



Cavalry of the Line
The 9th Queens Lancers Regiment

The 9th Queen's Lancers were a cavalry regiment of the British Army.



During the Indian mutiny of 1857, the 9th Lancers earned the name the Delhi Spearmen, a name which is believed to have been given to them by the mutineers themselves. 9th Lancers was present in all the three most notable events associated with the Indian mutiny, namely, the seizure of Delhi, the seizure of Lucknow and the relief of Lucknow.

In its long and eventful existence, soldiers and officers of the 9th Lancers have participated in actions at several places including South Africa, World War I and World War II.

It was amalgamated with the 12th Lancers on 11 September 1960, forming the 9th/12th Royal Lancers (Prince of Wales's).

EXPAND ON THERE ROLE IN WW2

Trooper Burnard Olham tells his story

http://www.bbc.co.uk/tellinglives/ww2/2004/wolverhampton/01_wolverhampton_ww2_intermediary.shtml



(Photo sourced from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/tellinglives/>-)

Standing in a Daimler scout car, Trooper Burnard Oldham
In Egypt 1940, the damage received to the front of the vehicle was the result of the driver crashing the car
off a cliff whilst leading a column of tanks!
Note the Boyes anti tank rifle.



The Dingo Register, The Daimler Fighting Vehicles Project – Part D3b Cavalry of the Line 9th, 12th, 16th/5th, 17th/21st, 24th & 27th Lancers

Cavalry of the Line The 12th Lancers Regiment

The 9th Queen's Lancers were a cavalry regiment of the British Army. The 12th Royal Lancers (Prince of Wales's) was a cavalry regiment of the British Army.

The regiment of dragoons that was to become the 12th Royal Lancers was raised by Brigadier-General Phineas Bowles in 1715 against the threat of the Jacobite rebellion. In 1718 the regiment was posted to Ireland, where it remained for seventy-five years.

In 1768 King George III bestowed the title of 'The 12th Prince of Wales's Regiment of Light Dragoons, and the regiment was given the badge of the three ostrich feathers, and the motto "Ich Dien".

In 1816, the 12th Light Dragoons were armed with lances after the cavalry of Napoleon's Army had shown their effectiveness.

The British Army removed the lance from its weaponry in 1903, but an influential lobby secured its reinstatement in 1909.

The 12th Lancers served on the Western Front throughout World War I. In the mobile opening months of the war, cavalry played a vital role. On 29 August 1914, C Squadron of the 12th Lancers made a successful charge against a dismounted squadron of Prussian Dragoons. The 9th/12th Royal Lancers celebrate Mons/Moy Day annually, which commemorates the last occasions on which each predecessor regiment charged with lances. In all, 166 officers and men of 12th Lancers died in World War I.

In 1928, the 12th Lancers gave up their horses and were equipped with armoured cars.

EXPAND ON THERE ROLE IN WW2

The 12th Royal Lancers (Prince of Wales's) were amalgamated with the 9th Queen's Royal Lancers to form the 9th/12th Royal Lancers (Prince of Wales's) in 1960.



Image courtesy of the Bovington Tank Museum

Photographer: not known

Description: A driver Daimler scout car F206983 of the 12th Lancers relaxes in the sunshine,
(Note the unit insignia on the officers sleeve)
Italy circa 1944



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Following is an extract of Personal letter contained in the 6th RTR war diary from Lt Col RN Wilson (former 2i/c) to Lt Col Liardet.

(It is thought that this is the Col Wilson who was serving with the, 1 Armd Div, Recce Regt, 12 lancers, in North Africa and had been then Posted to Italy as Corpstroops).

Received by Col Liardet November 1944. 6th RTR

Now for my news. Well, as you must already know we came over to Italy with the Americans. Before we left N Africa – that awful place called Homs – we did an enormous amount of training for close country, and studied bits of Italy etc, etc. we also did our Combined Ops training there, and we never let up for a minute.

It was all very interesting as we were really working on what the 4th Armd Bde had found out in Sicily and passed on to us. Also a lot of theory stuff worked out with our Infantry Bde in the Div. Of course, it was nothing but improvisation type of training – the same as usual, and we could not use the Shermans, B vehicles or anything at all. So it was all TEWTs, discussions and lectures. Still, it did work when we tried it out here, which was lucky.

We actually came ahead of Bde, and were with the Infantry Bde for a week before they landed. We had a marvellous trip over in LSTs, which are a wonderful invention and very comfortable as long as it is a smooth sea. They roll like anything.

We got into five of them. No.1 had my half of RHQ (two tanks, my Dingo, IOs Dingo and two sections of Recce), one sqn tanks, A Echelon (Sqn), Troop of 25pdrs, Troop AA. No.2 had the same, with the other half of RHQ under the 2i/c, a Sqn and all the rest the same. No.3 had one sqn, section of Recce, it's A Echelon, part of B Echelon. No.4 a mixture of B & C Echelon. No.5 the remaining part of C Echelon. We actually landed No.1 and 2 on the first day, and the rest about 20 hours later.

It is essential in Combined Ops I'm sure, that RHQ is split, Sqns are kept together and are self contained, with their own section of three, Sqn Leaders Dingo and it's own A Echelon of fitters, ammunition and petrol. The first two Sqns must have their own troop of guns, the reserve Sqn doesn't need any. The great thing is that each Sqn must be able and prepared to go straight into action on beaching.

We found it very easy to load onto the LSTs and very quick. And, likewise, the disembarkation on the beach in Italy (place a secret, but I am sure obvious!) presented no difficulties and was very quick. Although done after midnight with not an awful lot of moon, it went like clockwork.

We were heavily attacked from the air at last light when still at sea, the only damage being to my staff car, which was on the top deck of the LST – nothing serious, only punctured a water can and holing the bodywork! Luckily, they didn't shell us on landing, and no bombers came over. The first few days was a bit on the hectic side, as you can imagine, but we really had little to do, until the Bridgehead was made secure by getting dominating high ground – we couldn't get there.

Our job then started and we were virtually turned into 'I' tanks and I had Sqns under comd Infantry Bns, which we all hate like poison. However, the drill we had worked out in Africa proved itself, and the Forward Body (or combination of Point and Vanguard within the Advance Guard) and the whole, consisting of one Sqn tanks, Sec Recce, Infantry Coy, and if possible a Bty or at least a troop, also some RE's all under the command of the tank Sqn Leader, proved itself.

It is certainly a good basis to start on, and according to the country, whether open or close, to vary it. In really close country where it is hard to get off the road and one can see nothing (and I mean not more than 80 to 100 yards) then the correct ratio is one Troop of three tanks to one Coy of Infantry and working in support of the Infantry who move in front of and to about 200 to 300 yards to each flank of the tank troop, who if on the road work as a Snake Patrol, if across country as the old Point, Comd and Reserve. I am convinced that in this type of country tanks should always have Infantry under command, and it is pure murder and stupid to make tanks go in without Infantry.

The days of the Motor Bn, until they get the new Home WE, is finished, they are, as we've always said, too thin on the ground and cluttered up with a lot of very unnecessary transport which takes up too much road space. Lorried Infantry are the only thing, but they must be prepared to get onto their feet and act as scouts for the tanks who are completely blind in this type of close and difficult country, full of ditches, bog and every type of known obstacle both artificial and natural.

Infantry commanders want to try and possess a tank mind, which they haven't got at the moment. They seem willing to lose a tank instead if one infantryman in many cases. They get very angry when you tell them, and I think it's a wonder that I am still here! So don't be surprised if you here I've had a Fowler!



Image courtesy of the Imperial War Museum Reference VIE 1021

Photographer: Lambert RP (Sergeant) No 2 Army Film & Photographic Unit

Description: Armoured cars and scout cars of the 12th Royal Lancers arrive at Meidling Barracks, Austria, where the regiment took over garrison duties from the 2nd Battalion, Lancashire Fusiliers.

Period: 1945 -21 September 1945

Actually, in the first party with the Lorried Infantry Bde, it all went very well and we got everything we set out to get fairly quickly and with very little loss. I only lost 4 tanks – two brewed up by SP guns, one immobilised by an SP but repairable, and one on a mine which blew one complete assembly off and broke the track. It was on the road again within six hours and in the front line without the assembly, and was fully repaired later. I lost two carriers and a Dingo as well. Since then I've only had two tank casualties, both on mines and not badly damaged, and four carriers and three Dingos. As regards personnel, we've had had three killed (all ORs), four officers and about six ORs wounded. So we can't grumble.

We did one advance without any Infantry and over very close country and difficult going, getting a Sqn up a mountain – rather like, and worse than, the place on the TEWT on the Turkish Border we did – under enemy fire and observation, and taking another high feature as well. It meant the whole way being reced on foot by Recce Troop and tank crews armed with Tommy guns, owing to bog, A/Tk obstacles, mines galore (we had no REs) craters in the road and bridges blown. Why one is not given Infantry or even a Motor Pl I can't understand.

When it was all over I put in a report to the effect that both a tank and its crew were presumably more valuable than an Infantry soldier, and that if none could be given to me, I proposed that the WE of an Armd Regt be amended and the following added.

Three White scout cars, each with a crew of 1 NCO and 6 men armed with Tommy guns and trained in mine lifting with a detector, and in demolitions. The car itself to have a 20mm dual purpose gun with crew.



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Each crew to be a kind on 'combat team' and to be put under command of the leading Sqns as the CO thinks fit. They are then kept at Sqn HQ until needed. They then do any recce that is required on foot. I've only just sent the report in, as the operation is only over a few days, and so far have not heard any comments.

All the tanks which have been lost through A/Tk guns have been due to very well sited and camouflaged 105 SP guns (only a very few 88's have been met) which have opened up at between 80 and 120 yards. They were quite impossible to see. It is vital to have Infantry working in front of the tanks. We've been lucky in this respect and haven't lost so many tanks as the other Bns so far.

The Recce Troop is even more important than we ever thought. Information just doesn't come over the Rear Link as we were used to getting it in the desert, and very little – in fact nothing – comes from the Armd Cars, who just can't operate except very, very occasionally on a flank.

So, the only information a CO can get is from his own Recce Troop. It means the standard has to be very high indeed. It's essential for every vehicle in the Troop to have a wireless set and the usual training we always talked about. It is so important that I have got a Captain commanding it and three Lts in it as section commanders, and full of good Sgts, L Sgts and Cpls.

I have it organised with an HQ of 1 Dingo and 1 carrier. One carrier Troop of 3 sections of 3 carriers in each, and 1 Dingo Troop and three sections each of 3 Dingos.

Then four Dingos on RHQ – CO, 2i/c, RIO, and IM (LO shares 2i/c). Each Sqn Leader has a Dingo and it is vital for him to have it at all times. I am supposed to be getting the new WE of 10 sawn-off Honeys and 5 Dingos in the Intercom Troop which I think will be better.

The .5 AA gun on the Sherman is quite useless as we never see any enemy air, and I've given nearly all of them to my Recce and to the Motor Coy (both love them and have used them a great deal with marked success; the Germans do not like them.) The wireless is most tricky in this country. It has been found that in some districts one can't get over a mile. It's dreadful at night and everyone is sending out Step-ups all the time.

One lives a peculiar type of life which is really from one farmhouse to the next, each being dirtier and having more fleas, bed bugs and every kind of crawling creature there is. One is forced into them for cover from the rain, mud and damn chill wind at night. We have been lucky once or twice and had nice houses, but they are not easy to come by. The local inhabitants are just ghastly, dirty and generally on a par with the 'Wog'. There is plenty of food about and every known type of fruit and vegetable by the thousand. I've even had oysters and a type of mackerel.

The big snag is that all the roads, except for the main ones which one doesn't see a lot of, are dust roads, large clouds of thin powdery white dust goes up whenever a vehicle moves. It makes it very hard to move up any tanks without giving one's position away, so we've fitted dust shields at the back, blocked on each side and curved up towards heaven. It is fitted immediately below the two exhaust pipes (we have all diesel Shermans).

It takes the LAD and fitters very little time to carry out, but must be made from strong metal or sheeting and made as a permanent fixture. It definitely stops 80% of the dust.

We were sent over with the most stupid light camouflage which was quite useless and just showed us up to everyone. I've now managed to get all my tanks and recce done with black and dark green, and it's just the answer. I only hope I can get enough paint for the transport.

I'm sure in this type of warfare that each Sqn must have it's a Echelon, only a small one, with it at all times, especially when Sqns are separated by many miles with few lateral roads between them which usually haven't been cleared of mines or blows in the road repaired. It also ensures crews getting the maximum of sleep.

Road congestion is dreadful at times, and unit Provost on traffic control is essential. Plenty of Bn signs are needed, particularly Bn Tac HQ signs. Don't forget that colours we used in the desert are no good and can't be seen, white, black and yellow are best. Red must be very brilliant to be of real use, I don't know why, and of course it tends to fade quickly with the rain and continually being moved about.

To be camouflage minded is essential, they are very bad out here even in view of the enemy. OPs can see little, even from the top floors of high houses. The Air OP is essential and invaluable we have found. DRs with RHQ are also invaluable.

As regards fitters, we find they must travel with their Sqns, the BTA floating. EME travels right up and has with him his two Scammels. There are always the road-ditched tank and carrier owing to the nature of the country. One doesn't need anything like the amount of petrol or diesel out here that one has been used to, but ammunition remains the same. Recce vehicles, however, still require plenty of MT. I find it necessary to have a kind of Depot Vehicle for DRs and Recce Troop and Provost on Motor Cycles, kit and rations. This is combined on a lorry for the Provost plus all the signs. It goes in A Echelon, if Bde don't see it!



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Image courtesy of the Imperial War Museum Reference VIE 1019
PHOTOGRAPHER: Lambert RP (Sergeant):No 2 Army Film & Photographic Unit

Description: An armoured car F207560 of the 12th Royal Lancers arrives in Vienna where the regiment took over garrison duties from the 2nd Battalion, Lancashire Fusiliers. The regiment was stationed at Meidling Barracks.

21 September 1945



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Photo sourced from Imperial War Museum VIE 1020
Photographer: Lambert RP (Sergeant) of No 2 Army Film & Photographic Unit

Description: Armoured cars (F207434) and scout cars of the 12th Royal Lancers move through Vienna towards Meidling Barracks where the regiment took over garrison duties from the 2nd Battalion, Lancashire Fusiliers.

21 September 1945



Cavalry of the Line

The 16th/5th The Queen's Royal Lancers

The 16th/5th The Queen's Royal Lancers were a cavalry regiment of the British Army from 1922 to 1993.

It was formed at Lucknow in India as 16th/5th Lancers by the amalgamation of two regiments, 16th The Queen's Lancers and 5th Royal Irish Lancers.



The Inter-War Years

Although it seemed apparent to many that the Great War had marked the final demise of the cavalry, the inter-war years still saw the new Regiment serving as cavalry in India, Egypt and Scotland. It was while in Risalpur, now Pakistan, that the 16th/5th Lancers held their last mounted parade and handed over their horses before returning to England in January 1940.

On their return, the 16th/5th were brigaded with the 17th/21st Lancers and 2nd Lothian and Border Horse. This formation was to remain together throughout the Second World War. Initially the Brigade was designated the 1st Motor Machine Gun Brigade employed in anti-invasion duties in Kent and Essex. In November 1940, the Brigade was re-designated the 26th Armoured Brigade and became part of the 6th Armoured Division. Training on their new Valentine and Matilda tanks took place during 1941 and early 1942, before their deployment to North Africa.

The Second World War: North Africa 1942-3

After the landings in Algeria, from November 1942 until spring 1943 the 16th/5th were campaigning in Tunisia, their objective being Tunis itself. Early in 1943 the Regiment received the new American Sherman tanks, a vast improvement on their old Valentines and Matildas, both in terms of firepower and protection. It was with these tanks that the Regiment fought in the battles of Kasserine, Fondouk, Bordj, Djebel, Kourmine and the final battle for Tunis. After their hard-earned victory in North Africa the Brigade were withdrawn to reorganise, re-equip and rest in preparation for the invasion of Italy.

Message received from 26th Armoured Brigade in the Field, 13th May 1943: The Corps Commander sends his heartiest congratulations to all ranks in this Brigade and wishes them to know that it was largely due to their efforts that all the enemy both east of Tunis and opposite the 8th Army were either killed or captured.

Italy 1944

The Regiment landed in Naples in January 1944, at the outset of a sixteen gruelling months' campaign in Italy. Unlike the North African desert, Italy was not ideal armoured country. On the whole it was very close and dotted with vineyards and olive groves, complemented by formidable mountain ranges. The Regiment's record in Italy was most impressive: actions at Cassino in May 1944, fighting as dismounted infantry in the Apennine mountains outside Florence during the winter of 1944/45 and fighting in the final battle of The Po Valley.

On 2nd May 1945, the German army in Italy surrendered, followed days later by the unconditional surrender of all enemy forces. The 16th/5th Lancers found themselves further west than any other regiment in the 8th Army, actually linking up with the American 5th Army. With peace came the awesome task of reconstruction. For this the Regiment became part of the occupation forces in Austria and Schleswig-Holstein, where they had to deal with the consequences that war had brought to this part of Europe and the unprecedented numbers of refugees.

In 1947 HRH Princess Elizabeth was appointed Colonel-in-Chief of the 16th/5th Lancers. Seven years later, on her accession to the throne, the Regiment was designated 16th/5th The Queen's Royal Lancers. To mark this the old 16th Lancers collar badge was replaced by the combined 16th Lancers' Queen



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Charlotte's scypher and 5th Lancers 'Irish harp'; this became known as The Queen's Badge and is still worn today by The Queen's Royal Lancers as collar badges.

Egypt 1947-1948

Although the war was over and the Empire dramatically reduced in size, the 16th/5th Lancers continued its tradition of service abroad. In 1948, almost immediately after its return from Germany, the Regiment served overseas for five years in Egypt (Cyrenaica and Tripolitania). This deployment was at a particularly sensitive time as the nationalist party in Egypt was gaining influence. This came to a head in 1952 with the overthrow of King Farouk by the republican nationalist Colonel Nasser, marking the beginning of the end of British influence in the Near East.



DAC F20192 Seuz



DAC F117286



Dispensing with the use of their No2 cook sets, the crew here use the famous Bengazi cooker

Images courtesy of Trooper Tom Burt

Photographer: Tom Burt

Description: An armoured cars of 1st Troop, C Squadron, 16-5th Lancers.

Circa 1946 -47



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DAC F207414, Driver Tich Coleman, Commander Douglas & Gunner Tom Burt



DAC F207414

Images courtesy of Trooper Tom Burt

Photographer: Tom Burt

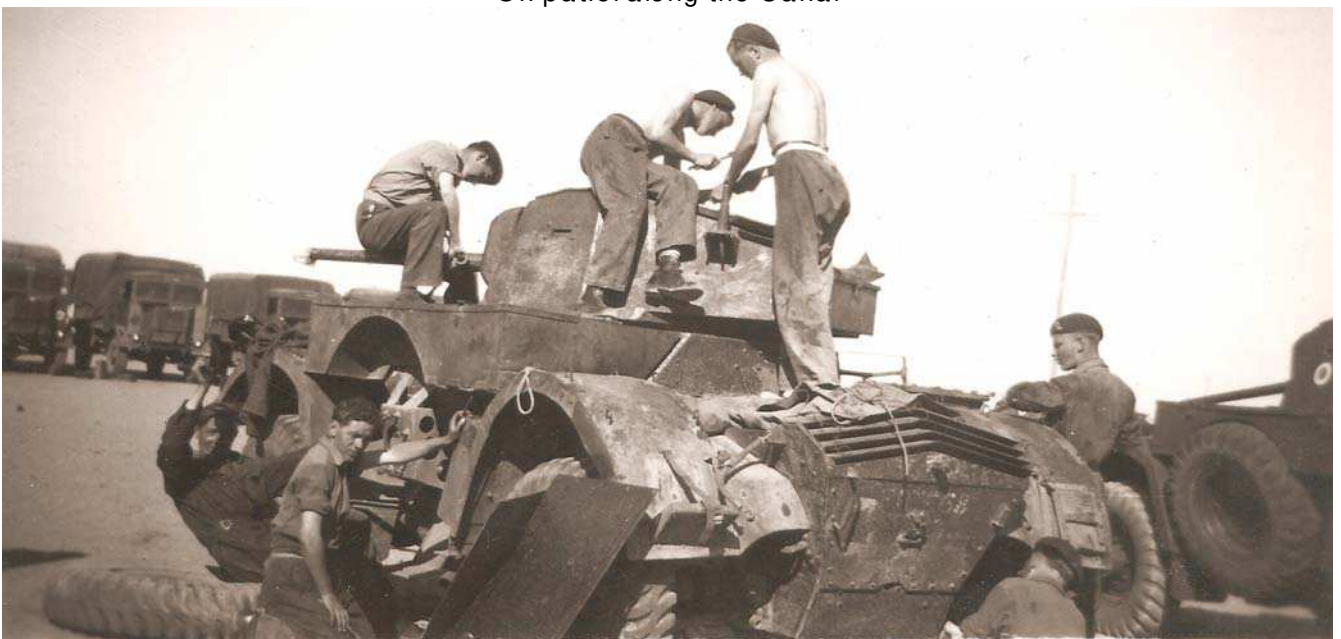
Description: An armoured car of 1st Troop, C Squadron, 16-5th Lancers.
Circa 1946 -47



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On patrol along the Canal



DAC F283668, undergoing a major service



The Guy armoured command vehicle.
That among other important things contained the commanding officers hammock!
Images courtesy of Trooper Tom Burt
Photographer: Tom Burt
Description: An armoured car of 1st Troop, C Squadron, 16-5th Lancers.
Circa 1946 -47



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DSC F48476 being recovered after a breakdown



DSC F205397 named 'Miss-Fire'



DSC F340786 named 'Maidens Prayer'

Images courtesy of Trooper Tom Burt

Photographer: Tom Burt

Description: An armoured cars of 1st Troop, C Squadron, 16-5th Lancers.
Circa 1946 -47



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Image courtesy of Trooper Tom Burt
Photographer: Tom Burt
Description: Tom Burt (centre) and fearless colleagues,
1st Troop, C Squadron, 16-5th Lancers.
Circa 1946 -47



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DSC F64256 named 'Some – Chicken'
This was Trooper Ainsworth's Dingo

Images courtesy of Trooper Tom Burt
Photographer: Tom Burt

Description: An armoured car of 1st Troop, C Squadron, 16-5th Lancers.
Circa 1946 -47



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DSC F64353 Some Neck



DSC F207009 loosing a contest with a tank transporter



DSC F351147, 25th December 1946, everyone is drunk!

Images courtesy of Trooper Tom Burt
Photographer: Tom Burt
Description: An armoured cars of 1st Troop, C Squadron, 16-5th Lancers.
Circa 1946 -47



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Images courtesy of Trooper Tom Burt
Photographer: Tom Burt
Description: An armoured cars of 1st Troop, C Squadron, 16-5th Lancers.
Circa 1946 -47

Use of Daimlers in Egypt

Cfn R Barnes REME confirms that the 16/5th used Daimler scout cars in Egypt between 1949 and 1950, these were withdrawn from service and replaced with new Humbers.



The Cold War 1953-89: Aden, Bahrain, Hong Kong

From 1953 and for much of the next thirty five years, the Regiment was in the forefront of the Cold War, serving as part of the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) in a variety of roles; at times patrolling the East-West German border, and always carrying out a vigorous training programme as an important part of the NATO deterrent against the communist Warsaw Pact countries of Eastern Europe led by the Soviet Union. The Cold War was finally won with the demise of communism symbolised by the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. The Regiment was equipped with Centurion and later Chieftain tanks, and was the first regiment to deploy anti-tank guided missiles (Swingfire). In 1970 the Regiment won the coveted Canadian Army Trophy for NATO tank gunnery. The 16th/5th Lancers were the last British regiment to win this prize. This period was interspersed with tours of duty as a recruit training regiment and squadron deployments to Aden, Bahrain and Hong Kong.

Northern Ireland, Cyprus 1970's

In 1971 at the height of the 'troubles' in Northern Ireland, the 16th/5th took over the role of resident armoured car regiment from the 17th/21st. For eighteen months they were engaged in numerous routine and specific security operations,

Just as interesting and slightly more unique was the part the Regiment played in another sectarian conflict in Cyprus. In July 1974 the hostility between the Turkish and Greek Cypriots developed into open warfare when the Turks invaded the north of Cyprus. At the time B Squadron the 16th/5th Lancers were deployed in Cyprus as part of the British Sovereign Base. The Cyprus Emergency required the deployment of larger numbers of troops in order to maintain the security of British nationals resident on the island. To that end RHQ, A and HQ Squadrons 16th/5th Lancers were deployed to the island in order to facilitate the evacuation of British and foreign families from Nicosia and Famagusta to Sovereign Base Areas. To further complicate matters for the Regiment, once in theatre they were required to re-badge to United Nations forces. It was in this guise that they occupied Nicosia airport after which a tense stand off with the heavily armed Turks ensued. 16th/5th actions were conducted in such a professional and successful manner that the Regiment was praised for its action in Parliament on two separate occasions - something which had not occurred since the end of the Second World War.



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17th/21st Lancers

The 17th/21st Lancers was a cavalry regiment of the British Army from 1922 to 1993.

It was formed in 1922 in England by the amalgamation of the 17th Lancers (Duke of Cambridge's Own) and the 21st Lancers (Empress of India's). From 1930 to 1939 it was deployed overseas; first in Egypt for two years, and then in India for seven. In 1938 the regiment was mechanised at Tidworth, the Regiment quickly established their reputation not only in military proficiency but also on the sporting field. In 1927.

The 17th/21st Lancers were posted to Meerut, India, in 1930, but it was not until 1938 eleven years after the loss of the lance that the Regiment were first mechanised. The outbreak of war saw the Regiment immediately posted back to England. After initially being employed as counter invasion forces, they became part of the newly formed 6th Armoured Division, training with Valentine and Matilda tanks. The Regiment remained with the new division in England until 1942 when they were warned off for active service in North Africa.

The Second World War: North Africa 1942-3

The Regiment eventually deployed to North Africa in November 1942. They were not however initially deployed with the Division but as part of 'Blade Force' under Lieutenant Colonel Hull, a 17th/21st Lancer. The plan was that Blade Force would act as a spearhead invasion force into Tunisia. The Force was to move from Algiers, in concert with the 8th Army who were moving west from Egypt, having advanced from El Alamein. The role of the 17th/21st Lancers within Blade Force was to provide a flank guard for the 78th Division, which was to occupy the city. Blade Force made a rapid advance of 300 miles before being held up at the Troads between Sdi Nasir station and Mateur by strong German resistance. This delay allowed the German to reinforce and thus foil the bid to capture Tunis. As a result Blade Force was broken up and the 17th/21st Lancers were returned to 26th Armoured Brigade.



17-21 Lancers Patrol circa 1940
(Photo sourced from www.qrl.uk.com-film clip)



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On the 19th of February 1943, the Germans launched a counter attack into the Kasserine Pass towards Thala. The Brigade was tasked with stopping the German advance. By dawn on the 21st, the Regiment was in a position blocking the road from Thala to Kasserine. All that day it fought a difficult delaying action in which fourteen tanks were lost. At dusk the Regiment retired into a leaguer. After a short time the sound of tanks moving on the road was heard; the enemy had resumed his advance in the dark and led the attack with a Valentine tank which had been abandoned by the Regiment at Tebourba in December. This ruse completely deceived the infantry in front of the regimental leaguer. It was not until the Germans opened fire that anyone realised what had happened. The first person to react was the Adjutant, Captain Ponsonby, who firing the gun of his own tank, destroyed four German tanks in quick succession. Soon the other tanks joined in and three more tanks were destroyed. The German attack dissolved; although the Regiment remained in the area for the next three days, the Germans did not renew it, but retired eastwards.

Protected only by the inferior armour of the Valentine and out gunned by the German tanks, the cost was high. Although the pass was held, the 17th/21st Lancers was reduced to only twelve tanks. It was after this encounter that the Regiment was withdrawn from the line and re-equipped with the American Sherman tank mounting a 75mm gun.

This represented a great improvement on the old 'Tommy Cookers' (Valentines), both in terms of firepower and armoured protection.

The stage was now set for the Battle of Fondouk, on the 8th and 9th April, in which the Regiment was to play a leading role. The Fondouk Pass was a flat, open plain, 1000 yards wide, dominated on both sides by steep rocky heights. The plan was for the Regiment to break through the pass and cut off the retreating German forces. During a reconnaissance on the evening of the 8th, the Regiment lost four tanks. At 9.00 a.m. on the 9th the 17th/21st was ordered to force the Pass at any cost. The area was mined, and covered by both artillery and anti-tank guns positioned both in the pass and on the high ground. For two hours the Regiment tried to break through the Pass, sustaining such heavy losses that only a handful of tanks were left in action. Information that the dry riverbed to the left might prove to be a way through was passed to Brigade Headquarters. At 11.30, 6th Armoured Brigade ordered the 16th/5th Lancers to try that route, which despite a number of losses to men and tanks, proved successful.

Although the subsequent break-through was achieved, the delay allowed the German forces to retreat unmolested towards Tunis. Regimental losses were eleven killed and thirty-two wounded, with thirty-two tanks put out of action, twenty-seven beyond further use.

May saw the final action of the North Africa campaign with the capture of the Cap Bon Peninsula. The Germans were trying to delay its capture long enough to allow evacuation of their Army by sea. The Regiment conducted a 'charge' along the beach totally out manoeuvring the German defensive positions. Enemy resistance crumbled, thousands of prisoners were taken, and thus ended the campaign. After nine months out of action, March 1944 saw the 17th/21st Lancers, still as part of 6th Armoured Division, deployed to Italy. The North African campaign marked the height of allied armoured warfare. Ahead lay a new country, with difficult terrain that would require new tactics. Even though the dominant role of the tank would no longer be so pronounced, the regiment still played its part to the full in the Italian campaign.



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(Photo sourced from Imperial War Museum-)

Photo Reference NA2445

Photographer: Army Film & Photographic Unit

Description: Soldiers of the 17th/21st Lancers checking over the engine of a Dingo scout car numbered F48668, near Goubellat.

26 April 1943



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(Photo sourced from Imperial War Museum-)
Photo Reference NA2446

Photographer: Army Film & Photographic Unit
Description: Soldiers of the 17th/21st Lancers resting near Goubellat, rest while daimler scout car F48662 lays concealed under makeshift camouflage

26 April 1943



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Italy 1942

The Regiment arrived in Italy during the preparation phase for the assault on the Gustav Line, a defensive line running the entire length of Italy and hinged on Monte Cassino. The assault began on 11th May 1944 with the crossing of the River Gari. The 17th/21st moved to their bridge-crossing site 'Amazon' during the night only to find that the bridges had not been laid, due to all the engineer bulldozers having been knocked out.

As a result the Regiment were forced to improvise, using their tanks to shunt a Bailey Bridge into position and thus effect a crossing.

By the 14th the Corps had achieved nineteen crossings and by the 16th the pressure on the Germans proved so great that they were forced to abandon the Gustav Line. It took the Canadians a further five days to breach the Adolf Hitler Line after which the road to Rome was effectively clear.

The advance north of Rome proved itself even harder than in the south. There were only three routes capable of supporting armoured formations with the Germans covering all of them with direct and indirect fire.

The delaying action the Germans fought was so effective it took the Allies four months to reach the Gothic Line. The winter of 1944/1945 saw the 17th/21st taking their turn as infantry on the Gothic Line in The Apennine Mountains, not only manning trenches but machine guns and mortars.

For the Regiment the battle of The Po Valley proved to be the final action of the war. By VE Day the 17th/21st Lancers had lost 21 officers and 135 other ranks killed.



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Greece, Egypt, Palestine 1945-48

As the Regiment had not deployed from England until 1942 they were not due an immediate return to Britain. As a result, after completing their occupation duties in Austria, they were posted to Greece in October 1946 where they conducted internal security duties and famine relief.

In October 1947 the Regiment was sent to the Suez Canal Zone where it was redesignated as an Armoured Car Regiment. From the calm of Suez the 17th/21st were posted to Palestine. At the time Palestine was in a state of civil war, with both Jews and Arabs fighting for independence both from each other and British rule. The Regiment was involved in the operation of armoured rail cars, frontier patrols and escort duties. In the one year that they served in Palestine (1948) the Regiment lost two officers and fourteen other ranks killed.



Photo courtesy of Peter Hommes (Netherlands)
 Photographer: unknown

Description: Daimler armoured car F117516 and Scout car F67518 of the 17/21 Lancers in Egypt.

Note the very rare picture of a Dingo F340894 converted to run on railway lines by the fitment of specially adapted wheels.
 Circa 1945-47



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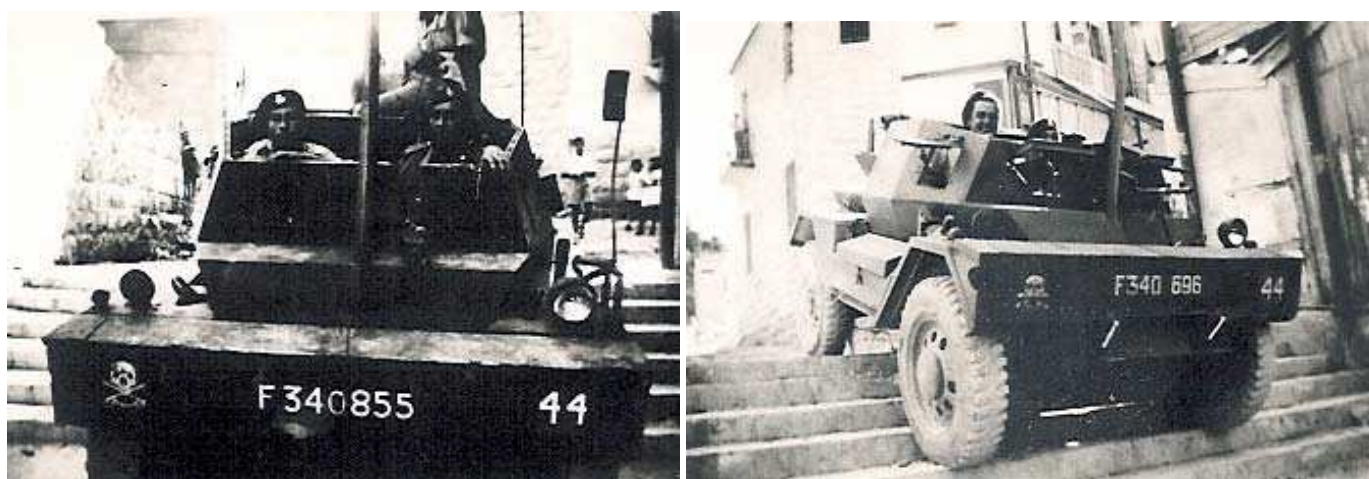


Photo courtesy of Peter Hommes (Netherlands)

Photographer: unknown

Description: Daimler armoured car F20293 and Scout cars F340855 & 340696 of the 17/21 Lancers in Egypt.

Circa 1945-47



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Photo courtesy of <http://www.servicepals.com>

Photographer: unknown

Description: Daimler armoured car F20107? Of the 17/21 Lancers in Mountcarmel Palestine
Circa 1946-47



Photo courtesy of <http://www.servicepals.com>

Photographer: unknown

Description: Daimler scout car F351178 Of the 17/21 Lancers in Mountcarmel Palestine
Circa 1948



Photo courtesy of <http://www.warwheels.com>

Photographer: unknown

Description: Daimler armoured car F207603 and Scoyt Car F340729 of the 17/21 Lancers Palestine
Circa 1946

The Cold War 1953-89

The main role of the 17th/21st Lancers service after the war was as part of the British Army of the Rhine serving as part of NATO's conventional deterrent against the Warsaw Pact Armies of Eastern Europe. It also served throughout the world with both squadron and troop deployments to Hong Kong, Borneo, Aden, Libya, Belize, Kuwait and Cyprus.

The main operational commitment post war for the Regiment was in Northern Ireland. Since 1969 and the beginning of the 'troubles', the 17th/21st were regularly deployed to the province in both mounted and dismounted roles. The Regiment was employed in Saladin, Saracen and Ferret armoured cars during the first two and bloodiest years of the troubles. The Regiment also conducted dismounted four-month emergency tours



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Photo courtesy of Mr. Leslie Thacker

Photographer: unknown

Description: The crew of two Daimler scout cars 14Z590/F205655 & 14Z595/F47641 prepare for a cold night in the open.

Circa 1950's.



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Photo courtesy of Mr. Leslie Thacker

Photographer: unknown

Description:.. Making the assumption that the learner driver is the same that is shown here well bogged down in the mud! The the car would be 07ZS15 / F340579
Circa 1950's.



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Cavalry of the Line

The 24th Lancers

The 24th Lancers was a cavalry regiment of the British Army from 1940 to 1944

The regiment was raised in December 1940 from a cadre of personnel taken from the 9th Queen's Royal Lancers and the 17th/21st Lancers, and was assigned to 29th Armoured Brigade of 11th Armoured Division. It was later reassigned to 8th Armoured Brigade.

With the 8th Armoured Brigade, the regiment landed on Gold Beach, in the second wave of the Operation Overlord landings, supporting the 50th (Northumbrian) Infantry Division.

After intensive action in the Tilly-sur-Seulles, Fontenay-le-Pesnel, Tessel Wood and Rauray areas, the Regiment was disbanded towards the end of July 1944 and personnel transferred to other Regiments. Most went to other units in the 8th Armoured Brigade or the 29th Armoured Brigade in the 11th Armoured Division.

In January 1957 it was awarded seven battle honours for service in 1944: Putot en Bessin, Villers Bocage, Tilly sur Seulles, The Odon, Fontenay le Pesnil, Defence of Rauray, and North-West Europe 1944.

No evidence of the use of Daimler Scout car or armoured car so far identified



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Cavalry of the Line
The 27th Lancers Regiment

The 27th Lancers was a cavalry regiment of the British Army from 1941 to 1945.

The regiment was raised in June 1941 from a cadre of personnel taken from the 12th Royal Lancers, and was assigned to 11th Armoured Division as the divisional reconnaissance regiment. It was later withdrawn and held under command of GHQ.

It served in Italy in 1944 as an independent reconnaissance regiment, and finished the war in Austria, where it was disbanded.



(Photo sourced from internet, known to also exist in the Bovington Library & IWM photo H_18869-)
Photographer: O'Brien (Lt), War Office official photographer

Description: Armoured cars of 5th troop of the 27th Lancers, 11th Armoured Division, 19 April 1942. A scout car leads, followed by Daimler and Humber armoured cars, with more scout cars bringing up the rear.

(Car number unclear but possibly F19263 DEMON)



The following story was obtained from the BBC peopleswar site

People in story: Charlie Parsons, Lt Colonel H Porter, Popsky, Ernest Schofield, Lancer Trooper Greetham, Corporal Jack Conolley

Location of story: Po Valley, Italy, Ravenny

Article ID:A4589878

Contributed on: 28 July 2005

This story was submitted to the People's War site by Roger Marsh of the 'Action Desk — Sheffield' Team on behalf of Charlie Parsons, and has been added to the site with the author's permission.

THE BRIDGE

Approach to the River Po By Charlie Parsons

The Bridge didn't have a lot going for it. It looked unimpressive, possibly because all the surrounding country, the Po Valley had been flooded by the Tedeski (German) to delay the advancing 8th Army, which it did. It was a flat land like the Fens in the Lincolnshire area of eastern England. Dykes had been blown and acres and acres were now underwater. The river itself could be seen by the currents it created making its way through the flood.

We were a troop of 12/14 men; No. 2 Troop of 'D' Squadron the 27th Lancers, a Cavalry Regiment made up at the start of 1941, from some 12th Royal Lancers, Derbyshire Yeomanry, and Welsh Regiment etc. We were trained as a reconnaissance force; we were quite adaptable, working in Armoured Fighting Vehicles and on foot. The Gothic Line was most awkward for the operational use of cars and we did all our patrols on foot. The plain north of Ravenna was quite extensive and we looked forward to getting back in our cars. The Germans astutely flooded the plain. We were to continue on foot.

Two troops entered Ravenna around the 5th of December 1944. It was officially taken accordingly to the powers that be on this date. Ravenna was unoccupied, we found the opposition had withdrawn and had left the roads littered with mines.

The 6th of December, using two **Daimler Scout Cars**, saw us going forward on the road north, a minor sort of road, very like a country road at home. Our destination was the bridge where we were to play a waiting game. We occupied a house some 50 yards up stream from the bridge and the road. It was decided by our Lieutenant after some discussion, to dig a slit trench on the far side, the north side of the bridge, against the wishes of most of us. It meant that if attacked in strength, the escape route from that forward position would be difficult because the bridge would have to be crossed to get back. Another trench was dug at this side, the south side, which we didn't use. Remember that by this time, it was completely dark and the forward trench was to be used by two of us and a Bren Gun. This latter trench would be manned at first light the next morning. A further factor in the situation was the arrival of Three Troop in an excellent position in a farmhouse on the road overlooking the bridge.

I refer to escape routes. Don't forget, we were Cavalry not Infantrymen and we had been trained accordingly. Our basic role was the collection of information. We worked in armoured cars, or on foot in small numbers. Tasks included the observation of roads used by the "Teds" (German) as to the type of vehicles in use. How wide is a river, how deep and so on? Determine the use of a building by the enemy as an O.P. Is a certain village occupied? What ammunition have they got? Indeed any information that might be useful to Corps HQ.

The point I make is, that to have gone to the trouble and effort to get this information, it would defeat the object entirely to get involved in an action that might endanger getting the information back to Squadron H.Q.

The operation at this time was called "PORTER FORCE" consisting of the 27th Lancers, a force of Armour and Artillery and the P.P.A. (Popsky's Private Army), a force under the command of our Lt Colonel H Porter who was considered to be most brilliant. He trained the regiment itself, in his own considered, unorthodox way.

Popsky was quite a character, he had managed through the desert campaign and had dealings with the Long Range Desert Group, to organise and lead a hundred men equipped with jeeps. They had almost a free hand with Porter Force; he took up position on our right and to his right on the coast were the Canadians.



So we found ourselves on a bridge in the dark. It was a Saturday night and Ernest Schofield (a friend and colleague) and I were sat in the forward trench in the damp, trying to see up the road. Conversation centred on girls and the Capitol Ballroom in Leeds, where we were stationed for some weeks before embarking for Egypt some time earlier. Our attention was drawn to some muffled noise up ahead. We couldn't see anything but there was some movement. Something had crossed the road from left to right. If you can get your line of sight on the road with the sky as a background (the sky can be slightly lighter than the foreground), and a shadow figure, what you have can be observed. I felt I had seen something. There it was again. Ernie slipped back to the house to inform our Officer of the situation. He came back with the story that H.Q. informs us that there was a stray horse in the area. It was the first time I had ever seen a horse cross a road in two parts. The night then passed without incident. When our stint had finished in the early hours of Sunday morning, we got down and had a sleep and before we knew it, morning was upon us.

The day began dull and damp, food was produced, bread, Bully beef or tinned bacon, we could carry that sort of food with us. I was just about to cut some bread for us all when Ernie said we had run out of milk. He volunteered to take a Scout Car and get some from a Squadron position down the road so off he went.

By this time it was 8.30 am and I was at the end of my bread slicing, a machine gun began operating on the bridge; it sounded like a Bren Gun, then a more rapid mode of fire from more than one could be heard. It was a SPANDAU (a very efficient machine gun), which was general issue to the German Forces. It sounded just like an engine. It was something I was really afraid of. The Bren in the forward trench had stopped firing, so all I could do was think the worst.

Five of us gained entry to the front of our house, a ground floor window which had a sash type window of dimensions 3 feet high and 2 feet across, occupied the front room. We pushed a table up to the window and two of us took up positions with a Bren Gun, and had a good look at the bridge and the flood and action that was taking place.

The slit trenches were now being used by two Germans in each, there was a line of Germans on the opposite bank, possibly a company of about 100 strong using a wood as a background from which they gained cover. Our immediate decision, the decision of all five in the front room, was to keep the heads down of the Germans in the slit trenches. We had realised that there wasn't enough space in the front of the house to use anything else but the window and the Bren. So I used the Bren continuously and the lads filled empty magazines. The Teds were now using mortars and things were definitely hotting up. Another group was attempting crossing over the bridge but failed. The enemy in the trench were well and truly in trouble.

The Sergeant came into the room; I remember he said that Popsky would be coming up to help out. At this time a German Red Cross man did a crouching run over the bridge to the rear trench.

The Sergeant got quite excited and told me to shoot him. I refused point blank. He retired to the back and the radio. We continued to keep the heads down from the Germans occupying the slit trenches and anybody showing his face on the bridge. I observed a German of Rank (uniform), I switched to him and missed and he then disappeared. There was a lot of return fire; the window was hit and the glass shattered everywhere. We pushed the sash window up which gave access to the Bren. We should really have knocked out the glass when we started but we didn't think at the time. It was obvious now that the opposition would try to take the bridge in force; they knew our limited firepower and strength. Our situation was feeling hopeless at this point. Our means of escape was very poor. The dirt track from the house to the road and bridge was about 50 yards, there was a Scout Car on it about 20 yards from the house door. To take this path would put us in full view of the attackers. The only cover was the Scout Car itself. It would take two of us, one driving if it was to be mounted, to mount the car, would lead to exposure being greater still, as we would have to clamber up and over.

Popsky arrived, 3 Jeeps approached, stationing themselves some 40 yards away from the bridge, and commenced spraying the far banks and bridge area. All this time the Germans were trying to get across or at least gain some advantage on the bridge, but we managed to hold on. The troop was down to 6 of us in the house. The Officer and Sergeant had managed to slip down into the water and make their way using the dyke bank and our cover to get to the road and Popsky. We had a look at the situation and decided to make our way to the Scout Car. We managed this all right, but now there were five of us pinned behind the car. We returned fire from this position and used grenades, our move had been



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observed and it seemed all hell let loose. One trooper, Jim, decided to take to the water but couldn't make it and got back to us wet through.

Popsky, having received a bad wound on his left, had decided to retire to the Canadian Medics, taking the wounded Lancer Trooper Greetham, Our Corporal Jack Conolley who was with him in the forward trench, had been killed sadly. The Jeep Commander had also decided to ask for reinforcements.

The German attack had petered out, possibly a regrouping exercise materialising in a further attack. Popsky left two Jeeps covering the bridge from his end.

If a further attack was to take place, our position was hopeless. We decided to take to the flood, using the dykes as much as possible. The water was knee high in most places, but holes and other obstructions could not be avoided. It was December, the light was very poor and temperature was very cold. The aim was to head west away from the bridge and loop south to regain the road, where a Squadron HQ could be picked up.

We had gained another trooper from the house; he said he left his mate in the upstairs room, who said he would use the darkness to get out, so the six of us took to the dykes.

We approached a flooded farmhouse with a boat tethered outside, it was across the fast flowing current of the canal, but we managed to retrieve it. One of the lads opted to get to another farm some quarter of a mile distance across the flood. It was a bad decision on his part as he drowned in the process; we picked up his body some days later.

The group was now down to five men, another boat was found in the roof of a barn a bit further into the flood. It proved quite useful because we no longer had to use the dykes. We were able to cross the flooded fields instead of going around them. Eventually we gained the Ravenna road and "B" Squadron HQ, we dried out a bit and had some food, and then given transport to our own "D" Squadron.

We learned from the P.P.A. that the Germans withdrew that night and left some thirty dead.

Two days were spent in the village where our Squadron HQ was situated. We cleaned up, rested and wrote our reports, re-organised and we took up a forward position, not far from the bridge of the action and proceeded to do patrols, through the woods, in preparation for an advance into the valley approaching the RIVER PO.

Pr-BR