

British Cavalry

British cavalry had earned a reputation during the Seven Years War for being an excellent battlefield force. Unfortunately British cavalry of the Napoleonic Wars was a flawed instrument given its many advantages. It had good quality of men in the ranks who were brave and good riders. Their horses were some of the best in Europe. There supply arrangements usually insured fodder was available. So why the mixed results? There are several reasons.

The greatest failure was in the area of command control and tactics where the British cavalry failed to achieve the heights of its French counterpart. There was no division or corps structure for cavalry in the British army. Commanders tended to lead from the front without thought of the correct timing of adding reserves. While some successes like Le Marchant at Salamanca (which resulted in his death) or Uxbridge at Waterloo showed the promise of the aggressive nature of the arm, its commanders were in no position to effectively add reserves or retain control after the charge. British cavalry were exceptional in the charge, deplorable in the recall and could not coordinate more than a brigade. As such it could win small regiment on regiment encounters but could not be relied upon as a decisive force on the battlefield as was French cavalry. It was Wellington who said: "It is occasioned entirely by the trick our officers of cavalry have acquired of galloping at everything, and their galloping back as fast as they gallop on the enemy ... They never consider the situation, never think of maneuvering before an enemy, and never keep back or provide for a reserve."

Secondly the very nature of having to transport cavalry by sea meant that British cavalry was at a disadvantage when they came ashore. It took time to get the horses fit again and the men, who rarely left England, had very limited field experience. Parades in the parks of England were a far different experience than the terrain they faced in Spain. With these two factors in mind let us take a look at the British cavalry gathered from many sources, I hope you find it interesting reading.

Household Cavalry:

The Household Cavalry was the elite of British cavalry and consisted of 1st and 2nd Life Guards (the senior regiments of the British army) and the Royal Horse Guards. The Royal Horse Guard was founded in 1650 by Oliver Cromwell as the Regiment of Cuirassiers. The first troop was originally raised in 1658 as His Majesty's Own Troop of Horse Guards. Membership of these was originally restricted to gentlemen, and accordingly they had no NCOs; their corporals were commissioned, and ranked as lieutenants in the rest of the army. By royal warrant in 1666 every grade of officer in the Life Guards was entitled to rank one above his nominal position. In theory the three guard troops formed the personal bodyguard of the King.

- 1st Life Guards
- 2nd Life Guards
- Royal Horse Guards

The Household cavalry only arrived in the Peninsula in 1813 and had little opportunity to distinguish themselves. Their moment of glory was at Waterloo in 1815.

British Dragoons:

British dragoons and dragoon guards served with distinction in the Peninsular War and during the Waterloo Campaign. The British Army first used the designation 'dragoon guards' in 1746, when the King's Own Regiment of Horse and the Princess of Wales's Own Regiment of Horse were re-designated the 1st and 2nd Dragoon Guards. Other regiments followed. The dragoon guards' regiments had abandoned their cuirasses and were almost indistinguishable from dragoon regiments. "The exercise of converting from Horse to Dragoon was to save money - Dragoons were paid less than Horse - and the change was very unpopular." (- wikipedia.org)

The dragoon guards and dragoons were represented by many regiments:

- 1st King's Dragoon Guards
- 2nd Queen's Dragoon Guards
- 3rd Prince of Wales' Dragoon Guards
- 4th Dragoon Guards - Royal Irish
- 5th Dragoon Guards
- 6th Dragoon Guards
- 7th Dragoon Guards
- 1st KGL Dragoons (1808-13)
- 2nd KGL Dragoons (1808-13)
- 1st Dragoons - "Royals"
- 2nd Dragoons - "Scots Grays"
- 3rd King's Own Dragoons
- 4th Queen's Own Dragoons
- 5th Dragoons
- 6th Dragoons - "Inniskillings"

Major-General Sir William Ponsonby at Waterloo led the (Dragoon) Union Brigade, so-called because it included an English, a Scottish and an Irish regiment. The brigade (1st, 2nd and 6th Dragoon Regiment) had counter-attacked to great effect against the disorganized French columns of infantry under D'Erlon. Ponsonby's troops then were charged by French lancers, effectively destroyed and played only a small part in the battle from that point.

The sabers of British heavy cavalry were described as "lumbering, clumsy, ill-contrived machine. It is too heavy, too short, and too broad." Waymouth of 2nd Life Guards also complained at the way of wielding the saber, with the elbow bent and the point upraised. It was a "very bad position whilst charging, the French carrying theirs in a manner much less fatiguing, and also much better for attack or defense."

Light Dragoons and Hussars:

The British light cavalry consisted of hussars and light dragoons. The hussars were formed in 1806 from light dragoons. (The 18th Hussars in 1807). According to www.lightdragoons.org.uk the light dragoons "were first raised in the middle of the Eighteenth Century for reconnaissance and patrolling - in other words scouting - but soon acquired a reputation for courage and dash in the charge.

Originally, each regiment of cavalry formed a light troop, but so successful was the idea that whole regiments were formed. The 15th Light Dragoons were the first ever (1759), and others quickly followed including the Eighteenth and Nineteenth. The Thirteenth, raised as dragoons (mounted infantrymen) as early as 1715, were also converted to the light role."



Also fighting alongside the British cavalry were the excellent regiments of the King's German Legion. "The origins of the Kings German Legion go back to the invasion and occupation of the Electorate of Hanover by France in July 1803. The ruler of Hanover was none other than King George III of England. Although forbidden by Napoleon to take up arms against France, men from the Hanovarian army soon began to come to England, to serve their Ruler, and free their land from French rule. ... Due to the large number of recruits joining, it was soon decided to raise units of all arms. In December the regiment was renamed the Kings German Legion. By 1805 the Legion had both light and heavy cavalry regiments, foot and horse artillery batteries, their own corps of engineers, plus two light and eight line infantry regiments. At its height, there were around 14,000 men serving in the Legion and some 28,000 were eventually to have been part of the KGL. The British supplied uniforms, weapons and equipment ..." The cavalry of KGL followed the pattern of treating their mounts first, grooming, trimming, saddle and hoof cleaning, and so forth, so it kept their horses in great condition when many of the British cavalrymen (but not the Guard) were walking because their neglected horses had broken down or were sold for alcohol. During the campaigns in Spain and Portugal the losses in the KGL cavalry were approx. only half of the English. (kingsgermanlegion.org.uk)

During the Napoleonic Wars there were many regiments of light cavalry:

- 1st KGL Light Dragoons (1813-16)
- 2nd KGL Light Dragoons (1813-16)
- 7th Queens' Own Hussars
- 8th Light Dragoons
- 9th Light Dragoons
- 10th Prince of Wales' Hussars
- 11th Light Dragoons
- 12th Light Dragoons
- 13th Light Dragoons
- 14th Light Dragoons
- 15th King's Hussars
- 16th Light Dragoons
- 17th Light Dragoons
- 18th Hussars
- 19th Light Dragoons
- 20th Light Dragoons
- 21st Light Dragoons
- 22nd Light Dragoons
- 23rd Light Dragoons
- 24th Light Dragoons
- 25th Light Dragoons
- 1st KGL Hussars
- 2nd KGL Hussars
- 3rd KGL Hussars

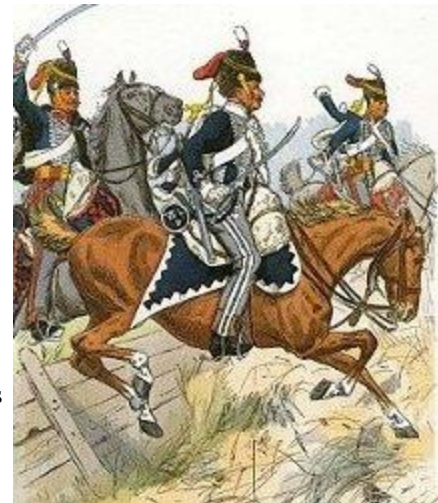
The British and German light cavalry enjoyed victories at Sahagun and Benevente. In the small combat at Sahagun the 15th Hussars defeated French cavalry. They took many prisoners for very little loss to themselves. The 15th Hussars were awarded "Sahagun" as a Battle Honour.

In 1808 at Benavente British 10th Hussars and 18th Light Dragoons, and 3rd KGL Hussars attacked a French cavalry regiment (Guard Chasseurs). "There was an indecisive clash between Lefebvre-Desnouettes' men and Paget's force of 10th Hussars and King's German Legion cavalry. Drawing the French off to Benavente, Paget then ambushed them and pursued the surprised enemy back across the Cea." (- *napoleonguide.com*)

The Guard Chasseurs lost 127 men, and their commander, Lefebvre-Desnouettes, was captured by a German named Bergmann, who gave up his precious prize to British hussar Gridale.

The British-German force at Benavente was led by Paget (later Lord Uxbridge, and subsequently Marquis of Anglesey). Henry Paget was not only an excellent officer but also a womanizer. When he decided to elope with Wellington's sister-in-law (and got her pregnant, before returning her to a tearful husband only to elope for a second time, forcing a parliamentary divorce and then marrying the lady), the military establishment in London wrongly supposed that his talents were no longer required by Wellington because of the scandal.

The charge of KGL dragoons at Garcia Hernandez was named by French General Foy as "The boldest charge of cavalry in the whole war [in Peninsula]." Beamish left description of this famous charge. "The French infantry and artillery being at first, concealed by the inequalities of the ground, the brigades were ordered by Lord Wellington to attack the cavalry, and their pace was accordingly increased to a gallop. The German regiments, confined by the narrowness of the valley, had been unable during their progress through it, to move upon a larger front than sections of 3s, and now, being an echelon of squadrons, they attempted to form line upon the first squadron. Who without waiting hurried forward, however, by the excitement of the moment, the leading squadron of the first regiment ...



dashed on without waiting for the remaining squadrons, and made straight for the enemy's cavalry. ... Captain Gustavus von der Decken, who commanded the third or left squadron of the regiment, seeing that if he advanced according to the order given, his flank would be exposed to the fire of a dense infantry square, formed the daring resolution of attacking it with his single squadron. This square stood on the lower slope of the heights and obedient to the signal of their chief, the German troopers advanced against it with order and determination, while a deafening peel of musketry from the enemy greeted their approach. Arriving within a 100 yards of the point of attack, the gallant squadron officer, struck by a ball in the knee, fell mortally wounded, and Lieutenant von Voss, with several men and horses, were killed ... the intrepid soldiers forced onward and bringing up their right flank, appeared before the enemy's bayonets on two sides of the square. The two front ranks, kneeling, presented a double row of deadly steel, while in the rear of these, the steady muskets of four standing ranks were leveled at the devoted horsemen.

At this critical moment, when the sword was about to be matched against the firelock, and the chivalrous horsemen against the firm foot soldier - when victory hung yet in equal scales - an accidental shot from the kneeling ranks, which **killing a horse, caused it and the rider to fall upon the bayonets** - gave the triumph to the dragoons! For a path was now opened, and the impatient troopers rushing in amid the blazing fire, while men and horses fell fast before the muskets of the French infantry, their firm formation was destroyed, and the whole battalion were either cut down or taken prisoner. Captain von Reitzenstein, who commanded the second squadron, seeing the success which had attended the daring onset of his comrades on the left, and being also impeded in his forward movement by the difficulties of the ground, decided upon following up the discomfiture of the infantry, and attempting the second square (it was not a square but 2 companies covering the rest of battalion), which stood on the edge of the heights.

He was received with a steady and destructive fire ... but the moral force of the French infantry had been shaken by the fearful overthrow which they had just witnessed, and some timid individuals leaving their ranks, Reitzenstein rushed in with his ready followers; the square broke, and the greater part of the battalion was cut down or captured. A third square (it was actually the second square) was instantly formed by those few who had escaped from destruction, and some cavalry came to their support. Against these Captain Baron Marschalek led the third squadron of the 2nd Regiment, and, being joined by the left troop of the second squadron under Lieutenant Fumetty, charged and dispersed the enemy's cavalry; then riding boldly at the infantry, broke and completely overthrew them. "The wreck of the routed battalions now rallied and attempted to make a stand on a rising ground near the high road to Peneranda, where they again formed a connected body. Marschalek and Fumetty led their troopers a second time to the charge, but their little force had become too much reduced, and the horses were too fatigued to admit of any impression being made upon the enemy. The French received the attack with a heavy fire and with a shower of stones, to which they now had recourse... No further attempt was made by the dragoons, and the enemy resumed their retreat." (*Beamish - "History of the Kings German Legion"*)

But there were also not so bright moments. In 1815 at Genappe, Lord Uxbridge unsuccessfully attempted to persuade the British 11th Light Dragoons to charge in support of the 7th Hussars who were being driven back by French lancers. ("My address to these Light Dragoons not having been received with all the enthusiasm that I expected, I ordered them to clear the chausee and said, 'The Life Guard shall have this honour', and instantly sending for them they charged successfully")



The 7th Hussars "Queen's Own" was the "embodiment of dash and panache". Uxbridge wanted to give them a "taste of glory" – so at Genappe the hussars charged but each charge "was not in the favor of the 7th Hussars". Finally the 7th Hussars refused to charge the French lancers." In the three-day Quatre Bras/Waterloo Campaign 7th Hussars sustained more than 50% casualties from their 380 regimental total.

The British saber 1796-Model for light cavalry was designed by Le Marchant. He was a strong advocate of the cut in cavalry combat. This saber had a broad blade with a pronounced curve, with a single broad but shallow fuller. Despite the sword's obvious unsuitability for use in the thrust some attempts were made to increase its efficiency in

this regard. The back of the blade, for the distance between the termination of the fuller and the tip, was sometimes ground down to increase the acuteness of the point. (*Martin Read - "The British 1796 Pattern Light Cavalry Sword"*)

Uniforms:

The uniforms of British cavalry made great impression on many onlookers. French General Foy wrote: "During the war in the Peninsula, the French soldiers were so struck with the elegant dresses of the light dragoons, their shining helmets, and the graceful shape of men and horses, that they gave them the name of Lindors (figures from Greek mythology, half-man, half-horse)." *General Foy*

The British dragoons wore crested helmets with black horsehair, scarlet coats, and either white breeches with high boots or grey overalls.

Until 1812 the light dragoons wore Tarleton helmets with white over red plume and turban of facing color (changed to black for all regiments). In 1812 the Tarleton was replaced with shako with white over red short plume. The light dragoons wore short tailed dark blue jacket with plastron front and epaulettes, white breeches (or grey trousers with one or two stripes in facing color) and short boots. Other sources give grey trousers with either 2 red stripes or 2 facing color stripes.

The British hussars wore fur caps with white over red plume, red bag of cap, yellow cap-lines, blue tailless dolmans with white braid, white breeches (or grey overalls with one or two stripes in facing colour) and short boots.

The British hussars were required to sport moustaches. The 1st and 2nd Hussars of KGL distinguished themselves with yellow braid (white for the 3rd).

Horses:

The British and German horses, whose tails were docked in accordance with British practice, were one of the best in Europe at a time when all the major continental armies were feeling the effect of the dreadful equine destruction occasioned by the numerous wars. The campaign against Russia alone resulted in tens of thousands of the best French horses dead and they never recovered. Ironically the only good French cavalry in 1813 were in Spain and most were sent back to fight in Germany. The British were never short of good quality mounts in England. However the difficult transportation to Spain and the harsh climate of the country meant that many British regiments were short of mounts.

French General Maximilien-Sebastien Foy wrote: "The pains bestowed by the English on their horses, and the superior qualities of their native breeds, at first gave a more favorable idea of their cavalry than the experience of war has justified. The horses are badly trained for fighting. They have narrow shoulders and a hard mouth and neither knew how to turn or to halt. Cropping their tails is a serious inconvenience in hot climates. The luxurious attentions which are lavished upon them render them quite unfit to support fatigue, scarcity of food, or the exposure of the bivouac..."

In the beginning of Peninsular campaign the lack of experience cost the British cavalry many excellent horses. "The tragic end of Lord Paget's heroic cavalry chargers in 1809 is made even more shameful when one considers the verdict of William Napier: "The very fact of their being so foundered was one of the results of inexperience; the cavalry had come out to Corunna without proper equipments, the horses were ruined, not for want of shoes, but want of hammers and nails to put them on!" (*Summerville - "March of Death" p 177*)

For example the 15th Light Dragoons (Hussars) when they debarked in England had 650 men fit for service but NO horse! The men of 7th Hussars finding almost no availability of horse transport vessels are given no alternative but that they must destroy the greater number of their horses before embarking for home shores, with a considerable

increase of trooper numbers by way of walking sick and men “on-command” they board with 631 of all ranks. Of horses it can be estimated that no more than 50 [officers chargers & re-mounts no doubt] made the full journey to safety. The transport vessel *Dispatch* sank in rough seas taking down 56 troopers of 7th Hussars, their comrades would re-assemble ashore, all ranks and in all conditions.

21st January 1809 [Landed at ports in England]

575 men

Approximately 50 horses. It will be more than four years before these two regiments would return to Spain.

In 1815 (Waterloo Campaign) the French cavalry was not fully equipped and had considerably scaled back the strength of cavalry regiments. By contrast England had always good horses and the financial means to obtain more of them wherever they might be found.

Tactics and Organization:

The British cavalry regiment had 2-4 squadrons in the field. According to George Nafziger the interval between squadrons was 1/3 of their actual front, but there was no additional or different interval between regiments and brigades. It is worth noting that the British regulation states that in a flank march the cavalry occupied 3 times the interval it occupied when facing to the front. The British used a movable pivot like the French, and also used a variation of the French maneuver of marching diagonally directly to their final position. However, instead of wheeling forward, their units wheeled backwards.

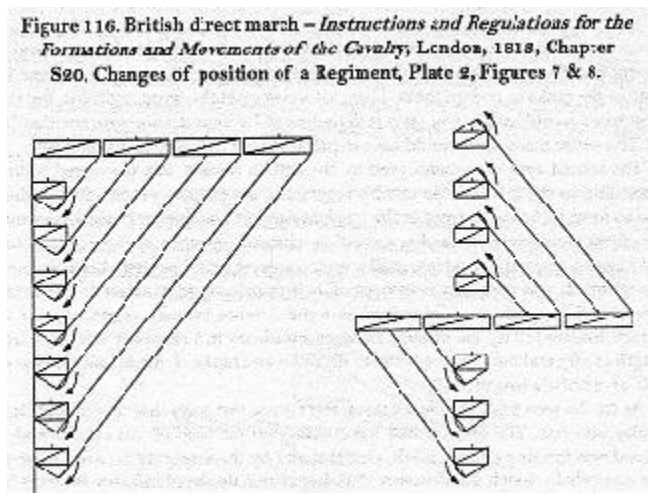
Fig. 116: changes of position of a regiment.

[Source: Nafziger - "Imperial Bayonets"]

There were two ways of column deploying into line.

The first method was forming on the head of the column and the second was forming on the middle. When the British played a line into a closed column they used a direct marching system. The troops did a counter-march by 3s from the opposite flank, passed behind the line, and marched directly to their final position.

And, as with the French, the British could always take a column of squadrons or troops and wheel them 90 degrees into a line perpendicular to the line of march. For a column of troops this maneuver required 0.4 minutes. For a column of squadrons it required 0.7 minutes.



On the level of individual horseman, and up to one or two regiments, the British and German cavalry were generally superior to the French. Private Cotton described a fight between a man of the 3rd Hussars of the King's German Legion and a French cuirassier that took place at Waterloo; "A hussar and a cuirassier had got entangled in the melee, and met in the plain in full view of our line; the hussar was without cap and bleeding from a wound in the head, but that did not hinder him from attacking his steel-clad adversary. He soon proved that the strength of cavalry contains in good swordsmanship ... and not in being clad in defensive armor... After a few blows the tremendous fencer made the Frenchman reel in the saddle ... a second blow stretched him on the ground, amidst the cheers of the horseman's comrades, who were ardent spectators of the combat."

Costello of 95th Rifles described a fight between British and French regiment: "... a loud cheering to the right attracted our attention, and we perceived our 1st Dragoons charge a French cavalry regiment. As this was the first charge of cavalry most of us had ever seen, we were all naturally much interested on the occasion. The French skirmishers who were also extended against us seemed to participate in the same



feeling as both parties suspended firing while the affair of dragoons was going on.

The English and the French cavalry met in the most gallant manner, and with the greatest show of resolution. The first shock, when they came in collision, seemed terrific, and many men and horses fell on both sides. They had ridden through and past each other, and now they wheeled round again.

This was followed by a second charge, accompanied by some very pretty- sabre-practice, by which many saddles were emptied, and English and French chargers were soon galloping about the field without riders. These immediately occupied the attention of the French skirmishers and ourselves, and we were soon engaged in pursuing them, the men of each nation endeavoring to secure the chargers of the opposite one as legal spoil. While engaged in this chase we frequently became intermixed, when much laughter was indulged in by both parties at the different accidents that occurred in our pursuit." (*Costello - "The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns" p 67*)

At Salamanca in 1812 the left wing of the French army was on the point of being defeated by the Anglo-Portuguese 3rd and 5th Infantry Divisions when Le Marchant's dragoons charged in and destroyed battalion after battalion. Le Marchant, knowing he had achieved a magnificent success, was leading a squadron against the last of the formed French infantry when he was shot and his spine broken. Wellington's dispatch after the battle stated: "In this charge Major-General Le Marchant was killed at the head of his brigade, and I have to lament the loss of a most able officer." With his death the British Army lost its most able cavalry commander.

Maneuvering or charging in good order with several regiments or brigades, was beyond their capabilities and American historian George Nafziger ranks them below the Saxon, Polish and French cavalry. In Wellington's opinion though one British squadron could defeat two French, it was the best for the British to avoid encounters when the opposing forces consisted of more than four squadrons each.



The larger the formation the more chaotic was the British cavalry.

Mark Adkin writes: "The Duke had a generally low opinion of the battlefield tactical ability of his cavalry officers... Wellington had not forgotten the 20th Light Dragoons after Vimeiro, the 23rd Light Dragoons at Talavera, the 13th Light Dragoons at Campo Mayor or General Slade's cavalry brigade at Maguilla. After the latter fiasco Wellington wrote, "I have never been more annoyed than by Slade's affair. ... At Waterloo Wellington's Household Brigade was to suffer severely and the Union Brigade was almost destroyed ..."

It is not surprising that after the little controlled cavalry charges at Waterloo, Wellington issued detailed instructions to his cavalry on how the cavalry must deploy in battle, not just one or two lines, but three in any attack. In 1815 at Waterloo there were two lines that quickly merged into one.

French General Foy wrote that the French cavalry was superior to the British: "In cavalry service it is not sufficient for the soldiers to be brave and the horses good; there must be science and unity. More than once, in the Peninsular war, weak detachments of British cavalry have charged French battalions through and through, but in disorder; the squadrons could not again be re-formed; there were not others at hand to finish the work; thus the bold stroke passed away, without producing any advantage."

As for skill in maneuver and discipline, the British cavalry was so inferior to the French that whatever physical advantage (excellent horses and much longer training) they enjoyed was canceled out. When at Waterloo two British brigades charged the armies cavalry commander (Uxbridge) rode in their front. Only after the French counterattacked and decimated his men, only then it occurred to him that perhaps, as commander in chief of all cavalry, he would have done better to remain behind and oversee the handling of his reserves! His dragoons were blown with no supporting fresh squadrons and were slaughtered.

There is evidence that Uxbridge gave an order, the morning of the battle, to all cavalry brigade commanders to commit their commands on their own initiative, as direct orders from himself might not always be forthcoming, and to "support movements to their front". It appears that Uxbridge expected the brigades of Vandeleur, Vivian and the Dutch cavalry to provide support to the British heavies. Uxbridge later regretted leading the charge in person, saying "I committed a great mistake," when he should have been organizing an adequate reserve to move forward in support.

At Waterloo the French lancers practically wiped out the Scots Grays, of the 24 officers who had taken part in the charge, 16 were killed and wounded, and the lower ranks suffered approx. the same proportion of casualties. Colonel Hamilton's body was found the next day, missing both arms and with a bullet in the heart. The two other regiments of Union Brigade suffered approx. 600 dead and wounded out of 1,000 men, a percentage that makes the famous charge at Balaklava pale in comparison. In the elite Household Brigade of the squadrons that had charged in the first line, fewer than 50 % turned back. The whole action took less than one hour.



Many popular histories suggest that the British heavy cavalry were destroyed as a viable force following their first, epic charge. Examination of eyewitness accounts reveals, however, that far from being ineffective, they continued to provide very valuable services. They counter-charged French cavalry numerous times (both brigades), halted a combined cavalry and infantry attack (Household Brigade only), were used to bolster the morale of those units in their vicinity at times of crisis, and filled gaps in the Anglo-Allied line caused by high casualties in infantry formations (both brigades). This service was rendered at a very high cost, as close combat with French cavalry, carbine fire, infantry musketry and – more deadly than all of these – artillery fire steadily eroded the number of effectives in the two brigades. At the end of the fighting the two brigades, by this time combined, could muster only a few composite squadrons.

At Waterloo the seasoned General Dornberg (he had fought for the French) decided to attack a single French cuirassier regiment with two of his own, the British 23rd Light Dragoons and the 1st Light Dragoons KGL. Dornberg outnumbered the French by 2 to 1. The two frontal squadrons of the French regiment were attacked on both flanks and routed. But Dornberg's entire cavalry dashed after the fleeing enemy. The French colonel, unlike his adversary, was holding two other squadrons in reserve, and these counterattacked and smashed the British. The British and Germans were remounting the slope in great disorder when another cuirassier regiment appeared and blocked their way. The French drew their sabers and awaited the enemy unmoving. "At the moment of impact, the light dragoons realized that their curved sabers were no match for the cuirassiers' long swords, nor could they penetrate the French cuirasses. Seeing that his men were losing heart, Dornberg tried to lead some of them against the enemy flank. (*Barbero - "The Battle" p 192*) Dornberg writes: "At this point I was pierced through the left side into the lung. Blood started coming out of my mouth, making it difficult for me to speak. I was forced to go to the rear, and I can say nothing more about the action."

During the great French cavalry charge the brave British-German-Netherlands infantry packed into their squares did not feel any great love for the cavalry. In the square in which Wellington himself had taken refuge, the infantrymen were so exasperated at the sight of cuirassiers, calmly riding past them a short distance away, that someone began to shout: "Where are the cavalry?! Why don't they come and pitch into those French fellows?" Unfortunately out of the entire Household brigade there were only few squadrons left. After the battle, only 1 or 2 men reported out of an entire squadron of the King's Dragoon Guards.



In 1812 in Spain, at Maguilla (Maquilla) there took place a cavalry battle that was typical when British met French. General Hill detached Penne Villemur's cavalry on the right flank, and General Slade with the 3rd Dragoon Guards and the Royals on the left flank. French General Lallemand came forward with only two dragoon regiments,

whereupon Hill, hoping to cut this small force off, placed Slade's British cavalry in a wood with directions to await further orders. Slade forgot his orders and charged and drove the French dragoons beyond the defile of Maquilla. Unfortunately General Slade rode in the foremost ranks and the supporting squadrons joined tumultuously in the pursuit. On the plain beyond stood the French commander, Charles-Francois-Antoine Lallemand, with a small reserve. He immediately broke the mass of British cavalry, killed and wounded 48 and "pursued the rest for 6 miles, recovered all his own prisoners, and took more than a hundred, including two officers, from his adversary" (*Napier - "History of the War in the Peninsula 1807-1814" Vol III, p 444*)

Deployment in the Peninsula:

It immediately becomes apparent that the seaborne transport of significant numbers of troop horses from the shores of the British Isles and ports in the Mediterranean Sea to the Peninsula would be regulated by the seasons. The following units were deployed with the army by year:

British cavalry brigades before the battle of Corunna in 1809

Cavalry Brigade: Stewart

----- 3rd Light Dragoons KGL

----- 7th Light Dragoons

----- 18th Light Dragoons

Cavalry Brigade: Slade

----- 10th Light Dragoons

----- 15th Light Dragoons

British cavalry brigades - Talavera 1809

1st Cavalry Brigade: Fane

----- 3rd Dragoon Guards

----- 4th Dragoons

2nd Cavalry Brigade: Cotton

----- 14th Light Dragoons

----- 16th Light Dragoons

3rd Cavalry Brigade: Anson

----- 23rd Light Dragoons

----- 1st Hussars KGL

British cavalry brigades - Salamanca 1812

1st Cavalry Brigade: Le Marchant

----- 5th Dragoon Guards

----- 3rd Dragoons

----- 4th Dragoons

2nd Cavalry Brigade: Anson

----- 11th Light Dragoons

----- 12th Light Dragoons

----- 16th Light Dragoons

3rd Cavalry Brigade: von Alten

----- 14th Light Dragoons

----- 1st Hussars KGL

4th Cavalry Brigade: von Bock

----- 1st Dragoons KGL

----- 2nd Dragoons KGL

Cavalry in the famous charge at Garcia Hernandez 1812

Cavalry Brigade: von Bock

----- 1st Dragoons KGL (3 sq.)
----- 2nd Dragoons KGL (3 sq.)
Cavalry Brigade: Anson
----- 11th Light Dragoons (1 sq.)
----- 16th Light Dragoons (1 sq.)

Sources other than noted in the text:

Adkin - "The Waterloo Companion"
Muir - "Salamanca, 1812"
Barbero - "The Battle"
Fortescue - "A History of the British Army"
Hofschröer - "Waterloo - the German Victory"
Glover - "Wellington's Army"
Nosworthy - "With Musket, Cannon, and Sword."

Costello - "The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns" 1968



Above left: Trooper of the Royals in full dress. Above: Corporal of the Scots Greys in full marching order. Left: Trooper of the Inniskillings in heavy marching order. The full equipment is shown; oat bags, hay net, waterdeck tent-peg mallet, canteen on valise, full haversack and water-bottle.



The 'Royals' were raised in 1661 by the Earl of Peterborough and were sent to garrison the port of Tangiers during the British occupation from 1662 to 1684. The regiment fought with great distinction against the Moors and at that time were known as the 'Tangier Horse'. About 1689 they were re-titled 'The Kings Own Royal Regiment of Dragoons' and about 1690 'The Royal Dragoons'. Battle-honours included Dettingen and the Peninsular.

The 'Scots Greys' traces its origins to about 1678. In 1681 they were known as the 'Royal Scots Dragoons' and also the 'Grey Dragoons'. This latter title was probably from the colour of their uniform clothing rather than the colour of the horses. This famous regiment served Marlborough with distinction gaining notable victories at Blenheim, Ramillies, Oudenarde and Malplaquet, etc. From the beginning of the 18th century the regiment retained the distinction of wearing grenadier caps.

Originally the cap was the cloth, mitre-shaped cap as worn by the grenadiers of the infantry but towards the end of the century a black bearskin was introduced and continued to be worn, with variations, up to and after Waterloo.

The 'Inniskillings' were raised in 1689 for the protection and defence of the town of Enniskillen in Ireland. Whilst on duty in Scotland in the early years of the 18th century they were mounted on black horses and were given the nickname of the 'Black Dragoons'. The regiment served with great distinction at Dettingen, Fontenoy, Roucoux, etc and in 1751 became the 6th or Inniskilling Dragoons.