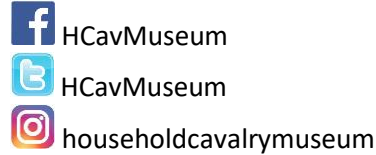




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Horse Guards, Whitehall, London, SW1A 2AX



## **TALES OF THE HOUSEHOLD CAVALRY**

**No: 1**

### **ROLES**

Hello, and welcome to Tales of the Household Cavalry, the first in a new series of Household Cavalry Museum video podcasts that will continue until the museum re-opens and I can once again access the museum's collection. In this first video, I'm going to highlight the many and varied roles that have been adopted by our regiments since their formation before and shortly after the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660.

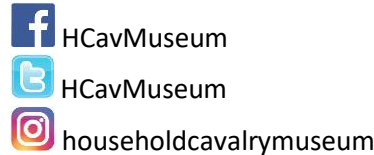
I'm sure that, if asked, most viewers would say that The Life Guards and The Blues and Royals, and their predecessor regiments, fought as horsed cavalry until the Second World War when they were mechanised, and that since the war they have served on tanks and armoured cars, whilst maintaining a mounted ceremonial unit in London. This is far from being the truth as we will see.

Now whilst it is true that the original Life Guards were formed as a mounted bodyguard for the exiled King Charles II, The Blues were



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raised as Cromwellian cavalry and The Royals were established to defend Tangier, from the earliest days Household Cavalrymen were required to be flexible when it came to work...

In 1665, the future King James II was the Lord High Admiral in command of the British fleet at the Battle of Lowestoft, fought against the Dutch. Like the King, James had his own Troop of Horse Guards. Captain of that Troop was the Earl of Falmouth who, along with several other officers, felt duty bound as the Duke's bodyguard, to be with him at sea aboard the flagship, the *Royal Charles*. Unfortunately, it did not end well for them, when a single cannon ball from the Dutch flagship killed the Earl, along with two other Horse Guards, Lord Muskerry and Mr Richard Boyle.

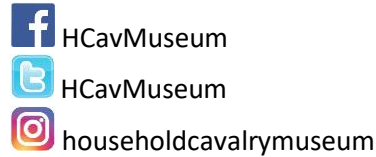
Not content with serving as marines, during the Great Fire of London, officers and men for The King's Troop of Horse Guards acted as firemen under the King's direction, who tasked them with blowing up houses to create fire breaks.

Then, in 1678, all the Troops of Horse Guards were required to raise Horse Grenadier Troops, which were mounted infantry armed with muskets and grenades, shown here in their 1750 uniform. So, by the



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time the Troops of Horse and Horse Grenadier Guards were formed into the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Life Guards in 1788, Household Cavalrymen had acted as marines, firemen, and infantry ... as well as acting occasionally as policemen, Excise officers and in counter-terrorism duties in addition to their traditional role as the sovereign's mounted bodyguard and their role in battle as heavy cavalry at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.

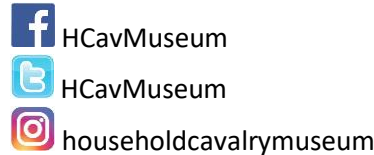
In the nineteenth century, the requirement for the Household Cavalry to be flexible meant that Life Guards were involved in 1820 in the arrest of the Cato Street Conspirators, and guarding their subsequent execution, and in the suppression of rioters in Trafalgar Square on Bloody Sunday in 1887.

The next new role for the regiments of the Household Cavalry arose in 1884, with the expedition to rescue General Gordon, who was trapped in Khartoum by The Mahdi and his army of insurgents. The relief expedition was led by Sir Garnet Wolseley, a future Colonel of The Blues, who ordered the formation of a Camel Corps consisting of a Heavy Cavalry, a Guards and a Mounted Infantry regiment as part of his Desert Column. The three regiments of the Household Cavalry contributed officers and men to the Heavy Camel Regiment. Although



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the expedition failed to reach Khartoum in time to save Gordon, the Desert Column fought a stiff action, dismounted, at the Abu Klea wells, during which Colonel Fred Burnaby of The Blues was killed after breaking open the square to rescue his friend, Lord Charles Beresford.

Life for our regiments returned to normality – in terms of soldiering – until the outbreak of the First World War during which, in addition to their role as horsed cavalry, our regiments formed two cycle companies, an infantry battalion, three truck borne machine gun regiments and a tractor drawn Siege Battery.

More recently, our regiments have consistently contributed men to the Guards Parachute Company and the SAS, fought on donkeys in Cyprus in the 1950s, formed helicopter Troops in the 1960s, served as infantry in Northern Ireland in the 1970s, formed parachute and air droppable units in the 1980s – and been mounted in a variety of vehicles including Land Rovers, main battle tanks and armoured cars and HCR is currently being re-equipped with the army's latest Ajax family of armoured fighting vehicles.



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Not for nothing was our recruiting slogan in the 1960s: ‘Ride, Drive & Fly’ with the Household Cavalry. Next week I’m going to reveal some secrets of the planning and delivery of the Household Cavalry Pageant, which marked the opening of the museum by The Queen in 2008. In the meantime, stay safe and stay well.