, while the cavalry were to make a turning movement round the north of these via Ak Klissa village, some three and a half miles north-west of Gebze.

On the 13th July 1920, the operation began with a short approach march of two miles, the 20th Hussars leaving camp punctually at 0415 hours and reaching their rendezvous - "The Spring" - shortly before zero hour, timed for 0515 hours.

"The Spring" lies in a narrow valley which screened the Regiment from the view of any enemy holding Beglik Dagh. The men were not allowed to leave this cover until the infantry began their attack on this height.

The first phase of the advance, which included the capture of Ak Klissa, began about 0525 hours, the signal being the opening of the howitzers on Beglik Dagh. 'A' squadron formed the advance guard, with Sgt Sturt's and Sgt Fowler's Troops leading on the right and left respectively, while Sgts Williams and Lancaster formed the main guard. The main body consisted of 'C', 'D' and 'B' squadrons in the order

mentioned, while 'B' Squadron found flank and rear guards. No enemy opposition was met in Ak Klissa village but the rough narrow ravines impeded Sgts Fowler and Williams on the left flank considerably. In fact, Lieut. Osborne and Sgt. Tidbury of 'B' Squadron, who moved slightly more to the right, were able to reach a knoll to the north of the village before Sgt. Williams, whom the latter had been detailed to relieve.

The next phase consisted of an advance of a further two miles and the occupation of the part of the ridge that ran north from Point 318. The position to be held by 'A' Squadron was semi-circular, facing north, and divided by a deep hollow from Point 318, which hill was, by this time, either being attacked or was actually held by the Garhwali Rifles. 'A' Squadron was disposed as follows; in the front from left to right, Lieut. MacIntyre, Sgt. Fowler and Sgt. Lancaster on a frontage of about 1,000 yards, Sgt.Williams being in reserve. Lieut. Osborne, 'B' Squadron, was in position some 300 yards to the left of 'A' Squadron.

As soon as the regiment had assembled, 'C' Squadron took up the duties of advanced guard, moving south-east round the eastern side of Point 318. A crossing had been found over the hollow mentioned above, and soon the squadron was in full swing to occupy and block the eastern exists of Gebze. Except for one gully, the country was suitable for cavalry and Lieut. Wray was able to lead the vanguard forward without a check. The squadron's objective was a flat-topped hill shaped like a kidney-bean, about 1,000 yards from the town. The leading troop was moving towards the open ground which lay between this hill and the town while Sgt. Mountford's Troop was detached and sent to the left flank to charge some enemy retiring in an easterly direction. When within about 700 yards of the town, the main body of the leading troop dismounted to engage some enemy in a copse. As fire was being opened, Lieut. Way, with two men, rode at a couple of Turks who had remained in the open.

Unluckily, Lieut. Way's horse shied and, instead of killing his man he was shot in the arm. After the action four Turks were found dead in the copse. The leading section of this troop almost reached the town; Pte. Smith (30) had his horse shot and, lying behind it, engaged the Turk at twenty-five yards. When the squadron reached the "kidney-bean" hill, Major Mangles sent Sgt. Waite's Troop to charge some Turks who were running over the open back to the town. This they did in great style, four being sabred.

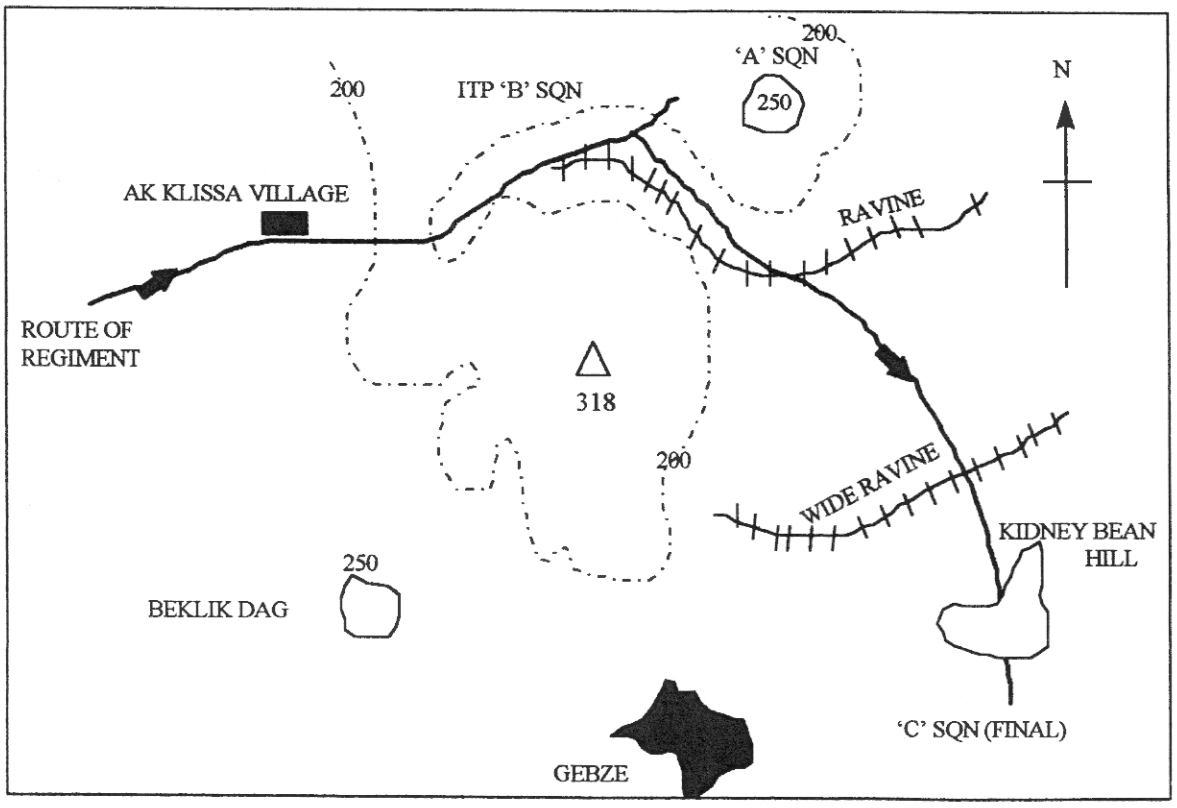
Sgt. Mountford on the left flank was able to pass in rear of about forty enemy; he charged, killing fourteen with the sword, capturing from them some valuable documents including a list of subscribers to the Nationalist movement. Sgt. Mountford witnessed the withdrawal of another couple of hundred enemy who were too far away to be attacked. The Colonel, on arrival at "kidney-bean" hill, ordered the concentration of 'C' Squadron which, being relieved by 'D' Squadron and part of 'B', moved to some high ground a mile further to the south.

As 'C' Squadron were moving southwards to the "kidney-bean" hill, a sound of rifle fire came from the north, where 'A' Squadron and Lieut. Osborne's Troop were in action. A small post of Turks had been noticed some 1,000 yards to the north of the latter's position. These had begun to advance while, simultaneously, a party of thirty to forty were seen farther to the east of them, being apparently reinforcements from the villages to the north. It was difficult to estimate numbers and casualties that were inflicted, owing to the thick scrub. Fire was opened with Lieut. Osborne's Hotchkiss rifle on the enemy's right, one man being seen to fall while all the remainder hurriedly taking cover and opening heavy, though unaimed, fire. It was noticed that after each burst of Hotchkiss fire the enemy was silent. After about fifteen minutes Lieut. MacIntyre gave orders for Lieut. Osborne to withdraw and covered his retreat. Successive positions were then taken up under Captain

Galbraith's direction, the rear guard being withdrawn to a line about a mile north of the "kidney-bean" hill.

Soon after this it was reported that the Garhwalis had finished searching Gebze and a withdrawal was begun to Tuzla. This movement was undisturbed and, after an hour's halt, the Regiment marched back to camp at Pavlo, the only serious casualty being Lieutenant Lesley Groves who was badly wounded in the knee. This was the last action in which a mounted cavalry regiment charged the enemy.

MAP OF ROUTE TAKEN BY 20th HUSSARS



An officer of the Garhwalis Rifles who witnessed the operation being carried by the 20th Hussars wrote:

"Our artillery opened fire and I could see the shells falling on the enemy position. Suddenly, as I watched, I saw movement on the ridge to the north. Over the crest of

the ridge came the whole of the 20th Hussars, two squadrons abreast in columns of Troops with the third squadron in depth, nearly three hundred men in all. Their sabres were drawn and glistened in the early morning sunlight, their trumpets sounded as they moved, slowly at first, but gathering speed as they approached the enemy's flank. Our artillery stopped firing and the Turks huddled together as best they could in small groups facing the oncoming horsemen. Some lay down and fired, some knelt, a few standing. All stood their ground, though lamentably positioned and with little hope of checking the cavalry. The Turk was always a dour fighter.

Now the Hussars reached the Turkish flank. We could see their sabres flashing in the sun as they struck, withdrew and struck again. All the time the trumpets echoed, fierce and thrilling, lifting one's spirits in some form of savage exultation. The charge swept clean through the Nationalist's line. Beyond it the squadrons rallied, regrouped, turned and charged back through the bewildered Turks, now making off for the cover of the vineyards round the village itself. Not more than thirty minutes after appearing over the ridge, the Hussars had vanished whence they came, leaving huddled bodies on the plain to bear testimony to their passage.

The last of the Nationalists disappeared into the thick country behind Gebze and it was time for me to advance with my Company to take possession and to complete the job begun so competently by the cavalry. There was no more resistance".

With the arrival of the Greek forces, the activities of the Turkish Nationalists died down and the 20th Hussars, after one or two skirmishes in which an officer and two men were wounded, went into barracks at Soglani.

Major Mangles managed to collect a few hounds and the foxes and hares of Asia Minor now had their turn at being harassed and tormented by the hunt.

In spite of the serious threats to peace with Mustapha Kemal taking over Armenia and the terrible massacre of its population, the British Government continued its planned reductions in the army even after demobilisation had been completed, despite many protests from Whitehall. Twenty-six battalions of infantry, one regiment of Household Cavalry and eight regiments from The Cavalry of the Line were earmarked for disbandment.

The 20th Hussars were informed that 'His Majesty the King was graciously pleased to approve the disbandment of the regiment, as soon as the exigencies of the service permit'. This came about in October 1920, when the 3rd Hussars relieved the regiment and they returned to the land of the Pharoahs.

After transferring 225 men to the 3rd Hussars and another 118 to the 11th Hussars, then stationed in Meerut, India, the remains of the regiment under the new command of Lieutenant Colonel Arthur C. Little, returned home and awaited that last indignity of disbandment.

There was only a handful of the senior N.C.O.s left and these proceeded to Knightsbridge barracks where the Sergeants Mess of the 2nd Life Guards became their hosts. There was a great deal of sympathy from these friendly guardsmen who were in a similar predicament to the men of the 20th.

As stated earlier in this chapter, the Turkish Nationalists were at war with the Greeks and, after two unsuccessful offensives against them, they prepared to attack the Greeks in determined fashion and then march on Constantinople. This threat brought about an air of uncertainty in the Middle East and Britain launched what was known as the 'Chanak Expedition' in 1922.

The British army was stretched to the limit with soldiers under arms in Ireland where partitioning was to take place, in Palestine where the Arabs were not very happy about the outcome of their efforts being unrewarded, Egypt was unsettled now the Turks had been ousted and finally in India where there was always trouble on the North-West frontier with the Pathans and in some of the towns of Bengal where there was always political agitation for self-rule. All this possibly contributed to a rethink about the intended policy of disbanding regiments.

A new idea was conceived to amalgamate these regiments and pair them with other regiments. It meant that the names of all the regiments remained intact and there was a nucleus to raise the regiments back to full strength should the outcome of worldly unsettlement make it necessary. Hence, the 20th Hussars were paired with the 14th (King's) Hussars and became the 14th/20th Hussars in 1922. The junior regiment was to supply one squadron to the two squadrons of the senior regiment. 'A' Squadron was nominated as the 20th Hussar Squadron and they were to continue to wear the 20th cap badge.

The amalgamation was carried out smoothly, the official date being the 1st October 1922 when the 14th were serving with the Army of the Rhine. The 20th squadron were happy to have some of their old officers back again. These had left some time previously to join the 14th. There were also several men who did likewise. So, unlike a number of other regiments, the 14th/20th Hussars were a happy family.

The 14th Hussar squadrons were in Cologne while the 20th Hussar squadron was sent by train to Silesia where fighting was taking place between Germans and Poles in consequence of the newly established 'Polish Corridor'. The squadron remained based on Lublinitz for a year, patrolling along part of the Polish frontier, sometimes under very severe wintry conditions they encountered on their arrival.

The regiment returned home from Germany under the command of Lieutenant Colonel J.G. Browne, where they adopted a peacetime role and in 1930 the 20th Hussar squadron title was dropped.

So ended the 20th Hussars, presumably for all time but like the phoenix it rose again in the amalgamated regiment of the King's Royal Hussars whilst serving in Germany. In 1997 the 20th Hussar squadron was resuscitated under the command of Major J.R.M. Palmer.

What happens in the future the writer cannot foresee but whatever it is, the 20th Hussars have written their name in the annals of history with blood shed in a brave and glorious past and long may it be remembered even though the regiment was "Nobody's Own".

THE END

COLONELS OF THE 20th LIGHT DRAGOONS & HUSSARS 1791 - 1922

Colonel Henry Farrington Gardner (Lieut. Commandant) 29.1.1791
Colonel George Sandford (Lieut. Commandant) 9.9.1792
General Charles Grey, 1st Earl Grey K.B. 4.11.1795
General Francis Augustus Eliott, 2nd Lord Heathfield 23.3.1797
General Lord William Henry Cavendish Bentinck G.C.B. G.C.H. 4.1.1810
Field Marshall Sir Stapleton Cotton BT. 1st Viscount Combermere G.C.B. K.S.I. 27.1.1813
Lieut. General Charles Montauban Carmichael C.B. 30.9.1862
General Michael William Smith C.B. 22.11.1870
Lieut. General Richard Knox 21.8.1883
Lieut. General Sir Roger William Henry Palmer BT. 11.6.1891
Major General Hugh Sutlej Gough C.B. C.M.G. 31.5.1910
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