NUOVA ANTOLOGIA MILITARE
RIVISTA INTERDISCIPLINARE DELLA SOCIETÀ ITALIANA DI STORIA MILITARE

N. 4
2023

Fascicolo 16. Novembre 2023

Storia Militare Contemporanea

a cura di
VIRGILIO ILARI

Società Italiana di Storia Militare

Nuova Antologia Militare
Rivista interdisciplinare della Società Italiana di Storia Militare
Periodico telematico open-access annuale (www.nam-sism.org)
Registrazione del Tribunale Ordinario di Roma n. 06 del 30 Gennaio 2020
Scopus List of Accepted Titles October 2022 (No. 597).
Rivista scientifica ANVUR (5/9/2023)

Direzione, Via Bosco degli Arvali 24, 00148 Roma
Contatti: direzione@nam-sigm.org ; virgilio.ilari@gmail.com

Grafica: Nadir Media Srl - Via Giuseppe Veronese, 22 - 00146 Roma
info@nadirmedia.it

Gruppo Editoriale Tab Srl -Viale Manzoni 24/c - 00185 Roma
www.tabedizioni.it

ISSN: 2704-9795

ISBN Fascicolo 9788892957930

NUOVA ANTOLOGIA MILITARE
RIVISTA INTERDISCIPLINARE DELLA SOCIETÀ ITALIANA DI STORIA MILITARE

N. 4
2023

Fascicolo 16. Novembre 2023

Storia Militare Contemporanea

a cura di
VIRGILIO ILARI

Società Italiana di Storia Militare

Distintivo speciale del Dipartimento della Guerra concesso agli addetti al Progetto Manhattan per la Bomba A(Atomica) che hanno lavorato almeno sei mesi tra il 19 giugno 1942 e il 6 agosto 1945
Foto 1198 DOE Ed Westcott 1945 Oak Ridge Tennessee (Wikimedia Commons)

Reactionaries or Realists?

The British Cavalry and Mechanization in the Interwar Period

by Alaric Searle[1]

Abstract. For many decades, the interpretation of J.F.C. Fuller and B.H. Liddell Hart dominated views on the role of cavalry in reform efforts in the British Army between the World Wars. More recent historiography has argued in great measure against the idea that the cavalry retarded progress in mechanization. This article takes the opposing view, however, presenting a picture which does not show resistance to technology, but rather bitter rejection of the social consequences of the abolishing of the cavalry. The emotional attachment to the cavalry was closely connected to the love of equestrian sports in the British Officer Corps, as well as service in India. In an effort to pursue a compromise policy, the mechanization of the cavalry delayed the creation of a balanced armoured force, while it also led to a situation whereby the British Army went to war with too many poorly armoured and under-gunned light tanks.

Keywords. British cavalry, mounted infantry, arme blanche, military reform, sport and war, regimental traditions, doctrine

With both glorious successes and failures to their name, from the Charge of the Light Brigade in the Crimean War (25 October 1854) to the attack of the 21st Lancers at Omdurman (2 September 1898), British

1 Prof. Dr. Dr. Alaric Searle is Academic Director and Head of Research, German Armed Forces Military History and Social Sciences Research Centre, Potsdam. He previously taught Modern History at the University of Munich, the University of Salford, UK, and Nankai University, Tianjin, China. He holds degrees from the University of Edinburgh, a doctorate from the Free University Berlin, a *Habilitation* from the University of Munich, and a D. Litt. from the University of Salford. Among his many publications, he is the author of *Armoured Warfare: A Military, Political and Global History* (Bloomsbury, 2017).

NAM, Anno 4 – n. 16
DOI: 10.36158/978889295793015
Novembre 2023

cavalry have not been without their historians.[2] More recent scholarly studies have sought to consider various aspects of the mounted arm. Gervase Phillips has argued forcefully that cavalry forces, at least before 1914, showed themselves capable of significant levels of reform and adaptation.[3] Stephen Badsey's study of British cavalry from 1880 to the end of the Great War takes an optimistic view of the value of British cavalry on the Western Front.[4] It should also be remembered that the cavalry were faced with a challenge from the mounted infantry before the First World, a subject recently examined by Andrew Winrow in his D.Phil. thesis of 2014. He takes a less charitable view of the British Army cavalry, pointing out the shallowness of their arguments against the mounted infantry force, arguing that the mounted infantry in fact proved effective in colonial wars before their abolition in 1913.[5]

A few historians have tackled the question of cavalry reform in the years leading up to the outbreak of the First World War,[6] but there is a clear and sharp divide between those who defend the measures taken to reform British cavalry and those who see the cavalry officer as a caricature of the aristocratic, technophobic and backward-looking officer, determined to defend his way of life in the face of all military logic. On this point, Badsey is correct that the clichèd image of the cavalry officer became ingrained in public thinking in Britain in the aftermath of the First World War.[7]

Nonetheless, since the publication of Edward L. Katzenbach's widely cited 1958 article in *Public Policy* on military attempts to defend the horse cavalry in

2 Philip Warner, *The British Cavalry* (London and Melbourne: J.M. Dent, 1984); Anthony Dawson, *Real War Horses: The Experiences of the British Cavalry 1814-1914* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2016); and, Alan Steele, *Belgium and France 1914: British Cavalryman versus German Cavalryman* (Oxford: Osprey, 2022).

3 Gervase Phillips, 'Who Shall Say That the Days of the Cavalry Are Over? The Revival of the Mounted Arm in Europe, 1853-1914', *War in History*, 18(1) (2011), pp. 5-32.

4 Stephen Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry 1880-1918* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), esp. Ch. 6 on the First World War, pp. 230-302.

5 Andrew Philip Winrow, The British Regular Mounted Infantry 1880-1913: Cavalry of Poverty or Victorian Paradigm? D.Phil. thesis, University of Buckingham, 2014, pp. 411-12.

6 W.L. Taylor, 'The Debate over Changing Cavalry Tactics and Weapons, 1900-1914', *Military Affairs*, 28(4) (1964-65), pp. 173-83; Edward M. Spiers, 'The British Cavalry 1902-1914', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 57 (1979), pp. 71-79; Phillips, 'Revival of the Mounted Arm in Europe', passim.

7 Badsey, *British Cavalry 1880-1918*, pp. 303-7.

the twentieth century, there has been a clear equation of British cavalry officers with reactionary attitudes to new technology. This interpretation found its way into wider analyses of armed forces' reactions to technological change, especially his broad arguments that military reform slowed down in peacetime and that the defence of the cavalry was linked to 'the emotion-packed matter of prestige'.[8] Thus, the subject of British cavalry is, quite clearly, one which extends well beyond the confines of military historiography in the United Kingdom.

Still, despite the attention which has been devoted to British cavalry before and during the First World War, there has been less consideration given to British cavalry during the interwar period.[9] This can be explained, at least in part, by the fact that examination of the British cavalry has largely been subsumed within the research into British armoured forces between the World Wars. Robert Larson highlights some of the reactionary attitudes towards mechanization and the supposed continued need for horse cavalry, but notes at the same time that reactionary attitudes did not reflect the views of all cavalry officers. As significant was the steady decline of cavalry officers across the senior ranks of the British Army between the Wars. Furthermore, according to Larson, the significance of cavalry in military operations was gradually downgraded in the Field Service Regulations. In his account, the picture is a mixed one when it came to cavalry officers, but he does argue that it is false to claim that mechanization was hindered by the bitter opposition of traditionalists who continued to defend the horse.[10] David French takes an even more pronounced position, asserting that the retarding of the process of mechanization of the cavalry was down to 'the lack of sufficient funding'.[11]

Hence, historians of British armour have tended to reject the Fuller-Liddell

8 The article was also reproduced in a collection of pieces by 'heavy-weights' in the field of international politics: Edward L. Katzenbach, 'The Horse Cavalry in the Twentieth Century', in Robert J. Art and Kenneth N. Waltz (eds), *The Use of Force: International Politics and Foreign Policy* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), pp. 277-97, quote, 292. An example of the employment of Katzenbach's arguments is Steven E. Miller, 'Technology and War', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, December 1985, pp. 46-48.

9 The exception here is David French, 'The Mechanization of the British Cavalry between the World Wars', *War in History*, 10 (July 2003), pp. 296-320.

10 Robert H. Larson, *The British Army and the Theory of Armored Warfare, 1918-1940* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1984), pp. 16-32.

11 French, 'Mechanization of the British Cavalry', p. 320.

Hart interpretation of mechanization in the interwar period, in other words, that the process was disrupted by the negative effects of the 'cavalry mentality'. Historians of cavalry have been even stronger in their denial of a retarding of mechanization by the 'cavalry mindset', arguing that cavalry forces remained significant not just in 1914 and 1918 on the Western Front, and in Palestine in 1917/18, but also in the Soviet-Polish War of 1919/20. Moreover, they argue that the 'continued existence of cavalry formations not just in the British but also in the continental European armies of the interwar period does not indicate any antagonism towards technology.'[12] In other words, the historiography appears to show a general rejection of the claims of Fuller and Liddell Hart: there has been either outright denial of their version, or a playing down of the idea that the cavalry exerted a negative effect on advances in the development of mechanized and armoured forces between the World Wars.[13]

This article will seek to challenge the received wisdom, namely, that the cavalry cannot be considered to have been overwhelmingly reactionary, that they exerted little influence over the process of mechanization in the British Army, and that their role in the interwar period was, in essence, largely neutral, if not cooperative on occasions. In order to advance this critique, this article will consider the 'cavalry spirit' and its ripple effects, the significance of the Cavalry Committee in the mid-1920s, the continued obsession with the preservation of cavalry regiments and the horse in the 1930s, and the destructive role played by the mechanization of the cavalry in the second half of the 1930s.

I. The Cavalry Spirit in the Wake of the Great War

In order to understand the role of the cavalry in the interwar period, it is important first of all to grasp what can best be characterized as the 'cavalry spirit'. This is a phenomenon which cannot be so easily compared with other European armies, such as the German, where *Reitergeist* was something different.[14] Among

12 Gervase Phillips, 'The Obsolescence of the *Arme Blanche* and Technological Determinism in British Military History', *War in History*, 9(1) (January 2002), pp. 39-59, quote, 58-59.

13 Liddell Hart's criticism of the role of the cavalry was more implicit than explicit in his history of the Royal Tank Regiment, but is nonetheless identifiable. See B.H. Liddell Hart, *The Tanks. The History of the Royal Tank Regiment 1914-1945. Vol. I 1914-1939* (London: Cassell, 1959), pp. 293-94, 357-59.

14 Although there are obvious similarities between the idea of cavalry spirit and *Reitergeist*,

the best sources which can assist in understanding the British cavalry spirit are the memoirs of former officers. What these make clear is the connection between the officer's daily routine, especially in the far-flung corners of the Empire, equestrian sports, the cult of the amateur rather than that of the professional, and the notion that learning to ride a horse was a prerequisite for the development of a sound officer. Sport and war were frequently connected in their minds.[15]

One of the features of officers' memoir literature is this very connection made by them between sport, often equestrian, and its value for the training of the soldier, although usually this was reserved for the officer given the class-based nature of the British Army in the first half of the twentieth century. According to one officer, writing in the mid-1930s:

> «There can be no doubt… that the sports of the field have always appealed to the British Army wherever, in Peace and War, it found itself. Furthermore, the love of the countryside, and the knowledge of the habits of its animal-dwellers which is inherent in every sportsman, cannot be anything but an asset to the fighting-man even in these decadent and mechanical days.»[16]

Other memoirs reinforce the impression of the close relationship between horsemanship, the playing of polo, and the role which service in India played in these pursuits. In reminiscences the opportunities which India offered for the sportsman were continually emphasized. According to General Sir Beauvoir de Lisle, writing in 1939: 'To any one who loves sport, India was and is a paradise.'[17] He also recalled that he naively thought when arriving at the Staff College at the turn of the century that he would be excused from attending riding school because

---

not least of all the value of horse-racing which transported a particular spirit into the officer corps, something else was identified by one German officer. He considered that *Reitergeist* lay in galloping across the countryside. This spirit was visible when courage and happiness could be seen on the faces of those who galloped across difficult terrain. The genuine *Reitergeist* was created by the example set by the officers. Karl von Tepper-Laski, *Rennreiten: Praktische Winke für Rennreiter und Manager* (Berlin: Paul Parey, 2nd edn, 1903), Ch. III (4).

15 For a general overview of the subject, see Frank Reichherzer, 'Militär – Sport – Krieg. Funktionalisierungen von Bewegungspraktiken in Großbritannien und dem Empire um 1900', in: Martin Elbe and Frank Reichherzer (eds), *Der Sport des Militärs: Perspektiven aus Forschung, Lehre und Praxis* (Berlin: De Gruyter/Oldenbourg, 2023), pp. 373-403.

16 Capt. Lionel Dawson, *Sport in War* (London: Collins, 1936), p. 13.

17 General Sir Beauvoir de Lisle, *Reminiscences of Sport and War* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1939), p. 45.

he had gained so much experience on horseback in India, including by playing polo. But he was forced to attend riding school because it was a requirement for all infantry officers: 'The idea prevailed that no infantry officer knew how to ride, and the regulations laid down that all Staff officers must be good riders, so I had to be taught to ride.'[18]

Time and again, in various military memoirs, one finds the same tropes repeated: 'Sport and War are closely allied',[19] sport of every kind was available to those posted to India, with polo one of the most popular. It was the romanticization of service in India, which was inevitably closely connected to equestrian sports, which coloured not just cavalry officers' attitudes but other sections of the British Army as well.[20] The critical point here is that cavalry officers found it hard to shake off their emotional attachment to service in India which was personified by the horse. This led, at times, to schizophrenic attitudes towards the future of the cavalry.

In addition, another important source is the *Cavalry Journal.* Before the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, the journal brought a combination of articles on great cavalry leaders, developments in foreign cavalry forces, information on the care of horses, and the inevitable articles on polo and pig-sticking.[21] Following the appearance of the July edition in 1914, the journal ceased publication for the course of the war.[22] It was reinstituted in 1920, with Field-Marshal The Earl Haig, himself a cavalryman, writing a foreword.[23] The rationale for the re-launch of the journal was laid out by him. In addition to the need to maintain cavalry traditions,

18 Ibid., p. 77.

19 Ibid., p. 272.

20 Sir James Willcocks, *The Romance of Soldiering and Sport* (London: Cassell, 1925), pp. 1-20, 202-260; Lt.-Col. Alban Wilson, *Sport und Service in Assam and Elsewhere* (London: Hutchinson, 1924), pp. 17, 280; Field-Marshal Lord Birdwood, *Khaki and Gown: An Autobiography* (London and Melbourne: Ward, Lock, & Co., 1941), pp. 32-36, 90-92.

21 A perusal of the volume for 1913 of the *Cavalry Journal* gives an indication of the general prewar atmosphere in the British Cavalry.

22 Anon., 'Explanations', *Cavalry Journal*, 10 (April 1920), p. 1.

23 Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force in France from late 1915 until the end of the Great War, had a very specific cavalry background. After commanding the 17th Lancers, he served as Inspector-General of Cavalry in India (1903-1906). He was also the author of an important text on cavalry. Major-General Douglas Haig, *Cavalry Studies: Strategical and Tactical* (London: Hugh Rees, 1907).

the journal would be required 'to record the cavalry history and the lessons of the war… [and] to correlate in the light of the experience of the war the policy and principles of the training of cavalry and allied arms'. He added that the duties of the cavalry had become more 'diverse and complicated' during the war.[24]

Nonetheless, if one examines the volume for 1920, there is a strong sense that cavalrymen had a feeling of foreboding about the future of their arm. On the one hand, there were the usual prewar-type articles on regimental polo, advice on how to handle horses, cavalry traditions, foreign views on cavalry and the careers of famous cavalrymen.[25] On the other, the implications of events in the Great War required some consideration, with articles appearing on the employment of cavalry on the Western Front, and in Palestine and Mesopotamia.[26] At the same time, there were articles which communicated not only the defensive attitude of the traditionalists, but which were also a response to three articles published by the most prominent postwar advocate of the tank in the army at the time, Colonel J.F.C. Fuller, dealing with cooperation between tanks and cavalry.[27]

One of the articles, authored by Major-General W.D. Bird, exuded the suspicion and contempt which many traditionalists felt towards the tank enthusiasts. For him, Fuller 'writes with the resolute assurance that can hardly fail to inspire either confidence in, or mistrust of, his opinions.' Bird naturally referenced the campaign of 1918 in Palestine as evidence of the continuing relevance of the horse in warfare. He also deployed a recurring argument of the defenders of the horse cavalry: the horse would one day become obsolete, but that day had not yet come. He reacted against Fuller's claim that the British High Command had

24 Field-Marshal Haig, 'Introductory Remarks', *Cavalry Journal*, 10 (1920), pp. 5-6.

25 In the *Cavalry Journal*, 10 (1920), examples are: Lt.-Gen. M.F. Rimington, 'Army Polo', pp. 437-41; Maj.-Gen. J. Vaughan, 'On Horse Management', pp. 7-14; Brevet Lt.-Col. H.S. Mosley, 'Observations on the Care and Management of Animals in a Mountain Sector', pp. 542-50; 'The French Horse Breeding and Remount Department', pp. 82-96; 'A French View of Cavalry and Armoured Cars', pp. 506-11; Maj.-Gen. Sir H.D. Fanshawe, 'Field-Marshal Sir Evelyn Wood, VC, GCB, GCMG', pp. 142-46; T. Miller Maguire, 'The Cavalry Career of Field-Marshal Viscount Allenby', pp. 379-84.

26 Examples are, *Cavalry Journal*, 10 (1920): 'The Belgian Cavalry in the Combat of Haelen, August 12th, 1914', pp. 442-45; Lt.-Gen. Sir H.D. Fanshawe, 'Cavalry in Mesopotamia in 1918', pp. 414-29; Maj. A.W.H. James, 'Co-operation Aircraft with Cavalry', pp. 481-87.

27 Col. J.F.C. Fuller, 'The Influence of Tanks on Cavalry Tactics (A Study in the Evolution of Mobility in War)', *Cavalry Journal*, 10 (1920): Part I, pp. 109-32; Part II, pp. 307-22; Part III, pp. 510-30.

displayed little imagination after the South African War, reflecting that while imagination 'is a priceless quality', it is 'not without its drawbacks'. According to Bird, peacetime armies lacked funding, hence experience tempers criticism, 'just as years are for many reasons usually opposed to ideas'.[28]

The nervousness with which cavalrymen considered the attacks on the viability of their arm was noted at the time by other military writers. Basil Liddell Hart, writing in 1925, commented that:

> «Cavalry enthusiasts, reluctant to see their old love disappear, draw such grains of comfort as they can find from its success in the limited sphere of close reconnaissance and for movement in uncivilized lands which happen to be flat and suitable for cavalry. In their anxiety to prepare a case for the defence they perhaps overstress this limited value.»

He continued, however, that 'the modernist school', who saw the cavalry as an anachronism, were destructive in their criticism. Yet, for him, the tank assault of the future would be 'but the long-awaited re-birth of the cavalry charge'.[29] The chief advocate of the future possibilities of the tank in the British Army in the 1920s, Colonel J.F.C. Fuller also argued that the tank would become a form of reincarnation of the cavalry.[30]

What was significant in the aftermath of the Great War, was that the reductions in the size of the British Army threatened the cavalry, in particular. The commander of the 2nd Lancers at Allahabad wrote to the Deputy Chief of the General Staff in India in June 1921 about the uncertainty being caused by the lack of information regarding the size of the reductions:

> «I know this question is causing more unrest and discontent than any other in India at the present moment and we keep on sending reminders to the

28 *Cavalry Journal*, 10 (1920): Maj.-Gen. W.D. Bird, 'Years versus Ideas', pp. 331-33; Lt.-Col. R.G.H. Howard-Vyse, 'A Defence of the Arme Blanche', pp. 323-30; Brig.-Gen. G.A. Weir, 'Some Critics of Cavalry and the Palestine Campaign', pp. 531-41. In an anonymous letter to the journal, an 'Indian Cavalry Officer of the Old 5th Cavalry Division', commented that, 'Colonel Fuller's remarks are inclined to strike one as being too general, and to be based entirely on what would now appear to be abnormal conditions.' See the letter published under, 'Notes. Cavalry and Tanks', pp. 557-58, quote, 557.

29 Capt. B.H. Liddell Hart, 'Mediaeval Cavalry and Modern Tanks', *The English Review*, 40 (July 1925), pp. 83-96, quotes, 93-94, 96.

30 J.F.C. Fuller, 'The Ancestors of the Tank', *Cavalry Journal*, 18 (April 1928), pp. 244-52; idem, 'The Mechanized Cavalry of the Future: How Armoured Machines are Replacing Horse Troops at the Tactical Pivot of Battle', *The Graphic*, 19 May 1928, p. 284.

> people at Home to get a move on and get something fixed. There will of course be a surplus of Cavalry officers when the amalgamation is complete but we hope to be able to absorb a large number in various vacancies.»[31]

The uncertainty surrounding the proposed cuts for 1922 certainly played on the minds of many. General Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd[32] wrote to a fellow officer that reductions would also be coming to India and that 'we have had to make big reductions in the Indian Cavalry'.[33]

Yet despite the uncertainties about the future, officers' minds were never far away from the desire for various forms of sport. One officer wrote to Montgomery-Massingberd from the Staff College in Camberley: 'This week, with Ascot on, and perfect weather, there is a general tendency to think rather of racing and cricket, etc. than the work here.' He reinforced the observation, noting: 'The Staff College is such an ideal jumping off place for every form of sport during May, June and July'.[34]

Nonetheless, despite the array of threats which British officers faced, and cavalry officers' desire to continue their sporting activities, there was an awareness that the use of tanks in India would save on both finance and men. According to Montgomery-Massingberd writing to Lieutenant-General Sir Philip Chetwode in September 1921, tanks and tracked vehicles were seen as offering excellent opportunities for greater efficiency for internal security and on the frontier. A continual worry was a war with Afghanistan which would stretch travel arrangements given the need for camels and mules, both of which were in short supply.[35] In reply, Chetwode commented that the cavalry 'must look forward or they will cease to exist.' In fact, even at this stage in the development of British ar-

31 Lt.-Col. H.C.S. Ward to Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, 28 June 1921, 8/16, Field-Marshal Sir Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd Papers, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London (hereafter, LHCMA).

32 For biographical details, J.P. Harris, 'Sir Archibald Armar Montgomery-Massingberd (1871-1947)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 4 October 2008, DOI:10.1093/ref:odnb/35082.

33 Montgomery-Massingberd to Col. L.W. de Sadlier-Jackson, 4 July 1921, 8/16, Montgomery- Massingberd Papers, LHCMA.

34 Maj.-Gen. W.H. Anderson to Montgomery-Massingberd, 15 June 1921, 8/16, Montgomery-Massingberd Papers, LHCMA.

35 Montgomery-Massingberd to Lt.-Gen. Sir Philip Chetwode, 27 September 1921, 8/18, Montgomery- Massingberd Papers, LHCMA.

moured forces, there was a clear vision for infantry and cavalry tanks, alongside cross-country tractors which would be used for supply.[36]

Still, there appears to have been an effort to defend the cavalry behind the scenes through the device of justifying their existence via doctrine manuals. In February 1921, the General Staff published a provisional cavalry training manual. While there was an acknowledgement that 'some of the duties which in the past could be accomplished only by mounted troops may, in future, be carried out by the air force, by fast-moving tanks, or by infantry conveyed in motor transport', cavalry was still viewed as an 'indispensable part of every army which takes the field in a country suitable for mounted movement'. Indeed, there was a clear message in favour of the *arme blanche*: 'Notwithstanding the fact that the destructive power of modern mechanical weapons tends to ever increase, the moral effect of a mounted attack with sword or lance remains as great as ever, where the enemy is not protected by physical or mechanical contrivances.'[37]

The sense of retrenchment regarding the protection of the cavalry had already been observable in the 1920 *Field Service Regulations, Vol. II. Operations* manual. In Chapter III, covering the fighting troops and their characteristics, it was noted that tanks had the task of assisting the infantry 'to achieve decisive success', which the reconnaissance role of cavalry was emphasized. Moreover, in the list of fighting troops, although infantry came first, they were followed by cavalry, mounted rifles and cyclists, with artillery and machine-guns dealt with before tanks. In the chapters on attack and defence, the role of cavalry was treated immediately after that of the infantry.[38]

Cavalry was considered at this point as an arm with the ability to cover long distances rapidly and cross uneven ground. It apparently possessed the ability to attack with the sword or lance, while it could also employ machine-guns and Hotchkiss rifles. It was asserted that it could combine fire and mounted action, and could 'exploit, either in attack or defence, the advantages inherent in its mo-

36 Chetwode to Montgomery-Massingberd, 6 September 1921, 8/18, Montgomery-Massingberd Papers, LHCMA.

37 General Staff, War Office, *Cavalry Training. Vol. II. War. 1920 (Provisional). 1920* (London: HMSO, February 1921), Ch. I, Sect. 1.1, pp. 9-10, LH 15/8/279, Sir Basil Liddell Hart Papers, LHCMA.

38 General Staff, War, Office, *Field Service Regulations. Vol. II. Operations. 1920. Provisional* (London: HMSO, 1920), Ch. III., pp. 21-22.

bility'. The view of cavalry as a reconnaissance force was combined with the belief that it would work in conjunction with the Royal Air Force. At the same time, the notion of its ability to act as a traditional screening force remained very much intact. It was claimed that the cavalry could break off an action more easily than the infantry, while it was to confirm and exploit the success of offensive operations conducted by the other arms. It was also considered useful as a local reserve once the battleline had stabilized.[39] Even in the finalized version of this manual, published in 1924, cavalry were considered to be 'usefully employed in protecting the defensive position' in mobile warfare on the defensive.[40] This understanding of the functions of cavalry was, in some respects, wishful thinking, but its advocates could always point to the successful employment of cavalry in France and Belgium, 1914 and 1918, and Palestine, 1917 and 1918.

II. The War Office Cavalry Committee of 1926

Despite the generosity towards the capabilities ascribed to the cavalry in the field service regulations, it was clear by the mid-1920s that mechanization required some difficult decisions be made in relation to cavalry units. For that reason, a War Office Cavalry Committee was formed in the summer of 1926 and tasked with giving recommendations on the organisation of the Cavalry, including to identify any regiments which could be considered to be surplus to requirements. The Chairman was Lieutenant-General Sir Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, with five further members and a secretary. Their main aim was to 'study the possibility of reducing the peace-time expenditure on the cavalry arm'.[41] They set out to consider three questions:

(i) What strength of cavalry is required for war and, consequently, how many regiments must be maintained in peace.

(ii) What measures should be taken to improve the effectiveness of the cavalry.

(iii) Whether any saving of expenditure is possible in order to provide funds necessary for carrying out measures suggested under (ii).[42]

39 Ibid., pp. 22-24.

40 War Office, *Field Service Regulations Volume II. Operations 1924* (London: HMSO, August 1924), p. 167.

41 The War Office, SECRET, Interim Report of the Cavalry Committee. Copy No. 15, 23 November 1926, pp. 1-3, 9/5/1, Montgomery-Massingberd Papers, LHCMA.

42 Ibid., p. 3.

The approach adopted included circulating a questionnaire to selected officers, according to their expertise: the first group (A) consisted of senior cavalry officers, the second (B), senior officers of other branches of service, with the third (C) consisting of less senior cavalry officers.[43]

The thirteen officers named in the 'A list' consisted of Field-Marshal Sir W. R. Birdwood, Generals Philip Chetwode and G. de S. Barrow, followed by two lieutenant-generals, four major-generals and four colonels. In the 'B list' there were nineteen officers, including three full generals, three lieutenant-generals, six major-generals and seven colonels. This list contained some of the most prominent names in the British Army: General Sir C.H. Harington, Major-Generals Sir C.F. Romer, Sir John Burnett-Stuart, Sir Edmund Ironside and C.W. Gwynn, alongside Colonels C.P. Deedes, John Dill, and the tank officers, George M. Lindsay, J.F.C. Fuller and Sir Hugh Elles. The C List consisted of twenty cavalry officers, with six colonels and fourteen lieutenant-colonels represented.[44]

All these officers were sent a questionnaire on 10 August which was to be returned to the War Office by 15 September 1926. The covering letter noted that, 'no measure involving increased expenditure can be adopted unless an equivalent saving can be made in some other direction'. Any proposals made which would involve an increased financial outlay required, therefore, an equivalent saving elsewhere. The letter included information on the annual cost of units and establishments.[45] The questionnaire itself began with a series of assumptions, the first of which was that: 'A Continental war is of extreme improbability.' This was accompanied by the presumption that an expeditionary force would be 'organized primarily with a view to a possible war in an underdeveloped country'. Likewise of note was the statement that, 'in view of the uncertainty as to the lines on which the development of tanks will proceed, tanks will not be included as part of a

43 Ibid., p. 3.

44 List of officers consulted by the Cavalry Committee, n.d. [1926], 9/5/4, Montgomery-Massingberd Papers, LHCMA.

45 SECRET AND PERSONAL, sample covering letter, n.d. [10 August 1926], 9/5/4, Montgomery- Massingberd Papers, LHCMA. The date when the covering letter was sent appears accurate since other recipients received the same letter, dated 10 August 1926, such as SECRET AND PERSONAL. Lt.-Col. E.K. Squires (Secretary, Cavalry Committee) to Col. George M. Lindsay (War Office, London S.W.1), 10 August 1926, LH 15/12/5, Liddell Hart Papers, LHCMA.

Cavalry formation', although this ruling did not apply to armoured cars.[46]

It must have been clear to the Committee from the outset that this was going to be a controversial task. A fellow officer wrote to Montgomery-Massingberd in August 1926, by which time the committee work was already underway, remarking: 'I don't envy you your Cavalry Committee and as you say any innovations will draw remonstrances from the diehards'.[47] Yet, the same individual wrote a few months later that, 'I can't believe the day of the horse is over as a fighting adjunct', even if he was willing to accept that the horse could be removed from transportation work if a machine could do the job better.[48] The emotion surrounding the entire issue of the future of the cavalry may have caused the Committee not to consider in the first iteration the 'desirability of retaining both the sword and the lance in the armament of cavalry'.[49]

The questionnaire sent by the Committee consisted of three basic questions:

- First, what was considered the most suitable composition for a Cavalry formation accompanying an Expeditionary Force of five infantry divisions?
- Second, was Corps Cavalry or Divisional Cavalry, or both, required in addition to the Cavalry formation?
- Third, for the purposes of the two preceding questions, how were the cavalry and their supporting units to be organized, armed and equipped?

The answers revealed that the majority which the Committee had created for cavalry officers provided a useful block on possible reforms. For the first question, 17 respondents favoured retaining the existing strength, with six arguing in favour of replacing three regiments with armoured car or machine-gun units, and only four arguing that the Cavalry Division was unnecessary. On the second question, 14 were in favour of Corps Cavalry, six were for Divisional Cavalry, with only three of the opinion that neither Corps nor Divisional Cavalry were necessary.[50]

46 SECRET AND PERSONAL. Questionnaire, n.d. [Aug. 1926], 9/5/4, Montgomery-Massingberd Papers, LHCMA.

47 Maj.-Gen. John F.S. Coleridge (Military Secretary's Branch, Army HQ, India) to Montgomery-Massingberd, 16 August 1926, 9/3/6, Montgomery-Massingberd Papers, LHCMA.

48 Coleridge to Montgomery-Massingberd, 29 November 1926, 9/3/6, Montgomery-Massingberd Papers, LHCMA.

49 War Office, Interim Report of the Cavalry Committee, p. 3, 9/5/7, Montgomery-Massingberd Papers, LHCMA.

50 Cavalry Committee, Summary of replies on main points, n.d., 9/5/4, Montgomery-Massin-

Whereas some officers simply submitted written statements, others were called to present evidence in person. Colonel George M. Lindsay and Colonel Sir H.J. Elles, for instance, gave evidence before the Committee on 18 and 19 October, as it was felt necessary to ask questions based on their written submissions. Lindsay argued that armoured cars were essential for the defence of communications and in suppressing anti-tank fire; he was adamant that 12 months was required to train the drivers. Much of the discussion revolved around future technical developments, with Elles of the opinion that cross-country armoured cars would replace tanks in the future. On this point he appeared still to be under the influence of his wartime experience. He did, however, argue that cavalry could not keep up with armoured cars, so should not be combined into one formation.[51] Based on this and other evidence, it becomes more understandable why the Cavalry Committee adopted some of the recommendations which in hindsight appeared to be ill-advised.

The final report, completed in early January the following year, did though take the bull by the horns and examine the thorny question of whether to retain the sword and the lance as cavalry weapons. The recommendation clearly aimed to take a middle ground: it was proposed that only one weapon be carried in addition to the rifle, either the sword or the lance. Nonetheless, the retention of the *arme blanche* by the cavalry was considered to be 'essential' with the justification given that experience in the late war in Palestine and Mesopotamia had demonstrated this. The one concession made to reform was that 'the present pattern of lance is unsuitable, owing to its length, weight, unhandiness and visibility', so that a more effective substitute needed to be found.[52]

It also contained, furthermore, reference to material not included in the interim report. Other subject matter covered was the composition of the Cavalry Division, measures for reducing the weight of the horse and the administration of the amalgamated cavalry regiments. The solutions to weight-reduction for horses were simple: first, some of the equipment carried by horses were to be either transferred to first-line transport, or abolished altogether; second, lighter

gberd Papers, LHCMA.

51 Cavalry Committee. Minutes of the 8th and 9th Meetings held at the War Office on 18th and 19th October, 1926, 9/5/4, Montgomery-Massingberd Papers, LHCMA.

52 The War Office. SECRET, Final Report of the Cavalry Committee. Copy No. 18, 4 January 1927, p. 10, 9/5/1, Montgomery-Massingberd Papers, LHCMA.

men were to be enlisted into the cavalry. Yet, overall the tactic adopted by the committee was to accept that at some point mechanization of both the cavalry itself and its transport would have to take place, but to argue – once again – that this moment had not yet come. Thus, as a result, the Royal Horse Artillery Brigade was to be retained as a horse-drawn unit in the Cavalry Division, although a concession was made in that the brigade ammunition column be mechanized with cross-country vehicles. As a further concession, it was stated: 'If and when, however, the substitution of cavalry in cross-country armoured cars for mounted cavalry commences, the question of the replacement of horse-drawn by mechanized artillery will have to be reconsidered.'[53]

In short, while the Cavalry Committee had made an effort to consult with influential officers across the British Army, including prominent tank enthusiasts such as Major-General Sir Hugh Elles, and Colonel J.F.C. Fuller and Colonel George M. Lindsay, there is a distinct sense in the documentary record that the Chairman of the Committee, Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, had made every effort to ensure that the cavalry was defended. That there were still very obvious reactionary views, and those determined to maintain the cavalry for emotional reasons, can be seen in some of the responses which the committee received. Colonel P.J.Y. Kelly, who belonged to the 'C List' of those consulted, wrote: 'For a nation with our vast commitments we must avoid, as much as possible, any further reduction in our cavalry strength.' Lieutenant-General Sir D.G.M. Campbell, a member of List A, commented:

> «The question of whether Cavalry will, and can, ever be entirely replaced by any form of tank is one that the future alone can decide: but that day has not yet arrived, nor is likely to arrive for some considerable time, must be clearly apparent to anyone less bigoted than the veritable tank maniac.»

Colonel G.A. Weir, another member of 'List A' was of the opinion that the French had made a mistake in discarding the *arme blanche*; moreover, he could not 'help feeling that in retaining it we have a great advantage in the attack over cavalry which depended almost entirely on fire power for both attack and defence.'[54]

The voices which were raised in favour, in effect, of abolition of the cavalry

53 Ibid., pp. 4-9.

54 Collected responses to the questionnaire, n.d., 9/5/2, Montgomery-Massingberd Papers, LHCMA.

should not be ignored, either. One such individual was the Inspector of the Royal Tank Corps, George M. Lindsay,[55] who produced a lengthy document in response to the questionnaire. He argued that the basic law of war was to achieve a balance between firepower, mobility and protection, and that where firepower was used in the nineteenth century, the *arme blanche* could achieve little against steadfast troops. According to Lindsay, the cavalry had been in decline throughout the nineteenth century, while he also challenged the view that the cavalry had done important work in 1918, pointing out the contribution of machine-gunners and armoured cars. In short, the horse was 'a very unsatisfactory vehicle for conveying our mobile firepower'. His conclusion was one which was unlikely to have gone down well with the committee: 'the cavalry division of the future should be completely mechanical, and should consist of Headquarters and four Brigades'.[56]

Likewise, not all the opinions from Lists A and C were those of die-hard defenders of the cavalry arm. It was not entirely unreasonable for senior officers, such as Field-Marshal Sir William Birdwood, to argue in the mid-1920s that a threat existed to the British Empire from Bolshevik Russia, so that Afghanistan, India and Persia might need cavalry forces to defend against some form of military aggression.[57] The key point to be made around the Cavalry Committee, nonetheless, was that its Chairman, Montgomery-Massingberd had made some effort to keep the peace within the Officer Corps over the question of the reform of the cavalry. The importance of this is that in 1933 he was to become Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) and would reach some crucial decisions when it came to the mechanization of the cavalry. For these two reasons, it seems remarkable that the two historians who have taken the question of the interwar cavalry most seriously have either ignored the Cavalry Committee completely, or have misinterpreted its historical significance.[58]

---

55 For biographical details, see J.P. Harris, 'George Mackintosh Lindsay (1880-1956)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 September 2010, DOI: 10.1093/ref:odnb/34540.

56 Colonel George M. Lindsay (Inspector, Royal Tank Corps), Reply to the questionnaire on the Cavalry requirements of the Army, 25 September 1926, LH 15/12/5, Liddell Hart Papers, LHCMA.

57 Ibid.

58 David French does not refer to the Cavalry Committee in his 2003 article in *War in History*. French, 'Mechanization of the British Cavalry', pp. 296-320. Larson, *Theory of Armored Warfare*, pp. 25-27, concludes that the final report 'demonstrated that the army was increasingly becoming aware of the limitations of the horse'. This statement is debatable;

Still, despite the 'defensive work' carried out by the Cavalry Committee, there were further threats to the cavalry which emerged in the second half of the 1920s. The CIGS, George Milne, had decided by June 1926 that the previous system of allotment of places at the Staff College according to arms of service be abolished for the officers who sought to enter by way of open competition. In that year the only cavalry officer who had been able to gain entry to Camberley had made use of the quota system. The matter was referred to the Army Council for a final decision.[59] Matters had not improved for the cavalry four years later when it was noted in August 1930 that both the cavalry and infantry alone had failed to secure their full quota of competitive places for the Staff College for courses commencing in January 1932.[60]

In the wake of the work of the Cavalry Committee, political efforts the following year to reduce expenditure on the cavalry ran into heavy opposition. After several months of disagreement, the Secretary of State for War had finally sanctioned the conversion of two cavalry regiments into armoured car units in October 1927, while the Cavalry Depot had already been abolished and cavalry regiments at home had been reduced by one squadron. But this was not before the CIGS, General George Milne, had passed on several memoranda warning about the dangers of cuts to the cavalry. While the CIGS was prepared to accept that at some point 'cavalry must give way to a mechanized arm', he could not say when that day would be, thus he was convinced there was a need for cavalry. To make further changes in the cavalry he considered a serious risk to national security. A memorandum had been penned by Milne, Walter Braithwaite, W.H. Anderson and Noel Birch, which argued - not unreasonably - that savings made through cutting cavalry would be unlikely to appear because investment would be required in new armoured vehicles which were not yet available. Noteworthy in this memorandum is the denial that 'reactionary tendencies' in the army was

---

it conceals the fact that the cavalry lobby remained extremely powerful and that Montgomery-Massingberd did what he could to appease them.

59 Minute. 43/S.C./4028, CIGS, 17 June 1926, Extract from Military Members Meeting, 1 July 1926, [signed] Col. J.F.C. Fuller, Military Assistant to CIGS, 5 July 1926, and Minute, 26 July 1926, WO 32/3090, The National Archives of the United Kingdom, Kew (hereafter, TNA).

60 Staff College. Allotment of Vacancies By Arms, Minute No. 21, Charles Bonham-Carter, Director of Staff Duties, 4 August 1930, WO 32/3092, TNA.

what was behind the defence of the cavalry.[61]

While the arguments in favour of maintaining cavalry forces were generally sound on the point that the mechanization of the cavalry would take several years, and that the conflict which the army had to prepare for would be most likely outside Western Europe, the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, had the suspicion that the opposition did spring from reactionary attitudes. In a letter to him in July of that year from the Secretary of State for War, Sir Laming Worthington-Evans, the latter sought to reassure him that 'far from there being any opposition in the higher ranks of the Army to mechanization and new weapons, they are one and all thinking of nothing else'.[62]

Such reassurance sounded hollow, however, not least of all if some of the pro-cavalry memoranda are considered. One written by Field-Marshal Edmund Allenby communicated the romanticism surrounding cavalry forces. According to him: 'Obstacles are more easily avoided or overcome by the suppleness of the equestrian; and the cavalier can take cover with greater facility than can the armoured car or tank.' Experience had allegedly shown 'that Cavalry, under a leader possessed of a quick brain and sound judgment, can still use the cold steel with as deadly effect as did the Paladins of old.' The horse's coat enabled it to 'defy both cold and heat'.[63]

Despite the acceptance that the days of the cavalry were numbered, the General Staff continued to indulge the cavalry in the illusion that the day for their abolition still lay many years in the future. Between 10 and 12 April 1929, a War Office Exercise was held at Aldershot under the direction of Major-General A.E.W. Harman, Inspector of Cavalry. The widely circulated report, signed (and thereby endorsed) by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field-Marshal Sir George Milne, declared that 'there is still work which can be done only by cavalry'. It was also claimed that the introduction of machine-gun carriers had 'con-

61 Minute, Adjutant General to Secretary of State for War (via CIGS), 27 October 1920, G.F. Milne to Secretary of State for War, 3 November 1927, SECRET. Memorandum on the Reorganization of the Cavalry, 30 June 1927, WO 32/2846, TNA.

62 SECRET. Sir L. Worthington-Evans to Stanley Baldwin, 1 July 1927, responding to Baldwin to Worthington-Evans, 20 June 1920, WO 32/2846, TNA.

63 Field-Marshal [Edmund] Allenby, Cavalry's Future, 1 November 1927, and, also, Extract from private letter from Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson, 3 November 1927, WO 32/2846, TNA.

siderably increased the power of the cavalry' because they had been freed from some of their logistic load. Scout cars were written off as possessing 'negligible' fighting power. In fact, there was a constant effort to play down the value of armoured cars, which were vulnerable if they lost their mobility, while the tendency to overworking them – 'particularly at night' – had to be avoided.[64]

Furthermore, despite the wind of change blowing in the direction of the cavalry, the new edition of the *Field Service Regulations. Vol. II. Operations*, published in 1929, appeared at first glance to continue to sit on the fence. Drawing from the 1928 manual on cavalry training, it was noted that 'the chief characteristics of cavalry are mobility, the power of dispersion and the power to deliver a mounted attack'. While the goal of cavalry remained the mounted attack, it required the support of machine-guns and artillery. While its traditional roles remained enumerated – reconnaissance, protection, pursuit, withdrawal, raids and use as a mobile reserve – on the other hand it was pointed out that as a result of the introduction of aircraft and armoured fighting vehicles, 'cavalry unaided will have little striking power, except in certain theatres where the enemy's armament and fighting value are relatively inferior'. Yet, it was asserted that with supporting arms, and the mechanization of cavalry transport, the striking power and range of cavalry formations had been 'greatly increased'.[65]

Later in the manual, the reality of the situation on the battlefield was spelt out with absolute clarity. In the section on 'Cavalry in the attack', it was laid down that commanders were required to ensure that cavalry formations were only employed on minor operations and those of an essential nature. It was noted that cavalry 'by itself can seldom hope to achieve decisive success', with the overthrow of the enemy dependent upon all arms cooperation. Surprise by large bodies of cavalry was seen as a phenomenon of the past. Nonetheless, with cooperation with air forces, and an advantageous situation on the battlefield, there remained the dream of cavalry intervening against demoralised and unprepared troops.[66] In essence, the cavalry had survived the questioning of its viability during the 1920s.

64 War Office. Report on War Office Exercise No. 1 (1929). Aldershot, 10th-12th April, esp. pp. 6, 8, 15-17, WO 279/66, TNA.

65 War Office, *Field Service Regulations. Volume II. Operations. 1929* (London: HMSO, 9 August 1929), pp. 12-14.

66 Ibid., pp. 126-28.

III. The Decision for Mechanization: The First Half of the 1930s

The decision to mechanize the cavalry cannot be identified as one single decision but rather a continual process running over several years. One could argue it was more of a gradual drift, caused by multiple factors. What is important is that it was heavily influenced by General Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd who took over as Chief of the Imperial General Staff from George Milne on 19 February 1933. While many of the highly damaging developments for the British Army occurred under the tenureship of the post of CIGS of his two successors, it was Montgomery-Massingberd who laid the basis for a flawed policy towards mechanization, understandable though it appears with the benefit of hindsight. His approach was coloured by three elements: first, the view that the main task of the army was imperial policing; second, his caution in matters of military reform; and, third, his stubborn defence of army traditions.[67]

It is worth noting in this context that the historian who has been most critical of the J.F.C. Fuller and Liddell Hart versions of mechanization in the interwar period, J.P. Harris, and who has been a staunch defender of Montgomery-Massingberd as CIGS, still admits that Montgomery-Massingberd was 'not an expert' on the subject of mechanized warfare. Moreover, Harris writes: 'The official suggestions put forward by the General Staff under his leadership for the composition of the Mobile Division had serious weaknesses and seem to have been unduly influenced by a desire to find congenial employment for cavalry regiments.' Thus, despite his positive assessment of 'M-M' as CIGS, Harris does concede that there were deficiencies in the approach adopted by the General Staff during the mid-1930s.[68]

Documents on army training in the first half of the decade make clear that, if the cavalry continued to be seen as a significant part of the fighting force, at the same time there were serious problems, some of which had already been identified by the Cavalry Committee in 1926. In a report on training in 1934-35, it was noted that the equipment worn by the cavalry was unsuitable. It was recommend-

67 Montgomery-Massingberd's own portrayal of his career confirms the interpretation of his commitment to tradition. See A.A. Montgomery- Massingberd, The Autobiography of a Gunner, TS, n.d., file 10/11, Montgomery- Massingberd Papers, LHCMA.

68 J.P. Harris, *Men, Ideas and Tanks: British Military Thought and Armoured Forces, 1903-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 264.

ed that the cavalry be issued with anti-tank guns, the Lanchester armoured car was considered inadequate, and needed to be replaced with a lighter and less conspicuous machine, while difficulties had been encountered with horse shoes slipping on tarmac roads. Above all, although light cars had been rejected in the past as reconnaissance vehicles, it was argued that the distances which often needed to be covered made the use of them essential on occasions, so that training with light cars needed to be undertaken.[69] Yet, despite the obvious problems, the CIGS, Montgomery-Massingberd, who had signed off on the report, remained wedded to the employment of cavalry forces in the future.

There were, in fact, two interrelated decisions which can be traced back to 1934 which seriously impeded the development of armoured forces in the British Army, in terms of their equipment, structure and doctrine. The first of these was the failure to follow the advice of the army's armour experts and develop a sound medium tank. In part due to lack of funding, but also due to the extensive technical challenges, and the more promising, short-term benefits offered by a light tank, not least of all a lower price-tag, the medium tank project was gradually abandoned. Moreover, when General Sir Hugh Elles was appointed to the post of Master General of the Ordnance in May 1934, he requested the development of a more heavily armoured infantry tank which would be able to resist anti-tank weapons.[70]

To the problems in tank design was added Montgomery-Massingberd's concept of a Mobile Division in which cavalry were to take their place. In October 1934, he noted in a minute that he had 'reached the provisional conclusion', rather than an independent Tank Brigade and a Cavalry Division (containing two horsed cavalry brigades), that a better solution would be a Mobile Division consisting of a Tank Brigade and a mechanized cavalry brigade, supplemented by 'an adequate proportion of reconnaissance and supporting troops'. This solution was still to leave one horsed cavalry brigade of three regiments and divisional cavalry regiments, 'for whose role mounted men are necessary'. He also thought that the

69 War Office, *Army Training Memorandum No. 14. Collective Training Period, 1934 (Supplementary) and Individual Training Period, 1934-35* (War Office, 22 May 1935), pp. 13-14, WO 231/230, TNA.

70 Harris, *Men, Ideas and Tanks*, pp. 238-40; War Office, First Report of the Mechanization Board covering the Period 1st January 1934 to 31st December 1934, pp. 13-20, WO 33/1367, TNA.

horsed regiments in Egypt would be mechanized at some point. The plan was that experiments were to be carried out in the 2nd Cavalry Brigade and the 12th Lancers. But it did not take long before the Quartermaster General raised the problem of cost, especially of the accommodation for the light tanks.[71]

Still, on 8 December 1934, the War Office forwarded a memorandum on the organization of mobile troops, noting that it was intended to commence experiments in the 2nd Cavalry Brigade with a motorized cavalry regiment; the 3rd King's Own Hussars had been selected for this purpose.[72] The final report on these mechanization experiments took until the following October to complete. The General Officer Commanding, Southern Command, John Burnett-Stuart, under whose authority the experiments had taken place, expressed disagreement on some points with the Commander of the 3rd Hussars, whom he thought had the wrong conception of the tasks which a motorized cavalry regiment should undertake. He admonished that such a unit 'can never be tactically independent', disagreeing with the 'inevitable tendency' to want heavier weapons, including mortars, to be included.[73] The length of the time it took to complete the experiments and the tendency of the senior leadership to impose their fixed opinions gave an indication of the hurdles ahead.

Crucial for an understanding of the plans to mechanize the cavalry is a memorandum completed by Montgomery-Massingberd in September 1935, entitled 'Future Organization of the British Army'. Although he acknowledged 'the gradual disappearance of the horse', he also noted that 'many urgent reforms have perforce been deferred'. He rightly understood that if war were to come in Europe, 'if our intervention is to be effective it must be prompt'. The division was to be the key element in the fighting force to be despatched to France; it was also to be anticipated that 'rapid movement of enemy troops and the presence of armoured fighting vehicles in most formations' would characterise the opening stages of the war. Still, he also considered that an unresolved question was

71 Minute. A.A.M.M. (CIGS) to A.G., Q.M.G., M.G.O., P.U.S., 15 October 1934, Q.M.G. to C.I.G.S., 23 November 1934, WO 32/2847, TNA.

72 War Office, 20/Cavalry/831 (S.D.2.), memorandum, 8 December 1934, WO 32/2847, TNA.

73 Report on the Mechanisation of 3rd Hussars. General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Southern Command, to Under Secretary of State, War Office, Salisbury, 28 October 1935, WO 32/2847, TNA.

that of 'the mobility of the divisional cavalry', which would be best resolved by the introduction of mechanized cavalry. His 'mobile division' was to include two armoured car regiments, one or two mechanized cavalry brigades, one tank brigade, two horse-artillery brigades and one horsed cavalry brigade. Were the ongoing experiments for the mechanization of cavalry to be successful, 'the conversion of cavalry regiments would not seriously affect the Cardwell System'.[74]

Although many of the broad strategic judgments made by him were sound, his determination to maintain at least some of the regimental cavalry identities obviously influenced his overall thinking. This was not entirely surprising as the cavalry continued to emphasize their distinctive traditions and, in essence, social standing. Responding to a report on the mechanization of the 3rd Hussars, the Inspector of Cavalry stated under the heading of 'Dress': 'I cannot urge too strongly that some special form of clothing is essential for personnel of mechanised cavalry. O.C. 3rd Hussars has gone into the question very thoroughly and his recommendations should be carefully considered.'[75] Here was yet another sign that the cavalry wished to maintain as far as possible its distinctive military identity.

While decision-making around tank design had started to go in the wrong direction in 1934, the doctrine-making system which had been established during the Great War remained intact. Towards the end of 1935, a new edition of the field service regulations was published which provides an interesting indication of how thinking on the cavalry had evolved. Unlike the 1929 *Field Service Regulations. Vol. II*, which had placed cavalry second in the list of fighting troops, after the infantry, and before artillery and armoured units, the 1935 manual placed armoured troops (tanks and armoured cars) before the cavalry. Although some of the old platitudes about cavalry remained, such as, the 'principal attribute of the horse-soldier is mobility', there was an attempt to downgrade its value. Cavalry was considered to be less mobile and more vulnerable than armoured forces, the concealment of large bodies of cavalry from the air presented 'serious difficulties', and it could only employ a limited proportion of its strength for dismounted

74 A. Montgomery-Massingberd, CIGS, SECRET. Future Organization of the British Army, 9 September 1935, Minute 20/General/5508, A.A.M.M. CIGS to Secretary of State, 9.9.1935, CIGS, 3.10.1935, with the instruction that the paper be passed to members of the Army Council, WO 32/4612, TNA.

75 Inspector of Cavalry to Director of Military Training, 8 November 1935, WO 32/2847, TNA.

action.[76]

Significant, likewise, is that in later sections of the manual on attack and defence, the word cavalry was dropped completely, with reference made in the headings merely to 'mounted troops'. Their employment in an attack was adjudged to be of value only before and after a battle, for pursuit or covering a withdrawal, while 'they should only be employed in the actual battle when it is considered that the chance of obtaining a decisive success justified their exposure to the risk of heavy casualties.' Judging the right moment when they were to be introduced was extremely difficult, since 'opportunities are fleeting and hard to perceive'. Yet, despite all the caveats, the section on mounted troops during a defensive action continued to emphasize their role in flank protection and reconnaissance.[77] Although the General Staff was clearly trying to detach the cavalry gradually from serious operational planning, it continued to try and appease the cavalry faction, so much so, that one generally very positive review of the 1935 *FSR II. Operations* manual in the leading army journal, commented that 'it is certainly not easy to understand the exaltation of the cavalry arm'.[78]

IV. Delay and Confusion: The Second Half of the 1930s

The period from 1936 to 1939, which saw the departure of Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd as CIGS in March 1936, was decisive in terms of the slow attempts to mechanize the cavalry which only served to hinder the development of British armoured forces. While it may be that the fatal decisions had already been made under 'M-M', especially in relation to the development of light and cruiser tanks, worse was to come, both in terms of the slow efforts to create mechanized forces and in doctrine. Central to both problems was the ripple effect caused by the strength of the 'cavalry lobby' inside the British Army. The complexities around the mechanization of the cavalry presented a serious problem to the British Army's armoured force.

---

76 War Office, *FSR II. Operations* (1929), Ch. II., pp. 10-18; War Office, *Field Service Regulations. Volume II. Operations–General. 1935* (London: HMSO, 30 November 1935), Ch. I. Fighting Troops, esp. I.3., pp. 5-6.

77 War Office, *FSR II. Operations-General* (1935), Ch. VI, Sect. 61, pp. 123-24, Ch. VII, Sect. 72, pp. 142-43.

78 Anon., 'Tactical Doctrine Update: Field Service Regulations, Part II, 1935', *Army Quarterly*, 32 (July 1936), pp. 262-68.

After Montgomery-Massingberd had been replaced by Field-Marshal Cyril Deverell[79] as CIGS, the progress in the mechanization of the cavalry remained slow. In April 1936, a request was communicated to the War Office from the Commander of British Troops in Egypt as to the likely date for the conversion of the 7th Queen's Own Hussars from horsed cavalry to a light tank regiment, and from what source he would be provided with tanks. An internal War Office memorandum at the end of September 1936 noted that, following the approval by the Secretary of State for War of the proposals by the CIGS for the mechanization of the cavalry, it was essential that a letter should be issued to commands conveying the decision. Still, there had been no decision on the location of some of the divisional cavalry regiments, the 1st Cavalry Brigade and cavalry regiments located in India. Despite the obvious urgency, a reply was quickly sent that while 'the S. of S. has approved in principle the C.I.G.S.'s proposal for re-organization, it still remains to examine the details and if necessary to obtain extension of the financial authorities which at present regulate our powers'.[80]

Towards the end of 1936, a Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence, met to discuss the tank situation. It was pointed out that financial stringency had hampered tank experimentation between 1927 and 1936, the Disarmament Conference had hindered the production of a suitable medium tank, while anti-war sentiment had discouraged arms companies from developing new machines. There was a new requirement for both infantry and cruiser tanks, with light tanks necessary for the four light tank cavalry regiments of the mobile division, for two light tank cavalry regiments in Egypt and possibly for four divisional cavalry regiments. At this stage, the medium tank was still an option, but there were three experimental types being developed.[81]

Despite these difficulties, late 1936 did bring one positive decision. The experimentation being undertaken by the 3rd Hussars into the possibilities of motorized cavalry had continued that summer. The two officers involved concluded

79 For further biographical details, J.P. Harris, 'Sir Cyril John Deverell (1874-1947)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 3 January 2008, DOI: 10.1093/ref:odnb/32799.

80 SECRET. General Officer C-in-C, British Troops in Egypt, to Under-Secretary of State, War Office, 4 April 1936, E.K. Squires, Director of Staff Duties, Mechanization of Cavalry, 30 September 1936, D.F.A. to D.S.D., 1 October 1936, WO 32/2826, TNA.

81 SECRET. Committee of Imperial Defence, Sub-Committee on Defence Policy and and Requirements, The Tank Situation, War Office, 19 October 1936, WO 32/4441, TNA.

that unless their troops were trained as infantry, there was little point in continuing down this route. At a meeting on 13 November in the War Office, it was thus decided that all mechanized cavalry units should be converted into light tank regiments. With this decision, the idea of motorized cavalry was finished off completely.[82]

During the course of 1937 progress continued to be slow as the penny-pinching Treasury constantly issued requests for 'further clarification'. A memorandum sent to the Director of Staff Duties in May gives some sense of the stuttering progress in terms of the procurement of tanks. As regards medium tanks, the War Office had received authority 'in principle' for 241. But the Treasury had requested that 'we shall not order reserves till the reserve position has been further elucidated', hence they could order no more than 164 in the first batch. In the case of infantry tanks, according to the same principle, although 565 had been agreed, it was not possible for the first order to exceed 548. When it came to cruiser tanks, orders could not be placed until the new tank programme was approved. A War Office memorandum had requested 1,855 machine gun carriers, which had been approved 'in principle, subject to a hold up of orders for war wastage pending consideration of the wastage reserve requirements.'[83]

Moreover, a serious clash occurred between Cyril Deverell, the CIGS, and Leslie Hore-Belisha, the Secretary of State for War, over the former's recommendation of General Michael Blakiston-Houston as commander of the Mobile Division. Hore-Belisha thought Blakiston-Houston to be unimpressive and a typical cavalry officer. The argument rumbled on for two months; Deverell finally agreed to withdraw his proposal, but did not appoint a tank advocate. This affair demonstrated how deeply the rift between the defenders of the cavalry and their opponents, including politicians, went. It also proved to be the beginning of the end as CIGS for Deverell, who was successfully replaced on the recommendation of Hore-Belisha to the Prime Minister.[84]

Of course, it is a tricky point to argue that the decision to mechanize the cavalry caused the British Army to move away from the medium tank, since there were

82 Larson, *Theory of Armored Warfare*, pp. 188-89.

83 Register No. 57/Tanks/2180. Minute sheet No. 34. D.U.S. to D.S.D., 24 May 1937, WO 32/4441, TNA.

84 Larson, *Theory of Armored Warfare*, pp. 206-9.

several factors which contributed to this decision. Nonetheless, the problems surrounding the process of mechanizing the cavalry did seem, at the very least, to cement a general trend after 1934 away from the sounder concept of a medium tank. The need to preserve the identity of the cavalry regiments distorted the underlying vision of the Mobile Division. According to one training pamphlet:

> «The Mobile Division is intended to provide the mobile component of any force that may be put into the field in the same way as the old Cavalry Division provided the mobile element of the Expeditionary Force.»

The difficulty here was that this reflected Montgomery-Massingberd's use of the opening months of the Great War as a point of reference. As a result, his idea of the purpose of the Mobile Division was, in essence, a listing of the tasks of the Cavalry Division of 1914. Moreover, the Royal Horse Artillery was advised that it would be required to maintain 'a standard of driving and vehicle maintenance as high as that of horse management'.[85] The language here reveals the determination on the part of some officers to cling to their equestrian identity.

The composition of the Mobile Division as laid down in April 1938 pointed towards the problems it faced. The Headquarters was located at Andover in the south of England, the 1st Cavalry Brigade was housed in Aldershot, the 2nd Cavalry Brigade at Tidworth in the north of England, the 1st Tank Brigade was based at Perham Down, the Armoured Car Regiment was at Tidworth, the 1st Brigade of Artillery at Aldershot, the 2nd was located in Newport, the Royal Engineers element was at Aldershot, while three squadrons of the Royal Corps of Signals were located at Aldershot, Tidworth and Perham Down.[86] This listing followed what had been described earlier in the year as 'confusion and difficulty… arising from discrepancies in the Army List as regards Units of the Mobile Division'.[87] Even if this was a minor administrative matter, it pointed to the complexities of attempting to combine different units which were dispersed across the country. The complexities of the training arrangements were made all too clear in a mem-

85 *Mobile Division. Training Pamphlet No. 3. Notes in the Tactical Employment of a Royal Horse Artillery Regiment, 1938* (War Office, 1938), pp. 1-2, available online at https://vickersmg.blog/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/v05428.pdf.

86 Headquarters, Southern Command, Salisbury, to Under Secretary of State, War Office, 4 March 1938, WO 32/2826, TNA.

87 HQ, Southern Command, Salisbury. Subject: Training and Administration - Mobile Division, To: Under Secretary of State, War Office, 2 February 1938, WO 32/2826, TNA.

orandum which outlined the arrangements for tactical and weapon, educational, physical, technical and experimental training.[88]

Moreover, the desire to maintain cavalry regimental identity continued to manifest itself in decisions surrounding the process of mechanization. At a meeting of the Co-ordinating Committee of the Army Council (C.C.A.C.) in September 1938, it was finally agreed that the site for the combined training of recruits for mechanized cavalry regiments was to be at Bovington, the old home of the Royal Tank Corps. In addition to the requirement for Treasury sanction for the conversion of the existing hutted accommodation, it was to be recommended to the Secretary of State for War that the combined corps of mechanized cavalry and the Royal Tank Corps be named Armoured Corps. It was not thought that the prefix 'Royal' would be required because the existing regiments would retain their full titles. Here was an obvious sign of the importance for senior officers of the maintenance of the traditions of cavalry regiments.[89]

The policy of Montgomery-Massingberd to mechanize as many cavalry units as possible, one continued by his two successors as CIGS, Sir Cyril Deverell and Lord Gort,[90] was accompanied by a shift from the established system of doctrine manuals to a new approach: the issuing of various training pamphlets. This was, in effect, a departure from the previous system of interlocking manuals in favour of training pamphlets which were not coordinated with the field service regulations.[91] One of these manuals explained in 1938 that there were two types of mechanized cavalry units – the cavalry light tank regiment and the divisional cavalry regiment: the former had the task to provide reconnaissance and protection for the mobile division through long and medium range information gathering, screening and hampering enemy reconnaissance forces; the latter was required to engage in close reconnaissance. Why separate forces were required at this stage

88 General C-in-C, Southern Command, Subject: Training and Administration – Mobile Division, Salisbury, 11 March 1938, WO 32/2826, TNA.

89 C.C.A.C. 61. 8. Training of recruits of mechanized Cavalry Regiments, 9. Name of the combined corps of mechanized Cavalry and R.T.C., 22nd Meeting, 7 September 1938, WO 163/67, TNA.

90 Biographical details for Gort in Brian Bond, 'General Lord Gort', in John Keegan (ed.), *Churchill's Generals* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), pp. 34-50.

91 On this ignored historical issue, Alaric Searle, '"The Great Doctrine Disaster": Reform, Reaction, and Mechanization in the British Army, 1919-1939', *Journal of Military History*, 87 (July 2023), pp. 599-632.

in the mechanization process for these two tasks is a question which is difficult to answer – but it does seem as if these distinctions were simply designed to assist in the preservation of certain cavalry units.[92]

A similar pamphlet which considered the Cavalry Light Tank Regiment commented that its purpose was 'to provide a tactical doctrine which will form the basis for experiment and discussion during the 1938 training season.' It was explained that the decision to provide more or less all cavalry regiments with light tanks had been made 'to enable these regiments to carry out more efficiently the proper functions of cavalry'. This suggests that a degree of persuasion had been necessary to convince some cavalrymen that it was time to give up their horses. Beyond the repetition of the age-old tasks of the cavalry, the pamphlet did at least attempt in the conclusion to communicate some of the maxims of armoured warfare: surprise and mislead the enemy; when on the offensive, pin the enemy down before attacking him in the flank; conceal positions when on the defensive; the force must fight as a coordinated whole; mobility depends on rapidity of thought as much as on speed of movement; in a pursuit, push forward boldly.[93]

Up until 1939 the cavalry was able to continue to remain represented in military manuals and training documents. As late as September 1939, the first pamphlet in a series of documents designed to update the *Field Service Regulations. Vol. II. Operations* of 1935 included a section on 'Cavalry, Yeomanry and Scouts'. Although it was conceded that 'in a country with good roads, horsed cavalry is now inferior in speed to armoured forces and infantry in lorries and buses', it was claimed that it remained the most mobile arm in thickly wooded or hilly country and, in countries with good roads, for the close reconnaissance of woods and buildings. It was stated that it possessed a greater power of dispersion than armoured troops while, remarkably, the individual horsed soldier was armed with a rifle for use when dismounted and a sword for mounted attack. To support its action, cavalry units were equipped with light machine-guns and a proportion

92 War Office, *Military Training Pamphlet No. 4. Notes on Mechanized Cavalry Units. 1938* (War Office, 1938), pp. 1-5, WO 231/133, TNA.

93 *Mobile Division Training Pamphlet No. 1. Notes on the Tactical Employment of a Cavalry Light Tank Regiment. 1938* (War Office, 1938), pp. i, 1, 52, available online at https://vickersmg.blog/wp-contents/uploads/2018/01/1938-uk-mobiledivisiontraining-pamphlet-no1v05426.pdf.

of light cars and motorcycles.[94]

Another pamphlet, issued by the War Office in January 1939, reveals the stagnation in doctrine which was, at least in part, caused by the desperate efforts to maintain some form of cavalry identity in the army. Written to explain the organization of a mechanized divisional cavalry regiment, the pamphlet began by referring the reader to the manuals *Cavalry Training (Horsed)* of 1937, *Cavalry Section Leading* (1934), *Military Training Pamphlet No. 4* (1938) and *Tank and Armoured Car Training* (1927). The regiment contained a total of 28 tanks, 44 scout carriers, 37 trucks and 41 motorcycles. The tasks remained those of traditional cavalry – reconnaissance, protection, guarding flanks, covering, conducting a pursuit and forming a mobile reserve. Almost inevitably, there was a desperate attempt to preserve the 'cavalry spirit': '*Like horsed cavalry*, mechanized cavalry will move by bounds from one tactical feature to another.' (My italics, AS.) The obvious weakness of this regiment was that its tanks were only armed with machine-guns. Hence, should enemy heavy tanks be encountered, 'the only possible action is to try to entice them to a flank, or to where it is known adequate anti-tank defence is placed.'[95]

To sum up, the second half of the 1930s saw a slow and painful attempt at a transition from horsed cavalry to the mechanization of cavalry units. While the cavalry could not be held responsible for the financial problems in the first half of the decade which hindered the development of new tanks, its flawed concept of mechanized units hindered severely the creation of a properly balanced armoured division. As a result the British Army went to war in 1939/40 with too many poorly armoured and under-gunned light tanks which were unsuited to the modern battlefield.

94 War Office, Military Training Pamphlet No. 23. Part I.-- General Principles, Fighting Troops and their Characteristics. 1939 (War Office: William Clowes for HMSO, September 1939), pp. 23-24, WO 231/161, TNA.

95 War Office, *Military Training Pamphlet No. 12. Notes on Organization, Training and Employment of a Mechanized Divisional Cavalry Regiment. 1939* (War Office: January 1939), pp. 3-6, 14, WO 231/142, TNA.

Conclusion

In seeking to reach a conclusion as to the hitherto unresolved issue of whether the cavalry hindered reform in the British Army, or whether they promoted realistic, gradualist policies, it is important to grasp that the impact of the cavalry was not entirely direct. It could be described as a form of 'ripple effect'. At one level, the social structure of the British Army in the interwar period was such that old regimental loyalties continued under the surface.[96] Sentimentality played a significant role as well since many officers looked back with nostalgia to their early service years in India, in particular remembering their days playing polo and hunting. The emotions created, which were imbued with a class-based distaste for things mechanical, meant that those considering reform had to move extremely carefully. This explains the defensive positions adopted by Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd when chairing the Cavalry Committee, not to mention his approach to mechanization while serving as CIGS.

It was the emotional impact of the determination to cling to the horse which distorted mechanization in the British Army, including doctrinal developments. Symbolic of the hold of the 'cavalry spirit' on the army was a memorandum, which was considered by the Co-ordinating Committee of the Army Council in May 1939. Enquiries had been received from Mobile Divisions and Cavalry Brigades at home and in Egypt, likewise from the Royal Armoured Corps and Anti-Tank Regiments of the Royal Artillery, as to whether chargers could be provided for officers. The Director of Military Training considered the horse essential for military training in relation to tactical training, supervision of tactical training and umpiring. Although by this point it had been ruled out for active operations, it remained a significant adjunct to training in peace. He thus wished that all Royal Tank Regiment and Mechanized Cavalry Regiment officers, and all staff officers of mobile formations, receive a horse. He provided two further arguments for the retention of chargers for cavalry officers: their historic association with the cavalry; and it would be difficult to recruit officers for the cavalry if horses were withdrawn.[97]

96 On the British regimental system, see David French, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army, and the British People, c. 1870-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), esp. Ch. 4. 'The Construction of the Idea of "the Regiment"', pp. 76-98.

97 C.C.A.C. 235. Provision of Chargers for Officers of Mobile Formations and Units. Memo-

The proposal for an increase in the number of chargers was followed up two months later in another memorandum which pointed out that the issue was one of equity due to the creation of the Royal Armoured Corps: this had led to a situation which had seen officers of mechanized cavalry units, who had a provision for horses, serving alongside officers of the Royal Tank Regiment who had had no provision for horses since 1928. It was finally agreed that the Treasury would most likely not allow a reintroduction of chargers into the Royal Tank Regiment. The Adjutant General then called into question most of the arguments made for the retention of horses, doubting whether a commander of an armoured unit would ever command from a horse and likewise calling into question, at least indirectly, the claim that lack of horses was affecting the recruitment of cavalry officers.[98] While the proposal to increase horses went nowhere,[99] the fact that it was being discussed at all on the eve of war does provide an obvious indication of the lingering influence of the 'cavalry spirit'.

All in all, this final moment of resistance of the social conservatives in the British Army points towards the largely destructive role which the cavalry played throughout the interwar period. While senior officers were always prepared to concede that the cavalry would need to mechanize, and that armoured vehicles would soon dominate the battlefield, they were able to employ the argument, at least in the 1920s, that this day had not yet come, so horsed cavalry would need to remain because conflict might break out at any moment in under-developed countries. The argument was made repeatedly in internal memoranda, as well as in journal articles.

In an article in the *Cavalry Journal* in 1929, for instance, one general argued that although the future of cavalry was being called into question as never before, this was not the first time 'that the justification for its existence as one of the principal arms of warfare has been called into question'. He also claimed that the cavalry had never been of use in siege warfare, yet the public had forgotten the many examples where cavalry had been used successfully. He concluded that

randum by D.M.T., 12 May 1939, WO 163/69, TNA.

98 C.C.A.C. 287. Provision of Chargers for Officers of Mobile Formations and Units, H.J. Creedy, 31 July 1939, WO 163/69, TNA.

99 It was finally agreed that 'the present scale of horses with cavalry and ex-cavalry (now armoured corps) regiments' would be guaranteed for three years; the Treasury was to be informed. C.C.A.C. 287. 68th Meeting, 9 August 1939, WO 163/69, TNA.

'the value of cavalry… has remained undiminished in spite of the advances of science', and further that it was 'unscientific to make deductions from speculative imaginations instead of from observed facts and experiences'. It was possible that the mechanized arm would 'some day' perform all the duties of cavalry, but he called into question whether 'the mechanized arm can do this much to-day or in the immediate future'. He even argued that if more mobile operations took place with mechanical vehicles in the next war, the influence of the mounted arm would be enhanced. And, the reader was warned not to be led astray by 'verbose prophecies'.[100]

It is, therefore, all things considered, very difficult to agree with the claim of some historians that the British Cavalry did not seriously hinder the progress of mechanization in the army.[101] While not all cavalry officers were reactionaries, there were no real reformers among them. In essence, the British Cavalry conducted throughout the interwar period, in keeping with one of its main tactical functions, a fighting withdrawal in the face of improved air and ground forces in European armies – and the more coherent arguments of their opponents inside the British Army. The loser in this battle was, in the first instance, Britain's armoured force but, secondly, the British Army itself.

Bibliography

Anon., 'Explanations', *Cavalry Journal*, 10 (1920), pp. 1-3.

Anon., 'The French Horse Breeding and Remount Department', *Cavalry Journal*, 10 (1920), pp. 82-96.

Anon., 'The Belgian Cavalry in the Combat of Haelen, August 12th, 1914', *Cavalry Journal*, 10 (1920), pp. 414-29.

Anon., 'A French View of Cavalry and Armoured Cars', *Cavalry Journal*, 10 (1920), pp. 506-11.

100 General Sir George Barrow, 'The Future of Cavalry', *Cavalry Journal*, 19 (1929), pp. 176-84, quotes, 178.

101 In the view of this writer, the most balanced assessment of interwar mechanization in the British Army, including references to the cavalry and military conservatism in general, is to be found in Harold R. Winton, *To Change an Army: General Sir John Burnett-Stuart and British Armored Doctrine, 1927-1938* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1988), pp. 223-32. However, while Winton is correct to seek explanations in multiple factors, he does not really acknowledge the full scale and impact of the 'cavalry spirit' and its largely insidious influence.

Anon., 'Tactical Doctrine Update: Field Service Regulations, Part II, 1935', *Army Quarterly*, 32 (July 1936), pp. 262-68

Badsey, Stephen, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry 1880-1918* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

Barrow, General Sir George, 'The Future of Cavalry' *Cavalry Journal*, 19 (1929), pp. 176-84.

Bird, Maj.-Gen. W.D., 'Years versus Ideas', *Cavalry Journal*, 10 (1920), pp. 331-33.

Birdwood, Field-Marshal Lord, *Khaki and Gown: An Autobiography* (London and Melbourne: Ward, Lock, & Co., 1941).

Bond, Brian, 'General Lord Gort', in John Keegan (ed.), *Churchill's Generals* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), pp. 34-50.

Dawson, Anthony, *Real War Horses: The Experiences of the British Cavalry 1814-1914* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2016).

Dawson, Capt. Lionel, *Sport in War* (London: Collins, 1936).

Fanshawe, Maj.-Gen. Sir H.D., 'Field-Marshal Sir Evelyn Wood, VC, GCB, GCMG', *Cavalry Journal*, 10 (1920), pp. 142-46.

Fanshawe, Lt.-Gen. Sir H.D., 'Cavalry in Mesopotamia in 1918', *Cavalry Journal*, 10 (1920), pp. 414-29.

French, David, 'The Mechanization of the British Cavalry between the World Wars', *War in History*, 10 (July 2003), pp. 296-320.

French, David, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army, and the British People, c. 1870-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Fuller, J.F.C., 'The Influence of Tanks on Cavalry Tactics (A Study in the Evolution of Mobility in War)', *Cavalry Journal*, 10 (1920): Part I, pp. 109-32; Part II, pp. 307-22; Part III, pp. 510-30.

Fuller, J.F.C., 'The Ancestors of the Tank', *Cavalry Journal*, 18 (1928), pp. 244-52.

Fuller, J.F.C., 'The Mechanized Cavalry of the Future: How Armoured Machines are Replacing Horse Troops at the Tactical Pivot of Battle', *The Graphic*, 19 May 1928.

Haig, Major-General Douglas, *Cavalry Studies: Strategical and Tactical* (London: Hugh Rees, 1907).

Haig, Field-Marshal [Sir Douglas], 'Introductory Remarks', *Cavalry Journal*, 10 (1920), pp. 5-6.

Harris, J.P., *Men, Ideas and Tanks: British Military Thought and Armoured Forces, 1903-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

Harris, J.P., 'Sir Cyril John Deverell (1874-1947)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 3 January 2008, DOI: 10.1093/ref:odnb/32799.

Harris, J.P., 'Sir Archibald Armar Montgomery-Massingberd (1871-1947)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 4 October 2008, DOI: 10.1093/ref:odnb/35082.

Harris, J.P., 'George Mackintosh Lindsay (1880-1956)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 September 2010, DOI: 10.1093/ref:odnb/34540.#

Howard-Vyse, Lt.-Col. R.G.H., 'A Defence of the Arme Blanche', *Cavalry Journal*, 10 (1920), pp. 323-30.

James, Maj. A.W.H., 'Co-operation Aircraft with Cavalry', *Cavalry Journal*, 10 (1920), pp. 481-87.

Katzenbach, Edward L., 'The Horse Cavalry in the Twentieth Century', in Robert J. Art and Kenneth N. Waltz (eds), *The Use of Force: International Politics and Foreign Policy* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), pp. 277-97.

Larson, Robert H., *The British Army and the Theory of Armored Warfare, 1918-1940* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1984).

Liddell Hart, B.H., 'Mediaevel Cavalry and Modern Tanks', *The English Review*, 40 (July 1925), pp. 83-96.

Liddell Hart, B.H., *The Tanks. The History of the Royal Tank Regiment 1914-1945. Vol. I, 1914-1939* (London: Cassell, 1959).

Lisle, General Sir Beavoir de, *Reminiscences of Sport and War* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1939).

Maguire, T. Miller, 'The Cavalry Career of Field-Marshal Viscount Allenby', *Cavalry Journal*, 10 (1920), pp. 379-84.

Miller, Steven E., 'Technology and War', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, December 1985, pp. 46-48.

Mosley, Brevet Lt.-Col. S. Mosley, 'Observations on the Care and Management of Animals in a Mountain Sector', *Cavalry Journal*, 10 (1920), pp. 542-50.

Phillips, Gervase, 'The Obsolesence of the *Arme Blanche* and Technological Determinism in British Military History', *War in History*, 9(1) (2002), pp. 39-59.

Phillips, Gervase, 'Who Shall Say the Days of the Cavalry Are Over? The Revival of the Mounted Arm in Europe, 1853-1914', *War in History*, 18(1) (2011), pp. 5-32.

Reichherzer, Frank, 'Militär-Sport-Krieg. Funktionalisierungen von Bewegungspraktiken in Großbritannien und dem Empire im 1900' in Martin Elbe and Frank Reichherzer (eds), *Der Sport des Militärs: Perspektiven aus Forschung, Lehre und Praxis* (Berlin: De Gruyter/Oldenbourg, 2023), pp. 373-403.

Rimmington, Lt.-Gen. M.F., 'Army Polo', *Cavalry Journal*, 10 (1920), pp. 437-41.

Searle, Alaric, ' "The Great Doctrine Disaster": Reform, Reaction, and Mechanization in the British Army, 1919-1939', *Journal of Military History,* 87 (July 2023), pp. 599-632.

Spiers, Edward M., 'The British Cavalry 1902-1914', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 57 (1979), pp. 71-79.

Steele, Alan, *Belgium and France 1914: British Cavalryman versus German Cavalryman* (Oxford: Osprey, 2022).

Taylor, W.L., 'The Debate over Changing Cavalry Tactics and Weapons, 1900-1914', *Military Affairs*, 28(4) (1964-65), pp. 173-83.

Tepper-Laski, Karl von, *Rennreiten: Praktische Winke für Rennreiter und Manager* (Berlin: Paul Parey, 2nd edn, 1903).

Vaughan, Maj.-Gen. J., 'On Horse Management', *Cavalry Journal*, 10 (1920), 7-14.

Warner, Philip, *The British Cavalry* (London and Melbourne: J.M. Dent, 1984).

War Office, *Field Service Regulations. Vol. II Operations 1920. Provisional* (London: HMSO, 1920).

War Office, *Field Service Regulations. Vol. II. Operations 1924* (London: HMSO, 1924).

War Office, *Field Service Regulations. Vol. II. Operations 1929* (London: HMSO, 9 August 1929).

War Office, *Field Service Regulations. Vol. II. Operations–General 1935* (London: HMSO, 30 November 1935).

Weir, Brig.-Gen. G.A., 'Some Critics of Cavalry and the Palestine Campaign', *Cavalry Journal*, 10 (1920), pp. 531-41.

Willcocks, Sir James, *The Romance of Soldiering and Sport* (London: Cassell, 1925).

Wilson, Lt.-Col. Alban, *Sport and Service in Assam and Elsewhere* (London: Hutchinson, 1924).

Winrow, Andrew Philip, The British Regular Mounted Infantry 1880-1913: Cavalry of Poverty or Victorian Paradigm? D.Phil. thesis, University of Buckingham, 2014.

Winton, Harold R., *To Change an Army: General Sir John Burnett-Stuart and British Armoured Doctrine, 1927-1938* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1988).

Archival sources

Liddell Hart Center for Military Archives, King's College, London

Field-Marshal Sir Archibald A. Montgomery-Massingberd Papers

Sir Basil Liddell Hart Papers

The National Archives of the United Kingdom, Kew

WO 32

WO 33

WO 163

WO 231

WO 279

Lev Nikolaevič Tolstoj in uniforme di capitano d’artiglieria

Storia Militare Contemporanea

Articoli / Articles

• Place and the Nature of Battle,
by Jeremy Black

• The Philosopher as the Strategist,
by Emanuele Farruggia

• Les Français et les Bourbons restaurés face à la mer. 1815-1830,
par Gaëtan Obéissart

• European Cavalry, 1815-1871,
by Gervase Phillips

• I battaglioni provvisori dell'esercito borbonico,
di Ferdinando Angeletti

• Sbandata e fuga di un esercito. Cittaducale, pomeriggio del 7 marzo 1821,
di Lino Martini

• Venice alone. The last to stand 1848-1849,
di Federico Moro

• La Pirofregata corazzata *Re d'Italia*,
di Aldo Antonicelli

• Cristeros en el siglo XIX. La guerra de los Religioneros 1873-76,
por Ulises Iñiguez Mendoza

• La struttura della popolazione militare italiana durante la Grande Guerra,
di Alessio Fornasin e Giuliana Freni

• Le polizze speciali di assicurazione per i combattenti della Grande Guerra
di Pietro Vargiu

• Douglas Haig's Reports about the Battle of the Lys: A Critical Analysis,
by Jesse Pyles

• Il potere aereo e la Regia Aeronautica nel primo dopoguerra,
di Davide Borsani

• Proteste inascoltate l'uso dei gas durante la guerra d'Etiopia,
di Christian Carnevale

• Reactionaries or Realists? The British Cavalry and Mechanization in Interwar Period,
by Alaric Searle

• The Road to Defeat, The Reorganisation of the Italian Army After the Winter 1940-41,
by Pierpaolo Battistelli

• Eric Axelson and the History of the Sixth SA Armoured Division in Italy, 1943-45,
by Ian van der Waag

• Pubblica sicurezza e ordine sociale. (1941-1952),
di Giovanni Cerchia

• L'esercito di Roma antica alla Mostra Augustea della Romanità,
di Anna Maria Liberati

Studi

• Caserta sede del Quartier Generale delle Forze Alleate (AFHQ) di Ippolito Gassirà

• Il Progetto Calabrone (Bumblebee) di Mario Romeo

Recensioni / Reviews

• Louis-Ferdinand Céline, *Guerre*
(di Riccardo Giovannetti)

• Emil Lederer, *Sociologia della GM*
(di Alvise Capria)

• Michael O'Hanlon, *Military History for the Modern Strategist.*
(by Jeremy Black)

• Jeremy Black, *History of Artillery*
(by Matteo Mazziotti di Celso)

• Alessandro Bonvini (cur), *Men in Arms Insorgenza e contro-insorgenza*
(di Luca Domizio)

• Aldo Antonicelli, *L'evoluzione dell'artiglieria navale 1780 - 1862*
(di Giampaolo Almirante)

• Aldo Antonicelli, *L'odissea della fregata La Regina 1838-39*
(di Comestor)

• Mauro Ferranti, *Eugenio di Savoia-Carignano*
(di Aldo Antonicelli)

• Umberto Bardini, *Tra i Mille di Garibaldi. I fratelli Bronzetti*
(di Liviana Gazzetta)

• Ercole Ricotti, *Scritti sull'istruzione militare* a cura di F. Iéva
(di Giampiero Brunelli)

• Alessandro Capone (cur.), *La prima guerra italiana. Il brigantaggio*
(di Luca Domizio)

• Giulio Tatasciore, *Briganti d'Italia. Storia di un immaginario romantico*
(di Luca Domizio)

• Marco Rovinello, *Fra servitù e servizio. La leva in Italia 1861-1914*
(di Luca Gomiero)

• Rolf Wörsdörfer, *Isonzo 1915 1917. Völkerschlachten am Gebirgsfluss*
(by Paolo Pozzato and Martin Samuel)

• Otto Gallian, *Monte Asolone 1917-18: il 99. k. u. k. IR sul Monte Grappa*
(di Virgilio Ilari)

• Davide Borsani, *Potere Aereo e disarmo. La Regia Aeronautica e diplomazia*
(di Virgilio Ilari)

• Tim Luckhurst, *Reporting the Second World War. The Press and the People*
(by Graham Majin)

• Klaus H. Schmider, *Hitler's Fatal Miscalculation. Why Germany Declared War on the United States*
(by Jeremy Black)

• William J. Nuttal, *Britain and the Bomb: Technology, Culture and the Cold War*
(di Davide Borsani)

• Matteo De Santis, *Fantasmi dalla Russia. Il mistero dei dispersi italiani*
(di Anna Maria Isastia)

• Carmela Zangara, *10 luglio 1943 testimonianze dei Licatesi*
(di Virgilio Ilari)

• Roberto Spazzali, *Il disonore delle armi. Settembre 1943 alla frontiera orientale*
(di Virgilio Ilari)

• Lorenza Pozzi Cavallo, *Luigi Cavallo. Da Stella Rossa al 1953*
(di Luciano Boccalatte)

• Gianluca Bonci, Controguerriglia. Un'analisi di casi storici
(di Lorenzo Lena)

• Mario Caligiuri, *La Questione Meridionale 1918-1946*
(di Renata Pilati)

• Liliosa Azara, *Un nuovo corpo dello Stato. La polizia femminile in Italia*
(di Anna Maria Isastia)

• Silvio Labbate, *L'Italia e la missione di pace in Libano 1982-84*
(di Federico Imperato)

• Fabrizio Vielmini, *Kazakistan fine di un'epoca*
(di Anthony Transfarino)