



AN INTRODUCTION TO THE MIDDLESEX YEOMANRY



1797-1997

by Mr. E T Hawkins

Major-General G.P.B. (Pip) Roberts CB., DSO., MC., commanded 22nd Armoured Brigade from July 1942 to January 1943 and in his Memoirs 'From the Desert to the Baltic' published by William Kimber & Company Ltd. he *wrote*:

' I was delighted with the brigade staff, the brigade major was the only regular soldier, all the rest were Territorials. The atmosphere was different, not happy go lucky but less formal and I enjoyed it. They had learnt a lot quickly. The brigade signals squadron was provided by the Middlesex Yeomanry and excellent they were 'and so the regiment's tradition of service will continue well into the space age of the future.

THE MIDDLESEX YEOMANRY

1797

Uxbridge Volunteer Cavalry Captain-Commandant Christopher Baynes

1798-1801

Uxbridge Yeomanry Cavalry Major-Commandant C. Baynes

1803-1813

Uxbridge Volunteers Infantry

1830

Uxbridge Yeomanry Cavalry Re-formed

1871

Middlesex Yeomanry Cavalry

1884

Middlesex (Duke of Cambridge's Hussars) Yeomanry Cavalry

1902

Middlesex (Duke of Cambridge's Hussars) Imperial Yeomanry

1908

1st County of London Yeomanry Middlesex (Duke of Cambridge's Hussars)

1920

2nd Cavalry Divisional Signals (Middlesex Yeomanry) Royal Signals

1939

Mobile Divisional Signals (Middlesex Yeomanry) T.A.

1939-1941

1st (Middlesex Yeomanry) Cavalry Divisional Signals 2nd (Middlesex Yeomanry)
Armoured Divisional Signals

1941

9th Armoured Brigade Signal Squadron (1st Middlesex Yeomanry)

(Independent Armoured Brigade 1942- ?)

1939-1940

22nd Armoured Brigade Signal Squadron
No.4. Squadron, 2nd (Middlesex Yeomanry)Armoured Divisional Signals

1940-1941

NO.4 Squadron, 2nd Middlesex Yeomanry, 22nd Armoured Brigade Signal Sqn
1st Armoured Divisional Signals

1941-1942

22nd (Independent) Armoured Brigade Signal Squadron
No.4 Squadron, 2nd Middlesex Yeomanry

1942-1945

No.4. Squadron, (2nd Middlesex Yeomanry), 22nd Armoured Brigade Signal Sqn
7th Armoured Divisional Signals (The Desert Rats)

1947

16th Airborne Divisional Signal Regiment (Middlesex Yeomanry) T,A.

1956-1959

The Middlesex Yeomanry Signal Regiment
40 Signal Regiment (Middlesex Yeomanry) T.A.
47 Signal Regiment (Middlesex Yeomanry) T.A.
(amalgamated)

1961

47 Signal Regiment (Middlesex Yeomanry) T.A.
305 (Parachute Brigade) Signal Sqn,
(Middlesex Yeomanry) T,A.

1967

47 (Middlesex Yeomanry) Signal Squadron (V)
31st (Greater London) Signal Regiment (V)

1995

47 (Middlesex Yeomanry) Signal Squadron (V)
39th (Skinners) Signal Regiment (V)
MIDDLESEX YEOMANRY

This short introduction to the history of the Middlesex Yeomanry is an attempt to show how changing conditions have altered the role of the regiment

From that of local armed police to an effective military force with a record of distinguished service in South Africa 1900-02; the Great War 1914-1918; the Second World War 1939-1945, and today a highly sophisticated technical unit forming part of the 39th (Skinners) Signal Regiment (V),

It was during the Napoleonic Wars that the Gentlemen of Uxbridge sought permission from the Government to form a Military Association to maintain law and order when the Regular Forces were sent to the coast to protect the country against invasion by the French. A Cavalry Troop was

raised in 1797 and titled the 'Uxbridge Volunteer Cavalry' and its first Captain Commandant was Christopher Baynes Esq' (later Sir Christopher),

The role of the Uxbridge Volunteer Cavalry was to act as armed police and support the Civil Powers in maintaining law and order in the local parishes.

A second troop was raised in 1798 with the change of title to 'Uxbridge Yeomanry Cavalry'. Captain-Commandant Christopher Baynes was appointed Major-Commandant and the UYC was given a wider sphere of operation.

The volunteers provided their own clothes and horses, and received no payment if called out to quell a disturbance,

At the end of the war with France the number of Yeomanry units was reduced and it was not until 1830 that the Uxbridge Yeomanry Cavalry was reformed to maintain the peace during a period of extreme poverty, when rioters terrorised the inhabitants and destroyed machinery which was being introduced into the agriculture and cotton industries.

The uniform worn by the Uxbridge Yeomanry Cavalry was of the Light Dragoon pattern with a broad-topped shako of dark green, ornamented with a brass Maltese Cross with the Arms of the County of Middlesex placed in the centre, and the motto adopted was 'Pro Aris et Focis', which can be loosely interpreted as 'For Hearth and Home'.

In 1856 the badge was changed to a gilt metal six-pointed star, surmounted by the Royal Crown, and a circle bearing the regimental motto 'Pro Aris et Focis' enclosing the Royal Cypher 'VR',

Middlesex Yeomanry Cavalry 1871

There were variations to the uniform until 1871 when the Uxbridge Yeomanry Cavalry was ordered to raise a fourth troop and to change its title to 'Middlesex Yeomanry Cavalry'. The Commanding Officer adopted the Hussar uniform, keeping the green Hussar tunic with black collars and cuffs; yellow Hussar lace on the collars, cuffs, and back, with three across the breast. Blue black overalls with double red Hussar stripes; a Hussar busby with dark green bag, and a red-under-green brush, with yellow lines, trimmings and bosses,

Subsequent changes were made which proved to be unpopular and it was not until Lt Col.W, Duncan took over command in April 1910 that the

Hussar uniform was firmly established, The only changes were a Hussar busby with red bag, and overalls with double yellow stripes, as worn today by Escorts on ceremonial occasions.

Royal Escorts

Throughout the 19th century the regiment was often required to perform escort duty to the Sovereign and the Royal family. The first occasion was in 1834 when King William IV travelled through Uxbridge to visit the Marquess of Westminster at Moor Park.

After the death of the King in 1837 the regiment was frequently called upon to escort Queen Victoria through Middlesex on her way to Windsor, and on reaching the county boundary the Escort would hand over to a detachment of the Royal Horse Guards to escort her to the Castle.

Duke of Cambridge's Hussars 1884

In April 1884 the Queen graciously honoured the Regiment with the title 'Middlesex (Duke of Cambridge's Hussars) Yeomanry Cavalry'.

There were many changes in the Yeomanry Force during the later years of the 19th century. The Squadron became the official unit. The Middlesex Yeomanry was formed of two squadrons, each with two troops, and the regiment was brigaded with the Royal Berkshire Yeomanry Cavalry, which formed the 1st Yeomanry Brigade.

South African War 1900-1902

Soon after the reverses in Natal the Government found that the only way to raise a large number of mounted men was to call upon the Yeomanry for volunteers to serve overseas. There was an immediate response from the regiment and by the end of January 1900 the Middlesex Yeomanry had raised three Companies, the 34th, the 35th (2nd Middlesex Yeomanry), and the 62nd (3rd Middlesex Yeomanry) plus a maxim-gun detachment. The 34th and 35th Companies together with two Companies raised in Kent formed the 11th Battalion under command of Colonel Kenyon Mitford, the Commanding Officer of the Middlesex Yeomanry. The 62nd was placed under command of the 14th Battalion.

In January 1901 a second contingent of Yeomanry was raised to replace the original 34th, 35th and 62nd Companies, and with a fourth Company, the 112th, formed the 112th (Kent and Middlesex) Battalion under command of Colonel R.B.Firman (Middlesex Yeomanry).

'Few Yeomanry Regiments have such proud memories of daring in South Africa as the two fights against such heavy odds which occurred at Senekel and Tweefonteen'. (*Historical Records of The Middlesex Yeomanry 1797-1927*).

Middlesex (Duke of Cambridge's Hussars) Imperial Yeomanry. 1900-1914

With the end of the South African War in 1902 there was a general re-organisation of the Yeomanry. The title of the whole force was changed to

'Imperial Yeomanry' and the name of the regiment changed to 'Middlesex (Duke of Cambridge's Hussars) Imperial Yeomanry'.

The regiment was increased to four squadrons totalling 596 all ranks, which included a machine-gun detachment. At the time there were four new Yeomanry regiments being recruited in London, so it was not an easy task to increase the strength of the regiment from 200 to about 600 all ranks.

1st County of London Yeomanry Middlesex, (Duke of Cambridge's Hussars)

On the 1st April 1908 the regiment became part of the Territorial Force being recruited in London. The title then changed to the 1st County of London Yeomanry, Middlesex, (Duke of Cambridge's Hussars) and with the other London Yeomanry Units formed the London Mounted Brigade.

The Great War 1914-1918

In the summer of 1914 the regiment was in camp at Moulsoford Berkshire when the declaration of war with Germany interrupted the inter regimental sports planned to take place on the Bank Holiday. Instead the regiment returned to headquarters and by the 5th August was ready to mobilize.

The Middlesex Yeomanry together with the 1st City of London Yeomanry (The Rough Riders) and the 3rd County of London Yeomanry (The Sharpshooters) formed the 8th Mounted Brigade of the Yeomanry Mounted Division.

It was the Yeomanry Regiments of this Division, which were used as detached regiments and brigades on the Egyptian, Gallipoli and Salonica fronts and with the Desert Column under General Allenby, took part in the advance from the Suez Canal culminating in the Battles of Gaza in 1917.

Major A.M. Lafone V.C. 27th October 1917

General Allenby's attack on Beersheba had been planned for the 31st October and the regiment, with two sub-sections of the 21st Machine-gun Squadron, were holding fortified points 720 and 630 along the line El Buggar Bir el Girheir. At dawn on the 27th October the small force at point 720, under command of Major Lafone, who was ordered to hold the position at all costs, faced a fierce attack by a superior force of Turks and suffered heavy shelling and machine-gun fire, which lasted for several hours. Most of his small force had been killed or wounded and he ordered the survivors to go back, whilst he continued to fire from the shoulder at point blank range to cover the withdrawal of his men. At 11.15 hrs the position was over-run.

Later that afternoon the 53rd Division advanced up the hill in attack formation and the Turks retreated to their defence positions. The railway had been saved, the construction of the rail-head at Karm continued, and General Allenby's offensive opened as planned.

Major Lafone was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross 'For most conspicuous bravery, leadership and self-sacrifice when holding a position for over seven hours against vastly superior forces His cheerfulness and courage were a splendid inspiration to his men, and by his leadership and devotion he was enabled to maintain his position, which he had been ordered to hold at all costs'.

Royal Signals 1920

After the war there was a reduction in the number of cavalry regiments and the Middlesex Yeomanry decided to accept the role of Cavalry Signals to the 2nd Cavalry Division, and recruiting started on the 20th May 1920. The 2nd Cavalry Divisional Signals (Middlesex Yeomanry) was integrated with the newly formed Royal Corps of Signals in June of that year.

The regiment fought hard to retain its old title, privileges, cap badge, motto and uniform, including the ancient custom of NCO's wearing a crown above their stripes, and the Quartermaster wearing four stripes with a crown, The shoulder title worn by the men changed to 'Royal Corps of Signals' with the concession of a 'Y' above it.

Second World War 1939-1945

The years between the wars had seen the cavalry regiments gradually change from mounted to mechanised regiments, although the 2nd Cavalry Division had retained some of its horses at the outbreak of war in 1939,

Following the Munich crisis in 1938, and the subsequent threat of war, thousands of young men and women volunteered to join the armed forces.

In December 1938 the title of the regiment changed to Mobile Divisional Signals (Middlesex Yeomanry) T,A, until a second regiment was formed in 1939 and the title changed to 1st (Middlesex Yeomanry) Cavalry Divisional Signals ,in November 1939, The second regiment became the

2nd (Middlesex Yeomanry) Armoured Divisional Signals.

The 1st Cavalry Division was sent to the Middle East and arrived in Palestine in January 1940, The 2nd Armoured Division (less 22nd Armoured Brigade) arrived in Egypt on New Year's Day 1941. It was a critical stage of the war. General Wavell had recently driven the Italians out of Cyrenaica and the Germans were threatening to advance through the Balkans into Greece, so the Allied Forces were threatened on two fronts.

The 1st Cavalry Division played a prominent part in the campaigns in Iraq, Syria and Persia, (*'Five Ventures' by Christopher Buckley., HMSO,*) and some of the units were sent to the Western Desert with the 2nd Armoured Division to face the newly formed German Afrika Korps.

The mechanisation of the cavalry regiments brought about changes, and the 1st Cavalry Division became 10th Armoured Division which included the 9th Armoured Brigade (*'El Alamein' by Michael Carver (Field-Marshal Lord Carver)* and many of the 1st Middlesex Yeomanry formed the Divisional Signals.

9th Armoured Brigade's previous designation was 'KINGSCOL' which had been the spearhead of 'HABFORCE' in the advance from Palestine through Habbanyia, and Fallujia to Baghdad in May (1941), and had then retraced its steps to lead the attack upon Palmyra in the Syrian campaign, and still commanded by Brigadier Tiarks, turned again in its tracks to take part in the Persian venture, (*'Five Ventures' by Christopher Buckley*).

In 1942 the 10th Armoured Division became part of 8th Army and took a prominent part in the Battle of El Alamein, where 9th Armoured Brigade (*with Middlesex Yeomanry Signal Squadron*) had an independent role under command of the 2nd New Zealand Division, Afterwards the brigade was withdrawn to Palestine/Syria area to prepare for the part it was to play in the Italian campaign

22nd Armoured Brigade (No.4 Squadron, 2nd Middlesex Yeomanry) arrived in Egypt, as an independent armoured brigade, at the beginning of October 1941 and was in action at Sidi Rezegh in November. There followed the relief of Tobruk and the enemy was again forced back to the Tripolitanian border at El Agheila, The Brigade returned to base at the beginning of 1942, and was re-equipped with some of the new weapons which were beginning to arrive in the Middle East, and included the 6 PDR anti-tank gun and the American Grant tank, By the 27th May the Brigade was back in the desert ready to meet Rommel when he attacked the Gazala Line.

It was a long summer as Rommel gradually encircled the Allied Forces who fought fiercely in the heat and dust storms at 'Knightsbridge' and Bir Hacheim, until the fall of Tobruk and they were forced back to the Alamein Line.

A Special Wireless Section from the 1st Middlesex Yeomanry was sent to Crete in April 1941, and the 1st Armoured Brigade (No 3 Squadron & part No 2 Squadron, 2nd Middlesex Yeomanry) went with the expeditionary force to Greece.

General Montgomery took command of the 8th Army in August 1942 and, with the increasing number of troops and modern equipment supporting the Allies, defeated Rommel at Alam Halfa at the beginning of September. It was the turning point of the war. On the 7th September 22nd Armoured Brigade became a permanent part of 7th Armoured Division (The Desert Rats) and remained with the Division until the end of the war.

At the Battle of El Alamein on the 23rd October 1942, 7th Armoured Division was in the south of the line, but moved north at the beginning of November, then through the minefields and joined in the pursuit of the enemy via Tripoli to Tunis which ended with the defeat of the enemy forces in North Africa in May 1943.

In September 1943 the 7th Armoured Division landed at Salerno on the west coast of Italy where it came under command of the 5th American Army, and after crossing the River Volturno the Division returned to the UK, to prepare for the Second Front. The Division arrived in East Anglia in January 1944 where it prepared for the invasion of Europe, and landed on the Normandy beaches on D + 1, 7th June 1944.

7th Armoured Division was in action at Caen, Villers Bocage, Falaise, Ghent, Eindhoven, Nimegan then across the Rhine into Germany, the surrender of Hamburg and the end of the war in May 1945.

The remnants of the the 2nd Armoured Division, reinforced by 3rd Armoured Brigade and equipped with worn out tanks left behind after General Wavell's campaign in December 1940, had been sent to the Western Desert in March 1941. At the beginning of April the Division was attacked by the German Afrika Korps, which had recently arrived in north Africa, and in spite of a fiercely fought rear-guard action Divisional Headquarters was surrounded at Mechili and forced to surrender on the 8th April.

Many survivors found their way into Tobruk and back to base to reinforce 7th Armoured Division and other units being re-fitted, At about the same time the Allied troops were being evacuated from Greece and, by the end of May, Crete had been lost to the German paratroops.

It is rare to find the Middlesex Yeomanry named in books written about the Second World War, yet the 1st Middlesex Yeomanry was the Signal Regiment to the 1st Cavalry Division, and the 2nd Middlesex Yeomanry the Signal Regiment to 2nd Armoured Division, It was the result of both regiments being reduced in strength by the loss of so many Signal Troops to reinforce other formations that, by April 1941, the Middlesex Yeomanry could no longer operate as a regiment.

Thereafter Middlesex Yeomen were to be found serving in all formations of Royal Signals throughout the Middle East, including the Long Range Desert Group, Small Boats Sections, Special Operations Executive, Airborne Signals, and later in north-west Europe, India, and Burma,

At all times they continued to wear the Middlesex Yeomanry cap badge and badges of rank, wherever they served.

Airborne Signals and afterwards 1945-1995

The regiment was re-formed in 1947 and became the 16th Airborne Divisional Signals (Middlesex Yeomanry) T.A., and continued as such until the T.A, Airborne Division was reduced to a Parachute Brigade Group in 1956.

The Middlesex Yeomanry Signal Regiment became 40 Signal Regiment (Middlesex Yeomanry) T.A., until 1961 when it was amalgamated with 47 (London) Signal Regiment T.A. and the newly formed regiment became known as 47 Signal Regiment (Middlesex Yeomanry) T.A.

The new regiment was given the role of SHAPE Troops (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe). No.3 Squadron, 40 Signal Regiment, 305 (Parachute Brigade) Signal Squadron T.A., did not become part of 47 Signal Regiment (Middlesex Yeomanry) T.A. but continued in its role as the Signal Squadron to 44 Parachute Brigade, retaining its Middlesex Yeomanry cap badge and badges of rank .

Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve 1967

When the Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve was formed in 1967 the Middlesex Yeomanry retained its title, but like so many other yeomanry' regiments was reduced to squadron establishment and became 47 (Middlesex Yeomanry) Signal Squadron TA VR., 31st (Greater London) Signal Regiment.

The Squadron was permitted to continue the ancient custom of NCO's wearing a crown above their stripes, and the SQMS wearing four stripes and a crown, and Middlesex Yeomanry collar badges continued to be worn on regulation uniform, but the Middlesex Yeomanry cap badge was forfeited for the Royal Signals 'Mercury' cap badge.

The coloured side hat of scarlet, piped with gold, and rifle green flaps piped with gold with scarlet tipped peak and two buttons, worn by officers and soldiers off duty, was also retained. Officers caps have an embroidered cap badge, in gold on rifle green cloth, of an oval strap bearing the motto *Pro Aris et Focis*, in the centre the cypher MYC, and the whole ensigned by St Edward's crown. Soldiers wear a metal Middlesex Yeomanry collar badge as a cap badge.

The khaki/green woven lanyard representing the rigging line of an army parachute commemorating the previous service of the unit, and the webbing stable belt in black over crimson, gold, green, and black stripes, fastened by two nickel plated buckles and black leather straps, worn when in shirt sleeve order, are also *retained*. (*Headdress, Badges & Embellishments, of the Royal Corps of Signals* by Major A. G. Harfield BEM., Picton Publishing Chippenham).

In 1995 47 (Middlesex Yeomanry) Signal Squadron (V) came under command of the 39th (Skinners) Signal Regiment (V).

Bicentenary Dinner 1997

The bicentenary dinner was held at the Duke of York's Headquarters, Chelsea, London, on the 10th October 1997, and on this historical occasion the President of the Association, Lieutenant-Colonel S.R. Beazley, gave a warm welcome to our Guest of Honour, Major-General David Horsfield.

General Horsfield is a direct descendent of Christopher Baynes Esq., a former officer of The Royal Horse Guards, who was the first CaptainCommandant of the Uxbridge Volunteer Cavalry in 1797.

In his speech, General Horsfield outlined the history of the Regiment over the past two hundred years, and also gave an interesting account of the long history of military service, and international commerce, of the Baynes family, but said little of his own distinguished military career, which spanned the Second World War in Egypt, India, Burma, and later in Malaya.

He passed on the good wishes sent by Sir John Baynes, and ended his speech by adding that 'The Middlesex Yeomanry have always been good survivors, so I hope that this will not be the last great gathering involving Yeomen and the Baynes family'.