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The British Cavalry 1920-1940

Ph.D. Thesis in History

Gary Evans

University of Kent Canterbury

List of Abbreviations

AEF	American Expeditionary Force
AFV	Armoured Fighting Vehicle
AG	Adjutant General
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
CAS	Chief of Air Staff
CDS	Chief of Defence Staff
CGS	Chief of the General Staff
CID	Committee of Imperial Defence
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
CO	Commanding Officer
COS	Chiefs of Staff
DAAG	Deputy Assistant Adjutant General
DCGS	Deputy Chief of the General Staff
DCIGS	Deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff
DGTF	Director General Territorial Force
DLM	<i>Division Légère Mécanique</i> (Light Mechanised Division)
DRC	Defence Requirements Sub-Committee
DRO	Director of Recruiting and Organisation
DSD	Director of Staff Duties
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
DUS	Deputy under Secretary
FSR	Field Service Regulations
GHQ	General Headquarters
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GOC.-in C.	General Officer Commanding-in-Chief
IWM	Imperial War Museum
IWMSA	Imperial War Museum Sound Archives
KDG	1 st King's Dragoon Guards
KOYLI	King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry
LHCMA	Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives
MP	Member of Parliament
MGO	Master-General of the Ordnance
NAM	National Army Museum
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
OCA	Old Comrades Association
OCTU	Officer Cadet Training Unit
PUS	Permanent Under Secretary
QMG	Quartermaster-General
RA	Royal Artillery
RAC	Royal Armoured Corps
RAF	Royal Air Force
RASC	Royal Army Service Corps
RAVC	Royal Army Veterinary Corps
RCS	Royal Corps of Signals
RE	Royal Engineers
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
RHA	Royal Horse Artillery

RMC	Royal Military College
RTC	Royal Tank Corps
RTR	Royal Tank Regiment
RUSI	Royal United Services Institution
RWY	Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry
TJFF	Trans-Jordanian Frontier Force

Abstract

This thesis examines the British cavalry 1920-40. It investigates the issues facing the cavalry and General Staff during the period. To do this it takes several methodological approaches. Firstly, using War Office files and other primary sources it looks at the political, economic and doctrinal issues affecting the army and how these impacted upon the cavalry. The time frames for analysing these factors are built around the creation of the DRC in 1934. This year saw a watershed when the likelihood of the cavalry being mechanised moved from being a possibility to a certainty. It shows that there were cavalrymen who supported modernisation but the General Staff were hampered in their efforts by politicians and, to a lesser extent, tank advocates themselves.

An analysis of the Yeomanry cavalry is also undertaken which reveals that the General Staff at the beginning of this period tried to undertake a radical restructuring of its Territorial Force. The selfish outlook of amateur military men of social influence along with the political dalliances of Churchill forced the General Staff to virtually abandon its plans. This was to have repercussions upon mobilisation and beyond.

The thesis utilises the large oral testimony held at the IWM, to investigate the cultural nature of the cavalry of this period. This reveals a service arm frequently lacking in professionalism; a source of enmity between services branches, in particular, the RTC, who mistook lack of focus for a resistance to change. Yet, longer-serving officers were committed to modernisation and it was the 'bright young things' of the 20s and 30s who were especially enamoured with the cult of the horse.

Then, using *The Cavalry Journal* along with other primary records, an analysis is made of how the British cavalry saw itself in comparison to other nations' mounted units. It shows how the cavalry and the General Staff believed that they were in advance of other nations in their perceptions on cavalry. However, by the late 1930s, this confidence was misplaced as the Germans, the French with their DLMs and the US cavalry began to overtake the British.

The conclusions drawn show that the cavalry did not retard the mechanisation of the British army but it did not advance it either. The failings of mechanisation lay in

factors often beyond the control of the army and for the cavalry's part when it was asked to mechanise it did so with far more zeal than it is given credit for.

Acknowledgements

When I chose to return to university to pursue my passion for history, I did not fully appreciate the adventure I would be undertaking; it certainly had its high and low points. Along the way I received help, support and advice without which it would have proven impossible to have completed this thesis. My thanks go to my supervisors, Professor Mark Connelly and Doctor Timothy Bowman, who endured and gave advice and support. I would also like to thank my examiners, Professors Ian Beckett and David French, whose critical observations undoubtedly made this a much-improved thesis. There have been many friends and family members who provided their love and support along the way for which I am extremely grateful. In this category, there are several who must be singled out. First and foremost is my wife, Beverley. Without her love, support and, at times, dogged determination, this thesis would have been impossible. I do not know how many drafts she waded through but her opinion was always valued. I owe her a huge debt of love and gratitude; this thesis is as much hers as it is mine. I also thank my parents, Michael and Joyce, and my mother-in-law, Gwen Jones, for their support as and when required; I could not ask for a better mother-in-law! Finally, but most certainly not least, to my three children: Emma, Daniel and Lucy. There must have been times when they seemed abandoned by their father and I know they think I live with my head in a book. I love them dearly.

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Introduction

The inter-war period marked a pivotal point for the world's military powers. Historians have argued and debated over the genesis of modern warfare, from the siege trenches of Sebastopol, the American Civil War and even the irregular nature of the Boer War. Whatever the pros and cons of these observations, the Great War signalled the culmination of these tentative progressions towards modernity and the end of the classic pitched battle. How military forces adapted to this change during the two decades prior to the Second World War was to impact upon their effectiveness during this conflict, especially in its early years. Consequently, for the British army, the historiographical focus has been primarily upon mechanisation. Bond has stated that it 'has rightly been regarded by military historians as the most important criterion for assessing the British Army's adaptability and openness to new ideas during the inter-war period.'¹ It is difficult to demur from this statement and mechanisation features predominantly in his book looking at this period. This remains the prominent text upon the British Army analysing its overarching policy between the wars. But in doing so, the focus has been upon the armoured forces and those connected with them; Bond confirms this as his own approach in the introduction to his book. However, at the time of publication, he believed that there was still a dearth of scholarly analysis on the army of this period other than a fixation on the RTC.²

This thesis will address part of this void by looking at the British cavalry between 1920 and 1940. The traditional narrative on the British cavalry of the first half of the twentieth century provides a picture of a service that clung to the ideas of prior centuries. A service that clung to the tactics of shock and the *arme blanche* and even when faced with the realities of a modern, mechanised war did its utmost to stop the inevitable tide of progress. The British cavalry came to be regarded as the epitome of British army conservatism with this conservatism being held responsible for the early defeats of the British army in the Second World War.

¹ Brian Bond, *British Military Policy between the Two World Wars*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), p. 127.

² Ibid, pp.8-9.

The evolution of this vision of the cavalry is best illustrated by an outline of its historiography through the twentieth century. In 1902, following the end of the Boer War, an investigation into the role played by both the cavalry and mounted infantry initiated a debate over the role of the mounted soldier. This debate was never over the future of the cavalry itself, for the war over the vast veldt of South Africa would have proven impossible to conduct without the mobility provided by the horse. The Marquess of Anglesey, in his collection of volumes *A History of the British Cavalry 1816-1919*, believed that the Boer War marked the pinnacle of cavalry achievement on the battlefield.³ The debate instead, focused upon how the cavalry was to be armed for the future: should the cavalry remain armed with sword and lance or should these be replaced with the rifle or a hybrid of the two? Cavalrymen, far from rejecting change, favoured the hybrid variant, as they recognized the growing prominence of firepower upon the battlefield. However, they felt that to relinquish the potential of *l'arme blanche* would prove to be a mistake. Amongst the senior protagonists in this debate, were the future leaders of the British Expeditionary Force in the First World War, John French and Douglas Haig, both of whom argued for the hybrid model. The case for the abandonment of traditional cavalry weapons was led by the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, Lord Roberts. The debate was sometimes lost through a clash of character between French and Roberts, however, the issue was real enough despite this personal conflict.⁴

Although Roberts managed to abolish the use of the lance for anything other than ceremonial purposes, the debate continued for most of the 1900s. The first major conflict post-Boer War was the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5 but it failed to provide any conclusive evidence in the debate on the future nature of the cavalry. For the duration of the war neither Russian nor Japanese cavalry had much impact, but in Britain both sides in the *arme blanche* debate strove to contrive supporting arguments out of the scant evidence.⁵

³ The Marquess of Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry 1816-1919*, Vol. IV, (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 1998), p. 25.

⁴ Gervase Phillips, 'Scapegoat Arm: Twentieth-Century Cavalry in Anglophone Historiography', *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 71, No. 1, Jan. 2007, pp. 38-42.

⁵ Ibid, pp. 42-4.

In the period between 1905 and 1914, a number of publications kept the debate alive: Haig's *Cavalry Studies*, Bernhardt's *Cavalry in War and Peace* with a preface written by French, and Erskine Childers's *War and the Arme Blanche* whose preface was written by Roberts.⁶ French continued to propound the viability of a flexible mounted arm and Haig maintained that the increased firepower of modern rifles meant an increase in the worth of the speed and mobility provided by the horse. Childers's book concurred with Haig's observations on mobility but believed that a trooper should set aside both sword and lance and learn to fire from the saddle as the Boers had done.

However, senior cavalry officers remained unconvinced, and in the period between 1910 and 1914, the lance was returned to the cavalry and the advocates of the hybrid model prevailed. Consequently, a force was created along the lines of the American ideal. This style of cavalry had been utilised in the American Civil War and was both doctrine and tradition for the American cavalry. The notion that the armies of Europe had ignored the lessons of the American Civil War was clearly false.⁷

The efficacy of the cavalry was to be put to the test during the First World War. It was a widely held assumption that the cavalry played no role in this war, but during its four-year time period no fewer than 100 cavalry divisions were fielded. The cavalry played major roles in the Eastern Front, Africa and the Middle-East. It is true that as mounted troops the cavalry played very little role on the Western Front in the years 1915-1917. During this period, cavalry frequently fought alongside infantryman in the trenches. The notion that they were sitting around waiting behind the frontline for the ever-elusive breakthrough is simply false. Furthermore, in both 1914 and 1918, the role of the cavalry was as crucial on the Western Front as it was proving to be in other theatres of war.⁸

⁶ Douglas Haig, *Cavalry Studies: Strategic and Tactical*, (London: Hugh Rees, 1907). Friedrich Bernhardt, *Cavalry in War and Peace*, (London: Hugh Rees, 1910). Erskine Childers, *War and the Arme Blanche*, (London: Edward Arnold 1910).

⁷ Phillips, 'Scapegoat Arm', pp. 48-50.

⁸ Ibid, pp. 50-5.

In the inter-war period, however, focus upon the Western Front and the stalemate period was to become the norm. This was especially true of the proponents of the new invention that had helped to break the deadlock of trench warfare: the tank. It was the supporters of this new weapon who were to prove the most vocal during the period and, by and large, it was to be their thoughts that were to prevail and become ingrained upon the memory of the nation. The most vocal critics of this period were J. F. C. Fuller and Basil Liddell Hart, who alleged the existence of a 'cavalry ring' that was working to oppose mechanisation.⁹

Initially, the most vocal was Fuller, who had been heavily involved in the evolution of the tank and its uses during the First World War. Fuller was both eloquent and prolific and maintained his vociferous support throughout the period for the tank. Fuller believed that it would not only supersede the cavalryman, but the infantryman as well. Fuller was, in his own words, unconventional and his extremely radical notions eventually led to him being sidelined and, frustrated, he eventually retired from the army in the mid 1930s.¹⁰

The assault upon the established military thinking by Fuller may not have become so lodged in the annals of military history had his ideas not been promulgated by Basil Liddell Hart. Liddell Hart, having witnessed the horrors of trench warfare, was concerned that such events should not happen again. Liddell Hart, being a newspaper journalist, was able to reach a far wider audience than Fuller and furthermore, was not quite so extreme and managed to garner the ear of those with influence.

⁹ J. F. C. Fuller, *Memoirs of an Unconventional Soldier*, (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1936), p. 362. This concept of a 'ring' has echoes of the factional in-fighting between Generals Roberts and Wolseley at the turn of the century; a situation Fuller would have been aware of. See Thomas Packenham, *The Boer War*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979), pp. xvi, 73-6.

¹⁰ The title of his memoirs, 'Memoirs of an Unconventional Soldier' attest to his eccentricities. These eccentricities and his extremism are illustrated by his strong support of Fascism and Oswald Moseley and also, his interest in the occult. Fuller, *Memoirs*.

The writings of Liddell Hart were cleverly structured to support his arguments and often ignored evidence that countered his opinions or facts were taken out of context. For example, he accused the cavalry of worsening the submarine threat through the transportation of forage, which exceeded ammunition in volume. What Liddell Hart chose to ignore was that the main method of transportation throughout the First World War was the horse and so fodder was required by all arms and was a logistical necessity. However, his campaign succeeded in associating the idea of waste with the cavalry and, more especially, the Cavalry Generals, who had directed the British Army during these wasteful years.¹¹

Lloyd George seized upon this notion of wastefulness by regressive cavalry generals in his memoirs using it as a tool to deflect blame from himself. He cited a specific incident of cavalry being used to capture the village of Monchy-le-Preux. He denounced the resultant waste of life as cavalry hopelessly charged machine guns. The cavalry failed to take the village and had to be replaced by infantrymen. A witness served to corroborate this version of the events. This witness stated that he had seen cavalry riding to the scene and that rider-less horses and dismounted men had returned. Unfortunately, this version of events was inaccurate. The cavalry, because of its greater mobility, had been sent to the village at the gallop, but upon arriving at the village had dismounted and fought a hard-won engagement to capture the village. The cavalry suffered heavy casualties but not through any foolish cavalry action.¹² Only the validity of whether an attempt should have been made to take the village could be questioned not the manner of its execution.

In the 1930s the reputation of the cavalry was further belittled in popular culture by the appearance of David Low's cartoon, Colonel Blimp. The inspiration for this cartoon had come, in part, from a letter to *The Times* newspaper by an old cavalry officer decrying the mechanisation of cavalry and insisting they should wear spurs in

¹¹ Phillips, 'Scapegoat Arm', p. 57. For an analysis of Liddell Hart's use of history in his arguments see John Mearsheimer, *Liddell Hart and the Weight of History*, (London: CUP, 1988).

¹² Phillips, 'Scapegoat Arm', pp. 57-8. See also a letter to *The Times* by Lord Dudley taking issue with the factual errors in Lloyd George's account of this action. *The Times*, Oct 11, 1934; p. 10, Issue 46882, col. D.

tanks.¹³ Blimp, by design, was a vehicle to highlight what Low perceived as 'stupidity' and, despite his military title, was not intended to represent solely the military but authority, the establishment and tradition and could equally have been a Bishop or a Doctor.¹⁴ However, even if unintentional, the association of Blimp and the military was to remain and any military man who was to defend the role of the cavalry was automatically cast in the role of a 'blimp'. The notion of the bungling, aristocratic, conservative, traditionalist cavalry officer of the 1930s was to be indelibly etched into popular culture.

This cultural perception was further reified with the appearance of Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and was followed by others writers that were to lead to an age of cynicism and disillusionment that was described by Brian Bond as 'literary in character' and impacted solely upon the general public.¹⁵

Thus, by the 1930s, the cavalry seemed to have very few supporters as the fixation with the Western Front became firmly entrenched. Although, there had been successful cavalry actions in the Russian Civil War 1918-1920, the Soviet-Polish conflict of 1920 and in the Spanish Civil War, they were ignored by all bar the cavalry itself. Phillips has stated that

In the English-speaking world, cavalry had ceased to be a matter for serious consideration by military analysts. Military historians, for their part, would largely inherit the prejudices of cavalry's most vehement critics.¹⁶

During the 1940s and 1950s, the realities of total war and its aftermath diverted attention away from the imagery and perception of the cavalry in Britain. These

¹³ David S. Low, *Low's Autobiography*, (New York: Schuster and Schuster, 1957), p. 283. Accessed online www.archive.org/details/lowsautobiograph017633mbp, accessed 15/10/2010. Peter Mellini, 'Colonel Blimp's England', *History Today*, Vol. 34, No. 10, 1984, pp. 30-37, pp. 31-2.

¹⁴ Mark Bryant, Ed., *The Complete Colonel Blimp*, (London: Bellew Publishing, 1991), pp. 14-29.

¹⁵ Erich Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, (London: Vintage, 1996). Gary Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory The First World War: Myths and Realities*, (London: Headline, 2001), pp. 6-8.

¹⁶ Phillips, 'Scapegoat Arm', p. 59.

prejudices were to reawaken in the 1960s with a further cultural driven attack. The publication of books such as Alan Clark's *The Donkeys* and Leon Wolff's *In Flanders Fields*; the production on stage of Joan Littlewood's *Oh! What A Lovely War* and an introduction into the school's curriculum of the War Poets reinforced the atrocities of the First World War to another generation. The War Poets continue to be taught in secondary schools in the twenty-first century.¹⁷

This perception became associated with the British commander, Douglas Haig, who 'history remembers and condemns.'¹⁸ Haig has become aligned with the 'stupidity' of Colonel Blimp and popular and academic historians have cast him 'as a callous blunderer and military incompetent.' Gervase Phillips concluded that a major element within this opinion was 'the significance of his pre-war career as a cavalry officer.'¹⁹ His continued support of the cavalry both during and after the war was perceived by many as clear evidence of the ineptitude of cavalymen to the tactical demands of modern warfare. Their foolhardy preoccupation with the offensive, the shock tactic and the cavalry charge had sent 'our boys' over the top to make their sacrifice for their nation.

For the cavalry, this condemnation by association has helped to perpetuate the caricature of an aristocratic dandy who was more concerned at appearing to be at the height of uniformed elegance and involved in the gentlemanly pastimes of polo and fox-hunting, than with the practicalities of war. This picture of officers pre-occupied with their social status and wasteful of those that served them is key in understanding Britain's attitudes towards its army. For the cavalry, with its inevitable association with feudal knights, the notion runs very deep in cultural perceptions towards it. Brian Bond's tone is far from complimentary when writing

¹⁷ Alan Clark, *The Donkeys: A History of the British Expeditionary Force in 1915*, (London: Pimlico, 1996). Leon Wolff, *In Flanders Fields: The 1917 Campaign*, (London: Pan, 1961). Joan Littlewood, *Oh! What a Lovely War*, (Methuen, 1967). For war poetry, see Brian Gardiner (ed.), *Up the Line to Death: War Poets, 1914-1918*, (London: Methuen, 1986).

¹⁸ Gary Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory*, p. 115.

¹⁹ Gervase Phillips, 'Douglas Haig and the Development of Twentieth Century Cavalry', *Archives*, Vol.28, No. 109, 2003, p. 142. Phillips' article provides an outline to the arguments both for and against Haig and references further writings upon the 'Haig Debate'.

of the pre-1914 cavalry, that despite its relative size, the cavalry had both a 'national' and 'service prestige out of all proportion' and that history had provided it with an 'aura of glamour and romance' and an 'aristocratic tone' perpetuated by the 'vetting' of officers.²⁰

More recent writings have perpetuated this image of the cavalry and its aristocratic tendencies and stupidity. Martin Van Creveld referred to 'the jingling, jangling cavalry' of 1914 and John Strawson commented that 'all the lessons of machine-guns and barbed wire had still not done away with either the horse or the lance'.²¹ The title of Strawson's book, *Gentleman in Khaki*, whilst not specific to the cavalry itself, is a direct reference to issues of class associated with the British army. Much of this later historiographical debate has been attached as a corollary to the wider debate upon the British Army's armoured doctrine which failed to combat effectively Germany's Blitzkrieg tactics in 1940. For example, in Robert H. Larson's book on *The British Army and the Theory of Armored Warfare, 1918-1940* the first chapter is called 'Years of Defeat: The Search for Responsibility'.²²

For much of this period, many historians and commentators adopted a teleological Whig approach by focussing upon outcomes. Arguably, in this case, it was the absence of an outcome. The failure to implement a complete mechanisation policy until too late meant the Army failed to establish a robust armoured doctrine. This failure to embrace technology was then ascribed to an apparent tranche of die-hard technophobes within the army, exemplified by the cavalry, who had been identified by Fuller and the other staunch advocates of the tank. This is a theoretical approach that, keeping with the idiom, placed the cart firmly before the horse. This technological determinant approach was then established as the main narrative on

²⁰ Brian Bond, 'Doctrine and Training in the British Cavalry, 1870-1914' in Michael Howard, Ed., *The Theory and Practice of War*, (London: Cassel, 1965), p.100.

²¹ Martin Van Creveld, *Technology and War From 2000 B.C. to the Present*, (London: The Free Press, 1991), p. 175. John Strawson, *Gentlemen in Khaki: The British Army 1890-1990*, (London: Secker & Warburg, 1989), p. 145.

²² Robert H. Larson, *The British Army and the Theory of Armored Warfare, 1918-1940*, (London: Secker & Warburg, 1989), pp. 15-41.

any debate that studied the inter-war period and the early part of the Second World War.²³

The failure of this approach is that it falls foul of many of the pitfalls of Whig historiography that Butterfield had highlighted in 1931. This being that it was far too simplistic and, in doing so, ignored much contradictory evidence.²⁴ The most obvious fact is that, fundamentally, the British army was the only army that entered the war committed to complete mechanisation. Although a Territorial cavalry regiment, the Cheshire Yeomanry, which was part of the 1st Cavalry Division that was posted to Palestine in 1939, was not finally dismounted until 1942, the British army had begun a wholesale policy of transition in 1936 to petrol-driven vehicles for both combat and transportation purposes.²⁵ This was not the case for any other army. Although the German Army of 1940 is held up as the yardstick of achievement in armoured warfare, it relied heavily upon the horse for logistical purposes and had a mounted cavalry cadre for the majority of the War.²⁶ Undoubtedly, for most of the war the German cavalry operated in the Eastern theatre of operations but to ascribe this completely to the contrasting topography of East and West Europe would be incorrect. The Western Theatre was only active for a few months in 1940 and did not resume until 1944. However, for those few months when *Blitzkrieg* was at its zenith, mounted reconnaissance regiments were operating effectively alongside panzer divisions.²⁷ Thus, horse and machine had co-existed in the German army, yet had not resulted in failure against the technological determinists' measure of success. This would imply that the technological determinant approach is unsatisfactory and that a more complex analysis is required.

²³ Phillips, 'Scapegoat Arm', pp. 37-74.

²⁴ H. Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History*, (London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1965). Showalter has also pointed out how military history as a genre remains a bastion for such thinking. Dennis E. Showalter, 'Military Innovation and the Whig Perspective of History', in Harold R. Winton and David R. Mets, (Eds.), *The Challenge of Change: Military Institutions and New Realities, 1918-1941*, (London: University of Nebraska, 2000), pp. 220- 236.

²⁵ Lt.-Col. Sir Richard Verdin, *The Cheshire (Earl of Chester's) Yeomanry 1898-1967: The Last Regiment to Fight on Horses*, (Chester: Wlimer Brothers, 1971), p. 369.

²⁶ See the chapter on The British Cavalry and its International Counterparts, p. 207.

²⁷ Klaus Christian Richter, *Cavalry of the Wehrmacht, 1941-1945*, (Atglen, PA: Schiffer, 1995). Jeffrey T. Fowler, *Axis Cavalry in World War II*, (Oxford: Osprey, 2001). Fowler states how the cavalry was especially useful over armour in the Low Countries, see p. 10.

In his *History of the British Cavalry*, the Marquess of Anglesey pleaded with history academics to reassess and challenge the aforementioned preconceived ideas.

It is still difficult to dispense the comfortable, facile assumptions so prominently disseminated by these influential commentators [Fuller *et al*]...the cavalry, the most vilified, despised and misunderstood of the arms...It ought...to be no longer possible to sustain the popular view that the mounted arm after 1914 became a large, unwanted, useless and expensive burden kept in being by old-fashioned, stuck-in-the-saddle cavalry generals.²⁸

There has been a small 'sea change' in attitude, with historians trying to look beyond the emotive hyperbole and mythology. Allan Mallinson's article on the transformation of the British cavalry between 1902 and 1914 asserted that the British cavalry 'had become the best in Europe by the outbreak of the First World War' and that irrespective of the debate of rifle versus sword the cavalry had attained a level of dual proficiency that allowed it to function as the situation required.²⁹ More recent articles have been written by Gervase Phillips and David French; the former accusing many military historians of focussing too much upon technology as their methodological driver in assessing change and the latter arguing that it was actually inadequate technology and parliamentary financial constraints that were the real blocks upon mechanisation.³⁰ Phillips' article tries to highlight the narrowness of focus of historiography, particularly popular historiography, on the cavalry and the military historian's predilection with technology. But it does not take the argument much beyond this observation.

French's article looks at the influence of governmental fiscal policies upon the implementation of mechanisation within the cavalry and how this lack of funding repressed the technological progression of the British Army at this time. However,

²⁸ Anglesey, *A History of the British cavalry*, p. 305.

²⁹ Allan Mallinson, 'Charging Ahead Transforming Britain's Cavalry 1902-1914', *History Today*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 1992, pp. 29-36, pp.29 and 34.

³⁰ Gervase Phillips, 'The Obsolescence of the *Arme Blanche* and Technological Determinism in British Military History', *War in History* 2002 9 (1), pp. 39-59. David French, 'The Mechanization of the British Cavalry between the World Wars', *War in History*, 2003 10 (3), pp. 296-320.

albeit slightly tangentially, the focus of the argument is still upon the technological aspect. Furthermore, French also points out that '[i]t is easy to find evidence that appears to substantiate Liddell Hart's assertion that sentiment overcame reason.'³¹ A notion that is supported by the Marquess of Anglesey who stated that evidence on a large scale could be found for 'reactionary cavalry officers.'³²

A further factor upon mechanisation that French outlined in the aforementioned article is the nature of regimental identity.³³ This was as much of a factor for the RTC as the cavalry or, indeed, any other army unit. French has developed this idea in his monograph, *Military Identities*.³⁴ Yet in 1966, an army board committee came to the conclusion that the traditional cavalry names such as Carabineers and Lancers, although a 'memorial to the obsolete weapons and techniques of the 18th and 19th centuries' had not hindered the 'abandonment of such weapons...[for the]...adoption of new.'³⁵

This approach by French is a move away from the standard dialogue on the technological focus, by looking at the psychology of organisation within a sociological context. However, the fundamental drive behind all discourse upon the cavalry of the inter-war period has been upon its transition from mediaeval to modern warfare: its mechanisation.

For a long time, the most comprehensive reassessment of the British cavalry was by Stephen Badsey in his Ph.D. thesis, *Fire and the Sword*, where he reviewed the *arme blanche* debate up to 1921.³⁶ He has now recently updated this research and published it, and whilst he accepts that some of his arguments in the original thesis

³¹ French, 'The Mechanization of the British Cavalry', p. 296.

³² Ibid, p. 298.

³³ Ibid, p. 299.

³⁴ David French, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army and the British People, c. 1870-2000*, (Oxford: OUP, 2005).

³⁵ Ibid, p. 341.

³⁶ Stephen Badsey, 'Fire and the Sword: The British Army and the Arme Blanche Controversy 1821-1921', (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1981).

were overstated, he still challenges the concept of the unthinking cavalryman, and regrets that it has become too ingrained a myth as to be ever truly dispelled; in his words a ‘zombie myth.’³⁷ David Leeson, in a review of Badsey’s book, whilst accepting his arguments, questions whether there now needs to be ‘a book-length demolition’ of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century cavalry. In Leeson’s view, much of what was challenging in Badsey’s original thesis, now some 29 years old, has become the accepted historiographical interpretation.³⁸ Leeson is correct in his assertion that academic history has moved away from the old perspective, highlighting the problems of publishing research that is now three decades old. The books and articles of French and Phillips utilised heavily in this introduction are proof in itself. However, it remains to be seen whether this perception has, or ever will be, accepted in a cultural sense by the British. Whilst not dealing with the cavalry specifically, the sentiments of *Blackadder Goes Forth* have been accepted in the cultural memory as ‘the truth.’³⁹ Badsey himself has written about the impact of this series.⁴⁰ This type of media portrayal has helped to perpetuate the cult of the British Cavalry General. For example, Christopher Fildes’ article in *The Daily Telegraph* was actually writing about banking institutions but his opening sentences were

CAVALRY generals in the Great War pined to give the order to charge. This strategy, so they believed, would be decisive, and all that stood in its way was the ineptitude of the War Office, which had not yet succeeded in its attempts to evolve a bullet-proof horse. Commanders in bank boardrooms know the feeling.⁴¹

³⁷ Stephen Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry 1880-1918*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. xv and 306.

³⁸ David Leeson, Review of *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry, 1880-1918* in *War in History*, Jan2010, Vol. 17 Issue 1, p117-119.

³⁹ Richard Curtis and Ben Elton *Blackadder Goes Forth* (Transmitted BBC 2, 28/ 9/89 – 2/11/89, 6 episodes).

⁴⁰ For an excellent summation upon the mythology of war see, Esther MacCallum-Stewart, ‘Television Docu-Drama and The First World War’, <http://www.inter-Disciplinary.net/ptb/www/War2/stewart%20paper.pdf>, accessed, 17/10/2010. Badsey’s work is referenced in this article.

⁴¹ Christopher Fildes, ‘The big banks get ready to charge but they still need a bullet-proof horse’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 25/11/2002.

Sir Michael Howard bemoaned a recent British academic's publication which referred to 'elderly cavalry generals' shaping the allied strategic policy in World War One.⁴² So despite the academic move away from the traditional narrative, the inheritance of blame of the cavalry has remained. This has proven prohibitive in the analysis of the cavalry of the inter-war years and has resulted in no thorough analysis of the subject to really try and understand either 'the cavalry': the men who actually belonged to this arm throughout the two decades; their feelings towards the role of the cavalry and its position in 'modern' warfare. Nor has its role really been fully contextualised within the functional realities of the period: political, geographical as well as technological. Much of the debate is portrayed in a simplistic milieu, giving the sense that there was a right and a wrong course of action. This thesis will investigate the complex realities of the period and how they impacted upon the function, role and perception of the cavalry and highlight that there was no simple course to take about the future of Britain's mounted force.

There has been an unforeseen defence of the cavalry from those historians researching the British army and its armoured doctrine. Coming as almost a by-product of this research, historians have highlighted that the dynamics of this topic are wide and that the cavalry's role, as an organisation, was minimal.⁴³

The distinction between the cavalry as an organisation and cavalry as a concept is important, as it is over this distinction that much of the misconceived and confused ideas on the cavalry and its role in mechanisation are derived. Larson argues that there evolved from 1928, two school of thoughts on how to operate tanks. There was the 'cavalry concept of tank operations', where they were being used to raid only within the confines of an attritional strategy, that is to say a subordinate role. The alternative was the strategy of tank warfare whereby the tank held the dominant role, rather than being dependent upon the main army.⁴⁴ It was the concept of

⁴² Sir Michael Howard, 'Once more, groggily, to the Beach', *The Sunday Times*, 29/7/2007.

⁴³ A good example of this is Robert Larson's book on British armoured theory during the inter-war period, Larson, *The British Army*. For an analysis in particular regarding a revisionist view on cavalry see the section entitled 'Horses versus Tanks' pp. 16-32.

⁴⁴ Larson, *The British Army*, pp. 143-4.

cavalry operations that came to be adopted by the British army from 1929 onwards. Consequently, tanks were employed very much in the Napoleonic idiom of light and heavy cavalry in 1940 and beyond.⁴⁵ Therefore, any criticism that the cavalry merely perceived mechanisation as a change from one charger to another, metallic one, whilst not invalid, was a little unjust, for it was the role the army saw for them. Indeed, the tank advocates who strongly supported an all tank composition merely compounded this perception.⁴⁶ The two highest profile tank theorists, Fuller and Liddell Hart, were frequently guilty of using the imagery of cavalry in their arguments. In Liddell Hart's book *The Remaking of Modern Armies* there was an entire chapter called '[t]he rebirth of cavalry' which ended with the telling conclusion

The tank assault of to-morrow is but the long-awaited rebirth of the cavalry charge, with the merely material change that moving fire is added to shock and that the cavalry tank replaces the cavalry horse. Thus, to paraphrase, "The cavalry is dead! Long live the cavalry!"⁴⁷

Fuller in an article for *The Cavalry Journal* accused those who considered the idea of cavalry as outmoded of being 'unthoughtful'; Fuller's idea of cavalry, like Liddell Hart, being upon a mechanical horse.

By widening the focus, far more can be drawn from this period outside of the standard critical portrayal of the cavalry. In his self-declared 'ideas book', *Rethinking Military History*, Jeremy Black highlights several problems in the way that military history is presented to the public.⁴⁸ These problems are 'Eurocentricity; technological bias; lack of focus on political 'tasking'; focus on leading and dominant military systems and a focus on state-to-state conflict.'⁴⁹ A study of the cavalry during the inter-war period spans a majority of these problems and

⁴⁵ Larson, *The British Army*, pp. 234-7.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p.147

⁴⁷ Captain B. H. Liddell Hart, *The Remaking of Modern Armies*, (London: John Murray, 1927), pp. 38-60.

⁴⁸ Jeremy Black, *Rethinking Military History*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p. ix.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

underlines the basic points that he is trying to make. Further in his book, Black actually goes on to cite the case of the cavalry specifically and how it has been placed at the pinnacle of its efficiency during the Middle Ages and consequently its function since then, by inference, represents a failure to adapt and modernise. He provides examples of the gross generalisation of such a view both prior and post Middle Ages.⁵⁰ Thus, despite all accusations of the cavalry being the ‘most anachronistic of arms’, Black asserts that the ‘potential’ for cavalry continued into the twentieth century.⁵¹ The use of the word potential has undoubtedly been selected deliberately to highlight that the cavalry were under-utilised during this period. The fixation on its mechanisation often blinded many to the roles the cavalry could have performed during this period, even if in some cases they were somewhat transitory whilst nascent technology developed. It is indeed something of a paradox that the ‘[f]ascination with cavalry...[has] played a role in the genesis of the twentieth-century cult of the machine.’⁵² There is a criticism that Black’s book is aimed at an undergraduate audience, which is correct. But this serves to reinforce the point that much historiographical thinking on military history in general, and the cavalry specifically, has not moved away from the long established perceptions outside of academic writing. This fascination with the cavalry is borne out when one bears in mind that the cavalry during the inter-war period constituted approximately 5% of the total strength of the British army.⁵³ The high profile afforded the debate on the mechanisation of cavalry would seem to be out of proportion to its prominence in the army. At times it got very animated between the protagonists and, as a result, the process of mechanisation of the army as a whole maintained a high profile. It is possibly this very point that Lt. Col. Applin made in a House of Commons debate in 1934 when he stated that there would not be mechanisation but for the cavalry.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Ibid, pp. 68-9.

⁵¹ Michael Howard, ‘Men against Fire: Expectations of War in 1914’, *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1984, p.47. Jeremy Black, *Rethinking Military History*, p. 70.

⁵² Black, *Rethinking Military History*, p. 71.

⁵³ Throughout this period the approximate governmental budgeted strength of the Army was 150,000 men, of which the cavalry constituted approximately 8,000; this giving a percentage of 5.33%. See the annual debates in Hansard on ‘Army Estimates’.

⁵⁴ Hansard Commons 1934, Vol. 287, Col. 653.

The above raises a question when investigating the cavalry during this period. In light of the proportionate irrelevance of the cavalry, why does the debate become so animated and central to the notion of military mechanisation? In order to try and answer this question there are several aspects that should be considered and investigated. Only then can one draw any conclusions on the cavalry of this period and discover that the issue was a complex and dynamic one, more so than even French or Phillips have alluded to, and most certainly not the rather simplistic criticism of a collection of 'Blimpish' cavalry officers refusing to accept the inevitable tide of technological change.

An important concern that needs to be addressed is what was the role of the cavalry during this period? Until this is understood it is very difficult to try and make any critical appraisal of the cavalry. A major problem for the British army as a whole during this period was in defining its function. Upon his appointment as CIGS in 1926, General Sir George Milne proposed to submit a memorandum to the Secretary of State for War requesting a definition of the function of the army. Surprisingly, the Army Council, for reasons that can only be surmised, decided not to support its CIGS and the question was never asked formally.⁵⁵ This could possibly be argued to be a defining moment, or more accurately, an 'undefining' moment, for the British army during the inter-war period. Whilst debate has raged over many aspects of the army in this period such as doctrine, strategy, organisation, the lack of a clear focus inevitably led to a degree of confusion. An official statement was eventually issued on the army's role in December 1937 which placed a Continental commitment last in its order of priorities.⁵⁶

The popularly accepted function of an army is state-to-state conflict. But the dilemma facing any army when not actually at war is how to prepare for such an occurrence when the nature of the enemy and the conflict itself are hidden. Into this

⁵⁵ Shelford Bidwell and Dominick Graham, *Fire-Power British Army Weapons and Theories of War 1904-1945*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2004), p. 167.

⁵⁶ Brian Bond, 'Leslie Hore-Belisha at the War Office' in Ian Beckett and John Gooch, eds. *Politicians and Defence: Studies in the Formulation of British Defence Policy*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), pp. 110-31, p. 115.

hotchpotch are thrown the ancillary duties that a nation's government expects of its army during periods of peace. It can then be seen that the diversity of military practices that any army is required to perform in order to fulfil its obligations must lead the military historian to understand the 'pluralistic nature of warfare.'⁵⁷

It is against this diverse background that the British cavalry needs to be assessed during the inter-war period. Whilst not strictly following the areas outlined by Black in his critique of the methodological failings of some military history, this thesis does draw on these areas to try and create a more complete analysis of the British cavalry of this period. The thesis will be split into five chapters entitled The British Cavalry 1920-33; The British Yeomanry Cavalry 1920-40; The Social and Cultural nature of the British Cavalry, 1920-40; The British Cavalry and its International Counterparts, 1920-40 and finally The British Cavalry 1934-40

The commencement date of 1920 has been chosen for two main reasons. Firstly, in the aftermath of the First World War very little is discussed in earnest about the cavalry and its future until this date. Secondly, it is not until 1920 that the first post-war volume of *The Cavalry Journal* appeared.⁵⁸ This thesis draws upon this journal as it was the only official voice of the cavalryman. It was the main conduit for disseminating information both from and to the British cavalry. In the first post-war issue, Haig stated that the journal was needed 'to correlate...the policy and principles of the training of cavalry.'⁵⁹ Figures on how widely the journal was distributed are unavailable but graphs were periodically published to show the proportional distribution amongst home and colonial regiments which imply that there was at least one subscriber per cavalry regiment.⁶⁰ The markings on some copies of the journal read by the author would also indicate that some copies were shared amongst the officers of a regiment. Furthermore, intermittent lists of new subscribers imply that it was also read outside of the cavalry fraternity. As a source, the journal has its flaws and these are dealt with in the body of the thesis, in particular, the chapters on

⁵⁷ Black, *Rethinking Military History*, p. 1.

⁵⁸ *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. X, 1920.

⁵⁹ Douglas Haig, 'Introductory Remarks', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. X, No. 36, Apr, 1920, p.5.

⁶⁰ For examples see *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIII, Jan. 1923, p. 112 and Apr. 1923, p.211.

The British Cavalry 1920-33 and on The Social and Cultural Nature of the British Cavalry.

The end date of 1940 really marks the end of the 'old' cavalry and any debates or doubts about mechanisation. The cavalry contributed a large part of the Armoured Division that was sent to France in 1940 and its practical disintegration during that short period meant that the cavalry had to be re-equipped and re-trained for a modern major war. Any thinking upon its relevance in policing an Empire became moot. It is not for this thesis to deliberate on the end of the British Empire but it is sufficient to say that the British army's colonial duties were never quite as onerous as they had been prior to 1940.

The first and last chapters deal with perhaps the more standard aspects of military history. They look at various aspects of policy surrounding the cavalry. This includes the political and economic policies as well as military policy. Whilst there is a degree of contextualisation for both periods covered by these chapters, ultimately, all of the above aspects are viewed with the specific focus of the cavalry. Having selected the period 1920-40, the period is then split into two chapters; the first from 1920-33, the second 1934-40. The reason for this is that 1934 signalled the beginning of rearmament with the deficiencies of the British defence forces being highlighted by a new government committee, the Defence Requirements Committee. This marked the point when mechanisation ceased to be a possibility and became ever more a probability.

These two chapters deal with what Black calls 'political tasking'. He argues that it is not technology that dictates 'tactics, strategy, doctrine and tasking', but it is the tasks set that are the drivers behind them.⁶¹ This then provides a 'demand-led account' of military history, where 'fitness for purpose' becomes the measure of military

⁶¹ Black, *Rethinking Military History*, p. 121.

requirements.⁶² However, Black's assertion that military historians should reconsider their focus is not a new idea. For example, one of the most notable military theorists of the last two hundred years, Carl von Clausewitz, had signposted this thought process in his major work, *Vom Kriege*. Clausewitz stated that 'war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means.'⁶³ By implication, a nation's standing army is therefore subject to the machinations of its politicians: its function, composition, viability and affordability.

During the inter-war period, the British government, when trying to construct and define its military requirements, was faced with contradictory pressures. As with all political policy-making in a democracy, a middle road was often sought to try and appease all parties. Invariably, the solution was not an ideal one and brings with it its own new set of problems.

During the two decades following the First World War there was a large degree of confusion, politically, economically, socially and militarily. At the start of the period, Britain had the largest army it had ever had and an extended Empire. The world suffered a serious economic slump during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Amongst the nations within the Empire and British protectorates, there was a growing sense of national identity. Both socially and politically, there was a perceived fear of the growth of bolshevism and a realisation of the threat of fascism. It was perhaps inevitable that '[t]here was no clearly expressed or coherent policy to guide the armed forces.'⁶⁴

This diversity gave birth to a hybrid defence policy role that called for 'the defence of the land frontiers of the home country and empire'.⁶⁵ This was not as simple as it

⁶² Ibid, p. 128.

⁶³ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), Michael Howard and Peter Paret Eds. p. 87.

⁶⁴ Bidwell and Graham, *Fire-Power*, p. 150.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

would seem. The fact that Britain is an island meant that the army was left in doubt as to how best to defend the home country. The central argument revolved around whether the army should have a Continental commitment. The answer to this question had significant ramifications for how the army was to be configured. This debate was to escalate during the 1930s as the potential threat from Germany increased. It was the military correspondent, Basil Liddell Hart, who created the most confusion on this matter. By the late 1930s, Liddell Hart was an unofficial adviser to the new Secretary of State for War, Leslie Hore-Belisha. Liddell Hart argued that the British way in warfare was not via a Continental commitment. He argued that in a future war, Britain should only be involved on the periphery bringing about economic pressure through naval superiority.⁶⁶ Ironically, Liddell Hart's advocacy of non-intervention on the continent was a brake upon the mechanisation he had so strongly advocated. It was not until the late 1930s that this outlook was to be fully discarded by politicians.

The defence of the Empire was equally as complex. The diversity of the geography posed difficulties for the army. It meant that the army was stretched in both manpower and *materiel* in meeting its overseas commitments. Furthermore, the varied nature of the geography of the Empire meant that there were different tactical requirements. To make the army's position more fragile at this juncture, it could no longer rely upon assistance from any of the larger Dominions. They themselves were pulling at the fabric of the Empire. The Canadian Prime Minister, MacKenzie King, was keen to disassociate Canada from the problems of Europe with one of his representatives commenting that '[w]e live in a fire-proof house, far from inflammable materials.'⁶⁷ In South Africa, Smuts' resentment of France led him to a policy that was isolationist in all but name. Whilst in the Antipodes, both Australia and New Zealand called upon Britain to focus its military gaze upon the threat upon their doorstep in the form of Japan.⁶⁸ Therefore, the army was unable to create a simple, single solution. The Empire was also a source of unrest. Keith Jeffrey states

⁶⁶ Basil Liddell Hart, *The British Way in Warfare*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1932). For an analysis of this debate see Michael Howard, *The Continental Commitment: Dilemma of British Defence Policy in the Era of the Two World Wars*, (London: The Ashfield Press, 1989).

⁶⁷ Howard, *The Continental Commitment*, pp.75-76.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

that, in the four years immediately following the First World War, the Empire was certainly not a 'haven of peace' but a source of growing nationalism, rebellion and war.⁶⁹

The task of 'policing' the Empire remained a prime consideration for both political and military policy makers, a military function that is often subject to tokenism by military historians according to Black.⁷⁰ Black is unjustly harsh in this criticism. It is not necessarily treated with such brevity, but rather a degree of negative bias. For example, in Bond's analysis of British military policy during the inter-war period, he comments upon the army's 'relegation to imperial policing duties.' He further claims that this function was partially responsible for the army's poor performance between 1939 and 1942.⁷¹ There were contemporaries who concurred with Bond's view *viz a viz* the role of imperial *gendarmarie*. In 1933, Brigadier- General Makins, a former cavalryman, commented that 'it has become a platitude to call it [the British army] a police force.'⁷² Yet it has been commented more recently that '[d]uring the first two hundred years of its existence' the fundamental role of the army 'was to acquire an overseas empire and then police it'.⁷³ This was a view shared in 1930 by Brigadier- General Clifton-Brown who assumed that the requirement of the army was for 'garrison work and police work in our very big empire.'⁷⁴

The cavalry featured prominently in governmental thinking on 'imperial policing' and this particular task was a large part of the platform used to justify the continuation of a mounted presence within the army. The justification ran along two lines of thought. Firstly, there remained regions within the Empire where the topography still remained impassable to the wheeled and tracked vehicles of the time and secondly, the nature of police work was to control civilians not provoke them. There is undoubtedly some validity to both these arguments. In an era when

⁶⁹ Keith Jeffrey, *The British army and the crisis of empire 1918-1922*, (Manchester: MUP, 1984), p. 155.

⁷⁰ Black, *Rethinking Military History*, p. 1.

⁷¹ Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 337.

⁷² Hansard Commons Vol. 275 Col. 1401

⁷³ Bidwell & Graham, *Fire-Power*, p. 1.

⁷⁴ Hansard Commons Vol. 237 Col. 373

computerised military technology is the norm, the man on a horse has still been used. The United Nations was to use a very small mounted force when policing Kosovo. The 'remote hills and mountainous country' of Kosovo proved to be a problem for the mechanical vehicles of the Kosovo Force. This was resolved when a British contingent of the Force turned to horses.⁷⁵ In a similar way, many police forces maintain a mounted arm. This is not because of any problems of accessibility but because of the ability to use the horse as a visible, intimidatory factor in crowd control without presenting an overtly threatening image.⁷⁶ American Special Forces have also operated in Afghanistan on horses as a form of mounted counter-insurgency unit.⁷⁷ The Cheshire Yeomanry was the last regiment to be mechanised in 1942, but prior to their conversion they trained in a similar mounted commando role operating behind the lines, in anticipation of the Germans overrunning Palestine.⁷⁸

Whilst discussing the British Empire, it is worth identifying that there were Dominion cavalry forces such as the Australian, Canadian, Indian, New Zealand and South African mounted forces, along with other miscellaneous units such as the cavalry element of the Trans-Jordanian Frontier Force. The mounted units of Australia, Canada New Zealand and South Africa were militia units and in most instances were mounted rifles. Consequently, they bore more resemblance to the British Imperial Yeomanry of the Second Boer War. There is very little that appears in *The Cavalry Journal* on these nations' cavalry. The reason is unknown but it is possible that the managing editors believed that there was relatively little to learn from them. Furthermore, they would not have been seen as a potential enemy force.⁷⁹ The Indian cavalry was as large as the British cavalry and faced a large

⁷⁵ www.nato.int/kfor/chronicle/2000/nr_000803.htm. Accessed 1st January 2006.

⁷⁶ www.met.police.uk/mountedbranch/duties.htm, accessed 4th November 2010.

⁷⁷ Doug Stanton, *Horse Soldiers*, (London: Simon & Schuster, 2009).

⁷⁸ Interviews with the author and Arnold Dodd and Peter Maurice-Jones, held at the Cheshire Military Museum, June 2006.

⁷⁹ There is a good book on the Australian Light Horse, Jean Bou, *Light Horse: A History of Australia's Mounted Arm*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2009). There is also an Australian Army, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Study paper No. 307 by Captain James C. Morrison, *Mechanising an Army: Mechanisation Policy and the Conversion of the Light Horse, 1920-1943*, (Land Studies Warfare Centre, 2006). This is available online www.army.gov.au/lwsc/docs/SP_307.pdf, 30th June 2008. The sources available for the other nations covering this period are not as good. For Canada there is an article by Major Jamie W. Hammond, 'The Pen before the Sword: Thinking about 'Mechanization' between the Wars',

number of issues during this period: the abolition of the *sillidar* system; amalgamation and reduction; indianisation and mechanisation. Some of the observations made by Indian cavalrymen and issues caused by the Indian government are raised in this thesis but far more can be written about the Indian cavalry in its own right than as an adjunct to the British cavalry.⁸⁰ A discussion of these forces has not been included in this thesis due to the restriction in size. Indeed, these forces could merit a further thesis on their own.

The second chapter looks at the Yeomanry cavalry between 1920-40. This is an aspect of the debate that has been very much overlooked. The Yeomanry had played a significant role in the Boer War and the First World War, and were to do so again in the Second World War, consequently to overlook them is an error. However, as the chapter highlights, they have been overlooked by historians primarily because they were overlooked by their contemporaries for much of the period. In 1940, eight Yeomanry cavalry regiments were sent to Palestine as part of the 1st British cavalry Division armed with First World War vintage equipment.⁸¹ An analysis of the debate surrounding the Yeomanry highlights that the British army was trying to re-organise for a modern conflict. However, it shows more clearly than any other chapter just how bound it was to its political masters, who chose courses that were politically expedient rather than militarily so. In this respect, the chapter highlights that Churchill, often perceived as a staunch advocate for modernisation, was not necessarily always so when political expediency was necessary. The British Yeomanry, and the British army, were to inherit the repercussions of his political actions concerning the Yeomanry when war was declared.

Canadian Military Journal, Summer 2000, pp. 93-102 or a more general book, John Marteinson and Michael R. McNorgan, *The Royal Canadian Armoured Corps: An Illustrated History*, (Montreal: Robin Brass Studio, 2000). There are only more general military histories for New Zealand and South Africa.

⁸⁰ There are a large number of sources for the Indian cavalry. For a general overview there are Major-General Gurcharn Singh Sandhu, *The Indian Cavalry: History of the Indian Armoured Corps till 1940*, (Delhi: Vision, 1987); Major-General S. Shahid Hamid, *So They Rode and Fought*, (Tunbridge Wells: Midas, 1983). There are a number of memoirs from the period including, M. R. A. Baig, *In Different Saddles*, (London: Asia Publishing, 1967); Francis Ingall, *The Last of the Bengal Lancers*, (Novato: Presidio, 1988); D.M. Killingley, *Farewell the Plumed Troop: A Memoir of the Indian Cavalry 1919-1945*, D. Killingley and S.-Y. Killingley, Eds., (Newcastle upon Tyne: Grevatt & Grevatt, 1990).

⁸¹ Bernie Blewett of the Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry commented on how they were still armed with 1909 Hotchkiss machine guns. E-mail correspondence with Author, 20th November 2005.

The third chapter is important in trying to get to the bottom of the aforementioned cultural image of the cavalry. This chapter looks at the social and cultural aspect of the Inter-War cavalry. In doing so, it moves away from the more functional aspects of the cavalry and looks at the attitudes of the cavalry and the social trappings of being a cavalryman. As the chapter itself states it deals more with the concepts of *mentalitiés* and *imaginaire social*. To do this, it looks primarily at the memoirs and recollections of cavalrymen from that period rather than at government documents, although these are used where relevant. Aside from published memoirs, it draws on the excellent oral testimonies from soldiers of the period held in the archives of the IWM: a vastly underused resource. It also analyses data held at the Royal Military College at Sandhurst on cadets in order to obtain a social demographic analysis of the cavalry officers of the period.

The fourth chapter looks at the British cavalry and its international counterparts. This is an attempt to deal with what Black calls eurocentricity. In reality, it fails to do this as much of the examples are drawn from Europe. It does deal with the U. S. cavalry but this still leaves the criticism of a Western viewpoint rather than a global one. It does briefly look at the Russian cavalry and the Japanese cavalry. The reason for this smaller international outlook is due to the confines of methodology. To undertake a true analysis of other nations' cavalry would require an investigation into the primary resources of those nations which is beyond the scope and resources of this thesis. What this chapter achieves is to look through the eyes of the British army at cavalry from overseas. Frequently, the British cavalry is accused of being self-centred and inward-looking. This chapter shows that the British cavalry did try and keep abreast of developments in warfare in other major nations. In doing so, it shows that the British cavalry was not unique in its outlook on modern warfare. Furthermore, it highlights that of all the international armies, the British army was very much aware of taking a euro-centric perspective owing to the plethora of conflict scenarios that it confronted compared, to say, Germany. This, in some way, goes to explain its vacillations on policy. The potential for false conclusions by focussing upon a narrow geographical scenario was even more relevant for the British army at this time than almost any other country, with possibly the exception of France. Although the First World War had seen the collapse of several Empires,

the British Empire following the Treaty of Versailles had grown to its 'territorial zenith.'⁸² However one looked at it, it should have been impossible not to acknowledge the diversity of responsibilities facing the British army at this period. As late as 1937 James Chuter-Ede, Labour MP for South Shields, posed the question to the House of Commons, in direct reference to the cavalry, as to whether '[i]n an Empire as far-flung as ours and with responsibilities as great as ours in different parts of the world, is it certain that the day of the horse is over?'⁸³

From the above chapters, a conclusion is drawn. This thesis is not a defence of the cavalry. It is designed to undertake a broader and more balanced approach to analysing the role of the cavalry during this period and how it impacted upon the army. Having said this, the conclusion does exonerate the cavalry, but not completely. For various reasons, the cavalry became a pawn in a larger game that it did not have control of. Thus, for most of the period it was inert and undertook the roles it was assigned. In simple terms, it did not repress the modernisation and mechanisation in the British army. However, the truth can sometimes be a double-edged sword and it was what the cavalry did not do that was its failing. For many cavalry officers, mechanisation was inevitable. But instead of taking the lead on this issue and combating the inertia, they chose a more cautious path. This approach combined with the political, economic and social factors was to have a significant impact on their mechanisation.

⁸² David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire*, (London: Allen Lane, 2001), p.3.

⁸³ Hansard Commons Vol. 321, Cols. 2020-21. James Chuter-Ede MP, later Baron Chuter-Ede, was to be appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education in 1940 and was made Home Secretary in the post-war Labour government. Kevin Jefferys, 'Ede, James Chuter Chuter-, Baron Chuter-Ede (1882–1965)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32414>, accessed 9 June 2011]

1. The British Cavalry 1920-1933

This chapter challenges the main body of historiography concerning the British cavalry of the inter-war period. It argues that during this period there was a body of senior cavalrymen that held positive views on mechanisation. It shows these were not the anachronistic dilettantes of Liddell Hart's 'cavalry school' but experienced soldiers, who had witnessed the realities of modern warfare. Furthermore, within their sphere of influence, these men tried to ensure that the cavalry was able to contribute to the plethora of possible functional scenarios that confronted the British army of this time. Contrary to the standard perceptions, their influence upon armoured doctrine was limited and there was never a lobby of serving cavalrymen acting to halt the implementation of armoured vehicles in either the regular British army or the regular British cavalry.¹ Indeed, a comparison with the policies and views of the General Staff illustrate that the cavalry's views were no more conservative in their outlook; arguably less so. Those officers who did speak in a more derogatory nature on the abilities of the armoured vehicle compared with those of the horse were invariably retired. Some of these retired cavalrymen held seats in Parliament which inevitably gave their views a higher profile than they necessarily merited. But, whilst their words had a hollow ring to them factually, it was their words, especially in the hands of skilled writers like Liddell Hart and Fuller, which managed to tarnish unfairly the cavalry's image.

The crux of the matter was that despite the hyperbole of the tank advocates, throughout the 1920s no AFV existed that could fully perform all the functions of a mounted soldier. In this respect, those cavalry officers that advocated the dualistic approach of both vehicle and horse offered a pragmatic solution to the immediate functional requirements of the British army operating throughout the Empire. The prophecies of future warfare from the likes of Fuller and Liddell Hart were still speculative, and as historians of armoured doctrine have highlighted, these visions of future armoured warfare were not always in harmony. Furthermore, the approach of many of the tank advocates was that the armoured vehicle was the new cavalry, rather than of creating a new methodology of warfare. In this respect, progressive

¹ The distinction between regular and part-time cavalry here is deliberate as the same cannot be said for the Yeomanry cavalry. See chapter The Yeomanry Cavalry 1920-1940, p. 99.

cavalry officers were arguably in agreement with the tank advocates. The conflict was more about who was to control these new weapons; the RTC or the cavalry.

This chapter gives rise to conclusions which concur with many of those offered by David French in his article 'The Mechanization of the British Cavalry between the World Wars.' In that article he argues that the delay in mechanisation was due to the shortcomings of armoured vehicles not just the shortage of funds to purchase sufficient vehicles. Neither was it a result of an adherence to the regimental system, which was more a spur to modernisation for individual cavalry regiments than it was a hindrance.² Although, there is some evidence that regimental rivalry obstructed mechanisation in the 1930s.³ Where this chapter differs from French's article, is that it drills down further into the realities for the cavalry during the 1920s. In so doing, it highlights that if a more positive view had been taken towards wholesale mechanisation by the War Office during the period it would not have received significant resistance from the cavalry. Furthermore, they would have had many combat experienced officers, some of whom had fought in tanks, to implement such a change.⁴ It was then a governmental issue as to whether it was willing to fund the implementation. This chapter focuses upon a period when successive governments were unwilling to invest in the army. This attitude began to change with the creation of the DRC in 1933 and the reports it subsequently published. This chapter looks at the period prior to these reports when mechanisation was only a possibility rather than a probability.

The British cavalry had come out of the First World War with mixed fortunes and status. The Western Front had resulted in very few opportunities for the arm to be utilised in its more traditional mounted role. This had resulted in a call by some that

² French, 'The Mechanization of the British Cavalry', pp. 296-320

³ The Colonel of the 1st Royal Dragoons, General Sir Ernest Makins, wanted to retain horses for his regiment on the sole premise that the Scots Greys were going to. See Chapter 18, 'The End in France and Reorganization', Barney White-Spunner, *Horse Guards*, (Oxford: MacMillan, 2006), pp. 495-6.

⁴ Fuller mentions in his memoirs that two of the three brigade leaders in the Tank Corps during the recent war were cavalrymen, Lieutenant Colonels A. Courage and J. Hardress-Lloyd, Fuller, *Memoirs*, p.94.

the time had finally come for the disbandment of the cavalry. An editorial in *The Cavalry Journal*, the cavalry's official outlet, acknowledged in 1920 that

We cannot disguise from ourselves that, owing to the limitations placed upon the usual sources of information during the long period of hostilities, those who were not participants have found difficulty in realising the value of cavalry operations in the War.⁵

However, the writer was quick to point out that 'the character of siege conditions...afforded few opportunities for conspicuous exploits to any arm...least of all the cavalry.'⁶ Nevertheless, Lieutenant General Thomas Morland, writing when GOC, Aldershot, recollected that during the early part of the war in France, divisions without a mounted element were at a disadvantage to those with divisional cavalry.⁷ A recent doctoral thesis has argued that the key issue was a failing of army commanders to utilise the cavalry in an appropriate and timely fashion in order to maximise the full effect of this arm, rather than any intrinsic failing of the cavalry itself.⁸ There is post-war evidence to support this view. A report on an experimental brigade at Aldershot expressed concern that the restricted areas for training meant it was difficult to construct exercises utilising cavalry to its full extent which gave the infantry a false perception that it did not require cavalry.⁹ The continuing necessity for divisional cavalry and an inability by commanders to fully utilise cavalry attributes was mentioned in the report on the army manoeuvres of 1925.¹⁰

This view was strongly reinforced by Haig who, up until his death in 1928, repeatedly advocated the cavalry. In his editorial piece for the first post-war publication of *The Cavalry Journal* Haig wrote

the war has extended the duties of cavalry, and has shown them to be much more diverse and complicated than heretofore supposed.

⁵ Editorial, *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. X, Oct. 1920, pp. 377-8.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Appendix A, AIR5/1382, Aldershot Command: interim report on experimental brigade, 1922.

⁸ David Kenyon, 'British Cavalry on the Western Front, 1916-1918', (Unpublished PhD. thesis, Cranfield University), p. 305. Kenyon's thesis provides something of an acquittal of the cavalry during the Great War. For his concluding arguments see pp. 288-306.

⁹ Appendix A, AIR5/1382, Aldershot Command: interim report on experimental brigade, 1922.

¹⁰ WO279/56, Report on Army manoeuvres 1925, p. 45.

The operations of cavalry proved to be on a larger scale than had been anticipated generally¹¹

In an address in Canterbury, Haig enlarged upon these sentiments by saying

I certainly am not among those who hold that Cavalry is a dead arm...When the lessons of the Great War are properly understood they will be found to teach no one thing more emphatically than this – that cavalry is still an essential arm, even in a European War, and more especially so to an Imperial Army such as ours.¹²

The problem with Haig's patronage was that it was invariably little more than rhetoric and provided little substance to any advocacy of the cavalry. One of Haig's frequently cited assertions was that

as time goes on you will find just as much use for the horse – the well-bred horse – as you have in the past¹³

Sheffield has defended Haig on this comment by pointing out that it should not be taken out of context as this formed part of a speech given to the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and that Haig's only real failing was an inability to predict the future.¹⁴ In this he is correct as the emphasis upon breeding to veterinary specialists makes more sense. But part of the speech was still in the context of mounted troops exploiting situations created by machine-guns from 5,000 to 6,000 yards, reminiscent of the First World War 'G in Gap' concept. It was this seeming blind faith in the mounted arm that has led many contemporaries and historians to portray Haig in a negative light. The staunch tank advocate, J. F. C. Fuller, was especially vitriolic in his denunciation of Haig; indeed, it verged upon the irrational and seemed far more personal in its intensity than based upon a solid theoretical basis.¹⁵ Phillips has summed up the traditional historiographical view of Haig: '[h]is commitment to the mounted arm...blinded Haig to recent fundamental changes in the nature of warfare,

¹¹ Introduction, *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. X, Apr. 1920, p. 6.

¹² 'Cavalry, An Essential Arm' Field Marshal Earl Haig, address on receiving the Freedom of the City and Canterbury, October 10, 1921, *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XII, Jan. 1922, pp.6-8, p. 6.

¹³ 'The Cavalry Arm. Lord Haig On Value In War.', *The Times*, Jun 5, 1925, p. 8, Issue. 43980, col. D.

¹⁴ Gary Sheffield, 'Military Past, Military Present, Military Future', *The RUSI Journal*, Vol. 153, Iss. 3, June 2008, pp.103-4.

¹⁵ Fuller, *Memoirs*, pp. 95, 102, 137 and 140

instilling in him an inflexible cast of mind that left him unequal to the challenges of the Western Front.¹⁶ This is an assessment that Haig's most recent biographer, J. P. Harris, concurs with, although his argument is more nuanced than others who have criticised Haig.¹⁷ Whilst an analysis of Haig's direct performance is superfluous to this current analysis, his derived reputation is not, because the critique outlined by Phillips spilled over onto all cavalrymen and consequently Haig's advocacy during the period up to his death became a double-edged sword. The aforementioned article by Phillips and an earlier book edited by Bond and Cave, *Haig: A Reappraisal 70 Years On*, have served to try and make a more substantive, dispassionate critical analysis of Haig.¹⁸ As with these writings, it is important to try and disentangle the cavalry from this notion of inflexibility as it is a false logic to contend that support for one particular concept automatically implies a rejection of another. As Harris has pointed out, Haig was a strong supporter of the tank from the beginning, despite its initial major mechanical failings.¹⁹ This dualistic approach from Haig is apparent in his Canterbury address, where he went on to say

Do not think that I disparage or undervalue the new weapons.
Tanks and aeroplanes and heavy guns, and the other death-dealing
devices that modern science has produced, are all alike
indispensible...but they have not yet served to eliminate the horse.²⁰

Furthermore, Allenby's successful mounted operations in Palestine had given a ray of hope to the cavalry and added a degree of substance to Haig's vague assertions, allowing some cavalrymen to argue against those clamouring for their demise. However, Haig's frequent mystical support of the cavalry gave the more conservative cavalrymen, both in Britain and elsewhere, hopes for the retention of the horse.²¹ An example of which can be seen in a speech by Major-General Seely to

¹⁶ Phillips, 'Douglas Haig', pp. 142- 162, p. 142.

¹⁷ J. P. Harris, *Douglas Haig and the First World War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). There are a number of mentions of his adherence to the concept of the large breakthrough and the anticipation of using cavalry to exploit such a gap. See pp. 46-7 and 534 for an opinion on his blind faith in the cavalry.

¹⁸ Phillips, 'Douglas Haig', pp. 142- 162, Brian Bond and Nigel Cave, Eds., *Haig: A Reappraisal 70 Years On*, (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 1999).

¹⁹ Phillips, 'Douglas Haig', p. 143.

²⁰ 'Cavalry, An Essential Arm' Field Marshal Earl Haig, address on receiving the Freedom of the City and Canterbury, October 10, 1921, *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XII, Jan. 1922, pp.6-8, p. 7.

²¹ For an international perspective on Haig's influence, see chapter British Cavalry and its International Counterparts, p. 207.

the House of Commons who believed that '[e]very advance in science has made the horse a more and more indispensable weapon of war.'²² This logic was supported within the War Office during the early 1920s. The report on the Aldershot Experimental Brigade in 1922 commented that 'success in the tank action will alone enable the escorting cavalry to carry out its function.'²³

The issues facing the cavalry, and indeed the army, were based upon efficiency on two counts. Firstly, its effectiveness in combat and, secondly, the level of combat effectiveness *vis a vis* cost; these two issues of function and cost were not as simplistic as often assumed by many, especially the tank advocates. In a prize-winning essay in 1919, Lt. Col. W. D. Croft, an infantryman, argued strongly for mechanisation, but when discussing the substitution of cavalry by tanks he revealed the flaw in his argument that was at the core of the debate

if the premises of the writer concerning the British regular cavalry in the Great War are correct, a very great reduction, if not a total abolition of the most expensive arm would appear to be inevitable, sooner or later, provided something can be produced which is capable of performing its duties.²⁴

By this statement, Croft implied that there was not yet a vehicle that could completely undertake the cavalry role, yet made the assumption that such a vehicle could and would exist and be cheaper. This idea had yet to be totally proven. This uncertainty and weakness of argument was further exacerbated by uncertainty regarding the future function of the army. The dilemmas facing the War Office made planning and budgeting complex. The immediate post-war years were a period of turmoil as the nation sought to return to a semblance of normality and stability. The focus of politicians was upon domestic issues and re-establishing international relationships upon peacetime bases. Understandably, other than demobilisation, issues pertaining to the armed services were no longer uppermost in the political consciousness. This meant that there was no inter-service policy co-ordination and so there was no clear

²² 'Parliamentary Notes', *The Army Quarterly*, Vol. II, July 1921, pp. 414-5.

²³ Appendix B, AIR5/1382, Aldershot Command: interim report on experimental brigade, 1922.

²⁴ Brevet Lt. Col. W. D. Croft, 'Second Military Prize Essay for 1919', *RUSI Journal*, Vol. LXV, Aug 1920, p. 460.

transfer of function from wartime to peacetime. For the army, this resulted in its resources being overtaxed trying to deal with crises at home and abroad, together with enlarged Imperial policing duties.²⁵ In the period 1918-1922, the army had to bear the brunt of aid to the White Army in Russia; 'violent nationalism' in Ireland, India and Egypt; 'rebellion in Mesopotamia, a small war in Somaliland...a larger one on the North-West Frontier' and civil unrest at home.²⁶ Whilst some of these commitments disappeared and were replaced by others, throughout the 1920s the War Office continued to face a broad range of military scenarios, some actual and some potential, that made manpower planning and organisation an almost impossible job. Immediately after the war, the War Office set up a committee under the chairmanship of Major-General W. D. Bird to consider the organisation of an army division. This stated that because of the obligations of an Imperial army it was impossible to create an organisation to meet the obligations of both an empire and a future major war. It therefore argued that focus should be upon the former and that requirements for a major war would have to be met through expansion.²⁷ The CIGS in 1924, Lord Cavan, announced in January of that year, that the army was to focus upon Imperial defence and to no longer waste time on justifying its existence for action against 'hypothetical enemies.'²⁸ Cavan's successor in 1926, Field Marshal Sir George Milne, tried to establish terms upon which he should assess the role of the army by suggesting that a definition of its function be obtained. Milne's suggestion was not supported by the Army Council and the matter was never followed through.²⁹ The resulting haziness surrounding the army's role left it with a lack of clear strategic vision, which in turn impacted upon policy decisions. Consequently, any arguments upon the disposal of the cavalry often floundered for lack of any clear argument as to why. The cavalry were able to utilise this weakness to highlight their continuing value.

²⁵ Bond, *British Military Policy*, pp. 14-22.

²⁶ Jeffrey, *The British Army*, p. 155. Jeffrey's book provides a detailed analysis of the problems confronting the British Army immediately after the First World War.

²⁷ WO32/11357, Army Organisation: Formation, terms of reference and work of reorganisation committee, p. 2.

²⁸ Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 75.

²⁹ Bidwell and Graham, *Fire-Power*, p. 167.

The other aspect highlighted in Croft's statement was that in reality there was still yet to be a vehicle that could actually fully achieve what the tank activists prophesised. Fuller in an article in *The Cavalry Journal* proudly asserted that the tank was superior in every way to the cavalry with the exception of a few minor flaws. The remaining problems he outlined were speed; radius; endurance; flotation; forest fighting; fuel and visibility.³⁰ This list of flaws, however short-term, meant that Fuller's advocacy at this stage was far from a convincing argument for a move to wholesale mechanisation. The Bird Committee had concurred with this view on the inadequacies of the tank which 'restricted [its] sphere of usefulness.' Consequently, it disagreed with a distinct tank formation and advocated co-operation with other arms.³¹ Fuller wrote a further article in *The Army Quarterly* two years later when very little had progressed technologically compared with his aspirations.³² These shortcomings were still mentioned by the General Staff in the FSR of both 1924 and 1929.³³ Consequently, for the short term at least, it was questionable whether the cavalry was completely without merit.

To reinforce the weakness of the anti-cavalry arguments, articles appeared in *The Cavalry Journal* that gave details about policing and minor skirmish activities in the Empire that highlighted the flexibility of the cavalry and also their ability to work alongside modern vehicles. Major J. R. V. Sherston wrote a brief narrative of the operations of the 1st Cavalry Brigade in Afghanistan, showing how the KDG had conducted reconnaissance and patrols alongside the Brigade's armoured cars, thereby highlighting the validity that vehicles had yet to replace the horse. He also managed to find space to mention how 'B' squadron of the KDG charged some Afghans and 'got into them and did considerable execution.'³⁴ A similar tenor was given by Major J. K. McConnel, 20th Hussars, in his article 'Cavalry Work in Anatolia' where he

³⁰ Brevet Colonel J. F. C. Fuller, 'The Influence of Tanks on Cavalry Tactics', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. X, July 1920, p.322.

³¹ WO32/11357, Army Organisation: Formation, terms of reference and work of reorganisation committee, p. 8.

³² Colonel J. F. C. Fuller, 'Problems of Mechanical Warfare', *The Army Quarterly*, Jan. 1922, pp. 284-201, p. 288.

³³ General Staff, *Field Service Regulations, ii. Operations*, (London: HMSO, 1924), p. 21 and General Staff, *Field Service Regulations, ii. Operations*, (London: HMSO, 1929), p. 18.

³⁴ Major J. R. V. Sherston, 'Operations of 1st Cavalry Brigade, Afghanistan, May 7th to August 27th', 1919', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. X, Oct. 1920, pp. 446-454.

revelled in the fact that a squadron had twice charged the nationalists and ‘fourteen were sabred’ and this appeared to have a significant moral effect upon the nationalists. He highlighted that the terrain was very difficult consisting of narrow tracks, which was undoubtedly meant to highlight a failing on the part of motor vehicles. McConnel’s closing paragraph left no doubt that he was making a point in favour of the cavalry for this form of operation³⁵

The work of the columns and garrisons consisted largely of reconnaissance – this has naturally been the work of cavalry. In contrast to the fighting in France the cavalry has done nearly all the work and the infantry as a rule had little to do except to march quietly down the road.³⁶

Later in the year, there was an article that highlighted the experiences of cavalry actions in Mesopotamia. This article professed that ‘[r]apid movement secured practical immunity from enemy fire’ and that both the ‘sword and lance had great moral effect.’³⁷ The Aldershot experimental brigade report had also argued that in the small wars that were more likely to arise at that time, ‘the moral effect of the mounted arm is likely to be considerable, and mounted action rather than dismounted action is the ideal to be aimed at.’³⁸ Whilst the moral effect of the *arme blanche* may have proven effective, the article’s somewhat mystical assertion of immunity from fire was unrealistic.

Other articles also appeared in the early issues of the journal that focussed upon the more traditional elements of the cavalry rather than on specific actions of the recent past. In an article entitled ‘A Defence of the Arme Blanche’ by Lieutenant-Colonel R. G. H. Howard-Vyse, no reference was made to specific effective actions undertaken by the cavalry. He merely referred to nebulous concepts of chivalry and the moral

³⁵ Major J. K. McConnel, ‘Cavalry Work in Anatolia’, *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XI, Jan. 1921, pp53-7.

³⁶ Ibid, p.57.

³⁷ Capevi, ‘An Indian Cavalry Action in Mesopotamia’, *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XI, Oct. 1921, pp. 405-8, p. 408.

³⁸ Appendix B, AIR5/1382, Aldershot Command: interim report on experimental brigade, 1922.

effect which had ‘imbued him with an especially strong belief in the *arme blanche*’.³⁹ This lack of supporting first-hand evidence was a mistake on the part of Howard-Vyse whose credentials and experience should have enabled him to provide a more substantive claim. He had been commissioned in the Royal Horse Guards and had been the Household Cavalry’s first graduate from the Staff College. During the war he had been a Brigade-Major in the 5th Cavalry Brigade under Sir Philip Chetwode that had been involved in the cavalry actions during the Retreat from Mons. He was later Chief of Staff of the Desert Mounted Corps under Allenby in Palestine.⁴⁰ However, he failed to draw upon his experiences of these successful cavalry operations in order to construct a more rigorous defence of the *arme blanche*. He was to draw on this experience far more effectively when writing his report as part of the Committee on Lessons of the Great War.⁴¹

This focus upon tradition and sentimentality, rather than a more progressive outlook, gave credence to Fuller’s assertion that the cavalry retained an irrational and emotive opposition to his advocacy of tanks over cavalry.⁴² The argument put forward by Badsey in his doctoral thesis that such a ‘mixture of sentimental and traditionalist defence of the *arme blanche*...cut Fuller’s case to ribbons’ seems a little improbable, as invariably over the next fifteen years, it was this sentimentality that was to be used repeatedly by those who sought to ridicule the maintenance of a mounted force in the British army.⁴³ This argument has been dropped from his later published work *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry 1880-1918*, which is built around his earlier thesis.⁴⁴

Whilst McConnel and Sherston were able to make these early references to defend the cavalry position on the grounds of function, where they, and again the army, struggled was in the area of funding. The overarching domestic policy that arose

³⁹ Lt.-Col. R.G.H. Howard-Vyse, ‘A Defence of the Armed Blanche’, *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. X, July 1920, pp.323-329.

⁴⁰ Obituary, Sir Richard Howard-Vyse, *The Times*, Friday, Dec 07, 1962, p. 15, Issue 55568, col. B.

⁴¹ See War Lessons Committee: Report. Palestine 1917-18, Brigadier R.G. H. Howard-Vyse, LHCMA Kirke 4/6.

⁴² Badsey, ‘Fire and the Sword’, pp. 346-347.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*.

after the First World War was that of retrenchment.⁴⁵ One historian has argued that this attitude was of major significance because this frugal stance matured into 'a policy of fiscal economy which was to dog British planners throughout the inter-war era.'⁴⁶ Aggressive financial policy resulted in a Cabinet directive outlining a cut in total defence expenditure from £502 million in 1919-20 to just £135 million in 1920-1: a massive 73% economy.⁴⁷

It was in this period that the much debated 'Ten Year Rule' was inaugurated.⁴⁸ This rule was to impact considerably upon the army. It stated that the armed services should prepare their budgets upon the premise that there would be no major war for ten years. This made it difficult for the army to commit to anything fundamental and radical. The underlying assumption that there would be no major war for at least ten years could be interpreted to focus upon the short-term as there would be no real requirement to invest in the more sophisticated means of warfare until nearer the ten year deadline. The rule was renewed every year and, in 1928, it was formally implemented on a rolling basis. In effect, the rolling nature of this deadline meant that the notion of planning for a major war had been postponed indefinitely. Equally, it could have been argued that the prospect of a potential war in ten years meant that money should be invested in a future programme of development for such a contingency. The effective reality of the rule was that the government wanted to spend as little as possible on the army over the next ten years whatever the War Office's perspective.⁴⁹ The result of this policy was that the army, given no clear direction on financial policy and limited Treasury funding, opted for a military policy that tried to cover all eventualities. Consequently, whilst the army updated its FSR three times during this period, they were often confused as they exhibited a one doctrine fits all policy.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 22.

⁴⁶ F. A. Johnson, *Defence By Committee The British Committee of Imperial Defence 1905-1959*, (Oxford: OUP, 1960), p.167.

⁴⁷ Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 24.

⁴⁸ Ferris, 'Treasury Control, the Ten Year Rule and British Service Policies, 1919-1924', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 4, Dec. 1987, p. 860.

⁴⁹ For a clear account of the origins of this rule and its evolution during the 1920s see N. H. Gibbs, *Grand Strategy Volume 1 Rearmament Policy*, (London: HMSO, 1976), pp. 3-64.

⁵⁰ David French, 'Doctrine and Organization in the British Army, 1919-1932', *Historical Journal*, 44, 2001, pp. 497-515, p. 504.

The implication of this catchall policy can be seen in the changes made to the cavalry. By the end of the period, it was reduced in number to assuage those calling for its abolition, efforts were made to fully motorise its logistical functions and two regiments were mechanised for those calling for mechanisation. However, the fact that such progressive, though small, steps were made is an indication that the cavalry were not a retarding force upon modernising the inter-war army.

John Ferris has argued that too much emphasis has been placed upon this rule in the period up to 1925. Firstly, he argues that there was never any rule *per se*, merely a guideline that over that period had varying names and interpretations. But whether it was a guideline or a rule is arguing over semantics, as the intention from the Treasury was clearly to try and curtail military expenditure. Furthermore, he contends that initially the services were able to use the rule to their advantage, as it gave a precise target date on which to focus plans and from which it was difficult for the Treasury to demure. However, Ferris does not provide any substantive evidence to support this assertion. For him, it was not until 1925-6 that the Treasury established a strong control upon defence expenditure. This control was underpinned when the rule became a rolling deadline in 1928.⁵¹

However, even accepting Ferris' point, the reality was that defence expenditure was fundamentally restructured in the 1920s. This was amply demonstrated when a report from the Government Committee for National Expenditure for 1921-2, chaired by Sir Eric Geddes, recommended radical scaling-down of the armed services especially the army; the report was to become known as 'The Geddes Axe.' The army fared poorly in this period bearing the brunt of many economies and Ferris acknowledges that from this point the Treasury established complete financial control upon the army and by implication asserted considerable influence over its policy.⁵² By 1924, the army had become the 'Cinderella' service, being unpopular, undermanned and ill-equipped.

⁵¹ Ferris, 'Treasury Control, the Ten Year Rule', pp. 859-883.

⁵² Ibid, p. 880.

Cavan wrote to Robertson that 'Governments are tempted to treat us [the army] as the unpopular sister.'⁵³

The army was under constant pressure to make economies with the Geddes Report suggesting in its conclusions on the army that for 1922-3, a further reduction of 50,000 officers and men could be made and that the submitted army estimates for that year of £75million could be further reduced to £55million and the following year should see a further reduction.⁵⁴ Whilst these swingeing reductions were aimed right across the army, the cavalry were very prominent in the report as it suggested that eight regiments should be disbanded, almost one-third of the regular cavalry, and mention was also made that any economies applied should not be limited to just the regular cavalry of the line but to the Household Cavalry as well.⁵⁵ It must be highlighted that the report never questioned the functional validity of the cavalry; indeed it believed that the cavalry's fire-power had effectively quadrupled since before the war, it merely believed that it was an expensive arm; although no indication is given as to how this view on this comparative cost is derived. It never once suggested the replacement of the cavalry by tanks and the only suggestion was that it was being challenged by the RAF.⁵⁶ The problem for the cavalry against this backdrop was that it was alleged to be far more expensive to run on an annual basis than other arms. However, it was far cheaper as a longer-term capital commitment. Thus, to make any rational direct financial comparisons was, in reality, complex and any financial argument surrounding them depended upon fundamental financial assumptions; from these assumptions an equally valid case could be made for either horse or vehicle.

In the historiographical debate on cavalry versus tanks, it is often overlooked that in the early 1920s, there was a more immediate threat to the cavalry from mechanisation in the air. Indeed the army as a whole faced the ever-growing problem of its role of imperial policing being usurped by the RAF. Having successfully, and more

⁵³ Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 33.

⁵⁴ *The Times Supplement*, Sat. 11th February 1922, p. ii, Col. 5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. ii, Cols. 1 & 3.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. ii, Col. 1.

crucially, economically repressed an uprising by the Dervishes in Somaliland in 1920, the RAF had been given responsibility to police Iraq in 1922. Further regions were ascribed to the RAF over the next seven years: Palestine, Trans-Jordan and the Aden Protectorate. In 1928, the Chief of the Air Staff, Hugh Trenchard, when interviewed by a sub-committee of the CID, used the *Cavalry Training* manual to argue that every aspect of the cavalry function could in some way be performed by the RAF on top of its existing air functions.⁵⁷ Trenchard made the ultimate, if optimistic, bid in 1929 that the RAF should assume defence responsibilities for 'the Sudan, East and West Africa, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, the North West Frontier, and Coast Defence throughout the Empire.' To offset this grandiose usurpation of power, Trenchard contended that the £2million per annum savings realised by this proposal, could be utilised to improve and update the British army.⁵⁸ As a scheme it was not without some merit and the funds would have been a useful boost to progressing research and mechanisation in the army, but in reality it was more likely the money would have been retained by the Treasury as part of the overall public purse. Between 1927-1930, Thomas Hutton was Military Assistant to the CIGS and he stated that during this period funds could not be moved around within the War Office to alternative uses without Treasury consent, which was rarely forthcoming and any savings made were invariably not passed back. Hutton believed that the RAF was prone to ambitious claims in order to gain further funding but that these claims were exaggerated as the RAF was an 'accessory not a substitution.'⁵⁹ In 1922, Major-General Montgomery, who had been DCGS, India was approached by Trenchard to discuss the use of the RAF on the North-West Frontier. Montgomery was not impressed with Trenchard's proposals and felt that co-operation was required not replacement.⁶⁰ Fuller also believed that the aeroplane could not replace the man on the ground.⁶¹ This view was supported by the General Staff, whose view on this

⁵⁷ Meeting of the Sub-Committee on the Strength and Organization of the Cavalry, 21/2/1928, CAB 16/77, Records of the Committee of Imperial Defence: Cavalry - Strength and Organisation 1927-8.

⁵⁸ Bond, *British Military Policy*, pp. 85-6.

⁵⁹ IWMSA. Accession No. 895-2, Sir Thomas Jacomb Hutton.

⁶⁰ Field Marshal Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, *The Autobiography of a Gunner*, p. 47, LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd 10/11. Montgomery-Massingberd did not change his name until 1926.

⁶¹ Colonel J. F. C. Fuller, 'Problems of Mechanical Warfare', *The Army Quarterly*, Jan. 1922, pp. 284-201, p. 288.

aspect was not to change during the inter-war period.⁶² Furthermore, the evidence of rebellion in Palestine in 1929, and then later in 1936, seemed to suggest that the RAF was overstating its ability to act as 'Imperial Policeman'. Whilst it was able to act in the larger expanses of the desert in this capacity, any civil disorder in built up regions was not so successful without causing damage and ultimately further unrest.⁶³

Trenchard's assertions merely served to fuel inter-service antagonism and the proposal was defeated.⁶⁴ This enmity was not just limited to serving officers, as exhibited in an exchange of letters in early 1928 between Trenchard and the Secretary of State for War, Worthington-Evans, concerning the troop capacity of the Vickers Victoria, a troop transport and freight biplane. Trenchard claimed that a squadron of such aircraft could transport 250 men a distance of 150 miles in one day, but this was challenged strongly by Worthington-Evans who believed Trenchard's assessment was somewhat overstated, arguing that one of these aircraft could only carry twenty men for approximately half an hour and that this did not allow for any excess weight for both ammunition and rations.⁶⁵

Despite Hutton's contention, the RAF was more successful in replacing one of the cavalry's traditional roles: reconnaissance. The Geddes Report of 1922 singled out the cavalry in this one respect and suggested 'that greater reductions...be made in the cavalry, having regard to the advent of the Air as an alternative force.'⁶⁶ This was a threat that the cavalry was not unaware of and, in the early post-war issues of *The Cavalry Journal*, articles appeared covering this topic that portrayed a more positive view of the cavalry. In particular a former cavalryman, Major A. W. H. James, who was then a Squadron Leader at the RAF College at Cranwell, wrote a two-part article entitled 'Co-operation of Aircraft with Cavalry. General Principles' which very much supported the view that the two should work alongside one another and that aircraft

⁶² For example see *FSR*, (1929), p.54 and War Office, *Cavalry Training, Vol. II, War*, (London: HMSO, 1929), pp. 21-3. For later see *FSR*, (1935), pp. 63 and Lecture by M.O.1, 'The Role of the British Army', Feb. 1936, LHCMA Adam 2/2/2.

⁶³ Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 87.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 85-6.

⁶⁵ Items 1A, 1B, 1C, 2A, 3A and 3B, WO32/2845, Future organisation of the Cavalry: Sub-committee of Committee of Imperial Defence 1927. For an analysis of the RAF and colonial policing see David Omissi, *Air power and colonial control: the Royal Air Force, 1919-1939*, (Manchester: MUP, 1990).

⁶⁶ *The Times Supplemental*, Sat. 11th February 1922, p. ii, Col. 2.

could not replace cavalry.⁶⁷ James was at great pains to stress that ‘aeroplanes can no more do the work of cavalry than cavalry can do the work of aeroplanes,’ and he believed that ‘[a]eroplanes supplement and extend, they do not replace.’⁶⁸ This notion was reiterated in the FSR which stated that aircraft, along with other mechanical devices, had improved both the striking power and range of the cavalry.⁶⁹ James asserted that the aircraft’s function was only long-range, strategic reconnaissance, in an argument that resonated with a striking similarity to the critique of tanks, commented that geography and climatic conditions such as ‘fog, rain, high winds, low clouds [and] heat haze’ all restricted the efficacy of aircraft.⁷⁰ Milne was to reiterate these arguments later arguing that an ‘airman can report only what he sees...[and] can neither search, capture, identify or question nor can he “make good” ground over which troops propose to advance.’ These duties were, in his belief, better undertaken by ground troops.⁷¹ But these early assertions failed to influence the subsequent government committee.

The cavalry were not quite so bold in its claims of extended power and range and by 1929 the *Cavalry Training* manual acceded that there were many vehicles that were more rapid than the horse; the horse only being able to outperform them when conditions in the weather or on the ground were inimical to these new vehicles.⁷² In an editorial, *The Cavalry Journal* had to acknowledge that the role of ‘independent or strategical cavalry has in effect been modified, and the main duties of the cavalry to-day are *close co-operation* in the battle and the *pursuit*. These unquestionable facts are due to the advance of aircraft and air tactics.’⁷³ This was retold at the Cavalry Staff Exercise in 1927 which stated that it must be recognised that long distance reconnaissance was the role of the RAF; medium-range reconnaissance was undertaken by armoured cars with the cavalry fulfilling the role of close reconnaissance. However, the report from this exercise commented that when either

⁶⁷ Major A. W. H. James, ‘Co-operation of Aircraft with Cavalry. General Principles.’, *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. X, Apr. 1920, pp. 133-141. James was formerly of the 3rd Hussars.

⁶⁸ James, ‘Co-operation of Aircraft with Cavalry’, pp. 133-4.

⁶⁹ *FSR*, (1929), p.13.

⁷⁰ James, ‘Co-operation of Aircraft with Cavalry.’, p. 135.

⁷¹ ‘The Substitution of Armoured Vehicles for Cavalry’, WO32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

⁷² *Cavalry Training*, (1929), p. 2.

⁷³ ‘The Proposed Disbandments’, *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XI, Apr. 1921, pp.109-10, p.109.

weather conditions or road conditions were prohibitive, then the commanding officers would have to rely upon the cavalry.⁷⁴ This viewpoint was supported by one journalist when reporting upon manoeuvres undertaken by the Aldershot command in 1928 where he pronounced that '[t]he day of the cavalry [is] not yet over.' This was because throughout the manoeuvres aircraft were considerably hampered by fog.⁷⁵ However, it is questionable as to whether the retention of some several thousand mounted troopers was valid on the basis of the possibility of conditions being unsuitable for air reconnaissance.

Much to the cavalry's chagrin, the War Office had pre-empted the Geddes Report and had considered methods of reducing and reorganising the cavalry and two proposals were considered. The first was the disbandment of four regiments. The choice of four was determined on the basis that there had to be an even number of regiments of cavalry of the line so as the number of regiments stationed at home equalled those abroad for drafting purposes and two regiments would have been too few and six too many. The DAAG wrote an explanatory minute outlining a formula for choosing four regiments on the basis of 'juniority'. On the basis outlined by the DAAG this meant the 5th Lancers, 21st Lancers and the 19th and 20th Hussars would be disbanded. This recommendation also offered a tidy administrative solution as it removed two Lancers and two Hussar regiments keeping the number of regiments of lancers, hussars and dragoons even. The DAAG did point out that if the scheme wanted to be extended to five it would be possible to disband one of the household regiments as these were outside of the drafting considerations.⁷⁶ The AG preferred to remove the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Dragoon Guards as he believed this would pose the least difficulty administratively.⁷⁷ The DCIGS, Philip Chetwode, a cavalryman, commented that he felt that the General Staff would do well to observe a degree of caution in disbanding regiments 'of our already very small army for financial reasons.' Furthermore, he argued that if the General Staff favoured an inevitable expansion of the Tank Corps this could be undertaken by the transfer of cavalry regiments, which also would

⁷⁴ WO279/58, Cavalry Staff Exercise, April 1927, p.5.

⁷⁵ 'The Day of Cavalry Not Yet Over', *The Manchester Guardian*, 21st Sept. 1928, p.12.

⁷⁶ Minute 1, 'Scheme for Reducing Cavalry Regiments', WO32/5959, Scheme for reduction of Cavalry Regiments 1921.

⁷⁷ Minute 2, WO32/5959, Scheme for reduction of Cavalry Regiments 1921.

maintain unit tradition.⁷⁸ This was a clear indication that in the early period after the war the British army certainly anticipated some mechanisation of the cavalry.

The second option was proposed by the CO of the 1st Cavalry Brigade to create fourteen composite regiments, by reducing each existing regiment to two squadrons then pairing these together to make a composite regiment of four squadrons. The logic was that this maintained the identity of every regiment, retained a functional unit and provided significant cost savings. Furthermore, the proposer argued that it protected the cavalry from future cutbacks as it was a complete reorganisation rather than just picking away at costs repeatedly. Also, should the need arise, the cavalry could be expanded by separating the composite regiments and raising the requisite additional squadrons.⁷⁹ The scheme undoubtedly would have created savings and perhaps had its merits, but the assumption that it gave the cavalry protection against any future cuts was naive. Colonel Walter Kirke, the acting DMO, questioned just how long would it be, following such a change, before a government demanded the new regiments were cut down to a standard cavalry regiment of three squadrons, resulting in the loss of 50% of the cavalry not the 25% they were currently working to.⁸⁰ Kirke felt the scheme had made several assumptions which he believed were not insurmountable but aside from his above concern, he believed the scheme fell down in meeting the army's commitment to India; the cavalry was obliged to provide five regiments in India of three squadrons. These were funded by the Indian government and he felt it was highly unlikely that they would be willing to pay for five larger composite regiments with any manipulation of these regiments to compensate becoming logistically awkward and undermining the scheme. On top of this fundamental failing, he also harboured doubts as to whether the other cavalry

⁷⁸ Minute 3, WO32/5959, Scheme for reduction of Cavalry Regiments 1921.

⁷⁹ Item 2A, 'Proposal for Re-Organization of British Cavalry of the Line', WO32/5960, Proposals for reorganisation of Cavalry of the line: Amalgamation of various regiments 1921-2. The notion of expansion conforming to the views put forward by the Bird Committee cited earlier, WO32/11357, Army Organisation: Formation, terms of reference and work of reorganisation committee, p. 2.

⁸⁰ Minute 2, WO32/5960, Proposals for reorganisation of Cavalry of the line: Amalgamation of various regiments 1921-2.

regiments who were currently not threatened by the mooted cuts, would support such a scheme.⁸¹ Kirke rounded off his appraisal stating he doubted

the wisdom of accepting the views of existing Commanding Officers, who are naturally “crusted” horse soldiers...We would not allow similar objections on the part of the Artillery to deter us from mechanicalising batteries, or we would never make progress.⁸²

The DMO also raised the point that as time went by the original rationale of preserving the regiment would be lost to a feeling of dissatisfaction with the amalgamation.⁸³ Kirke’s point regarding cavalry officers is perhaps a fair one although it should be pointed out that there was a deeper-seated fear for the cavalry, namely its abolition. These cuts were on the premise of financial expediency but there was another layer to the debate. The comparison with the artillery on this basis is therefore unfair as it was only being modernised, its continuing utility on the battlefield was not in question. It is unclear if Kirke, an artilleryman, would have been quite so amenable if the artillery was to be abolished.

Ultimately, it was decided that four regiments should be disbanded on the basis outlined by the DAAG’s minute with a caveat that the ‘entity of the regiments’ should be retained to transfer to the seven tank units that were under consideration for 1922.⁸⁴ The rationale for these cuts was to facilitate a request for ‘£500,000 for improved forms of tanks [as m]echanical means of fighting must be developed to its fullest extent.’⁸⁵ The War Office in taking this approach did not fully anticipate that the Geddes committee was intent upon making wholesale immediate savings and not to plan for the future. Ignoring this oversight in policy by the War Office, the key thing to draw from this approach was that it gave an implicit message that the cavalry could and would be sacrificed for investment in armoured vehicles. Consequently, whilst the War Office during the 1920s never set about debating that it had to be either tanks or cavalry, unlike Fuller or Liddell Hart, its policy intimated that this was

⁸¹ Minute 2, WO32/5960, Proposals for reorganisation of Cavalry of the line: Amalgamation of various regiments 1921-2.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Minute 7, WO32/5959, Scheme for reduction of Cavalry Regiments 1921.

⁸⁵ ‘The Proposed Disbandments’, *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XI, Apr. 1921, pp.109-10, p.109.

the case. *The Cavalry Journal*, commenting upon mechanisation, freely acknowledged that ‘it must be clear to every cavalry soldier with war experience that they [AFVs] are bound to develop enormously in the near future!’ but it waxed poetically and hopefully that the immediate technological uncertainty of these vehicles would stop the War Office from ‘hurl[ing] back the magic Excalibur into the deep waters whence it had emerged on a day long past.’⁸⁶ The final epitaph did not provide any rousing acknowledgement of progression and transition but merely commiserated that ‘[t]he committee of the CAVALRY JOURNAL desire to express their deep sympathy with the four regiments concerned.’⁸⁷

The announcement of these disbandments engendered a spirited debate within the House of Commons, where several Members, primarily ex-cavalrymen, spoke out against these cuts. The most vociferous of these was the Conservative member for Harborough, Sir Keith Fraser. Fraser had served with the 7th Hussars during the Boer War and during the Great War had served with the 3rd County of London Yeomanry.⁸⁸ He believed that it was an affront to all Irishmen that the 5th Royal Irish Lancers and the 8th Royal Irish Hussars had been selected and that the other two regiments were Indian working in difficult conditions compared to other units.⁸⁹ This was to prove the most cogent and rational part of Fraser’s argument as he then proceeded to denounce officers of regiments stationed at home for spending their time ‘going to race meetings and hunting’ and that their regiments were ‘travelling about the country like a circus preparing for annual inspection.’⁹⁰ This argument may have given support for the four regiments under threat, but unfortunately his picture of those regiments stationed at home was far from positive. Fraser continued that the economics were pure folly and that the British Empire could afford twenty-nine regiments of cavalry and he pointed to both the newspapers, especially the *Daily*

⁸⁶ ‘The Proposed Disbandments’, pp.109-10.

⁸⁷ Ibid. For members of the committee at this time see Appendix, p. 348.

⁸⁸ Obituary, *The Times*, Mon. Sept 23rd 1935, p.19, iss. 47176, col. C.

⁸⁹ Fraser incorrectly named the 8th Hussars as they were never under consideration for disbandment. The reason for his error is unknown but it may be that he simply confused the 8th Hussars for the 18th Hussars, who were potentially at risk. See WO32/5959, Scheme for reduction of Cavalry Regiments 1921. Also, his assertion that two were Indian regiments is somewhat confusing; they were British cavalry regiments of the line. They may have been currently stationed in India, but all regiments, other than the Household Cavalry, took their turn serving overseas.

⁹⁰ Hansard Commons Vol. 139, 1921, Cols. 1354-5.

Mail, and infantry officers for advocating such a false policy.⁹¹ Fraser's ill-conceived defence was finalised when he countered his own argument for full retention of the cavalry by acceding that in European warfare 'cavalry days are over' and that it was in Asia where their usefulness remained. As a final throw away comment, he added, in complete contrast to the opinion of current serving cavalrymen, that aircraft were still not able to provide reconnaissance as well as cavalry.⁹²

Following this debate, Fraser tabled a motion that the proposed disbandments were 'contrary to the experience gained in the last War and inimical to the best interests of the defence of the Empire.'⁹³ Again, this flew in the face of his previous assertion on European warfare and in a supporting speech he argued that it was a false economy to fund more tanks and for them to just sit around. Once again, this comment set against his earlier remark upon cavalry regiments stationed at home being little more than a circus, renders his argumentation a little hollow.⁹⁴ Amongst Fraser's supporters for the motion was Lieutenant-Colonel Archer-Shee, Conservative MP for Finsbury, who was a former 19th Hussar, one of the regiments under threat, who argued that the very best officers came from the cavalry and that tradition meant 'a great deal.'⁹⁵ The trouble with these arguments was that the vacuous logic actually supported a reduction, even though this was not the intention. The Secretary of State for War, Worthington-Evans, had been explicit that the reduction in cavalry was upon financial grounds not tactical and the cavalry was an arm that could be legitimately reduced, as had happened with other European armies.⁹⁶ Of course, the mere fact that the cavalry was expendable does imply that there was a question against its future utility; Fraser had inadvertently highlighted the failings in Europe and the seeming financial wastefulness in retaining them at home.

⁹¹ Unfortunately, Fraser again got his facts wrong as there were 28 Regiments of the Line and 3 Household Cavalry regiments.

⁹² Hansard Commons Vol. 139, 1921, Cols. 1355-6.

⁹³ Hansard Commons Vol. 140, 1921, Col. 1979.

⁹⁴ Ibid, Cols. 1979-88.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 1921, Cols. 1994-5. Obituary, 'Lieut.-Colonel Sir M. Archer-Shee', *The Times*, Monday, Jan 07, 1935, p. 19; Issue 46955, col. A.

⁹⁶ Hansard Commons Vol. 139, 1921, Cols. 1388-91.

Whilst Fraser's inept defence of the cavalry can be viewed in hindsight with wry amusement, the perception that the days of the cavalry were over was the main problem that the cavalry had to address in this period. Unquestionably, financial constraints upon the army were a very genuine shackle upon its strategic policy. As one article in *The Cavalry Journal* pointed out, at that time 'the size and composition of our army have perforce to be regulated not by strategic requirements, but by the limited sum which the country is able to provide...the relation between efficiency and cost becomes of even greater consequence than in war.'⁹⁷ But although money was the driver behind any military cuts it was not the rationale. The rationale was inevitably to remove that which was immediately surplus to requirements. This did not mean that cuts were made on solely outmoded units, but on those that were superfluous to current requirements. Sir Henry Wilson volunteered this criticism on the reconstitution of the Territorial army in 1920. He argued that to fund a force that could only be used for home defence, when it was believed no such threat would exist for ten years, was not a judicious use of public money.⁹⁸ The difficulty for the cavalry was the perception that there was an ever decreasing function for them in the near future, not just in ten years time and so they were an inevitable budgetary target.

Outside of this argument there appeared a degree of resentment from some regarding the case of the 5th Lancers, as many believed the application of seniority had been incorrectly applied in its case. The problem was that whilst it obviously appeared fifth in the list of seniority, the 5th Royal Irish Dragoons had been disbanded in 1799 after the Irish Rebellion and had only been reformed as a lancer regiment in 1858. In March 1921, the War Office received a letter from Allenby, the Colonel of the regiment, appealing against this decision, together with a subsequent letter from Colonel J R Harvey, a former officer and a petition signed by twenty-two former officers. However, the War Office was adamant on the validity of its decision and refused to reconsider.⁹⁹ Worthington-Evans received a letter from Lord French,

⁹⁷ 'Mechanical Warfare', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XII, April 1922, p. 155.

⁹⁸ Peter Dennis, *The Territorial Army 1907-1940*, (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1987), p.46.

⁹⁹ See the following papers, Item 19A, Petition and covering letter dated 2nd June 1921, Letter to the War Office from Allenby, 24th March 1921. Item 19B, Letter from the War Office to Colonel J R Harvey, dated 8th June 1921. Letter from Worthington-Evans to Allenby, dated 23rd May 1921. All documents held in WO32/5959, Scheme for reduction of Cavalry Regiments 1921.

Colonel of 19th Hussars, appealing against the decision to disband his regiment.¹⁰⁰ However, none of these letters ever took issue with the notion of disbanding the regiments on grounds of either functionality or economics, merely of disappointment that it was their regiment that had been selected. Of interest in considering these disbandments, was that very serious consideration was being given to the idea that any new tank regiments subsequently raised should bear the nomenclature of these regiments.¹⁰¹

The reality of these disbandments provoked those cavalrymen who actually thought about the future into action and, instead of vacuous rhetoric, they started to respond with more thoughtful, professional observations. For example, in *The Cavalry Journal*, articles started to appear that tried to take the lead in how the cavalry should evolve for future warfare, rather than resting upon its laurels. In the notes section of the July 1921 issue, there was a piece that fully embraced the tank, denouncing those that decried it upon the continent, but importantly laid out a vision of synchronicity between horse and machine.

We do not share the opinion so prevalent on the continent that the tank will completely disappear before the gun and the armour-piercing bullet. It is incapable of supporting cavalry but should be regarded as an ally. When improved it should make cavalry action more varied, powerful, extended and decisive, but the machines must be developed so as to not lose the dominant factors in war of speed, manoeuvre and mobility. They must be capable of accompanying or following cavalry at all paces across any country, with the obvious exception of marshes, woods or ravines. The mechanical auxiliaries to cavalry must include shielded artillery on wheels or caterpillars, fast tanks, a service of cross-country automobiles to transport infantry supports and to ensure supply.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Letter from French to Worthington-Evans, dated 15th March 1921, WO32/5959, Scheme for reduction of Cavalry Regiments 1921.

¹⁰¹ Minute 7 and item 10H, letter from the King's Private Secretary to Worthington-Evans, dated 11th March 1921, WO32/5959, Scheme for reduction of Cavalry Regiments 1921.

¹⁰² 'Notes', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XI, July 1921, p.313.

The tenor of this piece is far more pragmatic and progressive than some of the previous articles. It provided an outline of a vision of the future and perhaps this could have been elaborated upon. Although the article is obviously written with a degree of bias, placing the tank in a subservient role, this is understandable in the light of the threat to the cavalry's continued existence; a degree of bravado was undoubtedly called for in mounting a defence. Furthermore, the argument that the tank was not yet capable of fulfilling the tasks that had been foreseen for it was a valid one; Fuller had admitted such in his 1920 articles.¹⁰³

In another article, the writer sought not only to harmonise horse and machine, but to reconcile this with a prudent financial approach. The article called for a move away from unnecessary polarisation and appealed for some sense of unity, stating that the 'sole aim of all military organization and training should be the evolution of a force which ... will produce the maximum fighting efficiency in war' and requested that all parties drop the 'antagonistic spirit' or 'preconceived idea[s]' and come to a rational decision as to the best combination of new and old.¹⁰⁴ The only problem with this call for harmony was that the main protagonists invariably could not agree upon what was efficient, especially as this was variable based on finance, functionality and conditions of conflict.

Whilst the War Office had already set in motion the disbandment of four cavalry regiments, the Geddes report called for a further five, reducing the cavalry of the line from twenty-eight regiments to nineteen of just three squadrons, giving the cavalry just fifty-seven squadrons in total strength.¹⁰⁵ This was an overall reduction of just under one half. For the General Staff, this was a radical change and required them to revisit the debate that had commenced when deciding upon the original cuts on how the cavalry was to be organised. The Army Council's immediate response was that it

¹⁰³ Brevet Colonel J. F. C. Fuller, 'The Influence of Tanks on Cavalry Tactics (A Study in the Evolution of Mobility in War)', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. X, No. 36, Apr. 1920, No. 37 July 1920 and No. 38, Oct. 1920.

¹⁰⁴ 'Mechanical Warfare', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XII, April 1922, pp.153-6.

¹⁰⁵ *The Times Supplement*, Sat. 11th February 1922.

should try to ameliorate all reductions.¹⁰⁶ Initially, there were two options proposed. Firstly, the simple one of merely continuing the earlier policy and disbanding a further five regiments based upon a method of selection. The alternative was to reinstate the previously disbanded four regiments, and return to the previously rejected case of creating fourteen composite regiments. The reinstatement of the four cavalry regiments would not cause any problems as they had not actually yet been disbanded owing to one of the regiments being overseas.¹⁰⁷ For the CIGS, Sir Henry Wilson and the AG, Macdonogh, the matter was relatively simple and that five regiments should be selected under a pre-determined criteria, such as seniority and then disbanded. Macdonogh was quite clear that there was no confusion on the matter and highlighted that during the nineteenth century when the army faced similar requirements, regiments were simply disbanded. These regiments were then resurrected when and if required.¹⁰⁸ However, although Wilson was CIGS, his tenure was coming to an end, so instead of vociferously arguing his corner, he let the CIGS-in-waiting, Lord Cavan, become involved in the debate. Cavan held a totally different viewpoint and was 'much opposed to the total destruction of cavalry regiments.' Cavan requested that any schemes that had been propounded be forwarded to him and asked Wilson to get these schemes assessed as to their feasibility as soon as possible.¹⁰⁹

In total there were to be four schemes put forward for assessment, the simplest of which was Macdonogh's preferred course of further disbandments. The others were

¹⁰⁶ Army Council Meeting 293, 20/1/1922, WO33/1022, Minutes of proceedings and précis prepared for the Army Council 1922.

¹⁰⁷ This failing had resulted in the army not saving the £150,000 it had anticipated for 1921. The figure of £150,000 was lower than the full £500,000 as it had been recognised that there were logistical issues in the disbandments, thus the full savings would not commence until the subsequent year. However, it had been anticipated that some progress would have been made by June 1921. Army Council Meeting 281, 2/6/1921, Précis 1073, Army Expenditure 1921/22, WO33/1003, Minutes of proceedings and précis prepared for the Army Council 1921.

¹⁰⁸ Minute 9, WO32/5960, Proposals for reorganisation of Cavalry of the line: Amalgamation of various regiments 1921-2. Macdonogh was a highly intelligent officer, who not only was a career officer but had also qualified as a barrister. For details on Macdonogh see, Ian F. W. Beckett, 'Macdonogh, Sir George Mark Watson (1865–1942)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2010

[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38446>, accessed 15th September 2010].

¹⁰⁹ Minute 7, WO32/5960, Proposals for reorganisation of Cavalry of the line: Amalgamation of various regiments 1921-2. Also, Cavan to CIGS, 'The Cavalry Scheme', 31/1/1922, WO32/5960, Proposals for reorganisation of Cavalry of the line: Amalgamation of various regiments 1921-2.

labelled schemes A, B and C, which would imply that Macdonogh's preference was not a favoured course amongst the other officers. Scheme A was proposed by the current COs of the three Cavalry Brigades and to a degree was a revision of the previous scheme put forward by the cavalry. It again called for the reinstatement of the four regiments in the process of being disbanded, but this time the reduction in squadrons was far more complex. It proposed that the twenty-eight regiments be split into three groups or 'grades'. In the first grade there would be ten standard-sized regiments of three squadrons. In the next grade, there were to be nine regiments reduced to two squadrons and in the final grade, the remaining nine regiments reduced to just a single squadron. These last two grades were then to be combined for administrative and practical purposes, thus creating nine composite regiments of a standard size. The net result of this restructuring was the creation of nineteen regiments of three squadrons each. There would then be a system of rotation whereby each year one regiment would move from grade 3 to 2, one from 2 to 1 and finally, one complete grade 1 regiment, would reduce itself on returning from overseas to a single squadron. Thus, this scheme would have a twenty-eight year cycle with each regiment spending ten years as a standard regiment and eighteen years as part of a composite regiment; nine years with two squadrons and another nine years with one squadron. The logic being that it was equitable to every regiment.¹¹⁰ As commented by the Finance section, this was ingenious in its conception and as an exercise in numerical problem-solving was worthy of any accountant.¹¹¹ However, the administrative and logistical complexities it raised in order to be implemented were not inconsiderable and consequently any savings may have been lost in extra administration.¹¹² Cavan favoured this scheme and even MacDonogh admitted that it was the best of the schemes submitted, although he still maintained 'the principle on which all these schemes are based is fundamentally unsound!'¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Item 20A, Précis for the Army Council 1091, 'Reduction of the Cavalry', WO33/5960, Proposals for reorganisation of Cavalry of the line: Amalgamation of various regiments 1921-2.

¹¹¹ Minute 10, WO33/5960, Proposals for reorganisation of Cavalry of the line: Amalgamation of various regiments 1921-2.

¹¹² Minutes 9 and 10, WO33/5960, Proposals for reorganisation of Cavalry of the line: Amalgamation of various regiments 1921-2.

¹¹³ Minute 7 and 9, WO33/5960 Proposals for reorganisation of Cavalry of the line: Amalgamation of various regiments 1921-2.

The second scheme, B, was suggested by the Finance section and was based upon their review of Scheme A. It suggested that instead of implementing a rotation system, the nine composite regiments should be established on a permanent basis. This provided the necessary cuts, gave nineteen regiments of standard size and removed the administrative difficulties.¹¹⁴ The final scheme, C, was to create a single corps of cavalry and operate along similar lines to the artillery. This last system was not popular as it was felt that it was the most destructive to regimental identity.¹¹⁵ By the time these schemes were put to the Army Council, opinions were divided; Macdonogh still advocated simple disbandment and Worthington-Evans supported the Finance Secretary's view of permanent amalgamation.¹¹⁶ Cavan, now CIGS, was beginning to vacillate. He still supported the initial cavalry scheme of rotation but was now 'less reluctant to advise disbandment'; a view formulated after having recently read a publication on the life of Marlborough.¹¹⁷ To come to a decision, the Army Council held two meetings, of which the final outcome was for permanent amalgamation and this decision was ratified by the Cabinet.¹¹⁸

On top of these amalgamations in the cavalry of the line, a proposal for reducing the Household Cavalry from three regiments to two was also offered by amalgamating the 1st and 2nd Life Guards regiments. The GOC, London District, Major-General G. D. Jeffreys, felt this was not a good idea on the basis that there had been several threats of civil disturbance in London and he believed that the regiments should not only be seen in terms of a cavalry regiment but also as 'Armed Mounted Police.' Furthermore, in the event of war there would be insufficient men to fulfil this role as

¹¹⁴ Minute 10 and Item 20A, Précis for the Army Council 1091, 'Reduction of the Cavalry', WO33/5960 Proposals for reorganisation of Cavalry of the line: Amalgamation of various regiments 1921-2.

¹¹⁵ Item 20A, Précis for the Army Council 1091, 'Reduction of the Cavalry', WO33/5960, Proposals for reorganisation of Cavalry of the line: Amalgamation of various regiments 1921-2.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Minute 14 and Item 20A, Précis for the Army Council 1091, 'Reduction of the Cavalry', WO33/5960, Proposals for reorganisation of Cavalry of the line: Amalgamation of various regiments 1921-2.

¹¹⁸ Army Council Meetings 296/7, 13/3/1922 and 21/3/1922, WO33/1022 Minutes of proceedings and précis prepared for the Army Council 1922.

well as for overseas duties.¹¹⁹ However, his views were ignored and the cabinet also ratified the amalgamation of the two Life Guard regiments.

The concept of amalgamation has often been ascribed to Cavan, but as has been highlighted this is not strictly accurate. He certainly was very much in favour and also strove to retain those regiments that had been selected for disbandment. His appointment as CIGS was crucial in this as this was a complete change in policy from his predecessor, Wilson. Thus, the change in War Office policy must be accredited to Cavan but the conceptualisation comes primarily from the three Cavalry Brigade commanders, Colonels Harman, 1st Cavalry Brigade, T.T. Pitman, 2nd Cavalry Brigade and G. A. Weir, 3rd Cavalry Brigade, together with some amendment from the finance department.

Despite what one writer referred to as the ‘almost daily triumphant paeans of joy in terms of regiments to be disbanded,’ the cavalry achieved a *coup* when the policy of disbandment was supplanted by amalgamation, saving the four threatened regiments.¹²⁰ They believed that the adoption of amalgamation saved regimental identity and should there be a future requirement would facilitate expansion.¹²¹ This remains for the cavalry a lasting legacy on political and military policy. As Macdonogh, Wilson and even Cavan had pointed out, it flew in the face of tradition, which had been disbandment. Furthermore, far from saving regimental identity it altered it for double the number. However, the view of the cavalry is not quite so clear cut. Some COs were not in favour of amalgamation. The CO of the Inniskillings felt that if cutbacks were going to be made then they should be more drastic, and was further supported by the CO of the 13th Hussars. The CO of the 15th Hussars felt that straightforward disbandment was a better approach. The COs of the 16th Lancers and the 19th Hussars thought that the scheme was fine but wanted the War Office to ensure that they got this scheme right first time rather than having to

¹¹⁹ ‘Some Notes on the Proposed Economies in Household Cavalry from the Point of View of G. O. C., London District’, WO33/5960, Proposals for reorganisation of Cavalry of the line: Amalgamation of various regiments 1921-2.

¹²⁰ ‘The Royal Horse Artillery with Cavalry’, *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXII, July 1922, p.238.

¹²¹ ‘The Reduction of the Cavalry’, *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XII, July 1922, pp.219-21.

revisit it and make subsequent economies. The CO of the KDG could see no other solution but pointed out that his officers were very much against the idea.¹²²

The amalgamation of cavalry regiments had already taken place in the Indian cavalry which had also seen a far more comprehensive reduction from 39 regiments to 21. However, despite the enthusiasm evinced by some within the British cavalry for the idea of amalgamation, the system had not been a whole-hearted success in India. In a letter to the *Pioneer* discussing the process in the Indian cavalry, one party had written

an elaborate scheme of amalgamation was thought out and was given as a sop to the regiments concerned, the underlying idea of the scheme being that neither of the regiments to be amalgamated would lose its identity or its traditions. As part of this scheme a clumsy system of double numbers expressed in vulgar fractions was foisted on the amalgamated regiments.¹²³

It created what became nicknamed the ‘vulgar fractions’ and resulted in the creation of the 3rd/6th Dragoon Guards, the 4th/7th Dragoon Guards, the 5th/6th Dragoons, the 13th/18th Hussars, the 14th/20th Hussars, the 15th/19th Hussars, the 16th/5th Lancers and the 17th/21st Lancers. It is difficult to argue against Strachan’s assertions that this was to the detriment of the army as a whole. It set a ‘precedent of compromise in place of confrontation’ and that regimental sentimentality should be taken into consideration in any future structure. In short, ‘the collective needs of the army’ could no longer be assumed to ‘take precedence over the individual needs of regiments.’¹²⁴

When, in 1926, as part of a wider review of cavalry, senior officers were asked whether they felt ‘the present arrangement of amalgamated regiments satisfactory,’

¹²² WO32/5960, Proposals for reorganisation of Cavalry of the line: Amalgamation of various regiments 1921-2.

¹²³ An Interested Party, ‘Extracted from the ‘Pioneer’ of the 16th April 1922’, Birdwood Papers, NAM 6707-19-591A.

¹²⁴ Hew Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), pp.210-211.

the responses were conflicting.¹²⁵ Some officers believed that it was the best method, others admitted that there had been difficulties but these were being overcome, whereas others believed it was wholly unsatisfactory, although some in this latter category believed it would confuse things even further to change to another policy.¹²⁶ However, from a purely administrative standpoint it would seem to have been something of a most convoluted solution. So much so that the committee had to make several recommendations upon dress, squadron nomenclature and the appointment of new officers even though the amalgamations had taken place four years earlier.¹²⁷

After this initial re-organisation of the cavalry, articles continued to appear in *The Cavalry Journal* trying to visualise an effective role for the cavalry within the modern British army. In any work that has been undertaken that involves an analysis of the cavalry, *The Cavalry Journal* features heavily as it was the closest thing to an official conduit for thinking upon the cavalry. As such, it has been repeatedly upheld as an exemplar of the cavalry's failure to grasp modern concepts and indicate anachronistic leanings. Winton, in his book upon the development of British armoured doctrine between 1927 and 1938 comments that '[t]he *Cavalry Journal*...was a folksy, horsy collection of reminiscences.'¹²⁸ Elizabeth Kier, when looking at the impact of culture on the formulation of military doctrine, repeatedly holds up the journal as unquestionable evidence of the cavalry's antediluvian approach. For her it was somewhat amateur in nature, and 'the simplicity of the writing and the portraits of famous horses and cavalry charges make the *Cavalry Journal* seem antiquated.'¹²⁹ The problem with Kier's analysis is that the evidence is selected to support her

¹²⁵ 'Copy of Letter and Questionnaire issued by the Cavalry Committee, Interim Report of the Cavalry Committee', 23rd Nov. 1926, Appendix 1, p. 27, WO32/2841, Army Organisation: Cavalry (Code 14(D)): Cavalry Committee: Interim report. 'Final Report of the Cavalry Committee', 4th Jan. 1927, p. 10, WO32/2842, ARMY ORGANISATION: Cavalry (Code 14(D)): Cavalry Committee: Final report.

¹²⁶ Items 157/81-157/105, LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd Papers 9/5/3.

¹²⁷ 'Final Report of the Cavalry Committee', 4th Jan. 1927, pp. 10-12, WO32/2842, ARMY ORGANISATION: Cavalry (Code 14(D)): Cavalry Committee: Final report.

¹²⁸ Harold R. Winton, *To Change an Army: General Sir John Burnett-Stuart and British Armoured Doctrine, 1927-1938*, (Kansas: University of Kansas, 1988), p.12.

¹²⁹ Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars*, (Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1999), p.134. This is not an isolated example, for further examples, see pp. 123, 128, 131, and 135.

argument and all other evidence is discarded, giving a biased approach.¹³⁰ Larson in his book on the British army's approach to armoured doctrine comments that all journals of the period

were seriously interested in the lessons to be learned from the recent war and in the strategic problems facing the British Empire...Naturally, not all of the articles published during these years were of high quality, and not all views expressed were progressive. The great majority, however, reflected a good deal of thought on the part of the authors and the leading tank advocates were able to make considerable use of the journals as a forum.¹³¹

In line with Larson's comment, the quality in *The Cavalry Journal* was variable. In an anonymous article entitled 'Progress', the author still accentuated the validity of the 'cavalry spirit' and although acknowledging that cavalry charges were reduced, did not believe that they were over but rather believed that they required 'the utmost dash...for success.' The article repeatedly referred to Colonel Henderson's book, *The Science of War*, a posthumous collection of papers from 1891-1903.¹³² Henderson's book was far from lacking merit, but was simply out of date following the impact of the recent war and it was hardly a strong basis to analyse progress.¹³³

It is also true that there existed many articles concerning the past or sporting events, but as many have pointed out, the British army's organisational structure is based upon parochial affiliation be it at regimental level or fighting arm. Such articles, therefore, did not progress the development of function within the army but they served to cement such notions of parochialism: an *esprit de corps*.

¹³⁰ Kier's book is based upon a cultural analysis of the British army. A more in-depth critique of her views on the British cavalry is undertaken in the chapter on cavalry culture. See *The Social and Cultural Nature of the Inter-War British Cavalry*, pp. 45-6.

¹³¹ Larson, *The British Army*, pp.21-2.

¹³² G. F. R. Henderson, *The Science of War: a collection of essays and lectures 1891-1903*, Neill Malcolm, Ed. (Longmans Green, 1919).

¹³³ 'Progress', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIII, Jan. 1923, pp. 6-16.

To state that there existed very few articles upon modernisation and problems of mobile war, is simply false. For example, in 1923 there was a summary of a senior officers conference held at Weedon, the army's equitation school, which studied the utilisation of a combined mobile force. The article is undoubtedly very positive towards the continuing effectiveness of the cavalry but it is quite clear that thinking was still evolving. The opening paragraphs stated

The problems confronting the Cavalry have entirely altered owing to their bulk and visibility from the air and to the increase in machine guns, and when the tank becomes more reliable mechanically, it will have a great effect on their use in war both in attack and defence...We should never again see on the field of battle by day even a brigade of Cavalry concentrated.¹³⁴

Other articles, that gave narratives of recent past actions, did try to draw lessons that could be applied for future conflict, some of which were more recent than the Great War. The actions of the Scinde Horse in fighting the Arabs in 1920 were recounted by Lieutenant-Colonel E. B. Maunsell, and he drew several conclusions on fighting this type of conflict, including the efficacy of fighting on foot and whether armoured cars would have been of assistance. He also challenged the ability of the Air Force in being able to deal with such an encounter.¹³⁵ Major-General Sir Edmund Ironside, who was to become CIGS for the first year of the Second World War, wrote an article entitled 'The Lessons of the East Prussian Campaign' which looked at the issues of commanding a mobile force of the future that derived from problems that arose for the Germans and Russians in 1914.¹³⁶

Such articles continued to appear throughout the 1920s and it is a false claim that the cavalry tried to ignore modern warfare and its implications, just as it would be a false claim to assert that every quarterly issue was brimming over with postulations on the nature of future warfare. Certainly, some of the articles were questionable in their

¹³⁴ 'Notes on Delay Action by a Mobile Force of all Arms', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIII, Oct. 1923, pp. 372-380.

¹³⁵ Lieut.-Colonel E. B. Maunsell, 'The Arab Rebellion A Disaster and a Cavalry rear-guard Action', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIV, July 1924, pp. 280-293.

¹³⁶ Major-General Sir Edmund Ironside, 'The Lessons of the east Prussian Campaign', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIV, Oct. 1924, pp. 379-85.

prescience and some were blinkered defences of the cavalry, but as those who advocated wholesale changes in the army were frequently unable to agree cohesively upon a congruent approach, it is unsurprising that cavalrymen's opinions varied. The diversity in opinion to mechanisation was exemplified and categorised by Winton into six groupings: revolutionaries, such as Fuller; reformers like Lindsay; his largest category, the progressives, in which he specifically named a senior cavalryman, General Sir Philip Chetwode, who was on *The Cavalry Journal's* managing committee; conservatives; reactionaries; and the last category, being a catchall for those who were simply indifferent.¹³⁷ Brian Bond was to adopt Winton's categorisation in his analysis of mechanisation and military policy of the inter-war period.¹³⁸

However, from approximately 1930, articles within *The Cavalry Journal* seemed to disappear on aspects of modern or future warfare. An editorial announcement in the October 1933 issue acceded that too many articles did look to the past 'and no attempt is made to enable readers to keep abreast of Cavalry thoughts...[and] the Journal does not really represent the modern thought of Cavalry soldiers, our present doctrine and future faith.'¹³⁹ To this end, an editorial challenged officers to put pen to paper with the provocative question that 'are [we] afraid of putting forth ideas that may not find favour?'¹⁴⁰ Unfortunately, this challenge went unheeded and to try and wake cavalrymen from their mental lethargy, the managing committee of the journal decided to start paying for articles in order to try and encourage 'more and better articles.'¹⁴¹ However, the editorial team themselves must be challenged upon their own standards. For example, the journal reported upon a cavalry exercise on Salisbury Plain in September 1933. This exercise was specifically designed to give practice as a mixed mobile force, with cavalry working alongside both tanks and armoured cars. The article reported the facts of the exercise but failed to draw any positive or negative conclusions, or make any recommendations for the future. The

¹³⁷ Winton, *To Change an Army*, pp.27-30. See Appendix for details of Managing Committee, p. 348.

¹³⁸ Bond, *British Military Policy*, pp. 130-2. The seeming date disparity between Bond's and Winton's books occurs because Bond based his work upon Winton's doctoral thesis of 1977, which was not published until 1988.

¹³⁹ 'Editorial', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXIII, Oct. 1933, p. 495.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ 'Editorial', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXIV, Jan 1934, p. 1.

author concluded that '[a]s to the lessons learnt, we hope that we have given sufficient detail to enable those interested to draw their own conclusions.'¹⁴² This was a rather vague and unhelpful summation that gave no indication of the thinking on cavalry doctrine by the War Office, senior cavalry officers, the editorial team or the author. The lack of any critical analysis was further compounded by the implication that the interest on any lessons drawn was likely to be minimal anyway.

The reasons for this indifference can only be conjecture but the number of men still serving with significant combat experience would have been reducing and being replaced by younger recruits who were enlisting in the cavalry for the horse.¹⁴³ Furthermore, much of the ideas put forward during the 1920s had been implemented where financially practicable and until funding was increased there was little more that could be done. Brian Bond described 1931 as the British army's 'nadir.' He states that whilst the political environment during the 1920s had been negative, the army had at least known the situation. However, from 1931 there were further negative factors domestically and internationally.¹⁴⁴ Hutton pointed out in a later interview that during both the 1920s and 1930s, there was an array of political and social factors that pushed against mechanisation. He believed these were the country's financial position, the League of Nations, the Treaty of Versailles, the peace movement, as well as the Ten Year Rule.¹⁴⁵ The financial crisis in 1931 meant that the army estimate for the year was only £36 million; its lowest of the inter-war period.¹⁴⁶ Roger Evans commented with some feeling that,

[o]nly those who experienced it can realize the sense of frustration of those lean years when...the British Army was being starved of men and modern equipment and left without incentive to inquire into up-to-date military thought.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² 'Cavalry Exercise on Salisbury Plain, September 4th-7th, 1933', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXIV, Jan. 1934, pp.5-17.

¹⁴³ See chapter on The Social and Cultural Nature of the Inter-War Cavalry, p. 143.

¹⁴⁴ Bond, *British Military Policy*, pp. 155-6.

¹⁴⁵ IWMSA. Accession No. 895-1, Thomas Jacomb Hutton.

¹⁴⁶ Bond, *British Military Policy*, pp. 155-6.

¹⁴⁷ Major-General Roger Evans, *The Years Between The Story of the 7th Queen's Own Hussars 1911-1937*, (Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1965), p. 104.

Another contribution to the cavalry's lack of doctrinal progress was that in 1931, a new edition of the army's 1929 publication, *Mechanized and Armoured Formations*, now renamed *Modern Formations* and known more generally as the Purple Primer, had been revised to encompass the activities of horsed cavalry. This was at the behest of the CIGS and was arguably done to bolster cavalry morale. In so doing it conceded that cavalry could still be a constituent part of a modern mobile formation.¹⁴⁸ The *Cavalry Training* manual explained at some length on the uses of mounted cavalry and was keen to highlight that mobile formations consisted of cavalry, armoured cars and motor-driven artillery and only occasionally tanks.¹⁴⁹ In a paper entitled 'Problems in Mechanization' by George Lindsay, a leading advocate of armoured warfare, he conceded that horsemen could be used in reconnaissance with medium tanks or in reconnaissance units for infantry. Whilst Lindsay stated that he believed that machine and horses should not work together and the horse was no longer the fastest means of movement, his paper was not an unequivocal dismissal of mounted cavalry or the cavalry concept¹⁵⁰. In some quarters, concerns had been raised over the future of the tank, owing to the advance of technology. Chetwode, now C.-in-C., India and the most senior cavalryman in the army at this time, was much enamoured with reports on a new anti-tank bullet, the Halger-Ultra, which could allegedly pierce armour over half an inch thick. He believed this new weapon undermined current thinking on armoured warfare.¹⁵¹ The tank's vulnerability to shellfire had been pointed out in the *Cavalry Training* manual.¹⁵²

The debates that took place in the House of Commons of the early 1930s further support the notion that a role for the cavalry was still perceived. During the Army

¹⁴⁸ Liddell Hart, *The Tanks*, p.294. The original had been published in 1929. Harris has commented that both the original and subsequent manual, whilst a reflection of the thinking of the RTC radicals, contained much that was unsound dogma. J. P Harris, *Men, ideas and tanks British military thought and armoured forces, 1903-1939*, (Manchester: MUP, 1995), pp. 202-3 and pp. 222-3.

¹⁴⁹ *Cavalry Training*, (1929). For this definition of mobile formations see p. 3. Other comments appear throughout upon the utility of mounted action and the shortfalls of machinery. For examples, p.2, pp. 121-2 and pp. 128-30.

¹⁵⁰ Brig. G. Lindsay, 'Problems of Mechanization', 26/5/1930, LHCMA Liddell Hart 15/12/5.

¹⁵¹ Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, p. 242.

¹⁵² *Cavalry Training*, (1929), p. 128.

Estimates debate in 1933 Duff Cooper stated that 'I think it is certainly too early, if the time ever comes, to assume that the function of the cavalry is finished.'¹⁵³

The Cavalry Journal was not the only outlet on cavalry thinking towards modern warfare. The aforementioned senior officer's conference of 1923 was not a unique occurrence and between 1923 and 1927 there were four Cavalry Staff Exercises looking at aspects of cavalry in a modern army. In 1926 at Aldershot, a cavalry staff exercise was conducted which was part of an ongoing appraisal of cavalry problems.¹⁵⁴ The opening comments gave an enlightening outlook and are worth quoting at length

For three years a number of the more senior and experienced cavalry officers, together with the younger staff officers...have assembled to consider cavalry problems. We have also the advice of senior artillerymen, airmen and tank officers at our disposal.

All of us are deeply interested in the cavalry arm and...in spite of the air arm and modern weapons, there are many...tasks in war that only the mounted arm can carry out in its present stage of the development of armies...

there is no thinking cavalryman who is not profoundly dissatisfied with the capacity of his arm to carry out its duties in war as he could wish them carried out.

These exercises are designed...to direct the minds of coming cavalry leaders into a train of thought which takes into account all the existing and probable mechanical and other aids to modern warfare...[and] to make practicable suggestions as to what weapons and what mechanical devices are most likely to help the cavalry of the future.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, p.240.

¹⁵⁴ 'Cavalry Staff Exercise, Aldershot, 19th-22nd April 1926', LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd papers 9/5/1. The author has only been able to find information relating to three of these exercises amongst archival documents and *The Cavalry Journal*, being those held in 1923, 1926 and 1927.

¹⁵⁵ 'Cavalry Staff Exercise, Aldershot, 19th-22nd April 1926', p. 5. LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd papers 9/5/1.

The whole tenor of these introductory remarks, which were made by Chetwode, who was then G. O. C.-in-C., Aldershot, provides an alternative image of the cavalry in direct contrast to that typically portrayed. Undoubtedly, it does not call for the radical overthrow of the cavalry demanded by the tank apostles, but it is also far from the retarding force those same apostles tried to arraign. At the 1927 cavalry staff exercise, Chetwode was again proactive towards modern machinery

If we honestly think that for any of the daily cavalry tasks the machine or the machine carried weapon can replace the horse, let us say so; for our business is to beat the enemy and not to stick to old and pleasant prejudices¹⁵⁶

Although, he did go on to offer the standard caveat of the varied terrain that the British army operated in and whether new devices were suitable in certain regions.¹⁵⁷ Fuller and Liddell Hart perpetually tried to create a negative image of the cavalry that was far too simplistic. Fuller perceived the existence within GHQ of ‘a cavalry ring,’ who during the recent war ‘would far rather have lost the war than have seen the cavalry replaced by tanks.’¹⁵⁸ As previously mentioned, Fuller’s antipathy towards the cavalry seems to have predominantly evolved from his belief in Haig’s incompetency. There are many florid examples of such in his book but suffice it to say here that he considered him incompetent for the role of BEF Commander-in-Chief.¹⁵⁹ This personal animosity towards Haig, a cavalryman, fuelled Fuller’s conspiracy theory over the existence of a GHQ cavalry ring. Indeed, Fuller’s uncompromising belief in the tank led him to resent any who opposed their use in any way.

This resentment led to some highly irrational logic on his part in his perception of the cavalry. For example, in his memoirs he cited an experience of Major S. H. Foot who was working at the War Office in 1918, who related a tale of an apparent deliberate obstruction by a senior officer to expand the Tank Corps, despite a decision having

¹⁵⁶ WO279/58, Cavalry Staff Exercise, 1927, p. 10.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Fuller, *Memoirs*, p. 395.

¹⁵⁹ For examples of Fuller’s assault upon Haig’s skills as a General see Fuller, *Memoirs*, pp. 95, 102, 137, 140, 156. J. P. Harris’ recent biography also challenges Haig’s suitability for this command although not quite in such florid tones. Harris, *Douglas Haig*, p. 546.

been made by Lloyd George at a Paris conference; an obstruction that so incensed Foot that he came close to assaulting the officer until he realised there was another party in the room.¹⁶⁰ However, in Foot's own published memoirs he certainly commented upon an apparent resistance by some cavalry officers to the tank and the above incident was recounted, yet he made no direct comment that the officer in question was a cavalryman, although there was a suggestion as such. More important is that he remained silent upon the existence of a deliberate underground cavalry movement.¹⁶¹ But Fuller concluded from this event that, although Foot could not have perceived what was behind the man's thoughts, Fuller could, for '[h]e [the officer] was hand-in-glove with the GHQ Cavalry Ring'.¹⁶² Whilst undeniably Fuller would have known the officer in question and his regimental background, to make such an unqualified pronouncement upon his intentions is questionable and verging upon paranoia.

Chetwode's involvement in the debate and development of the cavalry over much of the inter-war period was not inconsiderable. He had been commissioned in the 19th Hussars and had been heavily involved in Allenby's Palestinian campaign. In the post-war period he held several senior positions: Military Secretary; DCIGS; Adjutant-General; G. O. C.-in-C., Aldershot and finally, C.-in-C., India. Indeed, it was highly probable that, had the unprecedented extension of Milne's tenure as CIGS not taken place, he would have been appointed to the British army's senior post.¹⁶³ Unlike other cavalrymen, he received plaudits from both Fuller and Liddell Hart. Liddell Hart's entry on Chetwode in the *Dictionary of National Biography* states

It was a time of retrenchment but he exerted a helpful influence on the remodelling of the army by his constant insistence on the need to break loose from entrenchment and revive manoeuvre in warfare. While he still cherished the horse and was rather sceptical of the tank, his demand for 'a general quickening up all round' of

¹⁶⁰ Fuller, *Memoirs*, pp. 361-2.

¹⁶¹ Stephen Foot, *Three Lives-And Now: An Autobiography*, (London: Heinemann, 1937), pp.210-211.

¹⁶² Fuller, *Memoirs*, p. 362.

¹⁶³ B. H. L. Hart, 'Chetwode, Philip Walhouse, first Baron Chetwode (1869-1950)', rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32393>, accessed 16th June 2009]

movement and leadership was encouraging to those younger men who were proclaiming the new vision of lightning strokes by armoured forces.

Chetwode had greater natural gifts than most of the eminent soldiers of his time... He gripped an audience as few generals could—all the more because he looked and spoke like a leader...His ‘military testament’ delivered to the Quetta Staff College before he left India was one of the most penetrating indictments of orthodoxy and mental atrophy and stimulating calls for imagination ever delivered from the throne of military authority.¹⁶⁴

Fuller, who in this period was determined to ‘[stir] up a hornet’s nest’ and propagandise his concept for mobile armoured warfare, believed the *coup de grace* for his campaign was the debate that took place in December 1920 at the Senior Officers’ School at Woking that was chaired by Churchill himself. The title of the debate was ‘Tanks *versus* Cavalry’, with Fuller naturally taking the debate for the tank with Chetwode being his opponent. Fuller perceived that his ‘propaganda’ had created ‘such a typhoon...that no one less than the Secretary of State for War could take the chair, and no one less than a future Commander-in-Chief in India...could be selected as my opponent.’¹⁶⁵ This last statement is undoubtedly hyperbole on Fuller’s part, for at the time of the debate, Chetwode’s future command was a decade away. Chetwode was then a senior serving cavalryman but his future position in India could not have been pertinent to his selection as Fuller’s opponent. Whilst the details of this debate are unknown, Fuller commented that after the debate, ‘it was not a question of who had won’ and respectfully acknowledged Chetwode was ‘one of the ablest cavalry soldiers we have had for a century’.¹⁶⁶ In a book that rarely pulled its punches, these two statements provide a marked degree of humility and respect, and provides a strong indication that Fuller’s advocacy of the tank at the debate had not

¹⁶⁴ B. H. L. Hart, ‘Chetwode, Philip Walhouse, first Baron Chetwode (1869–1950)’, rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32393>, accessed 16th June 2009]

¹⁶⁵ Fuller, *Memoirs*, p. 395.

¹⁶⁶ Fuller did not elucidate in any detail upon the debate and no memoirs exist for Field Marshal Sir Philip Chetwode, with his diaries having been destroyed under explicit instructions in his will. See LHCMA web page www.kcl.ac.uk/lhcma/archives_working/parsefile.php?file=/lhcmalocreg/CHETWODE.shtml&query=chetwode, accessed 3rd January 2007. Fuller, *Memoirs*, p. 395.

totally cast aside the horse.¹⁶⁷ The only potential clue to Chetwode's argument is from an undated paper written by him when GOC of the 2nd Cavalry Division, 1915-6.¹⁶⁸ In this paper, he acknowledged the end of the deployment of mass cavalry, the rise of the aeroplane in reconnaissance and that the cavalry needed to be lighter, flexible and deployed in smaller units.¹⁶⁹

Chetwode was far from being the only senior cavalryman of the period who had a more progressive outlook and worked to try and modernise the British army in this respect. Allenby, whose Palestine campaign was often a crutch for the staunch cavalry advocates, conceded in a small report to the War Office that '[t]anks, armoured cars and the like, have by now proved their worth...their claim to supersede the Cavalry is based on - Firepower, Mobility, Invulnerability, Endurance, assets which are real and, indisputably, great.' However, he was to temper this statement with several pages of typescript highlighting how and where cavalry could be useful and how it had been in recent history. He had to acquiesce that '“The old order changeth, yielding place to new” – but evolution is a slow process.'¹⁷⁰ Whilst perhaps it is too strong to state that his views were progressive, nonetheless they were not so blinkered that they failed to concede that there was a change coming.

Another was General Sir David Campbell, a former 9th Lancer, who had also accredited himself well during the war, although solely upon the Western Front, where he had been one of the longest serving divisional commanders. During the post-war period, Campbell was the GOC for the Baluchistan District, India, and was then Military Secretary for a year. He then succeeded Chetwode as G. O. C.-in.-C., Aldershot.¹⁷¹ Within Winton's categorisation of officers from this period, it could be argued that Campbell was more of a reformer than merely progressive. For example, whilst not specifically a factor in Winton's category definitions, Campbell fought

¹⁶⁷ Fuller, *Memoirs*, p. 395.

¹⁶⁸ The date of Chetwode's command is taken from his service biography on the LHCMA website, <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/lhcma/locreg/CHETWODE.shtml>, accessed 4th October 2010.

¹⁶⁹ 'Paper by Major-General Chetwode, CO 2nd Cavalry Division', LHCMA Liddell Hart 15/12/5.

¹⁷⁰ Item 15A, 'Cavalry's Future', WO 32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

¹⁷¹ Obituary, 'General Sir David Campbell Soldier, Sportsman, And Administrator', *The Times*, Friday, Mar. 13, 1936, p. 16, Iss. 47322, col. B

vehemently after the War for promotion on merit, which did not endear him to a number of his colleagues.¹⁷² However, of note are his views upon cavalry in modern war, which he penned in a memorandum just prior to his command at Aldershot in 1926. In this memorandum he acquiesced that the recent war had made it patently clear that the role of cavalry had been significantly reduced and accepted that there was no longer any role for cavalry in undertaking strategical reconnaissance and in any attacking function, unless supported by tanks. Furthermore, he believed that it was to the Western Front and not Palestine that the army needed to look in considering the future of the cavalry.¹⁷³ Liddell Hart believed that '[n]o other leading cavalryman would have gone so far.'¹⁷⁴ His brief conclusion on the future of cavalry surrounded two points, which whilst not advocating the immediate overthrow of the cavalry, were an acknowledgement of its inevitability. These two points were

That the mantle of the cavalry has to a great extent fallen on the Tanks, and that later on the tank alone will be in a position to do what Cavalry did in the past.

That, until however a Tank is produced whose crew and armament contain the elements requisite for attack and defence, Cavalry, owing to its comparative mobility, will remain the best supporting arm of Tanks.¹⁷⁵

The final point also places the cavalry in support of the tank, unlike the many articles in *The Cavalry Journal* which saw the tank as an auxiliary to the cavalry: a subtle, yet important distinction. Campbell also prophesied that '[t]he decisive arm in the next war apart from Gas and Aircraft will be Tanks and Mechanicalised or Tank Artillery.'¹⁷⁶ In this respect Campbell's viewpoint was not too distant from Fuller himself. In light of Campbell's progressiveness, it was perhaps not so surprising that

¹⁷² Obituary, 'General Sir David Campbell Soldier, Sportsman, And Administrator', *The Times*, Friday, Mar. 13, 1936, p. 16, Iss. 47322, col. B., B. H. Liddell Hart, *The Memoirs of Captain Liddell Hart, Vol. I*, (London: Cassell, 1965), pp. 108-9.

¹⁷³ 'The value of Cavalry and Infantry, as organised today, in Modern War.', LHCMA Liddell Hart papers, 1/148/9.

¹⁷⁴ B. H. Liddell Hart, *The Memoirs of Captain Liddell Hart, Vol. I*, (London: Cassell, 1965), pp. 109.

¹⁷⁵ 'The value of Cavalry and Infantry, as organised today, in Modern War.', LHCMA Liddell Hart papers, 1/148/9.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

in a later incident, it was he who managed to intercede and dissuade Fuller from resigning his commission.¹⁷⁷

However, Campbell's dynamic vision of the future was tempered by a supplemental memorandum. In this document, he believed that the day when the cavalry could be replaced by the tank had yet to arrive and nor was it 'likely to arrive for some considerable time.'¹⁷⁸ He consequently believed that modern inventions should therefore be utilised to assist the cavalry to increase its range of operations and improve its firepower, very much along the lines that had been observed under Chetwode's Cavalry Staff Exercise.¹⁷⁹ Thus, Campbell retracted from his more strident position and vacillated between progressiveness and reform.

Campbell had initially been proposed to chair the aforementioned War Office committee, known as the Cavalry Committee, created in 1926 to investigate specifically issues pertaining to the cavalry. Unfortunately due to his forthcoming new command commitments at Aldershot he was unable to fulfil this task.¹⁸⁰ Instead, the chairmanship was undertaken by Lieutenant-General Sir Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, an artilleryman whose later catchphrase was evolution not revolution, and was far more conservative in his outlook.¹⁸¹ This phrase of evolution not revolution was likely to have been taken from an unknown respondent to the Cavalry Committee who stated

¹⁷⁷ Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, pp. 114-5. Anthony J. Trythall, *'Boney' Fuller: Soldier, Strategist and Writer 1878-1966*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1977), pp. 139-40. The incident that led to Fuller offering his resignation was to be known as 'The Tidworth Affair.' A broader description can be read in Trythall, pp. 120-144. As Trythall comments, whilst he withdrew his resignation, it led him to be confined to 'the military outer darkness.', Trythall, p. 145.

¹⁷⁸ 'Memorandum on Cavalry', LHCMA Liddell Hart papers 1/148/10.

¹⁷⁹ 'Cavalry Staff Exercise, Aldershot, 19th-22nd April 1926', LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd papers 9/5/1.

¹⁸⁰ Letter Squires to Montgomery-Massingberd, 3rd August 1926, LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd papers, 157/121.

¹⁸¹ Field Marshal Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, *The Autobiography of a Gunner*, p. 53, LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd 10/11. Brian Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 147.

I am a believer in “Evolution” rather than “Revolution” and I feel that going too fast is often as bad as going too slow!¹⁸²

It would be easy to argue that the two published reports that came from this committee were ultimately far less dynamic than if the committee had been under the stewardship of Campbell, but this would be mere supposition and difficult to support with any evidence. Campbell himself gave evidence to the committee where he again reiterated his comments on the unlikelihood of the cavalry being replaced for some while, and advocated that both sword and lance should still be maintained, as they were still relevant in ‘uncivilized warfare.’¹⁸³ This was hardly a staunch advocacy of modernisation as voiced previously.

The reports that were produced, did not proffer any fundamental re-assessment of the cavalry. The significant issues raised in the interim report, published in February 1927, advocated that there should be no further reduction in actual regiments but that each regiment should consist of three troop squadrons not four; first-line transport and machine guns should be mechanised; the Hotchkiss gun replaced with a suitable light-automatic weapon and most fundamentally, that some cavalry regiments should be converted to cross-country armoured cars.¹⁸⁴ In reality, it was a tentative step towards motorisation rather than mechanisation but it was a move in the right direction, if a little slow. The final report dealt with more mundane issues advocating administrative changes, a reduction of weight in both horse and man and the eventual replacement of the lance with something akin to a ‘hog-spear.’¹⁸⁵ The matter of reducing the weight carried by a horse had been considered by the cavalry for some while and so was really nothing new.¹⁸⁶ The proposal for a hog-spear was a strange

¹⁸² Item 157/117, LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd Papers 9/5/2.

¹⁸³ Item 157/107a, LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd papers 9/5/2, Item 157/47a, LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd papers 9/5/4.

¹⁸⁴ Item 6A, Précis for the Army Council, No. 1279, Cavalry Establishments and Organization’, WO32/2841, Army Organisation: Cavalry (Code 14(D)): Cavalry Committee: Interim report. Also, ‘Interim Report of the Cavalry Committee’, 23rd Nov. 1926, WO32/2841, Army Organisation: Cavalry (Code 14(D)): Cavalry Committee: Interim report.

¹⁸⁵ ‘Final Report of the Cavalry Committee’, 4th Jan. 1927, p. 10, WO32/2842, ARMY ORGANISATION: Cavalry (Code 14(D)): Cavalry Committee: Final report.

¹⁸⁶ The editor of *The Cavalry Journal* had set a competition open to all readers in 1924 asking for proposals on how the weight on a horse could be reduced. ‘Problem No. XVI, *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIV, April. 1924, pp.165-6. A précis of the various proposals in response to the competition were given in the following issue, *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIV, July 1924, pp. 346- 353.

one as the lance was to be completely abolished for the second and final time in December 1927.¹⁸⁷

The key to understanding these reports is the terms of reference that were imposed upon them by the Army Council and, more interestingly, the committee itself. The explicit terms of reference were

To consider the Cavalry requirements of the Army, and to make recommendations as to the establishment and organization of the Cavalry, and as to the disposal of any regiments which may be considered surplus to Cavalry requirements.¹⁸⁸

This was not asking the committee to assess whether the cavalry had a future in modern warfare, but whether economies could be made in its composition that did not weaken its current perceived role. Arguably, the concept of replacing the cavalry wholesale by armoured vehicles was a valid route for exploration but the phraseology did not encourage this line of thought. The key restrictions were the assumptions outlined in a round-robin questionnaire that the committee issued to senior officers. They stipulated that a 'continental war is of extreme probability' and any expeditionary force would be drawn only from forces stationed in the British Isles and the Rhine for 'a possible war in an underdeveloped country.'¹⁸⁹ By creating such a narrow approach, it is unsurprising that the evidence given to the committee was more conservative as most respondents made an inevitable association with Allenby's campaign in Palestine. Even the more hard-line respondents were unable to decry the use of cavalry in such a conflict; Burnett-Stuart acknowledged that a cavalry division might be required, for example along the Indian Frontier, although he saw no reason why the relevant force could not be drawn from the native forces.¹⁹⁰ Burnett-Stuart was one of the few who actually argued that the restrictive criteria made the questionnaire difficult to answer, as the possibility of a European war should not be

¹⁸⁷ Bond, 'Doctrine and training', Note 55, p. 124.

¹⁸⁸ 'Interim Report of the Cavalry Committee', 23rd Nov. 1926, WO32/2841, Army Organisation: Cavalry (Code 14(D)); Cavalry Committee: Interim report.

¹⁸⁹ 'Copy of Letter and Questionnaire issued by the Cavalry Committee, Interim Report of the Cavalry Committee', 23rd Nov. 1926, Appendix 1, p. 27, WO32/2841, Army Organisation: Cavalry (Code 14(D)); Cavalry Committee: Interim report.

¹⁹⁰ Item 157/37, LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd papers 9/5/4.

overlooked whatever its probability, echoing Campbell's opinion cited earlier.¹⁹¹

Taken in this context, the conclusions drawn by the committee were not unreasonable and certainly made void any calls for a grandiose scheme to mechanise, especially as the committee's main function was to find savings and not to expound large investment schemes for the future.

The net effect of the Cavalry Committee's findings upon the functioning of the cavalry was largely irrelevant and merely reiterated what was being considered by the cavalry. As a means of generating a clear and focussed policy for the cavalry it was a failure. The advocacy of motorisation was not anything new and had been part of the thinking on cavalry for a while. The only genuinely positive conclusion that was to come from the report was its advocacy of armoured cars and in 1927 it was announced that two regiments, the 11th Hussars and the 12th Lancers, were to be converted to armoured car regiments. But even here there was no clear message of future intent on policy. The CIGS believed that following conversion of these two regiments there would inevitably be a degree of mobility of officers as those suited to armoured cars would want to transfer to the newly converted regiments and those 'unsuited to armoured car work' would move to those regiments remaining on horseback.¹⁹²

Larson is more forgiving of the report, which he believes though cautious, was more progressive than the army of the time is given credit for.¹⁹³ From an historiographical perspective this is valid, but it was little more than a formal declaration of considered cavalry opinion and did little more than hedge its bets on the future. As Larson himself states, the report 'sidestepped the question of the complete mechanization of the cavalry, and its recommendation to give armored cars to the cavalry rather than expand the Royal Tank Corps was admittedly done in part to assuage ruffled feelings.'¹⁹⁴ Consequently, rather than progressive, it was a defensive report, as it

¹⁹¹ Item 157/37, LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd papers 9/5/4.

¹⁹² Minute CIGS to AG, 11/7/1927, WO32/2844 ARMY ORGANISATION: Armoured Car Cavalry Regiment: Organisation

¹⁹³ Larson, *The British Army*, p.26.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p.27.

was singular in its approach enabling the cavalry to validate its continued existence through a formalisation of arguments it had been utilising for some while. It did nothing to resolve the stand-off between the stronger advocates of mechanisation and the more conservative elements of the army. Bond has pointed out that during the 1927 manoeuvres, the fundamental obstacle facing mounted cavalry was its failure in co-ordinating with any form of motorised vehicle, including the proposed armoured car.¹⁹⁵ The cavalry, in essence, was isolating itself from the main combat arms rather than including itself and the conversion of some regiments to armoured cars had the potential to accentuate this rather than bring the mounted cavalry back into the fold. The Committee never propounded wholesale mechanisation in investigations for its reports.

There is also strong evidence that, despite the findings of the cavalry committee, the government of the time was considering the abolishment of the cavalry, certainly as a mounted arm. In a letter to Worthington-Evans, the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, enquired as to the current extent of the War Office's mechanisation proposals with a view to 'securing substantial and immediate reductions of expenditure in respect of the Cavalry.' In this letter Baldwin reminded Worthington-Evans that there had been significant support within the Standing Committee on Expenditure to withhold funds on the cavalry if it was 'to be abolished in the near future.' This was a consideration that, in Baldwin's view, had not dissipated despite Worthington-Evans' concern over the experimental state of mechanisation.¹⁹⁶ The problem facing the War Office was that, as Baldwin's letter explicitly stated, the savings anticipated from mechanisation were to be immediate but the reality was that the initial cost was greater than any savings on abolishing the cavalry. Furthermore, the notion that it was simply a case of swapping machine for horse was far too simplistic.

In response, Worthington-Evans sent a letter and memorandum of fourteen pages summarising the difficulties facing the War Office in mechanising the cavalry and

¹⁹⁵ Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 144.

¹⁹⁶ Item 1A, Letter from Baldwin to Worthington-Evans, 20th June 1927, WO 32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

also, the more general issues on mechanisation in the army. He pointed out that for him the cavalry had been reduced to a minimum and, although significant steps had been made in motorising transport and machine guns, he had significant doubts that the vehicles were of suitable cross-country capability. Although, almost contradicting this statement, he argued that despite minimal funds for experimentation, the British army possessed 'the best fighting tank, the best cross-country transport vehicle and the best artillery "dragon" in the world.' Despite these perceived leading developments, he argued that the army had been unable to find a mechanical substitute for the horse in undertaking protective and close reconnaissance work. He believed that there were 'some promising types' but they were not capable of being put into active service. However, irrespective of the current capability of the vehicles there was neither the money to acquire them nor trained personnel for their maintenance. The argument here also seems disjointed, for the letter goes on to confirm that he was considering converting two cavalry regiments into armoured car units.¹⁹⁷ The key to understanding this seemingly flawed logic comes in a supporting memorandum, which had been signed by the Army Council. In this document, the council commented that it had yet 'to find and thoroughly try out an armoured cross-country vehicle suitable both in design and weight and which is absolutely reliable.'¹⁹⁸ The RTC at this time had several armoured car companies and, in this simple statement, the War Office had almost glibly admitted that they were inadequate.¹⁹⁹ By 1927, Milne commented that the existing armoured car companies were equipped with obsolete vehicles.²⁰⁰ In this light it is perhaps all the more surprising that it was actually considering converting two cavalry regiments to armoured cars, but it adds weight to Baldwin's letter as to how much pressure the army was under to mechanise even to vehicles it did not wholly believe capable of performing the duties required. In the light of this evidence, it is easier to understand Worthington-Evans's concerns that he had

¹⁹⁷ Item 5A, Letter from Worthington-Evans to Baldwin, 1st July 1927, WO 32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry. This letter also appears in a Treasury file, T162/134, Cavalry of the Line; Regimental establishments; Strength and organisation 1923-28

¹⁹⁸ Item 5A, 'Memorandum on the Reorganisation of the Cavalry', Letter from Worthington-Evans to Baldwin, 1st July 1927, WO 32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

¹⁹⁹ Item 5A, Letter from Worthington-Evans to Baldwin, 1st July 1927, WO 32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

²⁰⁰ 'Memorandum on the Reorganization of the Cavalry', WO 32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

'already accepted risks', in order to gain funding but that he was uneasy at going any further.²⁰¹

Based upon this pressure, there is an argument as to why the War Office did not try to manipulate this for its own end and pursue a more vigorous implantation of mechanisation, in essence giving the politicians what they seemed to want to hear. If a programme of conversion of the cavalry had been financially evaluated and outlined and presented to the government it would have potentially changed the dynamic of the mechanisation process. The charge of conservatism within the army would have, to some degree, been allayed, for they would have been positively advocating modernisation. The government would have then been forced either to make a financial commitment towards mechanisation or take a more cautious approach. The War Office were undoubtedly very concerned that mechanisation of the army was not going to save any money as outlined and commented in its memorandum that, 'far from mechanisation leading to economy it is economy that is delaying mechanisation.'²⁰² In this assertion they were correct, but by taking such a diffident approach, it gave the politicians the upper-hand in any negotiations on mechanisation policy. The likely reality would have been that no money would have been forthcoming but it meant that the army was taking a positive approach and forcing the government to make any negative decisions: a subtle but crucial difference.

Instead of promoting a more assertive mechanisation policy, General Sir Frederick 'Tim' Pile believed that during this period the War Office did not have a mechanisation policy merely a motorisation policy.²⁰³ Pile's view is a little biased but does have some merit. It is worth providing a little more detail on the General Staff's policy on mechanisation in order to provide a yardstick in measuring the

²⁰¹ Item 5A, Letter from Worthington-Evans to Baldwin, 1st July 1927, WO 32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

²⁰² Item 5A, 'Memorandum on the Reorganisation of the Cavalry', Letter from Worthington-Evans to Baldwin, 1st July 1927, WO 32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry. This view also reiterated in a Treasury file note, 'Note on "Worthy's" reply to the P.M.'s economy letter', T162/134, Cavalry of the Line Regimental Establishments.

²⁰³ Brian Bond, *British Military Policy*, p.156. Pile's standpoint must be viewed with a degree of caution as during this period he was one of four officers who vigorously promoted the RTC. Harris, *Men ideas and tanks*, pp. 198-200.

cavalry's standpoint.²⁰⁴ As have already been cited, both the Bird Committee and the Aldershot Experimental Brigade had commented upon the utilisation of AFVs. Therefore, as pointed out by many historians, despite General Sir Louis Jackson's frequently quoted post-war comment, '[t]he tank proper was a freak', neither the tank nor any other mechanical vehicles were ever truly under threat.²⁰⁵ This was reinforced when the Tank Corps was established on a permanent basis in 1923 and given its 'Royal' prefix. In particular, in these earlier years when the technical capabilities of the tank were still open to criticism it was the armoured car that was to feature prominently in War Office thinking, as it was able to help fulfil the role of Imperial policeman; the RAF created two armoured car companies in this period to aid its policy on air control.²⁰⁶ Surprisingly, this is in direct contrast to the Bird Committee's report which declared that it did not see the need to include armoured cars in an Imperial army for 'in their opinion, opportunities will seldom occur for their effective use.'²⁰⁷ This was an opinion the General Staff chose to ignore and their foremost issue was with AFVs inability to deal with all terrain. The three FSR published during this period confirmed the efficacy of AFVs in suitable terrain and consequently repeated the concept of an all-arms concept of warfare.²⁰⁸ This has led to Bond commenting that politically, mechanisation was never a 'sharp issue' and certainly in the early 1920s much thought was applied to transportation and the 6-wheeled cross country vehicle.²⁰⁹ The 1925 manoeuvres were intended to highlight and analyse new concepts in mechanised warfare but served merely to show a lack of doctrine. One senior officer commented that they had not created a mobile force merely a means of moving infantry more quickly.²¹⁰ This gives credence to Pile's critique of the policy on mechanisation.

²⁰⁴ For a brief, yet comprehensive analysis on the historiography of mechanisation see J. P. Harris, 'British Armour 1918-1940: Doctrine and Development', pp. 27-50 in J. P. Harris and F. N. Toase, (Eds.), *Armoured Warfare*, (London: Batsford, 1990). In particular see pp. 27 – 30, where he cites the main scholarly works on this topic, all of which have been utilised in this thesis.

²⁰⁵ Harris, *Men, ideas and tanks*, p.197, Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 129, French, *Raising Churchill's Army*, p. 111.

²⁰⁶ Harris, *Men, ideas and tanks*, p.197. See www.raf.mod.uk/rafrement/squadrons/1_sqn_history.cfm and www.raf.mod.uk/rafrement/squadrons/iisqnhistory.cfm, accessed 6th October 2011.

²⁰⁷ WO33/3288, Re-organization Committee: Field Army, p. 9.

²⁰⁸ FSR (1920), FSR (1924) and FSR (1929). See also French, *Raising Churchill's Army*, p. 18.

²⁰⁹ Bond, *British Military Policy*, pp. 134-5.

²¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 138-9. It is of interest that the review, if it can be called such, of these manoeuvres in *The Cavalry Journal* were very shallow consisting of just over half a page of description and analysis, 'Manoeuvres', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XVI, Jan 1926, pp. 82-3.

In 1926, Milne became CIGS and with his appointment there was an air of anticipation for those who supported mechanisation, especially when he agreed to appoint Fuller as his Military Secretary, a position usually reserved for a more junior officer.²¹¹ In 1927, an experimental mechanised force was created to investigate mechanisation further. The experiment lasted for two years and whilst it engendered interest, debate and some useful observations, especially in its first year, it failed to provide conclusive answers to mechanised mobile warfare.²¹² By 1928, even the RTC radicals were losing interest in the experiment. Resultantly, focus remained upon mechanising the older arms, rather than investing in an uncertain, developing armoured force. In this Montgomery-Massingberd had utilised his influence to persuade the CIGS to follow this more conservative course. Montgomery-Massingberd alleges in his autobiography that he persuaded Milne to abandon the Experimental Armoured Force, in an effort to return to his call for 'evolution not revolution'.²¹³

For the cavalry, the seeming failure of the experimental force, gave rise to the notion that for the immediate future the cavalry could not be dispensed with. In *The Cavalry Journal*, General Sir George Barrow stated that after the demonstration of the mechanised force on Salisbury Plain in 1928, no commander would be willing to relinquish an element from his force in the false belief that a mechanical force could perform all its functions.²¹⁴ Barrow argued on a confused mix of acknowledgement of the future whilst clinging to the evidence of the past. He believed that firstly, given the right conditions, the validity of the cavalry's utility would remain.²¹⁵ As an argument, it was certainly not incorrect, but it is founded upon the premise that conditions do not change; but by this logic, assuredly the Dodo would not have been rendered extinct given the right conditions. He then went on to conclude that decisions should not be made based upon 'rash deductions...from speculative

²¹¹ Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 139.

²¹² The successes and failures of the experiment are discussed in greater detail in Bond, *British Military Policy*, pp. 139-146 and Harris, *Men, ideas and tanks*, p. 211-22.

²¹³ Field Marshal Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, *The Autobiography of a Gunner*, p. 53, LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd 10/11. Brian Bond, *British Military Policy*, pp. 146-7. Harris, *Men, ideas and tanks*, pp. 220-1.

²¹⁴ General Sir George Barrow, 'The Future of Cavalry', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIX, Apr. 1929, p. 182.

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 178.

imaginings instead of from observed facts and experiences.²¹⁶ This, of course, was all very well as long as the facts and experiences were a relevant basis upon which to make a decision. Then, in almost direct contradiction to this opinion, Barrow observed that in the future it was 'probable' that a 'mechanized arm' would perform the role of the cavalry.²¹⁷

In the year after the experimental armoured force had been abandoned new *FSR* and *Cavalry Training* manuals were published. These not only emphasised the concept of combined operations but significantly that '[a]rmoured cars form an integral part of the higher cavalry formations.'²¹⁸ The *Cavalry Training* manual stated that mobile forces would consist of 'aircraft, armoured troops, and cavalry' and that larger cavalry formations would include armoured cars and mechanised artillery. It stated that tanks may 'at times' be allotted to these formations.²¹⁹ Whilst not explicit, it was a move towards acknowledging the mechanisation of the cavalry function utilising light armoured vehicles; two cavalry regiments having already been converted into armoured car regiments at this stage.

The War Office policy was one of caution on mechanisation, especially against any potential sacrifice of army numbers. Therefore, the focus from 1929 was on the organisation of existing brigade formations rather than on a whole new armoured division. Pile believed that at this stage in the late 1920s, there was a sense of indifference towards mechanisation at the War Office and Milne's enthusiasm had been worn down. The Secretary of State for Air claimed in late 1929 that 'Milne had become an old man – mentally and physically.'²²⁰ If this was true it was perhaps unfortunate that Milne's tenure was extended for yet a further two years in 1931, giving him an unprecedented term of seven years as CIGS. It has also been commented that the newly appointed members of the Army Council at this time were

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ *FSR* (1929), p. 14.

²¹⁹ *Cavalry Training* (1929), p. 3.

²²⁰ Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 159.

less committed to mechanisation than previous members.²²¹ Even Martel, who though a supporter of mechanisation, was more diplomatic and less dogmatic than others, was to comment in 1932 of a 'retrograde atmosphere at the WO.'²²² However, it was in this year that the Committee on the Lessons of the Great War, under the chairmanship of General Kirke, published its report.²²³ This contained some mixed views upon mechanisation. The final report stated that it believed in the value of AFVs 'beyond a shadow of a doubt' and set aside the argument for delay in investment on the grounds of evolving technology.²²⁴ The question for the committee was still in how to follow up on a breakthrough achieved by the 'punch power' of AFVs; should it be mechanised infantry or cavalry? The report really sat upon the fence and argued that it was reliant upon the terrain and that a reserve of both should be maintained.²²⁵ The report also stressed the possibility of mechanising the existing traditional arms and opted not to comment upon the position of the RTC, which it stated should be for a different and future debate. The report also acknowledged that whilst it was not part of the committee's remit to consider finance, this was an on-going consideration for the army.²²⁶

Milne's tenure as CIGS, especially the latter half, has been criticised for its lack of progress, although Harris feels this is a harsh.²²⁷ The period between 1931-33 was exceptionally miserly; the Director of Mechanisation had ordered a halt to the development of the Medium tank in 1932 owing to escalating cost.²²⁸ Yet for all the perceived failings of the General Staff, both Bond and Harris agree that the British army remained the leading pioneer of mechanisation in this period.²²⁹ Indeed, with the appointment of Montgomery-Massingberd as the new CIGS in February 1933, a permanent tank brigade was established and placed under the command of the RTC's

²²¹ Ibid, p. 156.

²²² Ibid, p. 159.

²²³ Sadly, the original War Office file, WO33/1297, is currently missing from the National Archives. Therefore, the author has had to rely upon Kirke's own personal papers held at the LHCMA, Kirke 4/1-30. This means that any comments contained within the file made by the senior personnel at the War Office are unavailable.

²²⁴ LHCMA Kirke 4/30, 'Report of the Committee on the Lessons of the Great War', p. 13.

²²⁵ Ibid, p. 17.

²²⁶ Ibid, p. 30.

²²⁷ Harris, *Men, ideas and tanks*, p. 242.

²²⁸ French, *Raising Churchill's Army*, p. 97.

²²⁹ Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 160. Harris, *Men, ideas and tanks*, p. 228.

most radical proponent, Percy Hobart.²³⁰ In the period post 1933, Montgomery-Massingberd, who had played a significant role in the evolution of the cavalry during much of the period under question, was to play an equally prominent role in his term as CIGS.²³¹

Therefore, the cavalry's attitude was no less progressive or conservative than that exhibited by the War Office. It had gone along with War Office policy and any conservatism was engendered by financial constraints rather than innate traditionalism.

The economic argument surrounding the cavalry is a difficult one to unpick. Firstly, any detailed costings from the period on the cavalry are no longer available. The annual reports on army expenditure never refer to the cavalry in detail; what specific information did arise was not sufficient to provide a complete financial picture of the cost of a cavalry regiment. For example, there were often details upon the average cost of individual horses and the total cost of horses for the army, but this was not broken down into service arms for the cavalry was not the sole user of horses.²³² In the full annual army accounts presented to Parliament, there were breakdowns of what were called specimen regiments but the accounts for 1920/21 explicitly mentioned that it was not possible to provide an account of 'a typical cavalry regiment.'²³³ It is also noticeable from the annual accounts that the cost of a cavalry regiment was variable depending upon its posting. Lieutenant-General Sir Travers Clarke, when QMG, commented that getting any form of costing from the finance department was difficult and it seemed to him they treated them as '*arcana imperii*.'²³⁴ The information that is available often refers to cavalry establishments rather than specific monetary costs.²³⁵ There were also frequent comparisons with

²³⁰ Harris, *Men, ideas and tanks*, p.244.

²³¹ Montgomery-Massingberd's tenure as CIGS is discussed further in the subsequent chapter on the British Cavalry, 1934-1940.

²³² WO33/2321, Reports on army expenditure 1926-1933, Report for 1926/27, p.27

²³³ HCPP Accounts and Papers, Army accounts: 1920-1921, 1922, Paper No. 47, Vol. XII, p. 12.

²³⁴ QMG Minute 2, 5/2/1920, WO32/11301, Select Committee on National Expenditure: Fourth report: 1919 Observations by Army Council.

²³⁵ For an example of this see WO33/3185 Second interim report (Cavalry establishments) of the Committee on War and Peace Establishments 1922.

the level of establishments in 1914. In 1927, the Army Council pointed out that compared with 1914, the cavalry had been reduced to 6,373 men.²³⁶ These pre-war establishments seemed to have been accepted by all as a *de facto* yardstick but no questions were asked about the validity of this assumption. Implicit in such a comparison is that the pre- and post-war armies were comparable; however, the mere existence of a brand new arm, the RTC, challenges this perception. This is also not acknowledging other military factors such as a considerably expanded air force compared to pre-war. The reality was that these comparisons were meaningless. Whilst the level of establishment does give an indication of potential costs, as more men are likely to cost more, it provides no real information for any instructive analysis. To complicate matters further, a distinction was made between cavalry of the line and Household Cavalry.²³⁷

Within the House of Commons, there were repeated challenges regarding the level of money being utilised on the cavalry. Ernest Thurtle, Labour MP for Shoreditch, questioned whether expenditure upon the cavalry was 'a sheer waste of public money.'²³⁸ Another Labour MP, Colonel Wedgewood, the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme, hoped that the emotions of tradition were not going to make the government waste money upon an 'extinct' method of transport.²³⁹ This was not solely a Labour Party concern and the Liberal MP for Swansea West, Walter Runciman, wanted to know why the government was spending £1.9 million on the cavalry and questioned how the cavalry was to be used in modern warfare.²⁴⁰ Another Liberal MP, Rhys Hopkin Morris, MP for Cardiganshire, similarly challenged the government, although he placed the expenditure at a lower figure of £1,308,400.²⁴¹ This can be viewed in pure party political terms, with opposition parties voicing their criticism of the incumbent government, yet despite the sustained criticism from the Labour MPs, it should be noted that the Labour government of the

²³⁶ 'Memorandum on the Reorganization of the Cavalry', WO 32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

²³⁷ T162/134, Cavalry of the Line regimental establishments. T162/127 Household Cavalry Regimental Establishments 1923-27.

²³⁸ Ernest Thurtle, Hansard Commons Vol. 192, 1926, Col. 279.

²³⁹ Col. Wedgewood, Hansard Commons Vol. 193, 1926, Cols. 114-5.

²⁴⁰ Walter Runciman, Hansard Commons Vol. 181, 1924-5, Cols. 1988-9.

²⁴¹ Rhys Hopkin Morris, Hansard Commons Vol. 182, 1924-5 Cols. 173-4.

period had made no fundamental changes to either the structure or expenditure on the cavalry. Stephen Walsh, Labour MP for Ince, believed that whilst the cavalry made for a romantic vision of war, the reality was that as far as modern warfare was concerned the horse belonged in a 'zoological museum.'²⁴² Yet in 1924, Walsh had been the Labour government's Secretary of State for War and had made no such radical assertions during his brief tenure in the post. As for the Conservatives, whilst no challenge was aired within the House of Commons, the Committee for National Expenditure certainly questioned the validity of expense on the cavalry when the War Office was collating its estimates for expenditure. However, these calls for financial cuts from both inside and outside of the government were all a little vague and lacking in any methodological analysis, as evidenced by the disparity in Runciman's and Morris' figures, both of which were made in the same year; an indication that the costing of a cavalry regiment was not a straightforward exercise. Another MP, Captain Herbert Holt, Conservative MP for West Ham Upton, had asserted a year earlier that a tank regiment was more costly than a cavalry regiment, although no details were given to support this claim.²⁴³ It was likely Holt's perspective and analyses were biased having been a former cavalryman.²⁴⁴ However, Milne pointed out to the CID sub-committee that the financial reality was unknown and that they believed the differential on revenue costs between armoured and mounted units was not that much. He went on to frankly admit that '[a]ny figures we give...will be entirely fallacious...all speculation...We are so ignorant on the whole subject.'²⁴⁵ The best example of the vagaries of the figures bandied around was the disparity in figures given in an appendix written by Worthington-Evans to the CID report on the Strength and Organisation of the Cavalry. This stated that proposals put forward by Churchill which he believed would save somewhere in the region of £1,650,000 would, in fact, only save an estimated £100,000.²⁴⁶ This was a huge disparity, clearly indicating that the financial realities were unknown.

²⁴² Stephen Walsh, Hansard Commons Vol. 203, 1927, Cols. 888-9.

²⁴³ Captain Herbert Holt, Hansard Commons, Vol. 193, 1926, Cols. 115-8.

²⁴⁴ Holt had served in the 3rd Dragoon Guards. Obituary, 'Major H. P. Holt', *The Times*, Wednesday, Jun 2, 1971, p. 14, col. F.

²⁴⁵ CAB16/77, Records of the Committee of Imperial Defence: Cavalry - Strength and Organisation 1927-8.

²⁴⁶ Appendix III, Final Report, CAB16/77, Records of the Committee of Imperial Defence: Cavalry - Strength and Organisation 1927-8.

The first real indicator as to the cost of a cavalry regiment was provided in 1921 when the four regiments mentioned previously were under consideration for disbandment. However, even here the figures are estimated approximations covering a range between £400,000 and £450,000.²⁴⁷ Accepting these figures at face value would imply that the cost of a single cavalry regiment was somewhere between £100,000 and £112,500 per annum. A Treasury summary of total expenditure on the cavalry of the line regiments gave figures of £1,345,000 in 1922/23 and £1,382,000 in 1923/24. These totals, based upon thirteen regiments, give an approximation of £103,000 to £106,000 per regiment.²⁴⁸ The vague nature of official figures surrounding the cavalry is confirmed by this analysis from the Treasury. The figures quoted are by way of a comparative with the cost in 1914 of twenty-five regiments. There is no explanation given upon the derivation of the number of regiments, but it would seem reasonable to assume that the thirteen were the only ones funded directly by the British government, the others being funded by the Indian government when stationed in India. It is more significant that the implied cost per head had remained static over the ten years between 1914 and 1924.²⁴⁹ The inference was that a cut in cavalry personnel was a direct saving. The analysis shows no sophistication as to whether there were any hidden costs in cutting personnel, or indeed, further savings.²⁵⁰ If the cavalry had been completely disbanded there would have been costs associated with such a course and costs in creating a replacement to fulfil the mobile functions which the army perceived were still required in modern warfare.²⁵¹ However, irrespective of the provenance of these figures, the cost of a regiment is also supported by way of a covering letter sent to those officers invited by Montgomery-Massingberd's Cavalry Committee to comment upon reducing expenditure on the cavalry. This letter advised that the cost of a cavalry regiment in 1926/7 was £108,700. This covering letter provided indicative costs of four other units; a RHA brigade at £99,000, a Mechanised Field Artillery brigade at £97,000

²⁴⁷ 'The Proposed Disbandments', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XI, Apr. 1921, pp. 109-10.

²⁴⁸ T162/134, Cavalry of the Line regimental establishments.

²⁴⁹ Analysis dated 6/2/1923, T162/134, Cavalry of the Line; Regimental establishments; Strength and organisation 1923-28. The cost per head has been calculated by the author from figures provided. In 1914/15, the cost of 13,213 men was £2,584,000: £195 per head. The cost for 1923/4 was 7,076 men at £1,382,000, also £195 per head.

²⁵⁰ For example, savings were made in the RAVC, see www.army.mod.uk/documents/general/RAVC_History.pdf, accessed 24th September 2010.

²⁵¹ CAB16/77 Records of the Committee of Imperial Defence: Cavalry - Strength and Organisation 1927-8.

and an Armoured Car company at £30,000.²⁵² Here again, the problem with these figures is the lack of information provided alongside them, which renders them useless as a means of analytical comparison.

Firstly, there is no indication as to why these units were selected. The two artillery brigades as a method of assessing the cost of cavalry are immaterial. Whilst a RHA brigade would normally be utilised alongside its mounted brethren, its cost in assessing the cavalry is irrelevant. If a mechanised artillery brigade was capable of doing the job of the RHA equivalent, then irrespective of what was undertaken with the cavalry, it would have been logical to replace the latter given the indicative costs. If it was not, this would imply that the RHA could operate more efficiently than a mechanised artillery unit, supporting the argument that the horse was still more mobile on the battlefield, thereby strengthening the case for the retention of at least some cavalry. The only other possible consideration for the artillery was that, if the cavalry was either disbanded or converted, whether or not so many artillery brigades were required. If this was the case, then a financial saving could potentially be made, but, this was dependent upon a decision made on the cavalry first. Thus, the cavalry was the influencing factor on the cost of the artillery not the other way round; a decision on the cavalry had to be made first, in isolation.

There is more logic to comparing a cavalry regiment with an armoured car company as their functions were perceived as primarily reconnaissance. Thus, *prima facie*, the conversion of cavalry regiments to armoured cars would seem the most financially propitious course. The issue again is the lack of definition in the information provided. There still remained doubt over the capabilities of armoured cars over cavalry in certain areas and so there is no surety that the Cavalry Committee was comparing like-with-like. Even accepting that an armoured car company was functionally equivalent to a cavalry regiment, the costs provided were only annual costs, so the capital costs were not included. The initial investment in a tranche of new armoured cars would have been considerable and to ignore this in the overall

²⁵² Item 157/33b, Draft Covering Letter, LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd Papers 9/5/4.

financial assessment would have given a false financial picture. But, the importance of capital investment was heightened in the case of mechanisation at this time as the War Office doubted the actual capability of the vehicles available. This meant that any assumptions upon the working life of the vehicles were very weak. The QMG was very concerned that purchasing vehicles that would be outmoded in five years would not be a good use of public money.²⁵³ French has commented how investment in all equipment was hampered by a number of financial factors between the wars and that amongst these was the speed of technological development which caused the army a degree of angst as to when to commit to any major capital expenditure.²⁵⁴ The army had already had its fingers burned on the Medium D tank. In 1920, the Army Council had indicated a desire for 'a fast cavalry tank with [a] long radius of action', which it believed the Medium D tank would achieve and so had ordered 20 for experimental purposes with an anticipated delivery of April 1921.²⁵⁵ At this early stage such an 'independent tank' was seen fulfilling a cavalry function.²⁵⁶ The Medium D proved to be a failure and the Army Council pointed out this waste of funds to Worthington-Evans in 1927.²⁵⁷ French argues that the army was wise to have erred upon the side of caution as the vehicles of 1928 were capable of average speeds of 15 m.p.h. and a seventy mile radius, yet by 1939 average speeds had increased to 40 m.p.h. and radiuses between 160-250 miles, combined with easier maintenance.²⁵⁸ The Liberal MP for Montrose, Sir Robert Hutchison, a former cavalryman, was also concerned at committing large expenditure towards mechanisation of the cavalry when the vehicles were useless in peacetime and called for more flexible and adaptable vehicles.²⁵⁹ Whilst his comments are unclear as to whether he required new vehicles to be flexible in military terms or that there should be a link between military and commercial use, they do highlight the level of

²⁵³ WO32/2842 ARMY ORGANISATION: Cavalry Committee: Final report

²⁵⁴ David French, *Raising Churchill's Army: The British Army and the War against Germany 1919-1945*, (Oxford: OUP, 2001), pp. 82-3.

²⁵⁵ Précis No. 1043, 'Tank Production' produced for 273rd meeting 28/10/1920, WO33/979, Minutes of proceedings and précis prepared for the Army Council, 1920.

²⁵⁶ General Hugh Elles, 'Some notes on Tank Development During the War', *The Army Quarterly*, Vol. II, No.2, pp. 267-82, p. 274.

²⁵⁷ Memorandum on the Reorganization of the Cavalry', WO 32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

²⁵⁸ French, *Raising Churchill's Army*, pp. 82-3.

²⁵⁹ Sir Robert Hutchison, Hansard Commons Vol. 203, 1927, Col. 924. Hutchison had held commissions with the 7th Dragoon Guards, the 11th Hussars and the 4th Dragoon Guards, before senior command during the First World War. Obituary, 'Lord Hutchison of Montrose Soldier and Politician', *The Times*, Thursday, Jun. 15, 1950, p. 8, Iss. 51718, col. D.

uncertainty over the then current functionality of vehicles. The cavalry itself acknowledged the link between commercial viability and the development of new vehicles and systems.²⁶⁰ The Cavalry Committee in 1927 viewed trials of a half-tracked vehicle but the committee maintained concerns over the availability of a completely suitable vehicle.²⁶¹ The science of tracked technology was still in its infancy.²⁶² The lack of funding was not just hampering development. The War Office commented that 'too many machines are laid up by mechanical defects.' This was as a result of both insufficient spare parts and training in vehicle maintenance due to lack of finance.²⁶³

The gulf between desirability and actuality on vehicles was further widened by the lack of funds available for development. In 1927, the War Office had only £238,000 available for new vehicles, but an even smaller amount of £125,000 for research.²⁶⁴ So for approximately every £2 available for new vehicles, only £1 was available for new developments. This ratio may not have been quite so bad upon more established developments which only required fine-tuning, but on nascent developments, where there was a greater risk of wasted expenditure, the cost of research was logically going to exceed the actual basic capital cost. In the above instance, if the basic capital cost of a developmental vehicle was to be met from the research budget, then the amount available actually to develop that vehicle was less than the stated figure of £125,000. The alternative was that the experimental vehicles were purchased out of the new vehicle budget, allowing the whole £125,000 to be spent on research. This would have been a riskier strategy, as any unsuccessful developments would have resulted in the loss of funds from the new vehicle budget. Consequently, it was almost inevitable that any lead in armoured vehicle development that the British army had had was going to cease. In a memorandum to Worthington-Evans, the Army Council laid out the ongoing dilemma it had to face

²⁶⁰ Major E. G. Hume, 'Mechanical Aids to Cavalry', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XV, Jan. 1925, pp. 177-89, p. 177.

²⁶¹ WO32/2841 ARMY ORGANISATION: Cavalry Committee: Interim report.

²⁶² Memorandum on the Reorganization of the Cavalry', WO32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Sir L. Worthington-Evans, Hansard Commons Vol. 203, 1927, Col. 886.

In commercial life...modernisation of plant requires the expenditure of capital and that research to give valuable results must be continuous. The Army has had to endeavour to do both out of an income which has every year suffered reductions that could not be foreseen and at the same time cope with, and in some cases pay the cost of, all kinds of national emergencies, actual and impending, both at home and abroad...owing to a lack of continuity of expenditure a slight delay in the delivery of experimental vehicles may result in their cost being made a first charge against the next year's votes and thus upset the whole programme of experiment for 12 months.²⁶⁵

In *The Cavalry Journal*, one officer had tried to apply a more mathematical model to appraising the costs of a cavalry brigade with those of seeming similar armoured units to highlight the financial validity of exchanging horses for horse power. But even he had to acknowledge that in terms of the ongoing cost of replacing vehicles the horse was far less expensive, as per annum horses for a brigade cost £11,000 whereas his perceived similar unit of a tank battalion cost between £9,000 to £144,000, depending upon which vehicle was used to arm such a battalion.²⁶⁶ The lower capital amount was derived from the concept of equipping a whole tank battalion with two-man machine gun carriers.

These analyses of costs by Major Grove-White of the RE are seemingly the only available attempt to breakdown the annual costs of a cavalry unit and an armoured unit and compare them. In his analysis he had three options for a tank battalion each consisting of 36 vehicles: variant A was based upon a battle tank, variant B a medium tank and variant C a scout tank, which was the aforementioned machine gun carrier.

²⁶⁵ Memorandum on the Reorganization of the Cavalry', WO 32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

²⁶⁶ Bt-Major M. FitzG. Grove-White, 'Machinery of Muscle', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XII, April 1922, pp. 157-9, p. 159. During the inter-war period tank units were known as battalions, the nomenclature of regiment did not come into use until later, B. H. Liddell Hart, *The Tanks: The History of the Royal Tank Regiment and its predecessors 1914-1945*, Vol. One 1914-39, (New York: Praeger, 1959), p. 401.

	Cavalry Brigade	Tank battalion		
		A	B	C
Replace Horses/tank	11,000	144,000	36,000	9,000
Cost Forage/Fuel & Lubricant	90,000	6,480	3,240	648
Cost of Personnel	340,000	120,000	60,000	30,000
Total	441,000	270,480	99,240	39,648

Grove-White believed that these four units were of equivalent fire power and size when mobile. Accepting his analysis at face value, the mechanisation or replacement of the cavalry with armoured vehicles seems an obvious course of action. However, upon closer investigation much of the figure work does not hold up. The base cost of a cavalry brigade consisting of three regiments would seem expensive at £147,000 per regiment compared to outline costs indicated in Parliament, giving an in-built economic bias against the cavalry.

The tank battalion variation based upon scout tanks, tank battalion C, was no comparison to battalions A and B which were tank based; battalion C was realistically a motorised mobile infantry unit. It is arguable that the role of the cavalry had become that of mobile infantry, but comparing 36 two-men machine gun carriers with three cavalry regiments of several hundred men was not comparing like with like. It was inevitable that comparing a tank battalion of 72 men against approximately 1,500 in a cavalry brigade was going to realise considerable financial savings, but was unlikely to be an equivalent in firepower.

The other two options proffered by Grove-White do possess some logical plausibility but his financial assumptions were weak or highly speculative. His assumptions upon fuel and lubricants were based upon the prevailing fuel price with each vehicle undertaking 1,000 miles each year and an estimated rate of fuel consumption, neither of which were based upon any significant data. The figure for lubricant is surmised at 20% of total fuel costs, but this again appears to be arbitrary. Grove-White also omitted any costing for maintenance and spares for either a cavalry or mechanised

unit. Whilst it might be plausible to argue that maintenance costs for both would negate each other: veterinary and stables as opposed to garage and mechanics, for example. But to omit a cost for vehicle spares, which were less likely to be readily available at this time and therefore costly, would seem to skew his costs.

The significant disparity in costs between a cavalry unit and an armoured one in Grove-White's assessment was in the level and cost of personnel. This had always been the argument proffered by the tank advocates but again no detailed analysis seemed to have been made as to the level of reduction, or even, if this assertion was true. In Grove-White's tank battalions, version A required 400 men whereas version B required only 200, yet both tanks required crews of approximately 4 or 5 men. This meant that in version A, there were between 140-180 crew members, leaving some hundred or so other personnel. Yet, in version B there was only some 20-50 other personnel, but no explanation is provided on the logic as to why version A required significantly more ancillary personnel. Thus, the assumptions around personnel seem to be open to question.

The spurious nature of the figures utilised leads the whole analysis to be viewed with a degree of scepticism. But his attempt to quantify and balance finance and efficiency was acknowledged by the cavalry as the significant approach of the post-war army and agreed with Grove-White's assertion that where there were arms of equal efficiency the more economical arm should be adopted.²⁶⁷

Grove-White's calculations only looked at the annual expenditure, and although he tried to incorporate a capital element within this by allowing that both horses and vehicles would require replacement every year, his appraisal did not account for the uniqueness of the situation on mechanising the cavalry that meant there was a larger initial investment. Using Grove-White's own assumptions, he argued that a cavalry horse lasted for ten years, and had an initial cost of £75 and a final resale value of

²⁶⁷ 'Mechanical Warfare', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XII, April 1922, pp. 153-6, p. 155.

£10. Therefore, based upon his assessment of 1,700 horses in a cavalry brigade, the capital cost of a brigade in ten years was £110,500. In comparison, he argued that vehicles only had a three year life span, therefore to keep a tank battalion fully equipped over the same ten year period, 108 vehicles would have to be purchased. The cost of his various vehicles was, type A, £12,000; type B, £3,000 and type C £750 which would have resulted in the capital cost over ten years being A, £1,296,000; B, £324,000 and C, £81,000. Whilst these calculations do not take into account the time value of money and accepting the tentative nature of Grove-White's figures, it is easy to see that in simple capital terms, investing in armoured vehicles was a significant commitment. As an initial cost Grove-White's calculation would seem a little understated as the War Office estimated a total cost of £340,000 to convert just two regiments in 1927, although it hoped to mitigate some of this cost by utilising existing vehicles.²⁶⁸ In a minute to the DUS from the finance department in the War Office it commented that mechanisation would result in increases in capital expenditure with no real offset savings, although it acknowledged that '[m]echanisation is...bound to come, and the cost must be faced.'²⁶⁹ However, this is contradicted by the Estimates Committee who believed the conversion would have a net saving of 74 men (an additional 6 officers less 80 other ranks) and 570 horses giving a net financial saving in 1928 of £20,260 and thereafter £28,600 year on year.²⁷⁰ However, this figure makes no mention of the capital outlay, which based upon the £340,000 above, would mean that it would take approximately twelve years for the savings to recover such a capital expenditure. With this payback period longer than the prevailing Ten Year Rule, the resulting hesitancy by the War Office during the 1920s was unsurprising compounded by concerns over the viability of the vehicles themselves. Indeed, until a viable vehicle was produced, the economic argument for mechanising the cavalry was a moot point. This, of course, did not negate any economic argument against abolishing or reducing the cavalry, but the dominant logic within the army, including the RTC, was of retaining the cavalry concept of mobility and reconnaissance. For example, the three man committee on armoured car cavalry regiments fully endorsed the policy of converting the cavalry into armoured car regiments whilst the RTC manned 'the main fighting tank'. The

²⁶⁸ WO32/2842 ARMY ORGANISATION: Cavalry Committee: Final report

²⁶⁹ Minute to DUS from fl, 10/3/1927, WO32/2842 ARMY ORGANISATION: Cavalry Committee: Final report

²⁷⁰ WO32/2844 ARMY ORGANISATION: Armoured Car Cavalry Regiment: Organisation

committee members were the DSD, Major-General Bonham-Carter, along with Colonels Charles Broad and George Lindsay.²⁷¹ The latter two were strong advocates of armoured warfare throughout the inter-war period. . There is some confusion on Lindsay's standpoint here, as until approximately a year before this committee he had been emphatic that neither the infantry nor the cavalry should be rearmed with mechanised fighting vehicles, giving further evidence of the confusion that existed amongst even the RTC radicals as to what was the best policy.²⁷²

The only person who seemed to view matters differently was Churchill, who stated that he saw the contraction of the cavalry and its possible conversion to armoured car units as two separate matters. He believed that a further six regiments should be removed through further regimental amalgamations. Once these had taken place, realising approximately £600,000 in savings, then consideration could be given to mechanisation and any additional expense that may incur. He also argued that any potential immediate shortfall in mobile troops could be covered through the use of the mounted Yeomanry regiments.²⁷³ The cost of these regiments being approximately only £160,000. The War Office believed that Churchill's plan was impractical and that many of the perceived savings were based upon false premises. Firstly, a reduction on this scale would mean that eight regiments would be stationed abroad, five of which the army was obliged to retain in India as mounted units, against six stationed at home. The Government of India was refusing to accept mechanised units and the army could not afford to maintain two distinct armies.²⁷⁴ This presented personnel problems in feeding those regiments stationed abroad and so it was felt the establishments of the home regiments would have to be increased, thereby commuting some of the anticipated savings.²⁷⁵ Secondly, the idea of substituting Yeomanry regiments for regular regiments was seen as folly. It was felt that they were considerably lacking in training and that they were not sufficiently equipped to undertake the roles potentially required. The most obvious example being that most

²⁷¹ WO32/2844 ARMY ORGANISATION: Armoured Car Cavalry Regiment: Organisation.

²⁷² Harris, *Men, ideas and tanks*, pp. 212-3.

²⁷³ Letter to Worthington-Evans from Churchill, 27/10/27, WO 32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

²⁷⁴ 'Memorandum on the Reorganization of the Cavalry', WO32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

²⁷⁵ Item 14A, WO32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

yeomanry regiments possessed very few horses. Whilst these could be supplied from the disbanded regular regiments, this immediately mitigated a number of anticipated savings. Furthermore, there were legal and moral issues to overcome to allow the Yeomanry to be posted overseas. Milne believed that using the Yeomanry in this way would be merely disguising the inadequacy of the army.²⁷⁶

The concern expressed within the army is best summed up by Worthington-Evans, who stated to Parliament that

To mechanise the cavalry completely with an unsuitable vehicle...would be an expensive mistake. The horse may not be all that it should be...[but] it is better than a vehicle that is all that it should not be.²⁷⁷

However, the army was extremely concerned about its capability to fulfil its role of national security. As the army pointed out, since the Great War it had had to deal with 'six serious emergencies'; the Third Afghan War, rebellion in Mesopotamia, Chanak, Ireland, Egypt and China, as well as potential civil unrest at home during the recent general strikes.²⁷⁸ Thus, in view of the shortcomings of armoured vehicles, it was unwilling to gamble on removing the horse completely from its mobile options. As French concluded in his article on cavalry mechanisation, the General Staff sought a prudent course of overlap to meet immediate requirements as well as planning for future ones as well.²⁷⁹ But, no consideration appears to have been given for actively advancing further cavalry mechanisation, should the two regiments then under consideration prove to be a success. It was therefore not the cavalry that retarded its own mechanisation during this period, but the cautious policy implemented by the War Office in response to the aggressive economic policy of the government. This conclusion is broadly in agreement with French's assertion that funding was the main retarding factor but it gives a little support to Liddell Hart's assertion of a 'cavalry school' committed to the horse. Liddell Hart's accusation was far too overstated and

²⁷⁶ See Minute 14 and Item 14A, WO32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

²⁷⁷ Sir L. Worthington-Evans, Hansard Commons Vol. 203, 1927, Col. 881.

²⁷⁸ Item 5A, 'Memorandum on the Reorganisation of the Cavalry', Letter from Worthington-Evans to Baldwin, 1st July 1927, WO 32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

²⁷⁹ French, 'The Mechanization of the British Cavalry', p. 320.

Worthington-Evans went out of his way to mention that ‘far from there being any opposition in the higher ranks of the Army to mechanisation...they are one and all thinking of little else.’²⁸⁰ *The Manchester Guardian* had pointed out in 1923 that the recent round of senior appointments were not only a new generation of officers, who only ten years earlier had held relatively junior positions, but that none of them were from the cavalry.²⁸¹ However, it is possible to understand how those who were so vehemently committed to mechanisation could perceive that the General Staff seemed to drag its feet in dispensing with the horse. The Army Council refused to accept that the day of the horse was over and gave the somewhat guarded opinion that ‘[w]hen a suitable machine has been devised, it may, and probably will be advisable to replace the horse, but the time has not come yet, nor is it likely to for some time.’²⁸² The pragmatic overlapping approach vindicated by French was a prudent one, especially in light of the abilities of available vehicles and the likelihood of low future funding, but the approach was a vague one. There never seemed to be anyone in the General Staff who took a more positive approach by asserting that the day of the horse was over but until such time as a suitable vehicle could be found and funded, the horse would remain for the interim to provide a close reconnaissance function: a question of when not if. For example, David Campbell’s previously mentioned opinions were far more positive on the ultimate replacement of the horse than that of the General Staff. Only three months later, a memorandum written by the CIGS, Milne, seemed to have taken an even more negative step on the mechanisation of the cavalry, when he argued that he could only perceive ‘special circumstances’ when armoured vehicles could replace cavalry and that present policy was only to consider the ‘eventual conversion of a proportion of units’ as the cavalry was the only unit that could be relied upon for reconnaissance.²⁸³

The conversion of two regiments did provide a stimulus for thought within the cavalry. An article appeared in *The Cavalry Journal* that embraced the conversion

²⁸⁰ Item 5A, Letter from Worthington-Evans to Baldwin, 1st July 1927, WO 32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

²⁸¹ A Correspondent, ‘The New Generation of Soldiers’, *The Manchester Guardian*, Jan. 2nd, 1923.

²⁸² Item 5A, ‘Memorandum on the Reorganisation of the Cavalry’, Letter from Worthington-Evans to Baldwin, 1st July 1927, WO 32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

²⁸³ ‘Memo on the Substitution of Armoured Vehicles for Cavalry’, 31st Oct. 1927, WO 32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

and saw it as a positive step for the cavalry by making them harder hitting and faster and that the cavalry was the correct arm for mechanised forces.²⁸⁴ The author of this article, who used just his initials TTP, was Major-General T. T. Pitman. Pitman had been the CO of the 11th Hussars going into the First World War and was at this time the Colonel of the regiment.²⁸⁵

For the two regiments who were selected to be converted, there was some disappointment but the senior officers in both regiments insisted that the change would be undertaken in a positive fashion.²⁸⁶ One subaltern of the 12th Lancers believed that his CO took to armoured cars 'like a duck to water.'²⁸⁷ The CO in question was Colonel Charrington who had already proven himself a thoughtful officer. Charrington had published a pamphlet entitled *Where Cavalry Stands Today*, which had also been serialised in *The Cavalry Journal*.²⁸⁸ In this Charrington gave his considered opinion upon the validity of the cavalry as a mobile force. Whilst it did not advocate a wholesale conversion of the cavalry, it was a balanced and measured piece that acknowledged the coming ascendancy of the mechanised vehicle but believed that the cavalry still had a function operating in small detachments alongside other arms, especially infantry.²⁸⁹ The reviewer in the RUSI journal considered Charrington's work to be 'a refreshing antidote to the writings of the Mechanize-Everything School.'²⁹⁰ Under Charrington, armoured car training became more dynamic than it had been with the RTC, which had focussed upon road-bound exercises. The 12th Lancers began experimenting with off road exercises and overcoming any difficulties that arose.²⁹¹ In fact, far from the RTC passing on any

²⁸⁴ TTP, 'Back to the Chariots', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XVIII, Apr. 1928, pp. 306-7.

²⁸⁵ As cited earlier, Pitman had also been one of the three cavalry brigade COs who had had a hand in creating the proposal in the amalgamation of cavalry regiments.

²⁸⁶ IWMSA. Accession No. 918-1, Peter Milner Wiggin. IWMSA. Accession 905-1, Andrew Marshall Horsbrugh-Porter. Wiggin was in the 11th Hussars and Horsbrugh-Porter in the 12th Lancers.

²⁸⁷ IWMSA. Accession 905-1, Andrew Marshall Horsbrugh-Porter.

²⁸⁸ H. V. S. Charrington, *Where Cavalry Stands Today*, (London: Gale & Polden, 1927). LHCMA Charrington papers, H.V.S. Charrington, 'Where Cavalry Stands Today, Part 1', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XVII, Apr. 1927, pp.173-183 and 'Where Cavalry Stands Today, Part 2', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XVII, July. 1927, pp.419-430.

²⁸⁹ Charrington, *Where Cavalry Stands Today*, pp. 45, 49 and 53.

²⁹⁰ Item II/14, Extract of Review, RUSI Journal Nov. 1927, LHCMA Charrington papers

²⁹¹ IWMSA. Accession No. 905-1, Andrew Marshall Horsbrugh-Porter. Charrington's obituary in *The Times* ascribes the achievements of the 12th Lancers at Dunkirk to the quality of his training from the outset of their mechanisation. A clear indication of the Army's appreciation of Charrington's abilities was the fact that he was recalled to service after nine years of retirement, to command the First

experience to the two regiments, both units had to work out tactics out for themselves, as the only instruction they received was in driving, maintenance and gunnery.²⁹²

An interesting aspect of the Cavalry Committee's two reports was that neither were ever discussed formally by the Army Council. The first, interim report appeared on the agenda for the meeting in February 1927 but any decisions were postponed pending results from the Estimates Committee.²⁹³ This further supports the notion that decisions upon cavalry were, in reality, finance driven rather than functional. When the Cavalry Committee's interim report was laid before the Cabinet committee on expenditure, its main comment was that the savings indentified were insufficient. Thus the War Office representatives had to almost double the indicated savings from £80,000 to £157,000.²⁹⁴ After the above postponement, the Army Council never formally reviewed either of the reports from the cavalry committee. This does not diminish the importance of the reports as the contents of the War Office files will attest. But, in November 1927, the question of cavalry organisation was passed to a sub-committee of the CID under the chairmanship of Lord Salisbury and neither of the Cavalry Committee's reports were submitted to this new committee.²⁹⁵ From this point, that the matter became a political rather than a military issue, is borne out by the fact that the future of the cavalry was never afterwards truly discussed at Army Council meetings; the army's ruling administrative body.²⁹⁶

The cavalry, as a concept, emerged from the period unscathed. It had endured considerable economies with the total reduction of all ranks through amalgamations,

Armoured Brigade in 1941 and when ill-health restricted his active duties he became Alanbrooke's personal assistant. 'Brig. H. V. S. Charrington', *The Times*, Sat. Jun. 19, 1965, p. 10, col. E.

²⁹² IWMSA. Accession No. 905-2, Andrew Marshall Horsbrugh-Porter. IWMSA. Accession No.878-3., Dudley Jaffray Hynman Allenby.

²⁹³ Meeting 356, 9/2/1927, WO33/1158, Minutes of proceedings and précis prepared for the Army Council 1927.

²⁹⁴ WO32/2841 ARMY ORGANISATION: Cavalry Committee: Interim report.

²⁹⁵ Meeting 360, 22/11/1927, WO33/1158, Minutes of proceedings and précis prepared for the Army Council 1927. Also minutes 2 and 3, WO32/2845, Future organisation of the Cavalry: Sub-committee of committee of Imperial Defence 1927 and CAB 16/77, Records of the Committee of Imperial Defence: Cavalry - Strength and Organisation 1927-8.

²⁹⁶ The author has reviewed all subsequent minutes of proceedings for the 1920s and 1930s held at the National Archives.

the reduction in the number of squadrons per regiment and other actions, but it was not unique in this.²⁹⁷ Two regiments had been converted to armoured cars, but mechanisation was still unlikely, and many of its key functions in 1933 were fundamentally no different to 1914. The key factor for the period was unquestionably that of finance. The lack of funds available meant that development in mechanical vehicles was hindered.

Much as Worthington-Evans had, Clement Attlee made a similar call for caution in the House, stating that

When you introduce improvements, you need to be quite sure that they are improvements and that they will not have to be scrapped again in a year or so, because they have been made too hastily.²⁹⁸

This reluctance to commit meant that all decisions were conservative and non-committal. As Worthington-Evans lamented to Baldwin, both he and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Churchill, were for ever placed in the position of rejecting expenditure which they knew was essential for development.²⁹⁹ Liddell Hart believed that both Worthington-Evans and Churchill were fundamentally progressive but were curtailed by financial restrictions.³⁰⁰ Churchill actually refused to sign the CID's sub-committee's report on the cavalry as he felt it was not sufficiently progressive and felt that all efforts should be made to mechanise within the overriding constraints.³⁰¹ As previously mentioned, Worthington-Evans actually contended that contrary to popular belief there was no resistance to mechanisation amongst the senior ranks. The lack of research meant development of military vehicles became stagnant. Consequently this allowed the cavalry and the War Office to argue successfully that there were functions that could not yet be undertaken by anyone else other than by a man on a horse. In this respect, they were inadvertently aided by people like Fuller who had already acknowledged that in the immediate future, tanks did have short

²⁹⁷ Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, p. 335.

²⁹⁸ Memorandum on the Reorganization of the Cavalry', WO 32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

²⁹⁹ Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, p. 334.

³⁰⁰ Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, p. 100.

³⁰¹ Minute 19, WO32/2845, Future organisation of the Cavalry: Sub-committee of committee of Imperial Defence 1927. CAB 16/77, Records of the Committee of Imperial Defence: Cavalry - Strength and Organisation 1927-8.

falls. Even in 1935 Fuller berated the Vickers tank that had been introduced in 1923, as a very indifferent machine, its continued use in 1935 merely served to fuel his ire.³⁰² Fuller had even been responsible, when Milne's military assistant, in providing a defence for the cavalry.³⁰³ For the conservative cavalrymen, it meant that they were given a false hope. Even the most progressive cavalry General, David Campbell, still believed that complete replacement of the horse by machine was some way off.

Recent historians, have to a degree, been more forgiving of the cavalry than the traditional narrative, accepting that they did see a future for the machine within the British army. This is certainly correct; the black and white imagery utilised by the writings of Fuller and Liddell Hart was designed to invoke a negative portrayal of those who were not wholesale advocates of the machine. In so doing they ignored the practical realities of the period, in particular financial retrenchment and gave a warped perspective. Fuller was particularly intransigent towards any viewpoint other than his own. The debacle surrounding his aborted appointment to command the Experimental Armoured Force evidenced this. Whilst it would be folly to speculate upon what might have been had Fuller accepted this appointment, Trythall argues that the cautious nature of Fuller's replacement was partially responsible for the experiment failing to achieve anything of consequence.³⁰⁴ This, of course, is based upon an unsubstantiated assumption that Fuller would have made a success of the experiment.

The fact that the cavalry committee's reports were published at approximately the same time as the Experimental Armoured Force was in existence must have meant that its findings were seemingly built upon firmer foundations. This was further reinforced by a CID sub-committee report upon the composition of the cavalry that concluded that it would be unwise to reduce the army's only truly mobile force.³⁰⁵ The trouble with this is that the focus was upon mobility alone. Whilst the man on a

³⁰² Fuller, *Memoirs*, pp. 406-7.

³⁰³ Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, p. 132.

³⁰⁴ Trythall, *'Boney' Fuller*, p. 144.

³⁰⁵ Minute 7, WO32/2845, Future organisation of the Cavalry: Sub-committee of committee of Imperial Defence 1927. Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, Vol. 8, p. 336.

horse was arguably more mobile in a utilitarian sense, the flaw was that upon arriving at an ordered destination, it could undertake reconnaissance work but as a combat unit, was little more than a mounted infantry unit. The cavalry had called for more hitting power to improve its effectiveness, but this in itself was a tacit acceptance of its impotency upon a modern battlefield. Those who advocated for machines to work alongside cavalry were missing the point. If a vehicle was developed that could accompany the horse, why use the horse at all? This notion, although not fully acknowledged, was at the heart of those officers such as Campbell, who believed that ultimately machines would replace the horse. The horse may have been the best mode of transport available, but that is not the same as saying it was effective in modern warfare. The cavalry argued that it remained effective as a force in dealing with Imperial police work. This argument is not without merit, as mounted policemen exist to this day to deal with crowd control.³⁰⁶ But, as Burnett-Stuart had pointed out, the locally raised units could have dealt with these aspects of Imperial work; the Indian cavalry and the Trans-Jordan Frontier Force to highlight but two.

The parsimonious outlook of the period engendered a defensive mentality, protecting what they had rather than embracing innovation. The army had to try and tailor its coat from the available cloth, but this confused financial expediency with functional expediency. Budgetary constraints had led to the War Office chipping away at the edges, trying to retain the army in its usual guise so as to continue to fulfil its international remit. However, with the cavalry, it had missed the opportunity to utilise experienced, thinking senior officers to make a coherent argument for re-inventing the cavalry. Montgomery-Massingberd's Cavalry Committee's singular failing was in missing the opportunity of encouraging cavalry officers to reinvent the cavalry. Instead of encouraging pro-active thinking, it took a more negative approach. The approach adopted by the committee never encouraged cavalymen to envisage a mechanised unit and thereby engender a sense of ownership of a mechanised policy. In his memoirs, Montgomery-Massingberd praised the Committee for abolishing lances and recommending the mechanisation of one

³⁰⁶ www.met.police.uk/mountedbranch/duties.htm, accessed 4th November 2010.

squadron per regiment.³⁰⁷ This is putting a positive light upon the committee's reports, for it was recommending the mechanisation of the machine-gun squadron and the replacement of the lance with a smaller variant. In this sense it instilled in the cavalry an outlook that was reactive rather than reactionary. Contrary to Liddell Hart's and Fuller's assertions, the cavalry did not retard mechanisation because it was never involved in such discussions; consequently, it became inert in constructing its own future.

If there is a case for criticism against the cavalry during the period it is that officers such as Campbell, or even Charrington, should have pushed more vigorously the mechanisation of the cavalry, but this judgement should not be promoted too forcefully. The War Office also failed to do so and this meant that the cavalry was dictated to and the Treasury was never confronted with an imaginative forward, progressive plan. It is unclear how much they would have been able to progress such a course. The War Office's primary focus, due to financial pressures, was very much upon immediate solutions. Under Milne's stewardship, there had been some experimentation towards armoured warfare for the future, but, as the debacle around the Experimental Armoured Force had displayed, the use of armoured vehicles was still very much under debate. Thus, it was unlikely that mechanisation of the cavalry was ever going to be completely resolved until armoured policy had been clarified and funds were realised to implement such policy. However, it would have forced a decision from the government which would have provided both the cavalry and the War Office with a clearer indication of policy.

By 1933, with the arrival of Montgomery-Massingberd as CIGS, the mechanisation of the cavalry role was becoming only a question of when, not if, and only financial budgetary constraints were preventing it. The only real question was whether the cavalry should continue to fulfil this role or whether it should be transferred to the RTC. The creation of the DRC in late 1933 created a change in focus in defence

³⁰⁷ Field Marshal Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, *The Autobiography of a Gunner*, p. 52, LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd 10/11.

policy which led to a reassessment of mechanising the cavalry which is analysed in a subsequent chapter.

2. THE YEOMANRY CAVALRY 1920-1940

In the historiography of the British cavalry of the inter-war period, its part-time element, the Yeomanry cavalry, has received very little academic scrutiny. The main thrust of the standard historiographical debate focuses upon the cavalry's role and impact upon mechanisation. On the back of these debates, an assessment is always made on the degree of culpability that should be ascribed to the cavalry for Britain's military failings in France, 1940. The role of the Yeomanry in these debates is ignored and seemingly considered irrelevant. Even in the historiography of the British auxiliary forces, the Yeomanry is given short shrift during the inter-war period. In Ian Beckett's book on Britain's amateur military tradition, only a short, single paragraph is devoted to its fundamental restructuring in the 1920s, with a passing comment on its 'declining utility for modern warfare' and how there had been some bitterness towards its reorganisation.¹ It is given marginally longer treatment in Peter Dennis' book which focuses specifically on the Territorial army of the first half of the twentieth century.² In both these instances, it is perhaps unsurprising that it receives such meagre attention, as the focus of both books is upon the auxiliary force as a whole. Just prior to the First World War, the Yeomanry comprised only 10% of the overall auxiliary force and so was the smallest of the three frontline combat arms that constituted part of the auxiliary forces.³ However, even in a specific history of the Yeomanry, the period of 1919 -39 is given over to just four pages of images with just twenty-seven lines of accompanying text.⁴ Even accepting the author's acknowledgement that his book was far from a 'definitive history' and was designed for the 'non-specialist', it is still indicative of the degree of unimportance assigned to the Yeomanry in this period.⁵

This chapter seeks to redress this oversight and highlight the academic significance to the historiography of the British cavalry. It will argue that the plans of the British

¹ Ian F. W. Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition 1558-1945*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), p. 246.

² Dennis, *The Territorial Army*, p. 92.

³ Appendix on 'Strength of the Territorial Army, by arms, all ranks, on 1 October 1908-38' in Dennis, *The Territorial Army*, p. 262.

⁴ Patrick Mileham, *The Yeomanry Regiments Over 200 Years of Tradition*, (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 2003), pp. 48-51.

⁵ 'Author's Introduction' in Mileham, *The Yeomanry*, p. 6.

army for the reconstitution of the Yeomanry indicated that lessons had been learnt from the First World War. The British army recognised that the value of the horse in war had reduced, even if the time had not quite yet arrived for its abandonment. It will also show that the British army was constantly buffeted by social, political and economic factors and that as a result it frequently had to compromise functional efficiency. Unfortunately, often the army bore the brunt of any criticism for these functional failings despite them being beyond their control.

In the context of the British cavalry of the inter-war period, the size of the Yeomanry cavalry was not insignificant. On the eve of war in 1914 there were fifty-five regiments of Yeomanry and as such, it exceeded its regular brethren in size. The logic behind the reconstitution of the Territorial army after the Great War was that it should form the 'basis for the expansion of the nation's military forces in time of war'.⁶ Consequently, how those fifty-five Yeomanry regiments were subsumed into the military planning of the time is far from inconsequential in the debate on the fate of the cavalry as a whole. This debate as to whether the Yeomanry even had a future in the British army, tells us much of the attitudes and ideas of the parties involved as to the merits of the cavalry as an entity rather than just the Yeomanry.

Aside from this central argument, a by-product for analysing the Yeomanry in this period is, as previously mentioned, the interaction between the military and the government. In dealing with the auxiliary forces, there is, entwined with the military debate, a strong socio-political aspect that is arguably greater than its regular counterpart at both a national and local level. As Beckett has commented

the purpose fulfilled by the auxiliary forces was many-faceted and is a ready guide to the paradoxes of British attitudes towards the military. Indeed, auxiliary forces have been the real point of contact between army and society in Britain.⁷

⁶ Dennis, *The Territorial Army*, p. 86.

⁷ Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 246.

For the Yeomanry this was magnified and intensified. Firstly, by definition it was parochial in nature owing to its regional affiliation, giving it a sense of ownership by the county. This affiliation was demonstrated by levels of attendance at public displays given by Yeomanry regiments, which often provided an invaluable source of additional revenue.⁸ This, of course, was not unique to the Yeomanry regiments as all Territorial army units were created on a county basis. The second factor was the social make up of a yeomanry regiment. A yeomanry regiment drew the majority of its recruits, officers and troopers, from the local gentry, middle-class professionals and farmers. William Mather, who joined the Cheshire Yeomanry in 1935, described the regiment as an eclectic mixture of clerks from the towns and farmers, but of being well-educated overall.⁹ Benjamin Thomas of the North Somerset Yeomanry also believed there to be a 'good type' of person in his regiment and supported the view of the above-average intelligence of the pre-Second World War recruit by asserting that many of them were promoted from the ranks to become officers during the war.¹⁰ At a meeting held in 1942 fifty men of the North Somerset Yeomanry were identified as suitable for OCTU. The North Somersets may have been an exceptional case as the RWY had seven or eight suitable men.¹¹ This social calibre of individuals within the regiments acted as an incentive for others to join the Yeomanry. John Siminson cited as one of his reasons for joining his local yeomanry unit that '[t]he troopers in the RWY [Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry] were a better class of person.'¹² This social standing of the Yeomanry had been something of a tradition; Cunningham, in his analysis of the socio-political history of the auxiliary force of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, concluded that, in general, the volunteer force was unpopular with the upper-class who resented its bourgeois foundations and yet the middle-class perceived it as an object for wry amusement. However, despite this almost contradictory observation, he observed that the Yeomanry was the more socially agreeable.¹³ Although Cunningham provided little supporting evidence for this

⁸ Glenn A. Stepler, *Britons, To Arms! The Story of the British Volunteer Soldier*, (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1992), p. 140. The crowds can also be witnessed on these days on some amateur film footage of the Leicestershire Yeomanry from 1938-9. MACE Archive Refs: 794 & 1456.

⁹ IWMSA. Accession No. 15326, William Loris Mather.

¹⁰ IWMSA. Accession No. 11084, Benjamin Raymond Thomas,

¹¹ 'Minutes of a Meeting on the Conversion of the Cheshire Yeomanry and North Somerset Yeomanry to Signals Units, AG Branch, GHQ, 20th Feb. 1942.' CHEM 1001.36.06, Cheshire Military Museum.

¹² John Siminson, *Saturday Night Soldier*, (London: Janus Publishing, 1994), p.1.

¹³ Hugh Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force: A Social and Political History 1859-1908*, (London: Croom Helm, 1975), pp. 154-5.

assertion, it would seem from the evidence presented above that it was not unfounded.

This parochial and social constitution meant that the Yeomanry had men of strong political and financial influence at both a local and national level. During the inter-war period there were many serving yeomanry officers who were also Members of Parliament in either the House of Commons or Lords. For example, in 1932 there were thirteen Members of Parliament who were also current serving Yeomanry Cavalry officers, as well as six who were in non-cavalry Yeomanry regiments.¹⁴ This was aside from any MPs who had either familial connections with the Yeomanry or had previously served in a Yeomanry regiment. Churchill, who was the Secretary of State for War during the period when the future of the reconstituted Yeomanry was being examined, had himself been an officer in The Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars.¹⁵ Thus, unlike the regular army, the Yeomanry was in a far stronger position to participate in its future direction as it possessed a degree of political influence. Furthermore, it was able to use this influence far more effectively compared to the regular army, which had to be seen as apolitical. Hew Strachan has argued that the army was very capable of exercising political influence, but the difference here was that the army had to use more subtle approaches.¹⁶

This combination of factors were to come together almost immediately upon the proposed post-war reconstitution of the Yeomanry. In January 1920, the Army Council stated that the Territorial Force was to be 'a genuine second line' army that mirrored the regular army in its constitution and could ultimately take to the field in its own right.¹⁷ As part of this principle, it was deemed that only '10 mounted Yeomanry regiments, [were to be] available to form the nucleus of a 2nd Cavalry

¹⁴ *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXII, Jan. 1932, p. 138 and *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXII, Jul. 1932, p. 446. The numbers for the non-cavalry Yeoman appeared in a later issue after it had been pointed out to the Journal that they had been excluded.

¹⁵ Mileham, *The Yeomanry*, p.105.

¹⁶ Strachan, *Politics*.

¹⁷ Extract from Cabinet Memorandum 9/Gen. No. /9835 cited in an undated item 5A WO32/18608. This is reiterated in a round robin letter from the War Office to a number Yeomanry regiments dated 13th May 1921. See item 36A, WO32/18609.

Division on mobilization, and also to provide corps cavalry.’¹⁸ This, of all the changes to the pre-war Territorial Force, was far and away the most fundamental, as it called for the transformation of the forty-five remaining regiments from cavalry to another form. The War Office proposals for these surplus regiments was for their conversion into necessary units that were required to fulfil the Territorial Force’s new principle of mirroring the regular force. In general, this meant that the majority were to convert into an artillery unit, with a smaller number becoming armoured car units. Although this would appear a dramatic reconfiguration with over 80% of Yeomanry regiments being affected, it was not unrealistic in light of the experience of the Great War. By 1918, only seventeen of the fifty-five Yeomanry regiments were still mounted, the remainder contributing in other guises.¹⁹ The majority of those that had remained mounted regiments were under the command of Allenby in Palestine. Consequently, the General Staff’s scheme for the Yeomanry was built on a firm foundation of recent combat experience and was not driven solely by arbitrary economic cutbacks. However, despite the logical rationale of this reconfiguration, Churchill, then Secretary of State for War, and the War Office anticipated resistance to its proposed scheme. In order to overcome this potential reticence, he suggested a conference for Yeomanry commanders should be organised to allow the War Office to state its position on policy towards the Territorial Force and the Yeomanry. The key point to draw from this approach is that what the professional army believed it required to fulfil its defence obligation to the nation had to be received and sanctioned, at least in part, by its irregular counterpart. This was to provide a degree of frustration for the War Office as this conference was only the beginning of protracted negotiations to appease the potential future officers of the reconstituted Yeomanry. These negotiations were conducted over a matter of weeks that included a further two such conferences. The fact that these representatives were able to hold up the army’s plans provides a clear indication of the sway these senior Yeomanry members had. Socially, if the senior officers did not support any scheme, their influence upon recruitment was such that the army would find itself with a serious shortage of willing recruits; politically, the pressure it could bring about was

¹⁸ Extract from Cabinet Memorandum 9/Gen. No./9835 cited in item 5A WO32/18608.

¹⁹ Figures quoted by the Director General of the Territorial Force, Lord Scarbrough, Item 5A, ‘Proceedings of a meeting of Yeomanry Commanders’ 4/2/1920, WO32/18606. A copy of this is also on WO32/18607.

considerable. Of the attendees at the conferences, there were fourteen officers with either a title or honorific.²⁰

At the first of this series of conferences, the DGTF, Lord Scarbrough, was in combative mode and made the point in unequivocal terms on behalf of the army, that the proposed new structure was decided based primarily upon practical experience and that finance, though a strong factor was a secondary force.

we cannot afford anything like 55 Yeomanry Regiments – indeed we can only afford ten and only want ten, we should make an effort to convert those surplus Yeomanry regiments into the army troops which are actually essential...without those troops the Territorial Force would be incomplete...We want fewer Yeomanry Regiments in war and we want more army troops...I cannot help thinking that with the experience of the war the commonsense man would say to us – train us for what you want us to do in the next war, don't train us as cavalry and then put us on our feet or on cycles when we are embodied.²¹

This statement, which was effectively the closing speech of the initial conference, was an interesting one. For whilst it did not explicitly comment upon the future of cavalry in warfare, there was an undertone that was impossible not to discern; namely that a large cavalry force was superfluous to requirements. The full implication was hidden by the semantics of the language used and if the word Yeomanry was replaced by the word cavalry the message became far more explicit. This message was also skilfully hidden behind the screen of economy. By opening with the statement that it

²⁰ 'List of Officers who attended Conferences with the D.C.I.G.S.', WO32/18606. These were Lt. Col. Lord Deramore (Yorkshire Hussars), Major Hon. F. H. Cripps (Buckinghamshire Yeomanry), Col. Lord Collesloe (Buckinghamshire Territorial Force Association), Lord Hampden (Hertfordshire Yeomanry), Lt. Col. Leslie Wilson M. P., Viscount Hambledon (Royal Devonshire Yeomanry), Major Lord Vivian (Royal Devonshire Yeomanry), Lt. Col. Hon. C. J. Coventry (Worcestershire Yeomanry), Lt. Col. Lord Sackville (West Kent Yeomanry), Col. Lord Harris (West Kent Yeomanry), Major Hon. Vivian (Glamorgan Yeomanry), Lord Kensington (Welsh Horse), Major Lord Howard de Walden (2nd County of London Yeomanry), Lt. Col. Hon. S.C. Peel (Bedfordshire Yeomanry).

²¹ 'Proceedings of a meeting of Yeomanry Commanders', 4th February 1920, Item 5A, WO 32/18606, also WO32/18607.

was the affordability of the Yeomanry that was the problem, Scarbrough was diverting his audience. If the army could only afford ten regiments of Yeomanry, then the obvious answer was to simply reconstitute only ten and make considerable financial saving from the disbanded regiments. However, this was not the intention. The army were prepared to fund and reconstitute all fifty-five of the Yeomanry regiments, but it did not want to waste its budget upon unnecessary forces. Scarbrough was emphatic that only ten Yeomanry *cavalry* regiments were required to supplement the regular cavalry compliment and that the training of anymore would be pure folly. As a member of the Army Council, this is a strong indication that the lessons of the recent war were beginning to permeate into War Office thinking.²² This was not to say that the War Office envisaged the cavalry being wholly overthrown by mechanisation. Sir Henry Wilson, the CIGS, was in attendance at the second conference nine days later and informed those present that ‘mechanical means and...possibilities of the future’ were unproven in battle and across the Empire.²³ However, whilst the absolute future of the cavalry was unclear, it is apparent that an acknowledgement had been made that it was no longer as important as it had once been. The forcefulness of Scarbrough’s language is all the more striking as he had been a regular cavalryman and a Yeoman himself, and if he was merely conforming to the official stance, he showed no sign of sentimentality or regret.²⁴ Whether Scarbrough’s speech was preordained is impossible to ascertain but the significance that such a forthright speech came from him rather than the DCIGS, Tim Harrington, could not have been lost on the audience; Scarbrough’s social status and background was just as important as his actual words.

To further support the idea that the War Office was fully committed to reducing the number of Yeomanry cavalry regiments, it offered only one alternative option for

²² There was to be no formal investigation into the lessons of the war until the creation of the Kirke Committee in 1932. Brian Bond, *British Military Policy*, pp. 36-7. Although French has argued convincingly that army did begin to assimilate lessons far earlier, see French, ‘Doctrine and Organization.’

²³ ‘Report of a Conference with the Yeomanry Commanders’, 13th February 1920, WO32/18607.

²⁴ He had served with the 7th Hussars between 1877 and 1883, had himself commanded a Yeomanry unit, The Yorkshire Dragoons for a number of years and had been its Honorary Colonel. He had distinguished himself in South Africa against the Boers with the Imperial Yeomanry and had commanded a Territorial Mounted Brigade between 1908 and 1912. Obituary, *The Times*, 5th March 1945, p.6, Iss. 50083, Col. F.

regiments who did not wish to convert to a different function. This alternative was to form a special reserve regiment where recruits would sign up to a foreign service obligation, would undergo an initial five months training upon recruitment with an ongoing commitment of 27 days annual training. Although this ‘cumbersome’ scheme had been put forward by Scarbrough himself for the whole of the Territorial Force, not just the Yeomanry, it was foolhardy to think that it was practically viable for the Yeomanry regiments.²⁵ As has been observed, the vast majority of recruits had jobs of varying professional status and many employers often resented providing just two weeks unpaid leave for the annual camp. Harry Williams, who joined the Staffordshire Yeomanry in the winter of 1938, felt that his employers thought he was ‘trying one on’ for a fortnight’s camp by signing up, even though the diplomatic situation in Europe was volatile by this stage.²⁶ The Leicestershire Yeomanry recorded in their annual diary that twenty-one men were absent from the two week annual training in 1923, approximately 10% of the regiment, as they ‘could not be spared by [their] employer[s].’²⁷ Consequently, for any prospective special reservist to ask for an initial five months was more likely to see him become unemployable or out of work.

Despite the impracticality of the scheme, some representatives jumped at this option as a means of retaining their mounted status. The representative for the Welsh Horse gave a robust assurance that he could raise such a regiment in Wales. The representative for the Northamptonshire Yeomanry believed his men would demand it ‘as their right.’²⁸ The army was only too aware of the impracticality of the Special Reserve system and both the DCIGS and the DRO quizzed the conference over the reality of implementing such a system on an ongoing basis, spelling out exactly what the nature of the commitment was.

²⁵ Dennis, *The Territorial Army*, p. 59.

²⁶ IWMSA. Accession No. 12736-1, Harry Maples Williams.

²⁷ Leicestershire Yeomanry Regimental Record, DE3765/9, Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Record Office.

²⁸ ‘Proceedings of a meeting of Yeomanry Commanders’, 4th February 1920, Item 5A, WO 32/18606, also WO32/18607.

The Yeomanry commanders' response to the War Office proposals for re-organisation was, on the whole, very negative. Although various arguments were used by different representatives, the majority were all in favour of retaining the horse. There were a few who used a regional argument. The representatives of both the Welsh Horse and the Glamorgan Yeomanry believed that at least one of the ten retained mounted units should come from Wales. This national pride often presented problems for the British army when dealing with reorganisation. As previously mentioned, Scottish nationalism was to cause the War Office problems when reviewing the Scots Greys.²⁹ This could also dilute down to regional parochialism. Another representative highlighted that the proposed system of selecting the ten by seniority meant that no mounted Yeomanry would remain under the Eastern Command. In response to this point, Tim Harrington quickly pointed out how the function of the Territorial army had changed and that 'the defence of these shores...no longer applies.'³⁰ This was a clear indication of intended policy for the Territorials to form a second line force for conflict overseas.

Although this rebuttal of the army's proposals was based upon a notion of functionality, albeit a somewhat tenuous one, the most promulgated rejection of the army's proposed scheme was not based upon any such practical idea. The popular argument rested upon the notion of what the Yeomanry represented in terms of its tradition and class. The representative from the Dorset Yeomanry was the first to make this point, stating that the new proposals meant the demise of the Yeomanry and a totally new organisation altogether: 'It will be all quite new and there will be none of the old traditions existing at present.'³¹ A stance that the Dorset Territorial Force Association subsequently endorsed stating

²⁹ See chapter on The British cavalry 1934-1940, pp. 300-305.

³⁰ 'Proceedings of a meeting of Yeomanry Commanders', 4th February 1920, Item 5A, WO 32/18606, also WO32/18607.

³¹ Ibid.

The Association is convinced that cavalry is the most suitable arm for utilizing the services of the class of men who have hitherto formed the regiment.³²

The Oxfordshire representative was emphatic that it would 'finish the old Yeomanry' and that, irrespective of whether recruiting began sooner rather than later, he would be unable to recruit previously enlisted Yeomen as 'they are a totally different class of men.'³³ In order to preserve its tradition, class identity and, of course, its mounted status, the representative for the Royal Buckinghamshire Yeomanry put forward an alternative scheme for the Yeomanry. This scheme was that each county was to raise a single squadron that could be expanded upon when required.³⁴ The idea was not founded upon any rational principle other than to retain the Yeomanry in its pre-war configuration, as was clear from his comment that 'the Yeomanry as it stands today has nothing in common with the [artillery] batteries that it is proposed to turn them into. It is doing away with the old Yeomanry system altogether.'³⁵ Although this suggestion received many supporters, it was pointed out by the DCIGS that it had some serious logistical and administrative flaws. Firstly, it had not been thought through as to how these squadrons were to be expanded upon mobilisation. If it was to be through amalgamating squadrons, there was the geographical issue of which squadrons to combine and, in turn, the issue of who was to command such a combined regiment. If the alternative was the expansion of each squadron, this posed the issue of imbalanced training amongst the men. The issue of peacetime training would also be made complex with single squadron cadres as it would be difficult to organise regimental training and make the training of larger units impossible.³⁶ However, it was left again to Lord Scarbrough to highlight the fundamental flaw with this proposal. This was that it was not acknowledging the War Office's new policy. The squadron system meant that there remained fifty-five mounted regiments and a resultant shortfall in artillery. In Scarbrough's own words, 'what will they be used

³² Letter to the War Office, 6/7/1921, WO32/18586 Dorset Yeomanry: conversion into Royal Field Artillery

³³ 'Proceedings of a meeting of Yeomanry Commanders', 4th February 1920, Item 5A, WO 32/18606, also WO32/18607.

³⁴ Similar ideas were put forward by regular cavalry officers, when confronted with reducing the size of the Cavalry. See Chapter on The British Cavalry 1920-1933, p. 26.

³⁵ 'Proceedings of a meeting of Yeomanry Commanders', 4th February 1920, Item 5A, WO 32/18606, also WO32/18607.

³⁶ Ibid.

for? They don't come into the picture at all.'³⁷ There were very few audible supporters of the proposed scheme amongst the delegates and it was not proffered again at the second conference.³⁸

The class argument maintained its momentum at this second conference, with several delegates emphatic in their assertion that if the horses were to be removed, it would mean the loss to both the army and the nation of an entire class. This class, in the words of a representative from the Essex Yeomanry, Lt. Col. Francis Whitmore, were 'the very best fighting substance that the country has.'³⁹ Whitmore had fought with distinction on the Western Front and pointed out to the conference that he had experience of commanding both yeomanry and regular troops.⁴⁰ Viscount Valentia was also of the belief that the Yeoman of the 'Midland Counties' were of 'extreme value to the country' who would be lost if they were converted to any other role as 'they cannot serve except as cavalry.' In his view these yeoman were 'not only intelligent men but are in a superior position and extremely teachable; far more teachable than the ordinary recruit.'⁴¹ However, Valentia's statements seem somewhat contradictory, as these so-called intelligent and teachable men would surely have been the ideal candidates to understand the necessity for change and have the intellectual capacity to retrain in any new role. Instead, he portrayed them as anachronistic amateurs who would prefer to remain mounted 'and trust to luck...when war did come.'⁴² Whether these views were strictly the view of the Yeomen he represented or whether they had been subjected to Valentia's own personal prejudices is impossible to deduce, for Valentia was a zealous horseman. He had served with the 10th Hussars during the 1860s and then with The Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars and had been in South Africa with the Imperial Yeomanry. Thus, his initial military training had been undertaken almost half a century before the appearance of

³⁷ 'Proceedings of a meeting of Yeomanry Commanders', 4th February 1920, Item 5A, WO 32/18606, also WO32/18607.

³⁸ 'Report of a Conference with the Yeomanry Commanders', 13th February 1920, WO32/18607.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Whitmore had commanded both the Essex Yeomanry and the 10th Hussars and his actions included a valiant defence of Monchy-Le-Preux in April 1917 with both the above regiments. George K. Newark, 'A Monograph on the the Life, Times and Military Service of Colonel Sir Francis Whitmore KCB, CMG, DSO, TD, JP. 1872-1962', www.thurrock-community.org.uk/historysoc/whitmore4.htm, accessed 23rd October 2008.

⁴¹ 'Report of a Conference with the Yeomanry Commanders', 13th February 1920, WO32/18607.

⁴² Ibid.

armoured vehicles. Outside of the military he was an avid huntsman and, perhaps most importantly, had been one of the prime movers in introducing polo to England.⁴³ Thus, it was unlikely that his view was without bias.

Although Valentia's objectivity was questionable, his was not a lone voice in the crowd. Aside from Whitmore, the delegate for the Pembrokeshire Yeomanry warned against 'break[ing] up the particular class of man you have...that is invaluable for the protection of the State at this time.' The delegates from Kent, Hampshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire also forewarned a loss of a certain type of person.⁴⁴ The delegate for Hampshire was not a direct representative of the Hampshire Yeomanry but was there on their behalf as a member of the Territorial Association of Hampshire. His views were far more pragmatic on the reconstitution of the Yeomanry and his affirmation of the class argument on recruitment was a little less flattering than the others. He concurred that '[t]he men who formerly belonged to the Yeomanry were a particular class of man who thought themselves and were a little superior to other men in intelligence and very often in money also.'⁴⁵ Whether it was meant or not, the implied charge of snobbery and financial status was only very thinly veiled here.

This criticism leads to the heart of the objection made by many over the change of function of the Yeomanry and this was that the Yeomanry was an agreeable social and recreational pastime foremost, and a cog in the nation's war machine, very much secondly. The activities of a mounted yeomanry regiment were in-keeping with the equine pursuits of the local gentry. In 1933, Terry Frost joined the Warwickshire Yeomanry because he liked horse riding and joining up 'was one way of getting it on Sunday mornings.' Furthermore, the annual fortnight camps provided him with a holiday where he could go riding and see the country.⁴⁶ The bile from the delegate

⁴³ Obituary, 'Lord Valentia. A Notable Figure in Sport and Politics', *The Times*, 21st January 1927, p. 16, Iss. 44485, Col. D.

⁴⁴ Report of a Conference with the Yeomanry Commanders', 13th February 1920, WO32/18607.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ IWMSA. Accession No. 961-1, Terry Frost. Sir Terry Frost transferred to the commandos and spent a large part of the war as a prisoner where he began painting, a pursuit that was to provide him with some acclaim after the war.

for East Riding was tangible when he referred to this 'artillery business' and how no officer or yeoman would possibly agree to any new service.⁴⁷ From this comment, and others, it is possible to discern a distinct sense of resentment towards the War Office; these professional soldiers were interfering with their sporting pastime: a genuine sense of them and us, or perhaps more accurately, gentlemen versus players. Lord Harris stated

The Yeomanry Force has been the ugly duckling of the War Office during the whole of its existence. It has always been bullied. We are accustomed to kicks; we are accustomed to having every undertaking that the War Office has ever entered into with the Yeomanry broken.⁴⁸

The Pembrokeshire delegate accused the War Office of consistently trying to 'break up Yeomanry Regiments.'⁴⁹ These comments, if viewed through a Marxist lens, could be seen as a class conflict, with a bourgeois, professional, middle-class overriding the aristocracy's prerogative of a feudalistic army. This is going too far, especially as the personnel that constituted the Yeomanry, was predominantly from both middle- and upper-class backgrounds. Lord Lovat was particularly scathing that the CO of Lovat's Scouts was a banker, whom he nicknamed 'Uncle Gloom' and commented that he had 'never met a more apathetic soldier.' However, whilst Lovat was particularly scathing of the banking profession, it would seem a personal enmity rather than a class one.⁵⁰ The War Office was also very aware of the changing nature of the Yeomanry:

The old yeomanry class has ceased to exist and the yeomanry is nowadays composed almost entirely of business men as officers and clerks and artisans as other ranks. Their occupations make it

⁴⁷ Report of a Conference with the Yeomanry Commanders', 13th February 1920, WO32/18607.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Lord Lovat, *March Past: A Memoir by Lord Lovat*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985), p.167. Lovat seemed to have made it his business to antagonise 'Uncle Gloom.' Eventually, owing to an act of insubordination, Lovat had to apply for a transfer in order to save face. See pp. 167-172.

impossible for these men to devote more than a very small proportion of their time to military training⁵¹

At the third conference on 8th March, each representative for the Yeomanry regiments being asked to convert from a cavalry unit was asked to summarise their regiments' current position.⁵² An analysis of the responses given shows that one-third of those present pointedly mentioned the issue of class and a clear majority, 83%, stated that the existing yeoman would not re-enlist under the new proposals and only three of these believed they would be able to reconstitute with new, alternative recruits. The prognosis for the War Office's scheme was far from promising. The scheme had called for two signals squadrons, two batteries of horse artillery, fourteen field artillery brigades, two brigades of mountain artillery and seven motor machine-gun companies. The responses from the representatives present indicated that they would only be able to form two batteries of horse artillery, three half brigades, four motor machine-gun companies and five believed that they could comply with the requirements of forming Special Reserve units.⁵³

This response must have come as a surprise to the senior staff present at the third conference. In a synopsis of the first two conferences, Scarbrough had written that despite the unanimous abhorrence of the changes, he believed that all regiments would comply with the proposal rather than face disbandment. Indeed, he believed that all regiments would have opted for the scheme, with the exception of Wales, had it not been for the outlet of opting to be a Special Reserve regiment. He further surmised that there had been 'a more general acceptance of conversion' to field artillery, although even by his own analysis only six and one half brigades were agreed out of the desired fourteen.⁵⁴ Harrington, the DCIGS, had added in a further memorandum '[t]hat the Yeomanry will do their best to help the War Office scheme' and that although there would be some loss of senior officers and older yeoman, younger officers would rise to the challenge and 'the majority of the old Yeoman will

⁵¹ Item 14A, WO32/2846, 32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry. This is also repeated in Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, Vol. 8, pp. 344-5.

⁵² See Summary of Results, p. 141.

⁵³ See Summary of Results, p. 141.

⁵⁴ Memo to DCIGS from DGTF, 16th February 1920, WO32/18607.

come forward.⁵⁵ Sir Henry Wilson supported these views in a memorandum to Churchill.⁵⁶

This hopeful interpretation that the Yeomanry would comply with the War Office's requirements rather than face disbandment was fuelled by the concept at the core of the regular army, where regimental identity was one of its fundamental building blocks. However, in the case of the Yeomanry, this faith was perhaps a little misplaced. The key to this misunderstanding is best exemplified by one cavalryman's comment upon his attachment to the Yeomanry. He stated that an order given in a regular regiment was expected to be carried out, whereas an order in the Yeomanry was 'the basis for future discussion.'⁵⁷ This comment is undoubtedly anecdotal, if not apocryphal, but it strikes at the core of the difference between the two elements of the army. For all of those that signed up with the Yeomanry, it was a pastime not a profession, and as such, required a degree of social compatibility and personal enjoyment. It was these elements that were of primary importance to a yeomanry recruit before any regimental association. In the case of Terry Frost, the function of his preferred regiment was of paramount importance. Thus, the intangible notions of regimental identity and social belonging in the regular army were not relevant in the Yeomanry. Those who enlisted in the Yeomanry had a more tangible and functional association. This point was highlighted in articles in *The Army Quarterly*. One such article was entitled 'The Territorial Problem' by Colonel Codrington of the Leicestershire Yeomanry. In this article, he addressed the issue of recruitment for the Territorial army as a whole. Codrington pointed out that '[t]he Territorial Army is made up of enthusiasts plying their chosen hobby-otherwise they would not be there.'⁵⁸ Colonel Seton Hutchison commented that the Territorial army was 'a "movement", but one which depends far more upon the conventional recreational advantages which it offers than upon any pulsating spirit of its own.'⁵⁹ It

⁵⁵ Memo to CIGS from DCIGS, 18th February 1920, WO32/18607.

⁵⁶ Memo to Secretary of State from CIGS, 19th February, 1920, WO32/18607.

⁵⁷ IWMSA. Accession No. 905-3, Andrew Marshall Horsbrugh-Porter.

⁵⁸ Brevet Colonel G. R. Codrington, 'The Territorial Problem', *The Army Quarterly*, Vol. XIX, No.1, Oct. 1929, pp. 50-57, p. 52.

⁵⁹ Lt. Col. Graham Seton Hutchison, 'The New Warrior', *The Army Quarterly*, Vol. XXVII, No. 2, Jan. 1934, pp252-264, p. 254.

was a concept that the War Office had to wrestle with consistently throughout the inter-war period.

Those that represented the ten retained mounted units at the three conferences remained noticeably silent at the first two. Only one of their representatives spoke up, the Shropshire Yeomanry, when the idea of having just single squadrons was raised at the first conference and seemed to be gaining some support as he could see that their mounted status was under threat through this alternative proposal.⁶⁰

Only two regiments seemed to take any pragmatic view upon the army's proposals. The lead on this approach was taken by the Bedfordshire Yeomanry who declared that

the whole of this discussion is a perfectly useless one...if we do not take what is offered us we shall not get anything...it is useless to say we should like a squadron here or a squadron there. The only question is are we prepared to do what the War Office asks us to do...we will do the best we can...It is no use thinking of our private wishes and our private ambitions.⁶¹

Interestingly, the representative from the Essex Yeomanry, Colonel Whitmore, quickly endorsed this sentiment. But this was not a progressive acceptance of modern warfare but a defence strategy to retain the Yeomanry and its class traditions. The last phrase discloses a belief that both they, and many of the delegates, still harboured private hopes of remaining as a mounted unit. At the second conference both these representatives were the first to reiterate this standpoint. But, at this conference, this point of view received a further, limited, degree of support from a

⁶⁰ 'Proceedings of a meeting of Yeomanry Commanders', 4th February 1920, Item 5A, WO 32/18606, also WO32/18607.

⁶¹ Ibid.

number of other representatives, although many couched their support in muted, resigned tones rather than enthusiastic endorsements of the War Office scheme.⁶²

The reconstitution of the Territorial Force in the post-war period had been something of a headache for both the government and the War Office for many reasons and both Churchill and the War Office were under close scrutiny from Parliament and the press for a resolution on its composition and terms.⁶³ The final scheme had been approved in cabinet in late January 1920 after some months of impasse, yet only a month or so later the whole scheme was again in the balance due to the machinations of the Yeomanry.⁶⁴ With the whole scheme in crisis, Churchill made a unilateral decision that ambushed the War Office's proposals. Churchill proclaimed at the final conference '[t]hat the Yeomanry shall be reconstituted in its old form.' For the Yeomanry, this was a coup, albeit a relatively short-term one. Churchill's supposed rationale for this apparent change of heart was given in his preamble to this pronouncement, stating that although he had not departed from the War Office's stated scheme, he believed that 'it would be a great disaster if the Yeomanry...should come to complete collapse.' Therefore, he advocated recruiting in its pre-war form and once regiments were 'in camp having a pleasant training' there would be a greater inclination towards the War Office proposals. To help this change of attitude, he promised that the War Office would send representatives to elucidate upon the scheme in order to facilitate their conversion over the following two years.⁶⁵ It is questionable as to how successful these proposed visiting representatives would be, in light of the failure of the War Office to change opinions over three separate conferences. The response from the Yeomanry representatives was euphoric and endorsed Churchill's view that it was better to take this more sympathetic approach. However, the two year time limit was quickly forgotten as there was then a stream of questions on how the cavalry brigades would be formed and that regimental training

⁶² Including the Bedfordshire and Essex representatives, the list of those indicating a possibility of complying with the proposals were as follows: Bedfordshire, Essex, 3rd County of London, Royal Glasgow, Gloucestershire, Carmarthenshire, Sussex, Cumberland & Westmoreland, Cornwall, and West Somerset. WO32/18607.

⁶³ For a fuller analysis on these complexities, see Chapter 3, 'The Reconstitution of the Force' in Dennis, *The Territorial Army*, pp. 38-64.

⁶⁴ Ibid, pp. 38-60.

⁶⁵ Item 11A, 'The Future of Yeomanry', 8th March 1920, WO32/18607.

would be none other than cavalry training.⁶⁶ It was up to Harrington, the DCIGS, to try and reassert some control to the meeting. He reminded those present that this new approach had not been seen by the War Office and that their viewpoint remained the same. It was warned that to recruit and train men who were unlikely to volunteer to become gunners was a 'false economy' and that to carry on blindly assuming "everything will be all right on the night" is nothing less than murder.⁶⁷ The Dorset Yeomanry opted to convert straight away rather than start recruiting on a false premise, but in a letter the CO of the Dorset Yeomanry demanded a caveat for his regiment accepting this conversion by writing

The Regiment, in accepting the conversion, desires an assurance that it's [sic] claim to re-convert into Yeomanry shall in no way be prejudiced, and that it should be restored to a place on the list no lower than it's [sic] present one.⁶⁸

This was a clear indication that none of the regiments accepting this compromise really believed in the scheme of conversion. Indeed, as the two year deadline approached false rumours gained momentum on potential organisation of the Yeomanry. In January 1922, the Berkshire Territorial Association wrote in to the War Office to ask whether there was any truth in the rumour that the Oxford Yeomanry was to be retained as cavalry as it was impacting upon recruitment; the rumour was unfounded.⁶⁹

A measure of sympathy has to be held for those at the War Office, who were trying to take the first steps in modernising the army following the experiences of the War. Churchill's actions had completely undermined the War Office. In a period when financial retrenchment was the watchword, Churchill had placed them in a position of recruiting and funding men for functions that they did not want, and when the two year period of grace was over, there were no real guarantees that any of the men

⁶⁶ Item 11A, 'The Future of Yeomanry', 8th March 1920, WO32/18607.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Letter to the War Office, 2/7/1921, WO32/18586 Dorset Yeomanry: conversion into Royal Field Artillery.

⁶⁹ Letter from Berkshire T.A. to War Office, 18/1/1922, WO32/18597 Conversion of Queens Own Oxfordshire Yeomanry into Royal Field Artillery.

would be retained. Thus, in two years time, there was the potential that a whole new draft of men would have to have been recruited and trained, putting back the development of the Yeomanry by two years. In a file note to the DGTF, it is quite clear that the War Office was extremely unhappy with this compromise agreement and the attitude it had engendered amongst the Yeomanry

If they [the Derbyshire yeomanry] do not accept conversion they will be disbanded...it is quite wrong that the men should have been accepted for enlistment on the understanding the Reg[imen]t will remain cavalry permanently!⁷⁰

In another minute between Scarbrough and Harrington, Scarbrough stated explicitly that Churchill's decision to allow regiments to be reconstituted as cavalry 'has very much upset our original proposals for the reconstruction of the Territorial Force.'⁷¹

Although Harrington had been caught unaware by Churchill's new scheme, an analysis of the file correspondence between Churchill and the CIGS between the second and third conference indicate that whilst Churchill's intention to make such a manoeuvre had not been mentioned, it was not an unsurprising outcome. Wilson and Churchill had locked horns before on the matter of the Territorial Force and their literary sparring during this period is enlightening on a number of aspects.⁷² Firstly, it illustrates Churchill's complete confidence and willingness to challenge and override his professional military advisors based upon either his own personal opinions, political expediency or both. In an earlier speech to representatives of the Territorial Associations, Churchill had been emphatic on the requirements of the new Territorial army

If the new Territorial Force is to succeed, if a Territorial Force is to spring up again into life and vigour, it must be on a real basis; it must be for a real purpose and not for a pretence...The kind of men we

⁷⁰ TF1 to DGTF, WO32/18595 Derbyshire Yeomanry: conversion into an armoured car company

⁷¹ Minute 1, DGTF to DCIGS, 21/4/1920, WO32/11275, Reconstruction of Territorial Army: Conversion of Yeomanry unit to Artillery.

⁷² For an example, see Dennis, *The Territorial Army*, pp. 46-49.

desire and expect to rally to the Territorial Army are thinking, responsible citizens, most of whom have considered deeply the problems of their native land and of the British Empire, and have had only too much practical experience of war. The keenest and best would not care to be associated with the raising of a force which did not serve any real and definite military purpose; still less would they want to belong to a force created for one purpose and which when the time came they knew quite well would be used for another.⁷³

This was a clear message that the War Office wanted a functional semi-professional army as opposed to a collection of amateur clubs. Churchill was keen to present himself as a progressive, modernising force within the military and was ever keen to associate himself with mechanisation. However, his actions with respect to the Yeomanry displayed a great deal of sentimentality rather than progressive practicality. The same speech mentioned the Yeomanry specifically where he stated 'I feel that on the whole it is better to ascertain more exactly what their own wishes and capabilities are.'⁷⁴ This statement immediately implies that he was willing to give the Yeomanry a degree of leniency and autonomy that undermined the notion of creating the army required. The change to first person singular in the speech from a collective language of either the government or the War Office is significant and infers a personal view. Churchill's decision led to some criticism in Parliament of being weak but he justified his decision on the grounds that an enforced change would have a negative effect upon recruitment.⁷⁵ This justification is a little frail and made upon the assumption that those recruits motivated to sign on because of the retention of the horse would happily relinquish them and remain upon conversion to another arm, a conversion that, unless a fundamental change in policy took place, remained inevitable for the majority of the Yeomanry regiments. Scarborough made the following note on the final conference

From the general remarks at the conferences, I have come to the conclusion that the principal objections to the conversions come

⁷³ 'New Territorial Army', *The Times*, January 31st 1920, p.7.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Hansard, Commons, 1920, Vol. 127, 22nd March 1920, Cols. 181-2.

from the senior officers who shrink from adapting themselves to the new arm. If their own officers would give the right lead, I have no fear about the men – the risk only arises if the officers stand aloof. The critics took too narrow a view...⁷⁶

Scarborough, by implication, seemed to believe that a harder line should have been taken and that it was those officers at the conference who were resistant to change and that there would have been no real resistance otherwise. Consequently, the two year hiatus offered by Churchill was unlikely to change those senior officers' resistance. Furthermore, if the horse was such a positive factor for recruitment to the Yeomanry, it was questionable as to the plausibility that recruitment would be improved with a very real threat of conversion lingering like the Sword of Damocles. In later years, when Milne was the CIGS and was under pressure from Churchill to abolish the cavalry, Milne proposed that this process should begin with the Yeomanry as they were not as important as the regular cavalry and were poorly trained.⁷⁷ This notion was not well received by Churchill and he sought a different tack.⁷⁸ It is possible that Churchill's personal association with the Yeomanry through the Oxford Hussars coloured his thinking. Whilst at the point of this decision Churchill did not declare his real intent, he did indicate the thinking for his actions in later War Office files. For example, when the CID was reviewing the future of the regular cavalry in 1927, Churchill argued that a large tranche of the regular cavalry could be removed saving a considerable sum of money. He further argued that, if there was any shortfall, mounted mobile troops could be obtained from the considerably cheaper Yeomanry.⁷⁹ In 1920 the War Office had no real objections to reducing the regular cavalry if they were deemed unnecessary but their reduction was not seen as a justification for retaining extra yeomanry regiments as mounted cavalry.⁸⁰ Churchill's backtracking was to result in the retention of eight mounted Yeomanry

⁷⁶ File Item, 'The Following Note Made by Major-General Lord Scarbrough after the last Yeomanry Conference held on 8th March, 1920, is interesting', WO32/18596, Future of the Northumberland Yeomanry.

⁷⁷ Minute 14, 3/11/1927, WO32/2846, ARMY ORGANISATION: Reduction of expenditure on Cavalry. Also mentioned in IWMSA. Accession No. 895-2, Thomas Jacomb Hutton.

⁷⁸ IWMSA. Accession No. 895-2, Thomas Jacomb Hutton.

⁷⁹ Letter to Worthington-Evans from Churchill, 27/10/27, WO 32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

⁸⁰ Minute 26, DMO to DCIGS, 30/11/1920, WO 32/11275, Reconstruction of Territorial Army: Conversion of Yeomanry unit to Artillery.

regiments well into the Second World War long after the bulk of the regular cavalry had been mechanised.

Churchill's complicity in the confused reconstitution of the post-war Yeomanry was not to end at this point. Aside from the weakness of the logic in withholding conversion, it also had the effect of giving Yeomanry regiments false hope of their retention as mounted units, a hope that was fuelled by a speech he gave at the Mansion House on 8th December 1920 where he commented that

The Northumbrian Hussars, not included in the 10 regiments which were to be retained as cavalry, has been the first of all the Yeomanry regiments to attain its full strength. I propose that that regiment shall, if it wishes, take the place of the original 10 which on a given date will be found to have made the least rapid progress towards the completion of its strength.⁸¹

This effectively meant that the concept of seniority had been overthrown and it was to become a recruitment race. It was a proposal whose consequences were perhaps not thoroughly thought through. Such a notion was inevitably going to give rise to animosity from those regiments who would potentially have to give way to the successful regiments. Churchill's speech was not clear whether the given date was at some point in the future or had already passed. Furthermore, if at the given date there were more than ten regiments who were up to strength, there was going to be considerable confusion. There was no indication as to how a decision would then be made; would the decision be upon the first ten fully recruited or upon seniority? The confusion could further be complicated by the claim of those regiments who were not necessarily up to strength but had recruited more than the original ten. Then there was the potential issue of those regiments who had not opted to take the two years and had converted immediately, such as the Dorset Yeomanry, to cry foul play. The potential for disgruntlement for those who achieved full strength but were still excluded was also a risk, which raised a further question as to whether more than ten

⁸¹ 'Territorial Army Too Small Mr. Churchill's call for recruits', *The Times*, Thursday, Dec 9, 1920, p. 7, Iss. 42589, col. B.

regiments would have to be retained. If the original two year extension had been designed to ensure recruitment and retention, even if questionable, the despondency that was likely to be engendered by this new approach was inevitable.

In a letter written a little after his Mansion House speech, Churchill showed his thinking and provided a rationale for his actions over what he called the 'yeomanry problem.'

Our first object must be numbers...we are so far behind the totals we require we must follow recruiting possibilities rather than dictate services.

Secondly, the yeomanry is a very special force. You will not get the bulk of the regiments to reconstitute themselves as artillery or motor machine-gun regiments. Such a transformation could only be effected gradually when the regiments were themselves strongly reconstituted⁸²

The first sentence would seem to imply that the underlying principle, certainly for the Territorial army, was that he wanted quantity rather than quality and the War Office should take any course to ensure sufficient numbers were recruited. The second paragraph highlights that aside from having both a sentimental attachment to the Yeomanry and agreeing with the notion that they were from a class apart, it illustrated an unguarded lack of conviction in the original War Office plan. The letter also showed that Churchill had now realised the full ramifications of his speech and in it he outlined a somewhat convoluted scheme to mitigate some of the potential outcomes. He warned that there would be complaints from those who had already converted if the War Office allowed others 'to compete through recruiting.'⁸³ However, the unreserved pledge given to the Northumberland Hussars had already set a precedent on the recruitment numbers and Churchill, ever the politician, had managed to make the whole War Office complicit in his decision. As part of his latest scheme, twenty regiments were now to be retained as cavalry, rendering the

⁸² Letter to CIGS et al, 24th Dec. 1920, WO32/18608, 'Reconstruction of Yeomanry Regiments.'

⁸³ Ibid.

whole initial plan worthless.⁸⁴ The closing element of his letter dealing with this matter was a rather colourful paragraph

remember that we cannot afford to destroy live units, and that we have got to make our nosegay up out of flowers we can grow in our garden, and that they must be living, growing organisms and not paper products cut out with the scissors.⁸⁵

The plan for the army that had been sketched out by the War Office, namely of a balanced regular, primary force which should be mirrored by a secondary, territorial one, which included a degree of mechanisation, was a sound one and would seem, within the financial and political restrictions imposed upon it, to have been well thought out. However, in the space of just one year, Churchill had managed to unhinge the plan and jeopardise the Territorial army, and indirectly, the regular army. The letter was to provoke the CIGS, Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, to respond with eloquent ire that indicated a senior officer who was able to combat politicians adroitly on their own terms. The fact that the whole function of the Territorial army that had been previously established was now being undermined by Churchill's actions was Wilson's starting point in his memorandum. Wilson wanted to know whether the function of the Territorial army was internal security, and if so, was it capable of doing such a role or, was it 'to make up for the lamentable shortage of troops available to meet our overseas and Irish commitments?'⁸⁶ For Wilson, if it was for security purposes, then he wholeheartedly agreed with collecting the maximum amount of recruits possible, but if it was to support what he saw as a beleaguered army,

then I suggest that it is unwise to cultivate flowers when we really want useful vegetables, particularly as in this case the flowers are at the expense of the vegetables, viz., the Regular Army and its essential reserves.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Letter to CIGS et al, 24th Dec. 1920, WO32/18608, 'Reconstruction of Yeomanry Regiments.'

⁸⁶ Memorandum 2, To S. of S from CIGS, 2nd Jan. 1921, WO32/18608, 'Reconstruction of Yeomanry Regiments.'

⁸⁷ Ibid.

The response, aside from his clever and amusing use of Churchill's imagery, sets out that he saw the Yeomanry as an expensive luxury rather than having a practical use. This cannot be interpreted as a direct policy for the cavalry but it is an indication that the General Staff were not blindly unaware that the military was changing and that a vast swathe of cavalry, even if they were irregular cavalry, was no longer needed. Wilson proceeded that in his opinion,

the frequent changes in policy in regard to the Yeomanry have had an unfortunate effect not only on that arm but on the whole Force, and that you would be better advised to adhere to the accepted policy.

I therefore suggest that you sanction a pronouncement giving a definite and final policy which will clear up the uncertainty which exists at present, not only as regards the Yeomanry, but also as regards the other arms of the Territorial Army.⁸⁸

Wilson then suggested a far more practical scheme whereby those regiments who remained as cavalry that had not reached their establishment by a given date, should choose between conversion to another arm or disbandment. The original ten regiments being given a slightly shorter time frame than the others. For those regiments who had undertaken to convert to an alternative arm, he suggested that they be given a further year to recruit beyond the others. In Wilson's mind, '[t]his will remove the uncertainty which would have appeared to have resulted from your speech at the Mansion House on the 8th December.'⁸⁹ Wilson's frustration at the lack of progress caused by Churchill's interference is obvious. In an untitled file item, a summary of the position pertaining to the Territorial army as a whole was drafted which highlighted that Churchill had agreed to two variations to the overall General Staff scheme, the Yeomanry being one, that had 'saddled [the army] with many redundant units of arms which were no longer required.' On top of this, the Mansion House speech had 'caused a considerable amount of uncertainty and apprehension.'⁹⁰ However, despite Wilson's frustration and the War Office's attempts to try and push

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Item 5A, WO32/18608, 'Reconstruction of Yeomanry Regiments.'

Churchill's schemes towards their own, Churchill remained solid and wrote a rather irritable minute over a month later to the DCIGS demanding to know why there had been such procrastination and that 'no notice' had been taken of his earlier minutes. This delay, he felt, was leading to the destruction of the Yeomanry and that '[t]o destroy the Yeomanry at the moment when we are spending so much money on the regular cavalry is absolutely indefensible.'⁹¹ It is perhaps ironic that the root cause of the delay in reaching a satisfactory conclusion was Churchill himself, who was now due to vacate his position as Secretary of State for War; possibly the source of his terseness. It is interesting to note here that he believed that a large sum was being spent upon the regular cavalry with an inference that it was too much. Furthermore, the comment also implied that the regular cavalry should be sacrificed, in financial terms, before the Yeomanry.

Churchill's replacement was Sir Laming Worthington-Evans and he inherited the Yeomanry problem. A summary was drafted for Worthington-Evans which was constructed around the official version of Churchill's speech that had been printed in pamphlet form and distributed to all the Yeomanry regiments and other interested parties. This version of the speech was worded in far less explicit language. It stated simply that the Northumberland Hussars were the first regiment to reach its establishment and was not one of the selected ten who were to be retained as cavalry. But the key difference was the commitment to those outside of that ten which stated

If any of the ten regiments have not made the rapid progress towards the completion of the strength that is expected of them, then they will find themselves replaced by other units which have advanced more rapidly towards the total figure.⁹²

This statement merely held out the possibility of one of the original ten being replaced by another regiment. However, the Northumberland Hussars took *The Times'* account to be the correct one and demanded that they be retained as cavalry

⁹¹ Minute 7, To DCIGS from Churchill, 11th Feb. 1921, WO32/18608, 'Reconstruction of Yeomanry Regiments.'

⁹² Pamphlet 'The Secretary of State's Address on the Territorial Army', WO32/18596, Future of the Northumberland Yeomanry.

on the grounds of Churchill's unequivocal pledge. Churchill's decisions and pronouncements had placed the War Office and Worthington-Evans in an invidious position. The Northumberland Hussars were fourteenth on the list of seniority that had been used to select the original ten. Those three regiments that immediately preceded the Northumberland's had all opted to fall into line with the War Office's original scheme and had begun to convert to artillery units.⁹³ The predicament was spelt out in a document from Scarbrough's replacement as DGTF, Lieutenant-General Noel Birch, to Worthington-Evans. Firstly, it was his belief that all the ten would be fully recruited, although two were behind owing to unspecified 'initial difficulties' and that should these two fail to recruit, the War Office would rather just have eight than complicate the original scheme. The three regiments above the Northumberland Yeomanry who had converted had done so on the basis that 'this action not being prejudicial to their status as Yeomanry in the event of a change of policy.' Finally, that to add the Northumberland Yeomanry to the original list creating eleven regiments of yeomanry cavalry would be unfair to those regiments that had 'played the game.'⁹⁴ On top of this, the Derbyshire Yeomanry, who were twenty-second in seniority, who were outlined to convert to armoured cars, although they had opted for temporary cavalry status, had also reached its peacetime establishment and had also submitted a claim to remain mounted.⁹⁵ The C.-in-C., Eastern Command, General Sir Henry Horne, expressed concern that the uncertainty over policy was causing problems.

In my opinion it will be for the advantage of all concerned if it is made clear that the policy of maintaining ten regiments of Yeomanry Cavalry and no more will be adhered to. To make exceptions will inevitably cause great...discontent.⁹⁶

⁹³ Those regiments being the North Somerset Yeomanry, the Duke of Lancaster's Own Yeomanry and the Lanarkshire Yeomanry. Item 2A, 'Notes for the Secretary of State for War', WO32/18596, Future of the Northumberland Yeomanry.

⁹⁴ Item 2A, 'Notes for the Secretary of State for War', WO32/18596, Future of the Northumberland Yeomanry.

⁹⁵ Pamphlet 'The Secretary of State's Address on the Territorial Army', WO32/18596, Future of the Northumberland Yeomanry. Letter from Derbyshire Territorial Force Association to the War Office, 8/2/1921, WO32/18595 Derbyshire Yeomanry: conversion into an armoured car company.

⁹⁶ Letter to War Office, 9/5/1921, WO32/18598 Conversion of Surrey Yeomanry into Royal Field Artillery.

The whole scheme for the Territorial army was being undermined by the actions of Churchill, who valued quantity over quality, and the parochialism of the Yeomanry. In order to try and resolve the matter, Worthington-Evans received a deputation from the Northumberland Hussars. This deputation consisted of five high profile individuals: The Duke of Northumberland, the MP for Berwick, Sir Francis Blake MP, the Northumberland Hussar's CO, Colonel H. Sidney, the MP for Durham, Major J. Hills MP and the MP for Hexham, Major D. Clifton-Brown. Amongst the others present, aside from Worthington-Evans himself, was the CIGS Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson and both the current and previous DGTFs, General Birch and Lord Scarbrough. The meeting that took place was a very forthright affair that gives an insight into the attitudes of the two sides. The Northumberland deputation showed complete intransigence and refused to accept any arguments put forward by the War Office. Both Worthington-Evans and Lord Peel, the Under Secretary of State for War, highlighted how their persistence on insisting that the Northumberland Hussars had already been pledged a place as a mounted unit was rendering the whole voluntary scheme invalid and that their blind parochialism was verging upon being unpatriotic. Lord Peel argued that,

You [the Northumberland deputation] talk of the damage which will be done in Northumberland but I can assure you that the damage done to the Territorial Army in the rest of the country will be tremendous because they will regard it as a breach of faith...the trouble will be very intense and there is a great danger that it might upset the whole of the General Staff's scheme for the Territorial Force...I said afterwards that I wish Mr. Churchill had not said this because it will raise vague expectations and the rather ingenious interpretation which Major Hills has tried to put on it, does not help us⁹⁷

Worthington-Evans supported this and requested that,

⁹⁷ Item 4A, 'Record of the Proceedings of a Deputation received by the Secretary of State in his room at the War Office on Monday, 28th February, 1921, at 11 a.m.', WO32/18596, Future of the Northumberland Yeomanry.

Whatever the pledge was, I do not want you to enforce it in such a way as to destroy the Territorial Force, and I hope that I have made you see that there is a real risk of destroying the Territorial Force if this is insisted on too literally.⁹⁸

Despite these strong statements, the Northumberland deputation refused to let the matter rest and both Clifton-Brown and the Duke of Northumberland sent letters in to Worthington-Evans after the meeting insisting that they maintained their position, although Northumberland alleged that he understood the War Office's difficulties.⁹⁹ This blinkered attitude was perhaps unsurprising as one officer of the Northumberland Hussars of the inter-war period made a revealing jest, when he joked that in order to be 'an officer in the Noodles [Northumberland Hussars] ... [it required] the possession of a groom and two good horses.'¹⁰⁰ This narrow-minded, parochial outlook had been commented upon by Deverell when in command of the Welsh Division of the TA stating '[t]here is not one [Territorial] association which can rise above petty jealousy and bickering.'¹⁰¹

Unfortunately for the War Office, Churchill's influence upon military policy, even when no longer Secretary of State for War, continued when he submitted a letter to Worthington-Evans, having been lobbied by Clifton-Brown. In this letter he confirmed that he had made an explicit pledge to the Northumberland Yeomanry that they would remain as cavalry and that for him, he saw that the issue would raise no difficulty. In this letter Churchill elucidated his thinking was for the immediate future of the cavalry, both regular and irregular.

I am very sorry to see that you are inclined to acquiesce in the destruction of the yeomanry by forcing them to adopt formations for which they are unsuited and which will certainly end in the

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Items 5A and 5B, Letters to Worthington-Evans from Clifton-Brown and the Duke of Northumberland, 2nd March, 1921, WO32/18596, Future of the Northumberland Yeomanry.

¹⁰⁰ Henry Tegner, *The Story of a Regiment being The Short History of the Northumberland Hussars Yeomanry, 1819-1969*, (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: Frank Graham, 1969), p.47.

¹⁰¹ Letter from Deverell to WO, 20/4/1921, WO32/11275 Reconstruction of Territorial Army: Conversion of Yeomanry unit to Artillery.

disappearance of many regiments without your getting the alternative units the General Staff require. Considering that one regular cavalry regiment costs nearly as much as eight yeomanry regiments, I should have thought that a reduction of the regular cavalry was a much more reasonable course to follow, for in the Regular Army you can undoubtedly raise whatever alternative units you require, whereas with the yeomanry it is in many cases as a cavalry force alone that they can be maintained. My idea would have been to reduce the regular cavalry and supply the deficiency by a somewhat larger number of yeomanry regiments.¹⁰²

Churchill's method of reduction in the cavalry would have been by a series of amalgamations by the grouping of three regiments.¹⁰³ This letter reiterating his thinking outlined earlier. The result of this pledge was that the War Office were forced not only retain the Northumberland Hussars as cavalry, but on the grounds of equity, to offer the three regiments preceding them on the list of seniority the choice of converting back to cavalry from artillery.¹⁰⁴ This they chose to do and the War Office was forced to retain fourteen Yeomanry cavalry regiments up until mobilisation in 1939.

The rationale and logic of Churchill's letter is somewhat questionable and seemed to fly in the face of everything that the General Staff had set out to achieve. In trying to create the Territorial army, the General Staff had utilised its experience of the recent war in order to create a force that, in the face of a major conflict could effectively double the size of the British army. Churchill's vision was in direct contrast to this. It would seem that he was advocating that a commitment in numbers was sufficient, rather than any especial quality. In terms of cavalry specifically, his advocacy for twenty, thirty, or even forty yeomanry cavalry regiments is far removed from the perception of the great advocate of modernisation and mechanisation. For example,

¹⁰² Item 10A, Letter to Worthington-Evans from Churchill, 2nd April 1921, WO32/18596, Future of the Northumberland Yeomanry.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Item 11A, Letter to Churchill from Worthington-Evans, 2nd May 1921, WO32/18596, Future of the Northumberland Yeomanry.

the author of the history of the South Nottinghamshire Hussars, a regiment that converted to an artillery unit, commented that whilst the regiment's CO had put up a strong fight to retain horses, it was Churchill who held firm and argued for the Yeomanry cavalry to be reduced.¹⁰⁵ This is a common misconception of Churchill, whose fundamental rationale in decision making was economic rather than any progressive ideas on functionality. In an earlier, illuminating memorandum to the CIGS and Lord Peel, he stated his ideas on the role of the cavalry in the military.

I do not agree with the General Staff view that there is no military justification for a considerable force of Yeomanry Cavalry...The kind of wars which the British Empire has to look forward to as the most probable are wars with small armies in large countries with open flanks and where mobility will count. The least probable war which we have to fight in the next ten years is a European War in France and Flanders or on the Rhine...It is far more likely that there will be trouble in Palestine or Mesopotamia, in India itself, in Ireland, or in South Africa...there would be much scope for Yeomanry Cavalry. In addition, the importance of this force for internal security must not be overlooked...It seems to me best, therefore, to keep at least thirty regiments of Yeomanry Cavalry.¹⁰⁶

Whilst this argument is based upon functional grounds, it is not an argument in support of the Yeomanry. It is an argument in support of retaining a cavalry function. On this basis, if he perceived a role for the cavalry in the next ten years, the retention of a professional, well-equipped cavalry was likely to be a more effective solution. In fact, he was using the very argument that some cavalymen had used to rebut calls for the abolition of the cavalry. There would seem to be no basis for specifically stipulating the Yeomanry cavalry for this role. The only rationale for arguing for using the Yeomanry cavalry instead of the regular cavalry can be that they were cheaper to maintain. He was therefore manipulating a cavalry argument for his own ends.

¹⁰⁵ Eric B. Dobson, *History of the South Nottinghamshire Hussars, 1924-1948*, (London: Herald, 1948), p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ Item 4, Memo from Churchill, 26th Feb. 1920, WO32/18607, Reorganisation of Territorial Army: future of yeomanry regiments 1920-22.

This was further reinforced by a subsequent memorandum to the CIGS which stated,

I am entirely in accord with your views on the general question that we are maintaining an excessive amount of cavalry; but I measure the amount not so much by numbers as by expense...They [the Yeomanry] are a force whose composition makes them specially [sic] trustworthy. It will be difficult to wean them from the horse...They would make quite good mounted troops and enable us to economise in the much more expensive branch of regular cavalry...[they] are produced quite naturally and easily in existing circumstances and at a cost incomparably cheaper for their fighting value than any other class of men we are proposing to maintain.¹⁰⁷

These two extracts clearly outline that Churchill was not looking to the recent war but to the Boer War and the Imperial Yeomanry and, because of his views upon a 'ten year rule', he actually saw the army as little more than an Imperial *Gendarmerie*. It is interesting that, despite some historiographical criticism that the General Staff failed to draw any immediate lessons from the War, an attempt the General Staff had made in respect of the cavalry, was quashed by Churchill. Furthermore, he perceived the Yeomanry as politically acceptable on class grounds and financially preferable. There is also a distinct intimation that he still saw them as a legitimate arm for law and order along the lines of their role in the nineteenth century.

The logic upon financial efficiency is open to question. Firstly, Churchill never spoke of exact figures for the cost of a Yeomanry regiment, but merely stated that ten Yeomanry regiments were equivalent in cost to one cavalry regiment.¹⁰⁸ Here again, Churchill was guilty of manipulating the facts to suite his own argument. General David Campbell pointed this out to him when interviewed by the CID sub-committee on cavalry reorganisation. Campbell observed that comparing these two units was not really comparing like with like. A Yeomanry regiment consisted of only 300 men

¹⁰⁷ Item 5, Memo to CIGS from Churchill, 2nd March, 1920, WO32/18607, Reorganisation of Territorial Army: future of yeomanry regiments 1920-22.

¹⁰⁸ CAB16/77, Records of the Committee of Imperial Defence: Cavalry - Strength and Organisation 1927-8.

with two machine guns compared with 480 men and eight machine guns in a regular regiment.¹⁰⁹ Thus, a regular regiment would inevitably cost more owing to both more men and equipment. Also, a regular, professional soldier was always going to cost more individually than a part-time, amateur one. A regular regiment also had the cost of the horses themselves along with associated costs such as feed and saddlery. Campbell pointed out that Yeomanry regiments possessed no horses and hired them as and when required.¹¹⁰ This inevitably made the annual costs for a Yeomanry regiment cheaper. Furthermore, Campbell argued that this created the potential for a dangerous situation as neither horse nor man was sufficiently trained to undertake the work that would be required of them.¹¹¹ When Bernie Blewett joined the RWY, he knew very little about horses. In his first exercise, he was given a hired horse, which just bolted at the first loud noise and he was insufficiently skilled to bring the horse under control. In his own words, 'if it had been real, I would either won the VC, or be dead, or both!'¹¹² This example reinforces Campbell's assertion that anyone who sent a Yeomanry regiment to war, in its current form, would be 'a murderer.'¹¹³ Therefore, the cost of maintaining trained horses was not factored into Churchill's comparison. In the longer term, to train men for a role that had proven to be largely redundant, however cheaply, was clearly a waste of funds. It would have been far more viable, economically, to have disbanded them, or a large proportion, and to raise the requisite men and provide relevant training when they were actually required. This alleged inflexible class of man had already adapted to various arms during the War and the argument that they would neither volunteer nor adapt is tenuous. Surely, if, as Churchill claimed, they were highly trustworthy men, they would undoubtedly remain so and not refuse to volunteer when required because they could not remain mounted.

Even ignoring the longer-term perspective and accepting that there was an urgent requirement for financial prudence, Churchill's arguments remain shallow. It is

¹⁰⁹ General Sir David Campbell, CAB16/77, Records of the Committee of Imperial Defence: Cavalry - Strength and Organisation 1927-8.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Bernie Blewett, Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry, E-mail correspondence with author, 30th Nov. 2005.

¹¹³ General Sir David Campbell, CAB16/77, Records of the Committee of Imperial Defence: Cavalry - Strength and Organisation 1927-8.

questionable as to how viable it really was to be able to send a Yeomanry regiment overseas for any period of time, bearing in mind the professional occupations of most of the men. They were only likely to be available for more protracted conflicts which was in direct contradiction to Churchill's assertions. Worthington-Evans pointed out that to send the Yeomanry overseas would require a Special Act of Parliament which was likely to be 'politically difficult or inexpedient.'¹¹⁴ Furthermore, the function of the Territorial army was as a secondary force not a frontline force. Thus, regular cavalry would be required to fulfil this role, if such a role remained. If matters reached such a stage that a second line force was justified, it was again more likely that this was no longer a 'small war.' The concept of no major war was actually an argument for disbanding the Territorial army not the regular army, as there was no likelihood of requiring a second-line force. On this basis, it made more sense to disband these units and try to create a flexible functional regular army, as Wilson had alluded to in his request for vegetables rather than flowers. Churchill's interference upon the reconstitution of the Yeomanry was at best anachronistic and, at worst, a shallow act of political expediency to garner support from a class that he perceived politically influential. Indeed it was somewhat ironic that after the 1st Cavalry Division, primarily made up of the mounted Yeomanry units he had created, was posted to Palestine for the early years of the Second World War, it was Churchill who wrote,

I deeply regret the whole story of this fine body of men, and that the War Office can devise nothing better than to bring them all home in June to begin training which will keep them so long out of effective action.¹¹⁵

His own culpability in this situation seemed to have been lost upon him. It also must have been highly frustrating for the War Office, when after mobilisation in late September 1939, it decided that the eight regiments that were not brigaded should be

¹¹⁴ Appendix III, Final Report, CAB16/77, Records of the Committee of Imperial Defence: Cavalry - Strength and Organisation 1927-8.

¹¹⁵ Minute dated 17th Feb. 1941, Prem 3/301, 'Mechanisation of Cavalry Division'.

requested to dismount and be converted to mechanised artillery units; the Northumberland Hussars being one of these regiments.¹¹⁶

The grounds for disbanding the Yeomanry was further supported by the fact that over the next eighteen years prior to mobilisation they became effectively forgotten and carried on with very little change. Even during the 1930s, when the question of cavalry mechanisation was debated and came to fruition, the mounted Yeomanry were by-passed in the debate. One Yeoman commented that the military tactics used in 1937 were of the 'simple Boer War variety.'¹¹⁷ *The Cavalry Journal* paid very little attention to the Yeomanry during the period, and no real observations were made upon the proposed or final compliment of mounted Yeomanry regiments, merely a few passing sentences upon certain regiments' fates.¹¹⁸ It was not until 1936, that another full article appeared in the journal entitled 'Yeomanry and Tactical Exercises', which called for more realistic tactical training at regimental annual camps.¹¹⁹ The article raised concerns upon the suitability of these exercises, as they were set by the regiment with no direction from above. For example, the Cheshire Yeomanry, when on annual camp with the Duke of Lancaster's Yeomanry was extremely impressed when the latter held a night exercise which had never been considered by the former.¹²⁰ The nature of training was also influenced by geography and neighbouring units. The Leicestershire Yeomanry, owing to their close proximity to the Derbyshire Yeomanry, who had been converted to armoured cars, had tried in 1923 to design schemes for co-operation between cavalry and armoured cars.¹²¹ Whilst the above article was a valid observation, it appeared in the very same edition that announced the re-organisation of the regular cavalry and the pending

¹¹⁶ The other regiments were the Ayrshire Yeomanry, the Lanarkshire Yeomanry, the Shropshire Yeomanry, the Leicestershire Yeomanry, the Duke of Lancaster's Own Yeomanry, the Scottish Horse and Lovat's Scouts. Denis C. Bateman, 'Goodbye to Boots and Saddles The Twilight of the British Cavalry', *British Army Review*, No. 114, Dec. 1996, p. 82.

¹¹⁷ John Verney, *Going To The Wars: A Journey in Various Directions*, (Edinburgh: Reprint Soc, 1957), p.14.

¹¹⁸ The only really in-depth article appeared in 1925, 'Notes on Present-Day Yeomanry', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XV, Jan. 1925, pp. 66-83.

¹¹⁹ Yeomanry C. O., 'Yeomanry and Tactical Exercises', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXVI, No. 100, April 1936, pp. 189-203.

¹²⁰ Lt.-Col. Sir Richard Verdin, *The Cheshire Yeomanry*, p.214.

¹²¹ Leicestershire yeomanry Regimental Record, DE3765/9, Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Record Office.

mechanisation of eight regiments.¹²² Consequently, not only does the article question the level of preparedness for combat of a mounted yeomanry regiment, but set against this announcement, the isolation of the Yeomanry from contemporary military matters became exaggerated.

This perception is further enhanced when looking at regimental histories of mounted yeomanry regiments covering this period. Henry Tegner's history of the Northumberland Hussars, whose role had been so central in the reconstitution of the Yeomanry, describes a regiment that had the feel of a social, equestrian club rather than that of a second-line fighting force. The regiment was often at full complement and the reason was because they wanted to ride and that the annual camps 'were nearly always great parties whether the weather was good or bad.'¹²³ Len Flanakin joined the Warwickshire Yeomanry in 1938 because '[t]he Yeomanry allowed young men like me to play at part-time soldiers.'¹²⁴ This lack of focus upon the Yeomanry's prime function was confirmed by one yeomanry officer who stated of this period that

[t]here are the "Brass Hats" who come and inspect us, of course, but they are a thing apart. They are vaguely "The Army." Even when we march past them and go through our paces, they are almost the least important item.¹²⁵

John Verney's pastiche on the so-called Bassetshire Yeomanry, which was based upon his experiences in the North Somerset Yeomanry, comments that whilst at camp he 'hated the ritualistic dinners and the long hours of horseplay which, by tradition, followed them.'¹²⁶ Tegner comments upon a picture taken in 1939 of the officers at camp, all of whom he knew, and commented that irrespective of their riding ability

¹²² 'Army Re-Organisation', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXVI, No. 100, April 1936, pp. 283-5.

¹²³ Tegner, *The Story of a Regiment* p.45.

¹²⁴ Len Flanakin, *The Teddy Bear Lancers: The Experiences of a Warwickshire Yeoman in the Second World War*, (Warwick: Warwickshire Yeomanry Trust, 2004), p. 1. This book is held in the IWM Archive L. Flanakin 15520 07/13/1.

¹²⁵ Lt.-Col. P. W. Pitt, *Royal Wilts: The History of the Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry, 1920-1945*, (London: Burrup, Mathieson & Co, 1946), p. 19.

¹²⁶ Verney, *Going To The Wars*, p.13. Verney provides a more detailed description of the events in the officers' mess on pp.23-31. There are also examples of officers' hi-jinx at camp in Brigadier J. R. I. Platt, *The Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry 1907-1967*, (London: Garnerstone Press, 1972), p.61. For a full but fictional generalisation of a yeomanry camp from this period see Pitt, *Royal Wilts*, pp. 13-22.

‘they all looked like horsemen.’¹²⁷ It is interesting that despite the possibility of a pending war, the montage described could equally be from the nineteenth century; Tegner actually compares the picture favourably with a similar photograph taken of the officers in 1896.¹²⁸

During the inter-war period the social make-up of the Yeomanry cavalry, so cherished by its supporters upon its reconstitution, began to change albeit slowly. Verney asserted that his ‘brother officers were squires, farmers, land agents and the like,’ however he himself was at the time an assistant film director in London, a fellow new officer recruit was a businessman who tarred roads and another, whom he originally took to be of the country, was an insurance agent.¹²⁹ Verdin asserted that by 1926 the recruits for the Cheshire Yeomanry were predominantly from the towns rather than from the estates and rural agriculture. He commented that one troop, in particular, personified this transition, as the troop commander used the vernacular command ‘[f]ollow me you b.....s’, rather than the official commands.¹³⁰ The RWY had recruits who, other than at the annual camp, did not ride during the intermitting twelve months.¹³¹ The Leicestershire Yeomanry’s annual diary recorded that as early as 1920 ‘many of the recruits had had no previous experience of riding’ and fifty horses had to be utilised to provide a riding school at the annual camp.¹³² When Churchill was mooting further disbandments of regular cavalry regiments and that the Yeomanry were suitable replacements, the War Office were strongly unconvinced.

Except in camp the men do not get the opportunity of being trained under their own officers and N.C.O.’s and...get practically no opportunity of co-operation with other arms. In some cases the officers live hundreds of miles away from their squadron and seldom see their men except at camp.¹³³

¹²⁷ Tegner, *The Story of a Regiment*, p.47.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Verney, *Going To The Wars*, pp.13-20.

¹³⁰ Verdin, *The Cheshire Yeomanry*, pp. 189-191.

¹³¹ Platt, *Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry*, p.63.

¹³² Leicestershire Yeomanry Regimental Record, DE3765/9, Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Record Office.

¹³³ Item 14A, WO32/2846, 32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

This is in direct contradiction to the arguments proffered by those at the earlier conferences on the type of recruit that enlisted with the Yeomanry, although it is plausible that these recruits aspired to a perceived social status associated with the horse. For several years, the Leicestershire Yeomanry made a statistical analysis of the composition of the regiment to ascertain the percentage of men from traditional yeoman backgrounds, farmers, farmhands and grooms, compared to other occupational backgrounds. The figures consistently indicated that around 35% came from the traditional yeoman class, with the lowest percentage being 24% in 1923 and the highest in 1925 being 43%. The other two-thirds came from such diverse occupations as clerks, shopkeepers, fitters and turners and engineers.¹³⁴ The inference was that the traditional yeoman class, advocated so vehemently by those representatives at the Yeomanry conferences had ceased to be the predominant source of recruits. General Sir Walter Braithwaite, when he inspected the Lanarkshire Yeomanry, was surprised to find that the majority of the men came from the Lanark mines and their only experience of horses was the pit ponies.¹³⁵ However, this change in the traditional demographic, highlights an interesting aspect of recruitment and the cavalry, namely despite the majority of recruits not having any vocational association with the horse, some having no association whatsoever, they still chose to volunteer for the cavalry as opposed to any other arm. Some of the recruits came from mechanical backgrounds, such as seen in the Leicestershire Yeomanry, but saw no reason not to be associated with this alleged redundant arm. Some admitted that after the evidence of the recent war they saw it is as a form of life assurance policy, as they were unlikely to be on the front line on horseback.¹³⁶ This was a somewhat strange attitude, both in terms of volunteering and misunderstanding, as many Yeomanry regiments had been simply dismounted and fought as infantry in the recent war. But aside from this strange rationale for some, it would seem that the Yeomanry cavalry retained a strong appeal.

¹³⁴ Leicestershire Yeomanry Regimental Record, DE3765/9, Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Record Office.

¹³⁵ General Sir Walter Braithwaite, CAB16/77, Records of the Committee of Imperial Defence: Cavalry - Strength and Organisation 1927-8.

¹³⁶ Benjamin R. Thomas, *The Years Apart*, (Corsham: Birdies, 1998), p. 3. This book is held at the IWM Archive B. R. Thomas 455 90/26/1. This attitude was confirmed by Arnold Dodd, Cheshire Yeomanry. Interview with author, June, 2006.

The Yeomanry was largely overlooked during this period and this resulted in a lack of any coherent policy for the Yeomanry cavalry. This meant that the quality and variability of the training of these units during the period was considerable. Platt believed that whilst '[t]he standard of training achieved was...not high...great keenness and determination...compensated for lack of knowledge.'¹³⁷ In a file note, the War Office commented that it was difficult for the Yeomanry to find time to train and consequently their standard was not great.¹³⁸ This sentiment was echoed by Major-General Blakiston-Houston, when Inspector of Cavalry, who commented that whilst he was 'impressed by the spirit and keenness [sic] shown by all the ranks in the regiment [The Leicestershire Yeomanry]. Training in the details of minor tactics however does not seem to have received sufficient attention.'¹³⁹ Cyril Brain of the RWY stated that training was 'light-hearted stuff' that taught people how to ride but very little else.¹⁴⁰ Verdin went so far as to say that being an officer in the Yeomanry 'was not a great military strain' and that the practical examination for promotion to the ranks of either Captain or Major was 'not too exacting.'¹⁴¹ John Wiseman, who joined the North Somerset Yeomanry in 1940 and was one who was transferred to OCTU, thought that the existing officers exhibited no leadership abilities.¹⁴²

The saga of the Yeomanry cavalry of the inter-war period is an enlightening one. Whilst their regular brethren, and any decisions and actions concerning them, received both contemporary and later criticism as an anachronism, those concerning the Yeomanry have somehow managed to avoid such condemnation. The War Office, in trying to reduce the number of cavalry regiments in the Territorial army, had indicated that some of the lessons learnt from the recent war were being assimilated. Furthermore, it saw the necessity of creating a semi-professional force, rather than recruiting a collection of keen amateurs, which could be effectively mobilised when required. However, the interference of men of wealth, power and class who had experienced the army and society of an Edwardian Britain, strove to

¹³⁷ Brigadier J. R. I. Platt, *Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry*, p.65.

¹³⁸ Item 14A, 'WO32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

¹³⁹ Leicestershire Yeomanry Regimental Record, DE3765/9, Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Record Office.

¹⁴⁰ IWMSA. Accession No. 13653-1, Cyril Geoffrey Brain.

¹⁴¹ Verdin, *The Cheshire Yeomanry*, p.196.

¹⁴² IWMSA. Accession No. 20337-1, John Martin Wiseman.

return to such a vision ignoring the very lessons of war that the War Office were trying to comprehend and implement. This was further compounded by the perception that good fighting qualities and social class were linked. The horse was symbolic of this class and it was also believed that equestrian pursuits promoted and enhanced martial qualities. Furthermore, these men were prepared to sacrifice the War Office's scheme for the British army and its potential ability to meet the demands of defence, both at home and overseas, for the sake of the retention of a social class structure. Whether the War Office approach to creating a modern army was correct was largely irrelevant and the evidence provided does not absolve them of culpability in 1940, but it does apportion responsibility to a wider tranche of society.

Churchill's complicity in this blinkered vision is inescapable. The argument he used regarding efficiency and economy was nothing more than a smoke-screen. In 1940, of the fourteen mounted yeomanry units, six were converted into artillery units, and in so doing returned the Yeomanry to the essence of what the War Office had requested two decades earlier. Whatever the cost of a yeomanry regiment was during those years, the money that had been wasted upon largely irrelevant training was a false economy. In 1927, the Army Council, when under pressure to make financial savings on the regular cavalry commented that it believed initial savings should be made from the Yeomanry, for whilst they were relatively inexpensive, they were 'insufficiently trained [and] inadequately equipped.'¹⁴³ Churchill's argument of getting as near to a full establishment as possible remains unconvincing. From 1935 onwards, many men from this so-called special class, volunteered for the Yeomanry because of the threat of war in Europe not for the lure of the horse, indeed, many could not actually ride.¹⁴⁴ For many, the eventual replacement of their horses for machinery was a happy day. When the CO of the North Somerset Yeomanry announced the loss of their horses, he was flabbergasted when his men merely

¹⁴³ Item 5A, 'Memorandum on the Reorganisation of the Cavalry', Letter from Worthington-Evans to Baldwin, 1st July 1927, WO 32/2846, and Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

¹⁴⁴ T. C. Howes volunteered for the Yeomanry because he mistakenly believed they had been mechanised. 'My War' by Major T. C. Howes, IWM Archives T. C. Howes 13169 05/21/1. Benjamin Thomas rejected an officer's commission because he was embarrassed as he could not ride. Benjamin R. Thomas, *The Years Apart*, (Corsham: Birdies, 1998) held at the IWM Archive B. R. Thomas 455 90/26/1.

cheered.¹⁴⁵ It would have been far more cost effective if those regiments had been disbanded and revived when required, as the training would not have been overly retarded. In 1939, General Ironside, as CIGS, faced the problem of having a cavalry division consisting of eleven thousand men, who were predominantly Yeomanry regiments, which was 'unsuitable for employment in France' and was only half-equipped.¹⁴⁶ The RWY were still using the Hotchkiss machine gun in 1940.¹⁴⁷ The Hotchkiss had been deemed obsolescent by the cavalry committee report of 1927 and had been withdrawn from the regular cavalry on the committee's recommendation.¹⁴⁸ It was understandable that Ironside should post them to the Middle-East, where they could possibly train in the more clement weather than the British winter and aid in maintaining civil order. This role was much as Churchill had envisaged for them but it was only the outbreak of a major war that allowed them to be posted there. In so doing, they would free other units for any 'critical situation' that may have arisen.¹⁴⁹ This again highlights the folly of Churchill's argument. Those units that had been freed up would have not existed had he got his way, leaving the army even weaker that it already was in 1939.

It is perhaps possible to argue that an account of the Yeomanry cavalry of this period is irrelevant to the larger scheme of the British army. This would be missing the point that it acts as a microcosm of the issue surrounding the practicalities of planning, funding and modernising during this period and cavalry mechanisation was but a part of the problem. The War Office consistently fought a rearguard action against social attitudes, economic vagaries and political dalliances that resulted in inertia and stagnation. These retarding forces were embodied in the person of Churchill, whose duplicity in the modernisation of the Yeomanry cavalry was self-evident to everyone other than to himself. There is some degree of irony when Churchill disingenuously commented that by the end of 1940 he 'longed for more Regular troops with which to rebuild and expand the army. Wars are not won by heroic militias.'¹⁵⁰ Against the

¹⁴⁵ IWMSA. Accession No. 11084-2, Benjamin Raymond Thomas.

¹⁴⁶ Memo by the CIGS, 1st Nov. 1939, 'Despatch of Yeomanry Division to Palestine', CAB 80/4.

¹⁴⁷ Bernie Blewett, Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry, E-mail correspondence with author, 30th November. 2005.

¹⁴⁸ WO32/2841, Cavalry Committee: Interim Report 1926-27.

¹⁴⁹ Memo by the CIGS, 1st Nov. 1939, 'Despatch of Yeomanry Division to Palestine', CAB 80/4.

¹⁵⁰ Dennis, *The Territorial Army*, p. 261.

background highlighted by the failings of the Yeomanry cavalry, the achievement in making any advancement in mechanising the regular cavalry should not be underestimated.

Summary of Results of Survey on Attitudes to proposed Changes to the Yeomanry, 1920

	Proposed new branch	No Action	Old Yeoman adopt new branch	Able to do so with New Recruits	Mention Class	Special Reserve
1 Middlesex	Cavalry Divisional Signal Squadrons		N			
2 1LY	RHA		N	Y		
3 North Somerset	1st Somerset RFA Brigade		N			
4 West Somerset	1st Somerset RFA Brigade		N			
5 Duke of Lancaster	2nd Lancashire RFA Brigade	Y				
6 Lancashire Hussars	2nd Lancashire RFA Brigade	Y		Y		
7 Glasgow	3rd Lanark RFA Brigade		N			
8 Lanark	3rd Lanark RFA Brigade	-	-	-	-	
9 Nottinghamshire	4th Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire FA Brigade		N		Y	
10 Derbyshire	4th Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire FA Brigade		N		Y	
11 Pembrokeshire	5th Pembroke & Glamorgan FA Brigade		N		Y	
12 Glamorgan	5th Pembroke & Glamorgan FA Brigade		N			Y
13 East Kent	6th Kent FA Brigade	Y	N		Y	
14 West Kent	6th Kent FA Brigade	-	-	-	-	
15 Hampshire	7th Hampshire & Dorset FA Brigade		N			Y
16 Dorset	7th Hampshire & Dorset FA Brigade		N	N		
17 Buckinghamshire	8th Buckinghamshire & Berks RFA Brigade		N		Y	
18 Berkshire	8th Buckinghamshire & Berks RFA Brigade		N		Y	
19 Gloucestershire	9th Gloucestershire & Oxfordshire FA Brigade		N		Y	
20 Oxfordshire	9th Gloucestershire & Oxfordshire FA Brigade		N		Y	
21 Lord Valentia/Oxford			N		Y	
22 Hertfordshire	10th Herts & Bedfordshire RFA Brigade		N			
23 Bedfordshire	10th Herts & Bedfordshire RFA Brigade		Y			
24 Royal Devon	11th Devon RFA Brigade		N			
25 Suffolk	12th Suffolk & Norfolk RFA Brigade		N			
26 Norfolk	12th Suffolk & Norfolk RFA Brigade	-	-	-	-	
27 Surrey	13th Surrey & Sussex RFA Brigade	Y	N			
28 Sussex	13th Surrey & Sussex RFA Brigade		Y			
29 East Riding	14th Lincoln & East Yorks. RFA Brigade	-	-	-	-	
30 Northumberland	Brigade, RFA, Mountain Artillery		N			Y
31 Westmoreland	Brigade, RFA, Mountain Artillery	-	-	-	-	
32 Cumberland	Brigade, RFA, Mountain Artillery	-	-	-	-	
33 Denbigh	3rd Welsh Mountain Brigade, RGA		N			Y
34 Montgomery	3rd Welsh Mountain Brigade, RGA	Y	N			
35 Lothian & Border	1st Lothian & Border Motor Machine-Gun Co.		N		Y	
36 Fife & Forfar	2nd Fife & Forfar Motor Machine-Gun Co.		Y			
37 Worcester	3rd Worcestershire Motor Machine-Gun Co.		N			Y
38 2LY	4th London Motor Machine-Gun Co.	Y	Y			
39 3LY	5th London Motor Machine-Gun Co.	Y	Y			
40 Essex	6th Essex Motor Machine-Gun Co.		N		Y	
41 Northamptonshire	7th Northamptonshire Motor Machine-Gun Co.		N	Y	Y	
42 1 & 2 Lovat Scouts	1st Lovat's Scouts	Y	Y			
43 1 & 2 Scottish Horse	2nd Scottish Horse	-	-	-	-	
Totals	Yes	8	6	3	12	5
	No	0	28	1	0	0

The table shows the responses of Yeomanry representatives at the second Conference held in 1920 to the following questions:

- Would previously enlisted yeoman adopt the proposed new service branch?
- Would the Yeomanry regiments be able to create the proposed new service branch with new recruits?

The responses, where and if given, are tabulated, Y=Yes, N=No.

The column entitled 'No Action' is for those representatives who stipulated they had not actually formally consulted with its regiment. Thus, any opinion given was the representatives rather than an accurate reflection of the regiment's response. The column entitled 'mention class' indicates those representatives who specifically alluded to there being a class issue in their response and the final column indicates those who believed that they could raise a special reserve regiment.

Table Outlining the final designation of Yeomanry regiments in 1922

	Proposed new branch	Finalised designation*
1 Middlesex	Cavalry Divisional Signal Squadrons	Cavalry Divisional Signals
2 1LY	RHA	RHA
3 North Somerset	1st Somerset RFA Brigade	Mounted Cavalry
4 West Somerset	1st Somerset RFA Brigade	94 (Dorset and Somerset Yeomanry) RFA Brigade
5 Duke of Lancaster	2nd Lancashire RFA Brigade	Mounted Cavalry
6 Lancashire Hussars	2nd Lancashire RFA Brigade	106 (Lancashire Yeomanry) RFA Brigade
7 Glasgow	3rd Lanark RFA Brigade	101 (QORGY) RFA Brigade
8 Lanark	3rd Lanark RFA Brigade	Mounted Cavalry
9 Nottinghamshire	4th Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire FA Brigade	107 (South Notts Hussars Yeomanry) RFA Brigade
10 Derbyshire	4th Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire FA Brigade	24th Armoured Car Company, RTC
11 Pembrokeshire	5th Pembroke & Glamorgan FA Brigade	102 (Pembroke and Cardigan) RFA Brigade
12 Glamorgan	5th Pembroke & Glamorgan FA Brigade	324 (Glamorgan Yeomanry) Battery
13 East Kent	6th Kent FA Brigade	97 (Kent Yeomanry) RFA Brigade
14 West Kent	6th Kent FA Brigade	97 (Kent Yeomanry) RFA Brigade
15 Hampshire	7th Hampshire & Dorset FA Brigade	95 (Hampshire Yeomanry) RFA Brigade
16 Dorset	7th Hampshire & Dorset FA Brigade	94 (Dorset and Somerset Yeomanry) RFA Brigade
17 Buckinghamshire	8th Buckinghamshire & Berks RFA Brigade	99 (Bucks & Berks) RFA Brigade
18 Berkshire	8th Buckinghamshire & Berks RFA Brigade	99 (Bucks & Berks) RFA Brigade
19 Gloucestershire	9th Gloucestershire & Oxfordshire FA Brigade	21 (Royal Gloucestershire Hussars) Armoured Car Company, RTC
20 Oxfordshire	9th Gloucestershire & Oxfordshire FA Brigade	100 (Worcestershire and Oxfordshire Yeomanry) RFA Brigade
21 Hertfordshire	10th Herts & Bedfordshire RFA Brigade	86 (East Anglian) (Herts Yeomanry) RFA Brigade
22 Bedfordshire	10th Herts & Bedfordshire RFA Brigade	105 (Bedfordshire Yeomanry) RFA Brigade
23 Royal Devon	11th Devon RFA Brigade	96 (Devonshire Yeomanry) RFA Brigade
24 Suffolk	12th Suffolk & Norfolk RFA Brigade	108 (Suffolk and Norfolk Yeomanry) RFA Brigade
25 Norfolk	12th Suffolk & Norfolk RFA Brigade	108 (Suffolk and Norfolk Yeomanry) RFA Brigade
26 Surrey	13th Surrey & Sussex RFA Brigade	98 (Surrey & Sussex Yeomanry) RFA Brigade
27 Sussex	13th Surrey & Sussex RFA Brigade	98 (Surrey & Sussex Yeomanry) RFA Brigade
28 East Riding	14th Lincoln & East Yorks. RFA Brigade	26th Armoured Car Company, RTC
29 Northumberland	Brigade, RFA, Mountain Artillery	Mounted Cavalry
30 Westmoreland	Brigade, RFA, Mountain Artillery	93 (Westmoreland and Cumberland Yeo) RFA Brigade
31 Cumberland	Brigade, RFA, Mountain Artillery	93 (Westmoreland and Cumberland Yeo) RFA Brigade
32 Denbigh	3rd Welsh Mountain Brigade, RGA	61 (Caernarvon and Denbigh Yeomanry) Medium Brigade, RFA
33 Montgomery	3rd Welsh Mountain Brigade, RGA	Absorbed into Royal Welch Fusiliers
34 Lothian & Border	1st Lothian & Border Motor Machine-Gun Co.	19 (Lothian and Border Horse) Armoured Car Company, RTC
35 Fife & Forfar	2nd Fife & Forfar Motor Machine-Gun Co.	20th Armoured Car Company, RTC
36 Worcester	3rd Worcestershire Motor Machine-Gun Co.	100 (Worcestershire and Oxfordshire Yeomanry) RFA Brigade
37 2LY	4th London Motor Machine-Gun Co.	22nd (London) Armoured Car Company (Westminster Dragoons), RTC
38 3LY	5th London Motor Machine-Gun Co.	23rd (London) Armoured Car Company (Sharpshooters), RTC
39 Essex	6th Essex Motor Machine-Gun Co.	104 (Essex Yeomanry) RFA Brigade
40 Northamptonshire	7th Northamptonshire Motor Machine-Gun Co.	25th (Northamptonshire Yeomanry) Armored Car Company, RTC
41 1 & 2 Lovat Scouts	1st Lovat's Scouts	Lovat Scouts - Mounted Scout unit
42 1 & 2 Scottish Horse	2nd Scottish Horse	Scottish Horse - Mounted Scout Unit

*This table details the final designation of the Yeomanry regiments reconstituted after the war, who had been originally selected for conversion to a non-cavalry role.

3. The Social and Cultural Nature of the Inter-War British Cavalry

When writing about the British cavalry, historians have predominantly focussed upon a functionalistic approach in their methodology. Gervase Phillips has pointed out that the historiography has been influenced by ‘technological determinism.’¹ Denis Showalter criticises historians of military innovation for adopting the Whig perspective.² The attraction to this approach when discussing the mechanisation of the cavalry is that it allows a simplistic, black and white analysis; was a modern AFV able to operate better than a man on a horse? This is too simplistic. This thesis has tackled the problematisation of the British cavalry during this period by looking at the wider socio-political situation, economic difficulties and, in a subsequent chapter, international comparisons. It too, has looked at the functional debate surrounding man, horse and machine. However, this chapter seeks to provide a fuller picture of the British cavalry of the inter-war period by looking at both its social and cultural characteristics. Cultural History has been a popular field for many recent historians, although it has a tendency to divide opinion on its validity. Peter Burke, a cultural historian, commented that he would not argue that cultural history was the best form of history. He does argue, however, that it makes a valid contribution to history as a whole.³ The reason that many historians do not like the cultural turn is that it is a nebulous concept. This chapter argues that a cultural analysis of the British cavalry should not be overlooked. The reason for this is because the critique of historians who denigrate the British cavalry, has, at its core, a cultural aspect. These historians argue that the cavalry were so negative towards mechanisation because its attitudes were derived from a cultural outlook borne from social and cultural mores associated with equine pursuits: the cult of the horse. By the term culture, this chapter will define it along the lines of the French *Annalistes* and their concepts of *mentalités* and *imaginaire social*.⁴

¹ Gervase Phillips, ‘The Obsolescence of the *Arme Blanche*’.

² Denis E. Showalter, ‘Military Innovation and the Whig Perspective’ in Winton and Mets (Eds.), *The Challenge of Change*, pp. 220-36.

³ Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), pp. 125-6.

⁴ *Ibid* p. 4.

The ingrained cultural image of the inter-war cavalryman is as an anachronistic buffoon blindly clinging to the fighting methods of the early nineteenth century. He steadfastly refused to listen to the apostles of modernity, who foresaw the arrival of the armoured vehicle upon the battlefield. He would rather have practiced the skills of fox-hunting and polo and enjoy the social-trappings that came with these pursuits, than understand the complexities of the combustion engine and what it brought to the tactical nature of warfare. This mental caricature has more than a passing resemblance to David Low's Colonel Blimp cartoon. Whilst Blimp's rank implied a military background, Low ascribed to him no specific service association. However, the idea of attaching his character to the military had derived from an overheard conversation between two men 'of military bearing' debating a letter to the newspapers from an unknown Colonel supporting the notion that cavalrymen should continue to wear spurs in tanks.⁵ Many historians of the last two decades have taken a more sympathetic attitude towards the cavalry, highlighting other aspects of the mechanisation debate of the inter-war period and unpicking some of the earlier assertions, showing them to be based upon flawed premises.⁶ However, most caricatures are based upon reality, otherwise the subject becomes unrecognisable and its effect as a comment is lost. This chapter seeks to look behind the caricature of the cavalryman and unpick the truth from the mythology, and, in some cases identify plain untruths. By analysing contemporary evidence from serving and ex-cavalrymen, it establishes that there was a degree of truth in the charge of blind conservatism or at least, simple ambivalence. But, there were many who held a pragmatic approach to their profession. It also shows that the nature of cavalry attitudes was complex. For many, the life of a cavalryman was that of a *bon viveur* but this did not mean that they did not take their soldiering seriously. It would seem that they compartmentalized their social activities from their professional activities. The mistake that many made was whilst they made this distinction mentally the reality was often different. Utilising this evidence, it then highlights how the negative cavalryman's caricature was to establish itself as the dominant perception in the public domain.

⁵ David S. Low, *Low's Autobiography*, p. 283.

⁶ For an outline of the historiography on the British Cavalry, see Introduction, p. 1.

To help underpin this analysis, the Annual Registers of Cadets for the Royal Military College at Sandhurst have been scrutinized for the period, in order to provide some statistical evidence of the social demographic character of the cavalry. This provides some hard evidence to the nature of the cavalry in support of the more nebulous soft cultural evidence. By its very nature, this provides a top down analysis and there is very little source material to counterbalance this. However, some information has been extracted from the General Annual Reports on the British army which provides an interesting analysis on the other ranks of the cavalry. This includes assessment upon the general levels of education within the other ranks of the cavalry, especially when compared to both the RTC and the army as a whole. It also provides comparative information on the levels of recruitment during the period which indicates that the cavalry was consistently able to recruit to establishment until mechanisation commenced.

There have been historians who have applied the cultural turn to an analysis of inter-war change. For example, Harold Winton refers to the idea of 'service culture' in the British army and David Johnson to an '[a]rmy culture' in the American army.⁷ One book that explicitly looks at the influence of culture on the British army is Elizabeth Kier's book, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars*.⁸ Her book is a good exemplar to unpick as she follows the standard historiographical notion of a blinkered arm, clinging to their engrained horsey culture.⁹ Firstly, the evidence has been tailored to fit the conclusion, rather than drawing a conclusion from the evidence. This is not to challenge that her conclusions are incorrect, merely that the evidence she presents is insufficient to support such a conclusion. She correctly upholds that the only official voice of the cavalry was *The Cavalry Journal*.¹⁰ She argues that the journal was 'parochial' and focussed upon the cavalry. This is bemusing. It would seem contradictory to uphold the journal as representative of the cavalry and then criticize it for being about the

⁷ See the following chapters: Harold R. Winton, 'Tanks, Votes and Budgets', David E. Johnson, 'From Frontier Constabulary to Modern Army', and Denis E. Showalter, 'Military Innovation and the Whig Perspective', in Winton and Mets (Eds.), *The Challenge of Change*, pp. 74-107, pp. 162-219 and pp. 220-36.

⁸ Kier, *Imagining War*.

⁹ Ibid, pp. 134-5.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 123, p. 128, p. 131 and pp. 134-5.

cavalry. To draw the conclusion that this evidences that cavalrymen were anachronistic is epistemologically unsound. Kier also argues that the content was neither technical nor thought-provoking but focussed upon horsey tales and past glories.¹¹ Here again, the logic in her argumentation is challengeable. She misses the point that most cavalry regiments remained mounted until 1937-8 and thus technical issues for the cavalry were of horse management and horsemanship. It is therefore unsurprising that the journal included many such articles. As for the charge of not really thinking about modern warfare, this again is not wholly substantiated by the articles that did appear in the journal. From the journal's re-establishment after the First World War, it invited one of the tank radicals, Fuller, to write a series of articles on 'The Influence of Tanks on Cavalry Tactics'.¹² This is not to say that Fuller's ideas were embraced, and there were a number of subsequent articles from other writers challenging Fuller, but it clearly illustrates a fundamental weakness in Kier's argument.¹³ Fuller's series of articles was not an isolated example, and articles continued to appear in the journal over the inter-war period looking at the latest technological thinking both at home and internationally, on aspects of motorisation, mechanisation and aviation.¹⁴

Despite Kier's failure to establish a solid foundation to form a case against the cavalry of any cultural resistance to change, the original argument promulgated by Fuller and Liddell Hart was founded on the notion of a horsey culture within the army.¹⁵ What both would refer to as a cavalry ring or school. The existence of such a

¹¹ Ibid, p. 135.

¹² Fuller, *Memoirs*, pp. 391-2. Also his three article series, Brevet Colonel J. F. C. Fuller, 'The Influence of Tanks on Cavalry Tactics (A Study in the Evolution of Mobility in War)', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. X, No. 36, Apr. 1920, No. 37 July 1920 and No. 38, Oct. 1920.

¹³ Lt. - Col. R. G. H. Howard-Vyse, 'A Defence of the Arme Blanche', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. X, No. 37, pp. 323-330.

¹⁴ Kier compounds this flaw in her logic, by comparing the alleged dearth of technical articles in *The Cavalry Journal* with those found in the journals of the Royal Engineers and the Royal Air Force. The obvious inherent technical nature of these arms would undoubtedly skew any comparison and their use as a comparison is illogical. She also excludes evidence from other sources. For example, she does not draw attention to a fictional article printed in the *Royal Tanks Corps Journal* romancing the value of the horse in training entitled 'Hunting – And "F.S.R."'. Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War*, p. 134-5. Major A. J. Clifton, 'Hunting – and the "F.S.R."', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XX, Oct. 1930, pp. 555-65. The article is reprinted in *The Cavalry Journal*.

¹⁵ Kier's erroneous line of reasoning around the journal does not end with these assertions but she goes further by alleging that the type of advertisements it contained was evidence of the lack of professionalism in the British Cavalry. Here again, Kier has drawn false conclusions from the

clique is questionable for as French has pointed out its members remained anonymous.¹⁶ It would be easy to solely associate this notion of a horsey culture upon a social class basis. In Cannadine's analysis of 'patrician professionals' in his book on *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, he takes this line of argument, highlighting that the inter-war period saw an increased usurpation of the officer class by a new, middle class soldier.¹⁷ This resulted in a clash of class cultures that was symbolized by the imagery of the horse versus the mechanical vehicle. Those of the old, patrician class, yearned to return to the notion of pre-1914 gentlemanly soldiering, bound to social and sporting activities, many of which were linked to equine pursuits. The Earl of Dundonald, who had been commissioned into The Life Guards, saw the army as a refuge from the outside world where the concept of a gentleman was still maintained. Cannadine highlights that both Fuller and Liddell Hart were middle class in origin and the tide of technological change in warfare had mediated their rise. Of these two, Fuller, in particular, seemed to be the recipient of several inter-war CIGS's ire. Furthermore, Lord Gort, the CIGS 1937-1940, resented Hore-Belisha, the Secretary of State for War for much of this period, for his 'middle-class origins.' Gort conspired to get Hore-Belisha removed from the War Office.¹⁸

evidence in order to support her argument. The journal was a self-funding publication and the editorial board derived income from any advertising, for which it employed an advertising agency. On this basis, it would seem highly unlikely that the board would discard any potential advertisements, and the associated revenue, because they did not conform to some particular social criteria. It is possible that there is a case to be made through the advertisements, as to how the public perceived the cavalry, but this is not the same thing. Furthermore, if an advertisement is a signifier of attitudes to recent technological innovation then the journal did contain advertisements for motor cars. Kier, *Imagining War*, p. 131. For details on the journal's use of an agency, see *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXVI, Jan. 1936, p. 135.

¹⁶ Fuller referred to a 'GHQ cavalry Ring', Fuller, *Memoirs*, p. 362. Liddell Hart referred to 'cavalry Circles', Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, p. 77 and p. 93. French, 'The Mechanization of the British Cavalry', p. 296.

¹⁷ David Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British Aristocracy*, (London: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 236-296.

¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 264-280. Although not mentioned by Cannadine, the resentment from the military was also on anti-semitic grounds. Hore-Belisha was removed from his post in 1940 by Chamberlain. Hore-Belisha refused to accept a lesser ministerial position and effectively resigned from government. For anti-semitism, see Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 70.

This line of argument is attractive. It neatly conforms to the Colonel Blimp imagery and its black and white simplicity is easy to grasp. But it deserves a more substantive analysis to try and understand a complex issue.

This is not to dismiss totally the class dimension from the argument. In an article in *The Cavalry Journal* by Major-General N. M. Smyth entitled 'Sport', he commented that in a post-war world where 'social unrest, class opposition, sedition and disregard of duty are only too apparent in civilized countries', that sport was the only solution to 'pedantry, cant, mercenary selfishness, luxury and idleness.' Smyth believed that fox-hunting was a particularly good recreational pastime.¹⁹ For Smyth, it was not only the alleged training ability of sport but also in a world where he felt social boundaries were volatile, sport was a stabilising influence.

Lieutenant-Colonel R.G.H. Howard-Vyse in an article defending the cavalry, chided Fuller for his lack of chivalric spirit 'and whose inner meaning he affects to ignore.' Howard-Vyse's attack on Fuller, whilst not denouncing him on explicit class grounds, was a clear acknowledgement that warfare should still be an honourable undertaking and fought in gentlemanly manner. For him, that manner would be lost, if Fuller's theories on mechanical warfare were to replace the cavalry.²⁰

In the following year, there appeared a brief article that highlighted that, in order to be a cavalry subaltern, a private means of £400 per year was required.²¹ The purchase of the flamboyant uniform of a cavalry officer alone was a considerable personal capital commitment measured in hundreds of pounds.²² Even within the cavalry there was a level of status and the level of income required by an officer

¹⁹ Maj. -Gen. N. M. Smyth, 'Sport', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. X, Apr. 1920, pp. 26-31.

²⁰ Lt. - Col. R. G. H. Howard-Vyse, 'A Defence of the Arme Blanche', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. X, July 1920, pp. 323-330. Fuller himself entitled his memoirs of the Boer War as the last of the gentlemen's wars. J. F. C. Fuller, *The Last of the Gentlemen's Wars: a subaltern's journal of the war in South Africa, 1899-1902*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1937).

²¹ R.R.G., 'A Cavalry Subaltern on £200 a Year', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XI, Jan. 1921, pp. 87-8.

²² Tim Fitzgeorge-Parker, *Roscoe, The Bright Shiner: The Biography of Brigadier Roscoe Harvey DSO*, (London: Severn House, 1987), p. 30. Also, IWMSA. Accession No. 893-1, George William Draffen and Accession No. 915-1, Michael John Lindsay.

varied dependent upon that status. Michael Lindsay believed that the range of income needed for the cavalry was £100-£500 per annum. The status of the regiment influenced the level of this personal income. Lindsay saw the 10th Hussars as one of the most financially exclusive regiments as opposed to his own 'poor' regiment, the 1st Kings Dragoon Guards.²³ Despite his Scottish heritage, Donald McCorquodale could not afford to join the Royal Scots Greys and also joined the 1st Kings Dragoon Guards.²⁴ George Draffen commented that the Queen's Bays were also not 'rich' like other cavalry regiments who attracted rich, young men. But, even in such a lower status regiment, he found the cost of living difficult when stationed at home.²⁵ Another subaltern survived on an allowance of £200 per annum in the 5th/6th Dragoon Guards.²⁶ Andrew Horsbrugh-Porter commented that his pay in the 12th Lancers was £180 per annum and that, although his mess bills were low, £180 did not really go very far in meeting his total expenses. In his opinion, a private income of £300-£400 per annum was an adequate sum.²⁷ The implication from this is that there was a financial exclusivity to the cavalry. John Dring aspired to being a cavalry officer but was unable to finance the lifestyle in the British cavalry and so chose to join the Indian cavalry.²⁸

French in his book on *Military Identities* has tried to analyse a regimental hierarchy within the cavalry based upon Royal patronage and titled officers.²⁹ However, French's social status list does not quite agree with some of the perceptions above based upon perceived financial rankings. For example, Lindsay and McCorquodale's poor regiment, the 1st Kings Dragoon Guards, appears upon French's list of regiments with greater prestige.³⁰ An indication that whilst these perceptions existed, they were very subjective and are difficult to substantiate methodologically.

²³ IWMSA. Accession No. 915-1, Michael John Lindsay.

²⁴ IWMSA. Accession No. 914-1, Donald MacCorquodale.

²⁵ IWMSA. Accession No. 893-1, George William Draffen.

²⁶ Colonel Sir Mike Ansell, *Soldier On: An Autobiography*, (London: Peter Davies, 1973), p. 14.

²⁷ IWMSA Accession No. 905-1, Andrew Marshall Horsbrugh-Porter.

²⁸ IWMSA. Accession No. 4926, John Dring.

²⁹ French, *Military Identities*, p. 166.

³⁰ Ibid.

This social pecking order can be evidenced even for those who were joining the ranks. One former trooper advised his son, Reginald Truscott-Jones, who wanted to join the cavalry, that most regiments were being mechanised. He advised that there were still some on horses, but he would not want to join the 'Lancer mobs' as they were in India. There was the RHA that were 'a pretty group' but that the Inniskilling Dragoons, were 'a scruffy bunch, mostly Irish.' Ultimately, Truscott-Jones' father advised him to join the Household Cavalry as they were better regiments, especially The Blues, who were 'a little more elegant' and had 'a little more class.'³¹

However, Cannadine has argued that finance was actually a filter against the aristocracy entering the officer class with the wealthy middle-classes aspiring to make social advances. He quotes Leopold Amery after the Boer War, raising the concerns that 'many brainless sons of wealthy parvenus...enter the cavalry simply and solely for the sake of the social connections they hope to acquire.'³² The aforementioned article in *The Cavalry Journal* was fully aware of precisely this point as it highlighted that money 'does not endow them [cavalry subalterns] necessarily with the characteristics of a perfect cavalry leader.' Consequently, the article's author felt that a combination of frugality and subsidy was required in order to keep cavalry regiments up to strength with 'suitable officers.'³³ However enlightened the author of the article may have been, the inference is that he felt that the cavalry held a degree of financial exclusivity and, ergo some social exclusivity, that was to the detriment of the standard of professional soldiering within the cavalry.

However, aside from the few minor examples highlighted, no real official evidence of class motivated or cultural attitudes resistant towards the modernisation of the cavalry appear within the journal. Those few that have been cited are also limited to the early 1920s and nothing further is evidenced after this. Resultantly, the charge

³¹ Trooper Truscott-Jones succeeded in his desire to join The Blues. By the time he left them, he was a crack marksman which served him well in getting work in America and the Film industry. Truscott-Jones changed his name and was to have a highly successful career as the actor, Ray Milland. Ray Milland, *Wide-Eyed in Babylon*, (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1974), p. 52.

³² Cannadine, *British Aristocracy*, p. 275.

³³ R.R.G., 'A Cavalry Subaltern on £200 a Year', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XI, Jan. 1921, pp. 87.

that there was some form of social class divide is, superficially, unfounded, once again, finding flaws with the evidence used in Elizabeth Kier's arguments.

The question arises as to how indicative was *The Cavalry Journal* of the actual social values held by those in a cavalry regiment, or was it merely the acceptable face of the cavalry on such matters. Whilst the journal may not have evidenced any social or cultural anachronisms, for one junior subaltern of the period, R.F. G. Jayne, life in the inter-war cavalry was unquestionably blinkered by social and cultural attitudes. Jayne was subsequently to command his regiment, the 7th Hussars, during the Second World War. Jayne comments in his memoirs

This was the time when the form was more important than the substance and the code was more important than the substance and the code of conduct was very much based on taboos and shiboleths [sic]³⁴

Jayne recalled that when he was interviewed by the Colonel of the regiment when seeking a commission, the whole interview revolved around how much was his parental allowance and was he able to keep two polo ponies.³⁵ George Draffen also confirmed that this was the critical issue when interviewed by his CO.³⁶ Fortunately for Jayne, he had been given the very generous amount of £600 per annum, so was able to fund the extravagancies of life in the cavalry and was accepted into the 7th Hussars. He comments that it was 'a happy-go-lucky era with a 'father will always pay' attitude.' However, he believed that it was not just the cavalry who should be criticised, but the authorities, who assumed that both Cavalry and Guards officers had private financial means and so, 'pay and promotion was really irrelevant.'³⁷ In the late 1930s, when the army was considering the amalgamation of the RTC and mechanised cavalry, a committee highlighted that the differing lifestyles of the two sets of officers caused by a financial differential, was a major hindrance, commenting that 'tank corps officers have little or no private means to fall back

³⁴ Colonel R. F. G. Jayne, TS untitled memoirs, IWM Catalogue No. 6751 Box No. 78/15/1.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ IWMSA. Accession No. 893-1, George William Draffen.

³⁷ Colonel R. F. G. Jayne, TS untitled memoirs, IWM Catalogue No. 6751 Box No. 78/15/1.

upon.³⁸ This assessment was perhaps a little too simplistic: Major-General David Belchem, who graduated from Sandhurst in 1930, claimed that reviewing the personal means of aspiring officers was standard in whatever branch of the army. Belchem wanted to join the RTC whose minimum requirement was £150 per annum.³⁹ Thus, a private income was a necessity for any British officer, but for the cavalry it would seem that this income had to be greater than in other branches. This viewpoint therefore very much endorsed that of 'R.R.G.' in his article within *The Cavalry Journal*.

Financial considerations, however, were not the only criteria by which COs maintained a level of social exclusivity. Horsbrugh-Porter, upon graduating from Sandhurst, had chosen the 'Royal Dragoons' but they only had two vacancies, which the Colonel reserved for the two top old Etonian graduates from Sandhurst.⁴⁰ In the 1920s, the War Office commented that it was struggling to recruit officers in general as '[t]he class which supplies officers for the Army is losing all confidence in the Service as a career.' The same memorandum stated that the army had to give higher rates of pay for 'mechanical units' as they were proving unpopular.⁴¹ This statement gives support to the evolution of a professional, middle-class, career-minded soldier as opposed to a financially, self-reliant amateur soldier as outlined by Cannadine.

Much of the evidence provided in this chapter is based upon either the individual personal perceptions of cavalrymen or the analyses of War Office committees, which invariably drew upon individual evidence from senior army officers. There is very little substantive statistical evidence from official sources of the period that validates any of these assertions. The records that remain available today are also insufficient to construct an accurate social demographic analysis of this period. As a result there exists very little historiography on this aspect of the British army, especially upon

³⁸ Section 10, WO33/1509 'Report by a Committee assembled to consider the organization of the mechanized Cavalry and the Royal Tank Corps'.

³⁹ Major-General David Belchem, *All in the day's March*, (London: Collins, 1978), p. 18.

⁴⁰ IWMSA. Accession No. 905-1, Andrew Marshall Horsbrugh-Porter.

⁴¹ 'Memorandum on the Reorganization of the Cavalry', WO32/2846, ARMY ORGANISATION: Cavalry: Reduction of expenditure on Cavalry.

individual specific arms.⁴² One analysis by C. B. Otley, used the Register of Cadets for the Royal Military College at Sandhurst to undertake a study of the social origins of British army officers as they hold some details on the paternal background of the cadets. The registers also detail into which regiments the cadets were first commissioned. Using Otley's methodology, it is possible to create a database of the social background of officers commissioned into the cavalry between 1920 and 1940. This provided a sample of 501 junior cavalry officers that graduated from Sandhurst and were commissioned into the cavalry.⁴³ From this some broad conclusions upon the social demographic of cavalry officers can be derived and could be further contextualised against Otley's analysis of the British army as a whole.

Before providing conclusions from this data, it is necessary to highlight the weaknesses arising from its derivation. Firstly, by its very nature, the Royal Military College was socially exclusive as it charged an annual fee for the majority of its cadets and parents had to provide uniforms. In 1922, the fee for a private gentleman to attend the college was increased from £150 to £200.⁴⁴ Therefore, irrespective of the cadets' anticipated service arm, his social background was middle-class and more than likely to be upper middle class; what Otley called 'monied upper strata'.⁴⁵ To contextualise this amount, it has already been seen that a cavalry officer required a minimum annual income in the region of £200 and that this was a generous income compared to many other officers. Thus, to be able to afford to pay such a sum for just one year of a two year course indicates a considerable amount of disposable income.⁴⁶ This barrier to wider social inclusion at Sandhurst is in direct contrast to

⁴² Otley provides a brief overview of the historiography on this topic in his article, C. B. Otley, 'The Social Origins of British Army Officers', *Sociological Review*, 18, July 1970, pp. 213-239. All of the historiography is approximately 40-50 years old.

⁴³ WO151, Royal Military College Sandhurst: Registers of Cadets.

⁴⁴ Alan Shepperd, *Sandhurst: The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and its Predecessors*, (London: Country Life, 1980), p. 132.

⁴⁵ C. B. Otley, 'The Social Origins of British Army Officers', *Sociological Review*, 18, July 1970, pp. 213-239, p.216.

⁴⁶ Comparative indices of the time value of money are not always helpful, especially when looking at expenditure on less mainstream items, as they are based upon averages. However, based upon an average earnings index, £200 in 1922 is equivalent to £35,700 in 2009. The Office for National Statistics has reported that in 2010, the median average salary was £25,900. Thus, in modern terms, the cost of the course for just one year was more than most people earn in a year. www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/result.php, accessed 15/12/2010. Office for National Statistics, '2010 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings', www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfrdir/ashe1210.pdf, accessed 15/12/2010.

the Haldane Committee's assertion in 1924 'that it is neither necessary nor desirable to confine the selection of officers to any one class of the community.'⁴⁷

The determination of social class and its sub-categories also poses problems for any social investigation as the factors determining which social category an individual should be placed into is very much a subjective decision. To compound this problem, the information provided in the registers is very generic and ambiguous. To cite just one example, the register states that the occupation of the father of Cadet B. M. Strang, who was later commissioned into the 12th Lancers in 1924, was a farmer. This could mean that he was either a working farmer or that he was a landowner employing a farm manager and farm hands to run his farm.⁴⁸ Therefore, this analysis has replicated Otley's classification, which is more by occupational classes rather than of class origin⁴⁹. However, even these definitions have a degree of ambiguity and assumptions have had to be made. The term gentleman is frequently used in the registers and would seemingly refer to those men who did not have to work for a living; there is no validation of this assumption. For the purposes of this study, also included within this classification are those men who have been described as either landowners or of independent means. This is based upon the assumption that they also did not have to work for a living. Also, included in this category are those from a titled background. Consequently, those labelled in this study as Gentlemen, Etc. are representative of those coming from the upper echelons of society.

This leaves a category of men whose father's had a civilian occupation. These have been sub-divided into two categories, namely civilian professionals and businessmen and managers. The derivation of professional men is relatively straightforward and includes men such as lawyers, architects, clergymen and other professions requiring a level of formal training. This then leaves a catch-all category of those men who

⁴⁷ Ian Worthington, 'Socialization, Militarization and Officer Recruiting: The Development of the Officers Training Corps', *Military Affairs*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (Apr., 1979), pp. 90-96, p. 90.

⁴⁸ WO151, Royal Military College Sandhurst: Registers of Cadets.

⁴⁹ C. B. Otley, 'The Social Origins of British Army Officers', *Sociological Review*, 18, July 1970, pp. 213-239, p.223.

worked for a living but not in a professional capacity. Most of these men would appear to have been business owners and entrepreneurs.

Aside from the small group where the paternal occupation is unclear, the remaining group is formed from those cadets coming from a military background. This is the largest group in the sample. The difficulty with this group is that it is unclear whether all of these were long-term career soldiers. There are those whose fathers are flagged as a Lieutenant or Captain, a seemingly junior rank for a man who would be in the region of forty years old and more. This was far from impossible as promotion in the army during the inter-war period was slow. In 1932 it was reported that 359 army subalterns had a minimum of eleven years service. This bottle-neck in promotion did not seem to affect the Cavalry and Guards as much as some of the other service arms.⁵⁰ In particular, the worst affected would seem to have been the RA where the senior Major had 29 years of service. A detailed breakdown of the ages of officers promoted in 1933 and 1934 was given by a former officer, J. R. Kennedy.⁵¹

Table 1
The Number and Average Age of officers promoted in 1933 and 1934

	To Lt. Col.		To Colonel		To Major	
	No.	Average Age	No.	Average Age	No.	Average Age
Cavalry	4	43.5	1	45.7	5	36.6
RA	4	48.5	3	50.8	4	39.2
RE	4	44.1	2	45.0	4	36.11
RCS	2	42.0	-	-	2	42.7
Infantry	14	43.1	4	46.11	15	38.7
RTC	2	45.1	-	-	1	40.11
RASC	1	46.9	1	45.8	1	41.4
Total and Average	31	44.2	11	47.1	32	38.6

Table calculated from figures taken from J. R. Kennedy, *This, Our Army*, pp. 85-91.

Figures after the decimal point represent months, e.g. 46.11 denotes 46 years and 11 months.

⁵⁰ The turnover in officers was higher in the cavalry owing to sons of wealthy parents resigning their commission upon inheriting this wealth upon their father's death. French, *Military Identities*, p. 150.

⁵¹ Kennedy was a former RA Captain and his book was an unforgiving call for reform within the British Army. J. R. Kennedy, *This, Our Army*, (London: Hutchison & Co., 1935), pp. 77-95. Also in Bond, *British Military Policy*, pp. 48-9.

However, whilst this table highlights Kennedy’s point, it does not support the idea here that a large number of junior officers would be of sufficient age to have sons of sufficient age to attend Sandhurst. Thus, whilst not impossible for the father to hold a junior rank, it could also mean that whilst the father had held a commission in the army, he had subsequently resigned this commission. Thus, it is arguable whether some of the cadets should really fall into a military classification, but owing to the lack of available information they have had to be included in the military category for the purposes of this analysis. There were also those fathers who died whilst serving in the army, and especially for those cadets whose fathers may have only enlisted between 1914-18, there is no information on any prior civilian occupation. To further confuse matters, there are some entries where the father’s regiment or service arm has also been logged. Some of these have been logged as holding a commission in the Territorial army, which by its very definition means that this was not the father’s prime occupation, but again there are no further details. To try and ameliorate these discrepancies an analysis of ranks held by the fathers has been undertaken.

The above would tend to imply that any social demographic analysis presented here is of little merit, but this is incorrect. The above merely serves as a caution that only more general conclusions can be drawn and that there is a margin of error. The basic results from the survey are illustrated below.

Table 2
Occupation of Fathers of Cavalry Entrants to Sandhurst 1920-1940

Year	Father's Occupation										Total
	'Gentlemen' etc.		Businessmen and Managers		Military Professionals		Civilian Professionals		All Others		
1920-25	45	28.8%	13	8.3%	64	41.0%	28	17.9%	6	3.8%	156
1926-30	30	24.8%	13	10.7%	65	53.7%	11	9.1%	2	1.7%	121
1931-35	25	20.7%	10	8.3%	73	60.3%	7	5.8%	6	5.0%	121
1936-40	14	13.6%	25	24.3%	52	50.5%	10	9.7%	2	1.9%	103
Totals and Averages	114	22.8%	61	12.2%	254	50.7%	56	11.2%	16	3.2%	501

Source: WO151 Royal Military College Sandhurst: Registers of Cadets.

Table 2 clearly shows that army officers were drawn almost exclusively from the sons of the upper, upper middle and professional classes of society and that half of these were the sons of army officers. This underpins Otley’s earlier findings detailed below in Table 3. In the cavalry, the largest category throughout the period was that of a military professional and on average one in two cavalry officers came from a military background.

Table 3
Occupation of Fathers of Entrants to Sandhurst 1920-1940, taken from C. B. Otley.

Year	Father's Occupation										Total
	Gentlemen' etc.		Businessmen and Managers		Military Professionals		Civilian Professionals		All Others		
1920	61	17.6%	28	8.1%	130	37.6%	106	30.6%	21	6.1%	346
1930	28	9.1%	37	12.0%	157	50.8%	74	23.9%	13	4.2%	309
1939	16	4.0%	68	16.8%	161	39.8%	121	29.9%	39	9.6%	405
Totals and Averages	105	9.9%	133	12.5%	448	42.3%	301	28.4%	73	6.9%	1060

Source: C. B. Otley, 'The Social Origins of British Army Officers'.

Comparing this to Otley’s results, this would appear to be slightly higher than the officer cadre as a whole although this category still constitutes the largest single group. This continuing military association is perhaps what aided the familial feel described by many officers. These analyses also give credence to the notion of a burgeoning officer class. It is worth pointing out here that the fees at Sandhurst for the sons of serving officers were considerably reduced, being between £55 and £105 depending upon rank.⁵² Thus, there was a degree of inevitability in the creation of a self-perpetuating officer class as the fee structure meant it was both encouraged and financed by the army.

As highlighted earlier, there is a potential flaw in these figures, as some fathers who are listed as being in the army may only have held a commission for a shorter period with a subsequent position in civilian life. The tables below separate out, where

⁵² Shepperd, *Sandhurst*, p. 132.

possible, the rank that was held by the father, as those holding more senior rank were more likely, although not certain, to have been long-term career soldiers.

Table 4
Rank of Army Officer Fathers of Entrants to Sandhurst, Commissioned in the Cavalry 1920-1940

Year	Father's Rank								Total	
	Field Marshal to Major-General		Brigadier to Lieutenant-Colonel		Major to Second Lieutenant		Other			
1920-25	5	3.2%	34	21.8%	25	16.0%	0	0.0%	64	41.0%
1926-30	5	4.1%	30	24.8%	29	24.0%	1	0.8%	65	53.7%
1931-35	1	0.8%	28	23.1%	44	36.4%	0	0.0%	73	60.3%
1936-40	1	1.0%	19	18.4%	31	30.1%	1	1.0%	52	50.5%
Totals and Averages	12	2.4%	111	22.2%	129	25.7%	2	0.4%	254	50.7%

Source: WO151 Royal Military College Sandhurst: Registers of Cadets.

Table 5
Rank of Army Officer Fathers of Entrants to Sandhurst, 1920-1940 taken from C.B. Otley

Year	Father's Rank								Total	
	Field Marshal to Major-General		Brigadier to Lieutenant-Colonel		Major to Second Lieutenant		Other			
1920	4	1.2%	63	18.2%	50	14.5%	4	1.2%	121	35.0%
1930	7	2.3%	71	23.0%	70	22.7%	2	0.6%	150	48.5%
1939	4	1.0%	72	17.8%	73	18.0%	2	0.5%	151	37.3%
Totals and Averages	15	1.4%	206	19.4%	193	18.2%	8	0.8%	422	39.81%

Source: C. B. Otley, 'The Social Origins of British Army Officers'

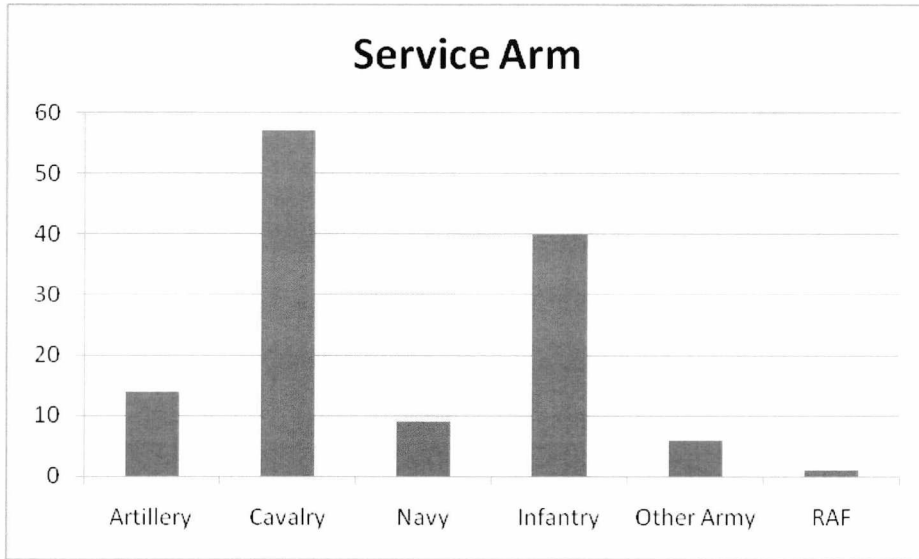
Table 4 illustrates that almost 25% of cavalry recruits had fathers who held or had held a senior military post (Brigadier and above). When this is compared to Otley's figure for the army as a whole, this would imply that a slightly larger proportion of

cavalry officer's came from a senior military background. This figure is interesting, especially when analysed against the historiographical perception of the Cavalry Generals. The rationale behind Kennedy's figures tabulated earlier was that those service arms with younger officer profiles were able to have more significant representation at senior level. Whereas those service arms with older officer profiles, were less well represented, being too old to take up senior posts when opportunities arose. Combining this concept with the faster promotion rate within the cavalry supports the traditional concept of the Cavalry Generals. However, Larson has dispelled this notion. Larson analysed army lists from 1923, 1932 and 1938 to establish the numbers and proportions of senior officers in the various army branches and how they changed during the period. His analysis shows that once beyond regimental level there were never more than 10% of cavalry generals and this had declined to 4% by 1938. Of the senior generals (Lieutenant-Generals and above), by 1932 there were only two from the cavalry and by 1938 there were none. Furthermore, within the Army Council, the army's ruling body throughout the inter-war period, only one position was ever occupied by a cavalryman, Chetwode who only served for six months between August 1922 and February 1923.⁵³ The RA, which had the oldest officer profile in Kennedy's figures, was significantly represented throughout the period and into the Second World War. But, what table 4 does infer was that senior officers were supporting their sons to join the cavalry. Thus giving the cavalry the potential for some leverage at senior level, but perhaps more likely, supporting the notion of a horsey culture within the army although it is impossible to be definitive in this assertion as the data is insufficient.

Of those sons who followed their fathers into the military it would be interesting to ascertain whether they also followed into the same service arm as their father. The available information giving which service arm the fathers had served in is not comprehensive in this sample, but it has been possible to extract this information for 127 cavalry cadets, the results of which are set out in the histogram below.

⁵³ Larson, *The British Army*, pp. 18-9.

Chart 1
Father's Service arm of RMC Cavalry Graduates



Source: WO151 Royal Military College Sandhurst: Registers of Cadets.

This chart indicates that the sons of former cavalrymen formed a significant tranche of subsequent cavalry officers. The inference being that cadets whose fathers had been cavalrymen were more likely than not themselves to join a cavalry regiment, with one in two officers having paternal ties with the cavalry. There were also a significant number whose fathers had been infantry officers; approximately one in three. There were also a representatives from all the other service arms. The figure for the RAF is considerably smaller, but this is unsurprising as it was a relatively new service and sons from RFC and RAF officers would have only been of sufficient age to enlist during the 1930s. One of the cadets in this sample was the son of Air Marshal Sir John Baldwin, but Baldwin's original commission had been in the cavalry prior to transferring to the RFC. This analysis would imply that whilst there was a some sense of the cavalry being a family business, it was not overly exclusive and it was far from impossible for sons of officers from other arms to aspire to join the cavalry.

Outside of the army class, the next largest group supplying officers to the cavalry was the monied middle-class. The combined percentage of officers coming from this group, both business and professional, was on average 23%. Although this figure

fluctuated throughout the period. This figure is also the same for those classified as gentlemen. Thus, the results from the Sandhurst registers would indicate that during the inter-war period, the demographic ratio of cavalry officers was approximately 2:1:1, military: gentry: middle class. This ratio does not reveal too much until it is compared with Otley's analysis. Otley's figures imply that in the army as a whole, the same ratio for officers was 2:2:1, supporting Cannadine's assertion of the increasing dominance of the middle class. Thus comparing the two, the cavalry had around 25% of its officers from the gentry as opposed to just 10% in the army as a whole. Thus, the figures would imply that the cavalry held on to its aristocratic status longer than the rest of the army. Thus the notion of the cavalry being the last bastion of an aristocratic army is not without merit.

However, in the last half of the 1930s, even in the cavalry there was a significant increase in the proportion of officers coming from the middle classes. The increase in the number of middle class officers in the cavalry was surprisingly different in character than that of the army as a whole. During the entire period, the middle class officers in the army were drawn predominantly from the professional classes whereas the increase in the cavalry came from businessmen.

Any change in the social demographic in the army is inevitably influenced by the number of recruits: an increase in the size of the army will see a wider inclusion of society as whole whereas the converse has the potential to allow selectivity in recruitment. The army saw large increases in its establishment in the latter half of the 1930s, but the Parliamentary *General Annual Report on the British Army* for the 1930s show that the establishment and actual strength of cavalry officers remained fairly static at approximately 500 and 520 respectively.⁵⁴ This would imply that whilst the cavalry never struggled to obtain its full complement of officers, there was no drastic increase in the number of officers within the cavalry that could account for the increase of middle class officers. It is not possible to account for why there was such a shift in the figures. There are some speculative reasons such as mechanisation

⁵⁴ PP *General Annual Report on the British Army, 1930-1937*, Cmd. Papers 3800, 4020, 4257, 4524, 4821, 5104, 5398, 5686.

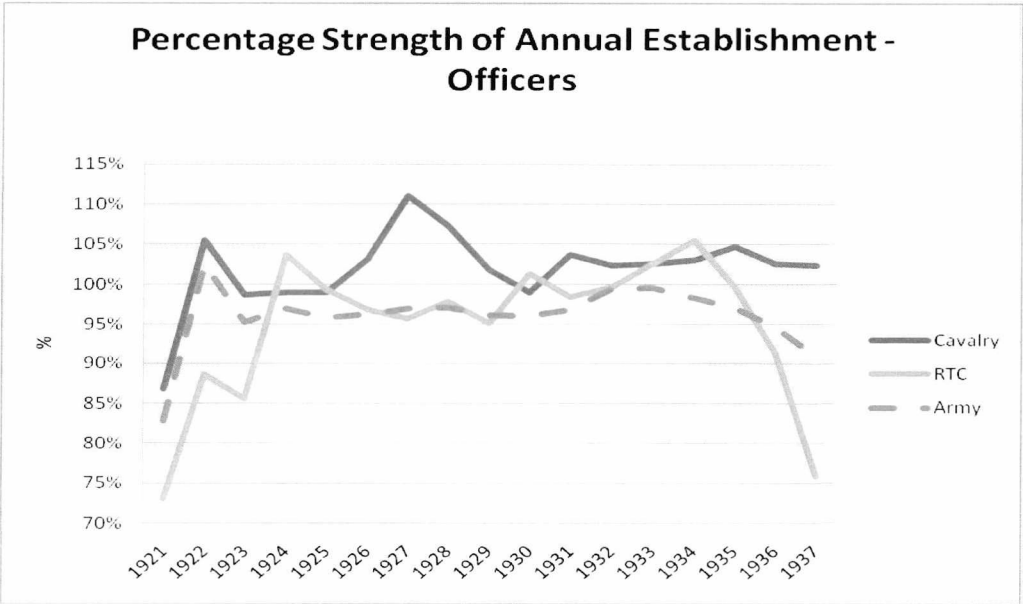
proving a disincentive to those from a more horsey culture; a general increase in size of this class within society which was merely being mirrored in the army; or growing concerns over the international situation, although the latter idea would affect all classes in society.

It is difficult to draw comprehensive conclusions from the data presented owing to the inconsistent nature of the source data, the lack of further supporting evidence and no comprehensive contextualising comparative data; Otley's data, whilst providing indicative trends, only draws upon three separate years from the period, thus only analysing approximately 15% of the available data. A similar problem arises for any longer term analysis outside of the inter-war period. Razell and Otley did undertake some longer term analysis that indicated the transition to a more middle class organisation but these had their sampling faults. Razell in his article 'Social Origins of Officers in the Indian and British Home Army: 1758-1962' tried to give some longer term perspective, but his sampling is simplistic, based upon a small sample taken from annual *Army Lists* which are taken from seemingly intermittent and random years: 1780, 1830, 1875, 1912, 1930 and 1952. Thus, any observations made upon social trends in the army are very weak because of both the sample size and the inconsistency of the selection of *Army Lists*. Furthermore, Razell's social categorisation is very simplistic, based upon Burke's *Peerage and Gentry*, setting up three groups: aristocracy, landed gentry and middle class. The first two categories are direct from Burke's directory but results in his final category being merely a catch-all category comprising of a balancing figure.⁵⁵ Otley's is a more refined analysis but his still only spot checks every decade. However, both provide evidence towards a steady increase in the contribution of the middle-class to the officer cadre of the British army, which increased after the First World War. Using Otley's figures as a comparison, the cavalry's transition to being a middle-class was a little slower than the general trend.

⁵⁵ P. E. Razell, 'Social Origins of Officers in the Indian and British Home Army: 1758-1962', *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Sep., 1963), pp. 248-260.

To support this analysis of RMC graduates some comparative data was drawn from the Parliamentary command papers on the British army. This data has provided details not only upon the officers of the cavalry but of the other ranks as well. A review of the annual establishments and actual strengths of the cavalry during this period, alongside comparative figures for both the RTC and the army as a whole, supports the contention mentioned earlier that the cavalry was rarely below establishment for its officers during the period. (See chart below) Against this, both the RTC and the army consistently struggled to reach its budgeted establishment of officers. The years 1936 and 1937 make for especial interest, as these years saw the mechanisation programme for the cavalry enlarged, yet it would seem to have had no effect upon the recruitment of officers to the cavalry. However, the level of officer recruitment in the RTC reduced. The percentage figure shown on the chart can be explained by the increased level of establishments for officers in the RTC which rose from 308 in 1935 to 386 in 1937. But the actual figures show that the number of officers in the RTC was 307 in 1935 but this fell to 286 in 1936 and only marginally recovered in 1937 to 293. Thus against a backdrop of army expansion, increased mechanisation and a deteriorating international political situation, the RTC actually struggled to recruit officers compared to the cavalry. Indeed, the 1936 and 1937 levels were the lowest for the RTC since the mid-1920s.

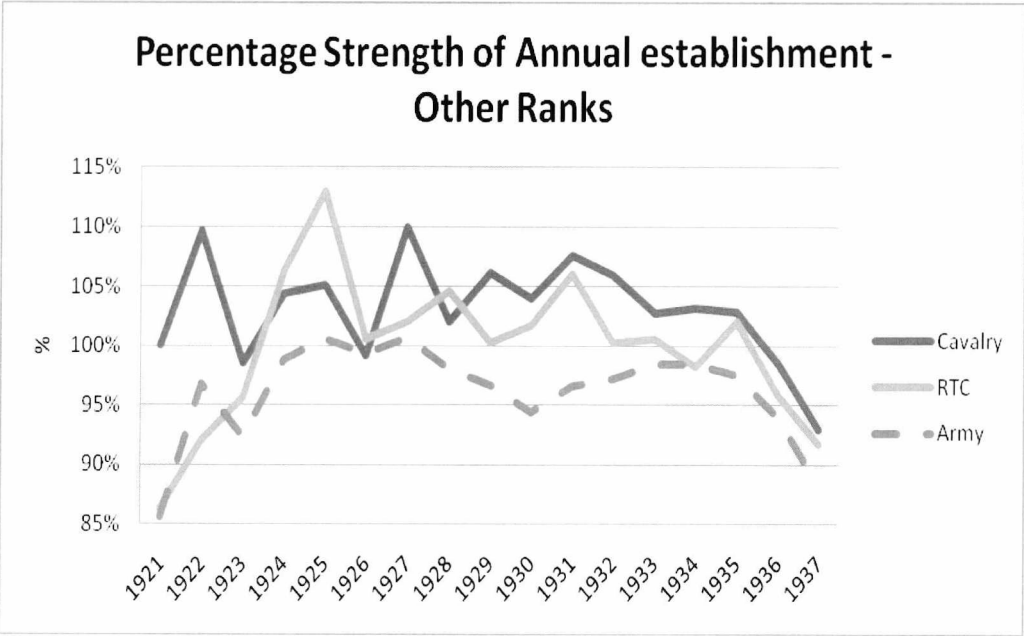
Chart 2



Source: Compiled from PP Command Papers, Annual Report for the British Army 1921-1937.

Thus, the figures would seem to dispel the assertion made by many that mechanisation would result in cavalry officers engrained with a technophobic horsey culture leaving the army in droves and it was the RTC who struggled to attract officers to its ranks. The reason for this is something of a conundrum, especially when the figures for the other ranks are also scrutinised.

Chart 3



Source: Compiled from PP Command Papers, Annual Report for the British Army 1921-1937.

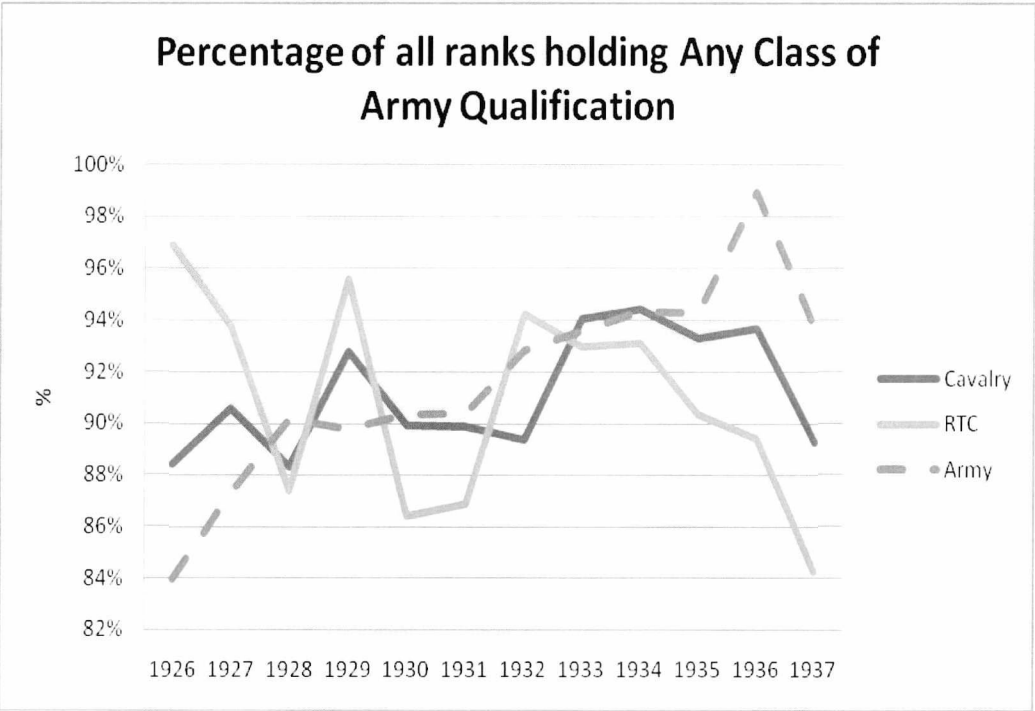
Here, in a period when the army struggled to recruit to full establishment, the cavalry consistently manage to recruit up to its establishment until post-1935 when the mechanisation programme was commenced. The actual strength in other ranks fell by 1,045 men, almost 10%, in just two years from 1935. This cannot be explained by any variation in establishment as the budgeted figure for other ranks had remained almost identical for the previous five years. On the other hand, the RTC continued to recruit strongly to the ranks. Although the percentage figure tails off in 1935, this was because the establishment for the RTC was drastically increased. The figures show that the RTC's actual strength in other ranks increased by 904: a 21% increase. This would support the assertion that those men who were going to enlist in an armoured unit would rather enlist with the RTC than the cavalry. This does require a slight caveat, as in 1936 the medical requirements for those deemed to be categorized as 'mechanized class' was marginally reduced compared to those categorised as 'horse and foot class', and whilst the cavalry was converting to armour it was still

classified in the latter category at this point.⁵⁶ Therefore, it was possible for a recruit to be rejected for the cavalry on medical grounds but to be accepted into the RTC, but this would not explain such a large swing in recruitment. The insinuation would appear to be that some of the lower ranks of the cavalry were more against mechanisation than the officers. There is insufficient information to try and account for this transformation. The evidence would seem to deny the accepted standpoint, namely those cavalrymen from the higher social classes and more likely from a horse culture were less influenced by mechanisation than those who were from lower social classes. It is mere supposition but could it be that the social ethos of the mounted cavalry mattered as much, if not more so, to those with a lower social status.

There was often the assertion that cavalrymen would be unable to cope with the technical requirements of mechanisation and it is possible that this was a limiting factor on the actual strength of the cavalry. However, an analysis of the educational standards attained by the cavalry and the RTC would imply that this was unsubstantiated. The proportion of men holding any form of educational qualification in the RTC was frequently below the average in the army and often below that of the cavalry. This would indicate that on average the cavalry were better educated than the RTC. The implication being that, academically, a cavalryman was just as likely to be able to cope with the basic technicalities of motorised vehicles as any member of the RTC.

⁵⁶ PP (1936-37) XVII Cmd. 5398 *General Annual Report for the British Army for the Year Ending 30th September 1936*.

Chart 4

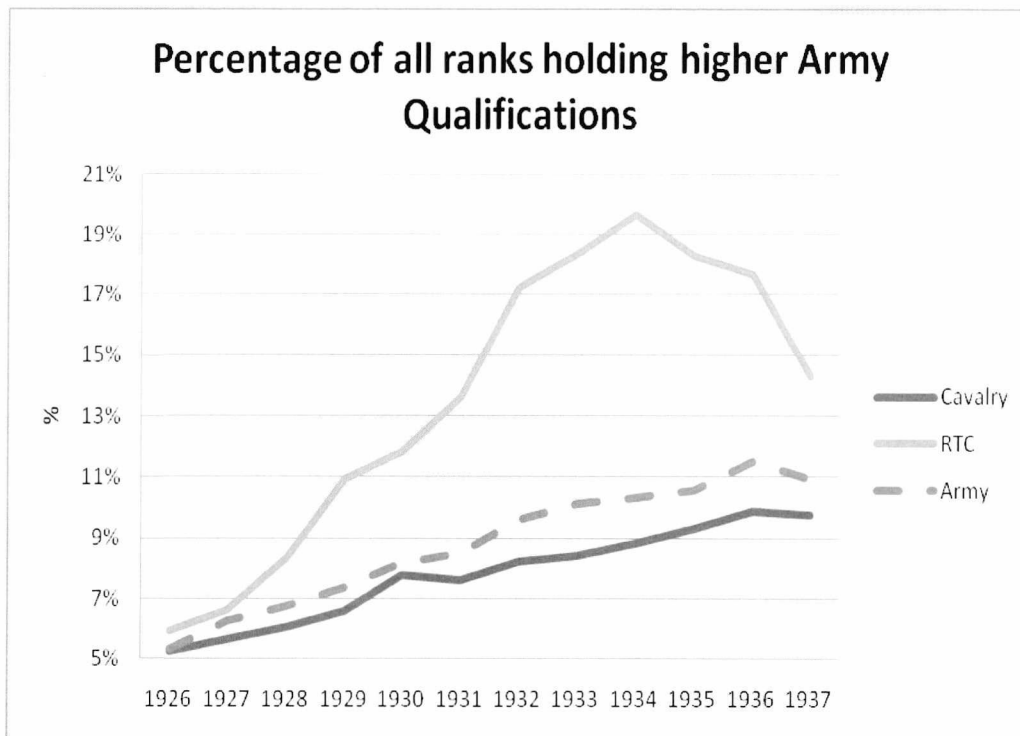


Source: Compiled from PP Command Papers, Annual Report for the British Army 1921-1937.

Where this does differ is an analysis of the percentage of men holding a higher level of qualification.⁵⁷ In this respect the RTC was considerably better qualified than both the army in general and the cavalry. Indeed the cavalry's level of higher educational achievement was lower than the army as a whole. The high level in the RTC was more than likely due to the requirement for some its men to have better automotive engineering skills. Thus, there may have been some validity in the claim that the cavalry did not have the necessary technical ability for mechanisation in some areas. However, this did not mean that cavalymen could not achieve this level if they were required to do so upon being mechanised.

⁵⁷ A higher level is defined as either a special or first class qualification.

Chart 5



Source: Compiled from PP Command Papers, Annual Report for the British Army 1921-1937.

The conclusions that can be drawn from these statistical analyses are more inferences rather than hard observations, but make for useful reading when considering the cavalry of the inter-war period. The officers in the cavalry during this period were from three classes of men; military, gentlemen and upper middle-class. Like the rest of the army, those men from a military background made up the greater part of the officer cadre and of these men approximately one in two came from a cavalry background. The other two categories, gentlemen and upper middle-class contributed the majority of the other officers and the number of gentlemen was greater in the cavalry than the rest of the army. In the period 1935-40, there was a significant shift with one in three new officers coming from the upper middle-class. The reason for this is unknown, but it was these officers that were to face the full trial of modern warfare. What is perhaps most significant, was that whatever class of man or whether mounted on horseback or armoured vehicles, the cavalry never struggled to recruit its officer cadre.

An analysis of the rank and file cavalryman of the period is a little harder to provide. Much like their officers, for most of the period they were at full peace establishment but when mechanisation was underway the cavalry struggled to recruit its full complement to the rank and file. The reason is not clear from the statistics, but the War Office believed that it was the uncertainty of the future of the cavalry that made it difficult to recruit.⁵⁸ Whether this situation was rectified upon the creation of the RAC is not clear. What is clear is that the argument offered by the RTC that the cavalry would struggle with the technology on conversion to armoured vehicles was always weak based upon the educational qualifications. Whilst the RTC had a larger number of well-qualified individuals within their ranks, the cavalry's average level of educational achievement was higher. This was to be borne out when the mechanisation process was implemented, as the cavalry successfully moved from horse to vehicle.

The statistics provided here suggest that the financial and cultural divide was not a fictitious one and it was to cause organisational problems for the British army when the issue of mechanisation had been decided in the late 1930s. A committee had to be commissioned to review how best to undertake the logical step of amalgamating the mechanised cavalry and the RTR into a single armoured unit and the issue of officers' cultural backgrounds, expectations and personal financial capabilities were influencing factors.⁵⁹ Indeed, one of the concluding sections of the committee's report painted a very full picture of the cavalry officer's background and expectations

[Cavalry regiments] attract officers from families which in the past have preserved the feudal conception that the holding of estates carries with it a liability for a defence of the Kingdom. Officers who enter the cavalry regiments do not expect to live on their pay and although they cannot claim and would not claim to be better officers on that account, they do represent a class which the state

⁵⁸ WO33/1509, Report by a Committee assembled to consider the organization of the mechanized Cavalry and the Royal Tank Corps.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

can ill afford to lose as officers now...the standard of living is higher than can be met from an officer's pay and allowances. Our army is recruited on a voluntary basis and there is no reason why any officer, or for that matter soldier, should be debarred from increasing the standard of his living by any private means which he is lucky enough to possess. It is probable that if the cavalry were compelled to reduce their standards to those compatible with the rate of pay and allowances, many officers would leave the Army.⁶⁰

From the above statement and statistical observations, Lieutenant-General Sir John Keir's argument that there was within the army a 'species of military aristocracy' was perhaps not too far from the truth.⁶¹ Jayne went on further by expounding that it was '[s]mall wonder, therefore, that from a Military point of view few officers took their careers very seriously.' Douglas Forster of the 11th Hussars agreed that 'soldiering in those days wasn't very serious.'⁶² Draffen concurred with this point and admitted that the RTC was more professional in its outlook than cavalry officers.⁶³ Ralph Younger admitted that he joined the 7th Queen's Own Hussars in 1926 as he enjoyed horses and riding and his interest in soldiering was secondary. Michael Lindsay admitted that he did not like being in service and was only in the regiment for the horses.⁶⁴ George Kidston-Montgomerie was another that, despite having familial connections to his regiment, chose the 12th Lancers because he was keen on horses.⁶⁵ This lack of professional commitment was evidenced by the fact that '[v]ery rarely did a Cavalry officer sit for the Staff College' and those that did ask were greeted with either 'astonishment or disgust.'⁶⁶ Forster contradicts this outlook slightly, as he felt that the 'clever ones' did go to the Staff College but those that remained with the regiment 'just enjoyed themselves with a bit of soldiering

⁶⁰ Section 10, 'Report by a Committee assembled to consider the organization of the mechanized Cavalry and the Royal Tank Corps', WO33/1509.

⁶¹ Lieut.-Gen. Sir John Keir, *A Soldier's Eye-View of Our Armies*, (London: John Murray, 1919), p. 144. Keir's viewpoint was more than likely tainted by the fact that as commander of VI Corps during the war he had come into conflict with his commander, Allenby. He complained to Haig about Allenby. Eventually, Allenby engineered Keir's dismissal and was sent home by Haig. Haig and Allenby were both cavalry generals. Alan MacDonald, *A Lack of Offensive Spirit? The 46th (North Midland) Division at Gommecourt, 1st July 1916*, (Beckenham: Iona, 2008), p. 506.

⁶² IWMSA. Accession No. 919-1, Douglas Forster.

⁶³ IWMSA. Accession No. 893-2, George William Draffen.

⁶⁴ IWMSA. Accession No. 913-1, Ralph Younger, and Accession No. 915-1, Michael John Lindsay.

⁶⁵ IWMSA Accession No. 892-1, George Jardine Kidston-Montgomerie.

⁶⁶ Colonel R. F. G. Jayne, TS untitled memoirs, IWM Catalogue No. 6751 Box No. 78/15/1

pushed in.⁶⁷ Jayne believed that one CO had actually responded to a request to attend the Staff College with the warning that ‘I can’t stop you, but let it be clearly understood that you will never again be welcome back in this regiment.’⁶⁸ Although Jayne’s evidence is somewhat anecdotal, John Blakiston-Houston, of the 11th Hussars, wrote that his regimental CO refused to let him sit the Staff College examination.⁶⁹ This was in direct contrast to Milne’s plea in 1927 for senior cavalry officers to ensure ‘that the best of cavalry officers were sent to the Staff College.’⁷⁰ As late as 1936, Mike Ansell of the 5th/6th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards, chose to leave just fifteen minutes into the final paper of his Staff College examination ‘because I was riding a good horse at Cottenham that afternoon. We won comfortably.’⁷¹ In 1936, as a fresh subaltern in the Inniskillings, Cecil Blacker, remembered Captain Mike Ansell as being held in awe in the officer’s mess as he was already an international polo player and show jumper: ‘he [Ansell] was unquestionably the cavalry’s rising star.’ However, as far as soldiering went, Blacker compared Ansell to ‘rather like sighting a rare bird...the only time he appeared in barracks was to put his name in the leave book for another six months sporting absence.’⁷² Ansell was far from an untalented soldier and only four years later, in March 1940, at the age of thirty-four, he was given command of the Lothian and Border Yeomanry; he was, at that time, the youngest CO in the British army.⁷³ However, his commitment to his equestrian pursuits rather than his professional advancement reinforces Jayne’s and Forster’s assertions. This attitude was not strictly reserved for the cavalry, as some of the county infantry regiments boasted that their officers had never attended the Staff College.⁷⁴ In an article in *The Army Quarterly*, Colonel C. Bonham-Carter was frustrated that those in the army held very negative attitudes towards education.⁷⁵ In Blakiston-Houston’s memoirs, his

⁶⁷ IWMSA. Accession No. 919-1, Douglas Forster.

⁶⁸ Colonel R. F. G. Jayne, TS untitled memoirs, IWM Catalogue No. 6751 Box No. 78/15/1

⁶⁹ LHCMA Blakiston-Houston, Lt. Col. J. M. Blakiston-Houston, *I’d Live it Again*, (Privately published: 1947), p.36.

⁷⁰ WO279/58, Cavalry Staff Exercise, April 1927, p.36.

⁷¹ Ansell, *Soldier On*, p. 53.

⁷² General Sir Cecil Blacker, *Monkey Business: The Memoirs of General Sir Cecil Blacker*, (London: Quiller, 1993), p. 24.

⁷³ Ansell, *Soldier On*, p. 62. The Lothians were amongst the regiments captured at St. Valery by the Germans and Ansell, inadvertently blinded and wounded by friendly fire being mistaken for a German, was to become a POW until repatriated in 1943. See his full memoirs, Ansell, *Soldier On*.

⁷⁴ Belchem, *All in the day’s March*, p. 17.

⁷⁵ Col. C. Bonham-Carter, ‘The Royal Military College, Sandhurst’, *The Army Quarterly*, Vol. 2, Oct. 1921, pp.105-113, pp. 107-8.

description of the period after the First World War up to the mechanisation of the 11th Hussars in 1928, gives a sense of fun and frivolity rather than of onerous soldiering.⁷⁶ When talking about another cavalry regiment, he commented that ‘I suppose the 4th Hussars did some soldiering but I can only think of them pigsticking.’⁷⁷ The adjutant of the Royal Inniskillings was Perry Harding who was a good amateur racing jockey. However, the concept of amateur, according to Cecil Blacker, was in name only, as in the summer he would make only cursory visits to the Adjutant’s office and between October and April, his whereabouts were mostly something of a mystery, with his duties undertaken by someone else.⁷⁸ The evidence clearly outlines a cavalry regimental culture of amateurism, the gentleman soldier, as opposed to a career-minded philosophy. Kenneth Savill of the 12th Lancers believed the infantry perceived the cavalry in this way, although he thought it was an unfair assessment.⁷⁹ Although he does comment that upon being transferred in 1936 to the KDG, who were still mounted at this point, he did enjoy a far more recumbent lifestyle and that training was a little lax.⁸⁰ John Hackett also agreed that life in a cavalry regiment, although poorly paid, was an agreeable existence, involving a half-day’s work, plenty of leave and a good social life.⁸¹

Jayne argued that the regiment was everything to the cavalry and to leave the regiment, for reasons other than financial or social scandal, even for the Staff College, was tantamount to desertion. Draffen confirmed that cavalry officers were a very tight community.⁸² The cavalry regiment of the inter-war period seems to have had the sense of a very insular, parochial gentleman’s club that ‘reflected the genteel behaviour in upper circles.’⁸³ Hackett, then of the 8th Hussars, gave wry amusement to his colleagues in the regiment for his eccentricity in making friends outside of the regiment: ‘he even had acquaintances in the Royal Engineers and the Royal Corps of

⁷⁶ LHCMA Blakiston-Houston, Lt. Col. J. M. Blakiston-Houston, *I’d Live it Again*, (Privately published: 1947), pp.14-37.

⁷⁷ Ibid p. 25.

⁷⁸ Blacker, *Monkey Business*, p. 24.

⁷⁹ IWMSA. Accession No. 933-1, Kenneth Edward Savill.

⁸⁰ IWMSA. Accession No. 933-3, Kenneth Edward Savill.

⁸¹ IWMSA. Accession No. 4527-1, John Winthrop Hackett.

⁸² IWMSA. Accession No. 893-2, George William Draffen.

⁸³ IWMSA. Accession No. 4527-1, John Winthrop Hackett. Also in Fullick, *Shan Hackett: The Pursuit of Exactitude*, (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 2003), p. 23.

Signals.’⁸⁴ These two regiments obviously did not have the social prestige of a cavalry regiment. The importance of social form was evidenced by Jayne directly, when he committed a social *faux pas* by rejecting Cavalry Club membership. This was deemed sufficient to be taken before the Colonel to explain himself.⁸⁵ The maintenance of the image of a cavalryman, as distinct from a soldier, was paramount and even in the 12th Lancers, having been mechanised for eight years, troopers were expected to carry their cavalry whip to maintain appearances when walking out.⁸⁶

The social standards that were so cherished by the cavalry were not reflected in Jayne’s regiment’s professional standards. His regiment had performed poorly on manoeuvres and was deemed unfit for war. This poor performance Jayne attributed directly to the same Colonel who had been so rigid in his maintenance of these social standards, Colonel Norman. Jayne observed that Norman was ‘a disastrous commander’, who strode about on horse at manoeuvres like he was ‘on a Crimean battlefield.’⁸⁷

These insights into life in the inter-war cavalry provide a strong validation to those who condemn the cavalry for being anachronistic; the evidence being all the stronger coming from cavalryman of the period. Jayne was only too aware of how deprecating his testimony was and tried to temper it in the opening paragraphs of his brief memoirs.

I write this account which to some might seem the pointless and unproductive life of a cavalry officer of that day. But I hope the reader will bear in mind that many of the playboys of the 30’s were the heroes of the 40’s.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ IWMSA. Accession No. 4527-2, John Winthrop Hackett. Also in Roy Fullick, *Shan Hackett*, p. 24.

⁸⁵ Colonel R. F. G. Jayne, TS untitled memoirs, IWM Catalogue No. 6751 Box No. 78/15/1.

⁸⁶ IWMSA. Accession No. 15748-2, John Bernard Clarkson.

⁸⁷ Colonel R. F. G. Jayne, TS untitled memoirs, IWM Catalogue No. 6751 Box No. 78/15/1.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

However, his apologetic tone only really serves to damn the cavalry officer of the 1920s and 1930s with faint praise.

This opinion of the officer class of the cavalry as parochial, inward-looking and, at the same time, of superior martial stock is endorsed by Spike Mays, a trooper of the period, whose perspective from below is worth quoting in detail.

Cavalry officers were the best in the world. Ours [1st The Royal Dragoons] certainly came from the 'best families', and in the cavalry they achieved this supremacy by maintaining in the army a kind of family club – for almost two centuries, as the names still show. Mostly from the aristocracy they cared not a cavalry cuss about the red tape of Whitehall. They set their own standards, conformed to the norms and mores of that particular group and were convinced that their regiment was the only place of consequence to put their sons in after they had emerged from Eton and Oxford. They always inspired confidence and respect in their men, although in some cases courage often exceeded wit and knowledge.⁸⁹

Mays' observations support the earlier demographic analyses in this chapter of the cavalry.

Field Marshal Sir Philip Chetwode endorsed this view of not caring for political pressures. He actually argued that wealthy officers were able to take risks in war that poorer officers could not as they could not afford being dismissed. Thus, in his view, wealthier officers rose to senior posts owing to daring decisions made whilst in command that reflected well for them. Yet these decisions were taken with the confidence that if they went wrong they had sufficient financial security if dismissed from the army: they had the money to gamble with their military careers. For

⁸⁹ Spike Mays, *Fall Out the Officers*, (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1969), pp. 91-2.

Chetwode, a cavalryman himself, this was why cavalrymen rose to the top.⁹⁰ The evidence provided paints a picture of a whole cadre of young, post-war cavalry officers whose immediate professional commitment was little more than a series of social functions and horse riding, punctuated with the occasional soldiering commitment. They seemed oblivious to the harsh reality of their profession and to debates on modern warfare following the recent war. Horsbrugh-Porter, whose regiment the 12th Lancers, was one of the first to be mechanised in 1928, was of opinion that most junior officers in the cavalry just wanted to stay on the horse as the paramount reason they had enlisted was to play polo and pursue other equine recreations.⁹¹ This notion was supported by Lieutenant-General Sir Tom Bridges, who, when was colonel of the 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards, wrote to the War Office upon being given notice of his regiment's mechanisation, commenting that it was something of a shock to the officers, 'especially to the younger officers who were looking forward to a career in a horsed regiment and had made their choice accordingly.'⁹² Thomas Evans-Lombe of the 8th Hussars did perceive that the mechanisation of two regiments in 1928 was the beginning of the end. He admitted that this saddened him as his attachment to the cavalry was stemmed from a love of horses and that he did not think that greatly about the function of the cavalry.⁹³ Ralph Younger, of the 7th Queen's Own Hussars, believed that the reactionaries opposed to mechanisation in his regiment were primarily the very 'horsey' junior officers.⁹⁴

This assertion seems in direct contradiction to the standard historiographical perception of a collection of old, senior, recalcitrant cavalry officers blindly clinging to their horses, resisting the tide of youthful modernisation. The Marquess of Anglesey, in his history of the British cavalry, believed that the younger regular cavalrymen of the post-war period realised the inevitability of mechanisation of the

⁹⁰ Bond, *British Military Policy*, p.47.

⁹¹ IWMSA. Accession No. 905-2, Andrew Marshall Horsbrugh-Porter.

⁹² WO32/4633, 'Suggested retention of the Scots Greys as Horse Cavalry and resuscitation of the Union Brigade (Mr. W. Elliot, M.P.)', Letter to A.G., Sir Harry Knox from Lt.-Gen. Sir G. T. Bridges, 11th November 1937.

⁹³ IWMSA. Accession No. 985-1, Thomas Brian Ashton Evans-Lombe.

⁹⁴ IWMSA. Accession No. 913-1, Ralph Younger.

army at the expense of the horse.⁹⁵ The evidence asserts the actuality was a little more complex. For Horsbrugh-Porter, it was the junior officers who were the more reluctant to lose their horses. A fellow 12th Lancer, Kenneth Savill, believed that all officers were saddened at the loss of their horses, but concurred with Horsbrugh-Porter that the senior officers were more philosophical than the junior officers, understanding the changing nature of war.⁹⁶ Dudley Allenby commented that there was a level of disappointment amongst the junior officers as they had enlisted with the cavalry because they loved horses.⁹⁷ Peter Wiggin was one of those junior officers and he confirmed that his reaction was one of horror.⁹⁸ Kenneth Cooper of the RTC, who helped train the 8th Hussars on their conversion, observed that the junior officers were more difficult to train.⁹⁹

From the above evidence, it can be seen that there was a tranche of young, inexperienced officer recruits during the inter-war period who saw the cavalry as a means of enjoying the upper and upper middle-class social trappings of the equestrian elite; the functional realities of being a soldier seeming to be a secondary concern. Chetwode, when giving an address to the Staff College at Quetta, India in 1934 as Commander-in-Chief in India, commented that

I am not happy about the present officer, either in the British Service or in the Indian Army. I do not think that, as a class, they have improved in general education, or military instinct and leadership, since the war...if anything, the contrary is the case.¹⁰⁰

Chetwode's statement supports this unprofessional attitude of the junior officer as, by implication, he questions the capabilities of the entire post-war officer cadre.

⁹⁵ Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, pp. 316-7. French, 'The Mechanization of the British Cavalry', p. 298.

⁹⁶ IWMSA. Accession No. 933-1, Kenneth Edward Savill.

⁹⁷ IWMSA. Accession No. 878-1, Dudley Jaffray Hynman Allenby. Dudley Allenby was the nephew of Field Marshal Allenby, whose campaign in Palestine was often the basis for retaining horses in the cavalry.

⁹⁸ IWMSA. Accession No. 918-1, Peter Milner Wiggin.

⁹⁹ IWMSA. Accession No. 788-4, Kenneth Christopher Cooper.

¹⁰⁰ 'Address by his Excellency the Commander-in-Chief Field Marshal Sir Philip Chetwode at the Staff College, Quetta on the 8th October 1934.' Chetwode Papers LHCMA LH 1/166/3.

Chetwode was aiming his comment at the army as a whole but in respect of the cavalry his assertion would appear to be supported by solid evidence.

It is of note that Chetwode was a former cavalry officer. This fact, combined with the testimony of the junior cavalry officers of the period, could imply that senior officers were of a more thoughtful nature. Resultantly, these senior officers, who had served during the war, held a more pragmatic approach to any pending mechanisation and this overrode any social appeal of the horse. Horsbrugh-Porter believed that the senior officers of the 12th Lancers were in favour of mechanisation and that the Colonel at the time, Colonel Charrington, took to it especially well.¹⁰¹ One of the tank advocates of the period, Giffard Le Quesne Martel, attended Staff College with Charrington in 1921 and commented that he 'was quite ready to be convinced that the cavalry would use tanks in the future.'¹⁰² Allenby, who was in the 11th Hussars, the other regiment mechanised in 1928, stated that any negative attitudes were quashed by his CO. He advised his regiment that it had to be accepted and a good job made of conversion and he gave an unofficial order that no one was to resign as it would impact negatively upon implementation.¹⁰³ Major-General T. T. Pitman, the regiment's Colonel at the time, pointed out to the 11th that they were 'getting in on the ground floor' as mechanisation was inevitable.¹⁰⁴ This positive approach was echoed in later years. The CO of the KDG was also emphatic that mechanisation would happen and insisted that it would be done well.¹⁰⁵ In 1936, whilst still stationed in India, he had sent a letter requesting details of the peace establishment of a motor cavalry regiment so that he could commence training 'tradesmen', such as a Transport Storeman, in order to prepare for the KDG's return to the United Kingdom in 1937-8, when they were due to begin conversion.¹⁰⁶ The newly appointed CO of the 5th Inniskilling Dragoon Guards, Colonel 'Ugly' Martin, took to mechanisation 'like an ardent lover and clutched it to his bosom,' according

¹⁰¹ IWMSA. Accession No. 905-2, Andrew Marshall Horsbrugh-Porter.

¹⁰² Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry, 1816-1919*, pp. 318-9.

¹⁰³ IWMSA. Accession No. 878-1, Dudley Jaffray Hynman Allenby.

¹⁰⁴ IWMSA. Accession No. 918-1, Peter Milner Wiggin.

¹⁰⁵ IWMSA. Accession No. 914-2, Donald McCorquodale.

¹⁰⁶ File Note, 'Copy of Letter No. 50901/5/A, dated 28th September 1936, from Headquarters, Southern Command to the Adjutant General in India', WO32/2847, ARMY ORGANISATION: Introduction of a Mobile Division.

to one officer. When this same officer requested an absence of leave to attend a point-to-point meeting, Martin refused permission to the dismay and anger of the officer.¹⁰⁷ Robert Ffrench-Blake of the 17th/21st Lancers, stated that his CO, despite being given two years to mechanise by the War Office in 1938, announced to his regiment that they would achieve it in just one year.¹⁰⁸ Thomas Nickalls believed that the 17th/21st Lancers' CO was far more interested in cars than horses anyway.¹⁰⁹ Indeed by this late stage, Ffrench-Blake believed most officers were relieved that it had finally happened and far from resisting mechanisation there was a sense of pity that it had not happened sooner. He did point out there was one officer who was unable to adjust to the transformation in his regiment but he was due to leave anyway.¹¹⁰ Two other officers in the 17th/21st Lancers, Marling and Lawrence, confirmed that they were delighted to receive news of their mechanisation as they knew the horse was finished.¹¹¹ Douglas Scott of the 3rd Hussars commented that the mechanisation of the 11th Hussars and the 12th Lancers in 1928 generated much debate and that there was a realisation that mechanisation was coming. Scott believed that when the 3rd Hussars' mechanisation in 1934 was announced in his regiment he was not aware of any dichotomy between junior and senior officers.¹¹² McCorquodale also confirmed that 1928 sparked some debate within his regiment and that it was 'obvious that mechanisation must come', although there was a wave of sympathy for the two mechanised regiments.¹¹³

This perception of a professional core of senior cavalry officers offers a very convenient synthesis between the traditional historiographical perception of the cavalry and the more recent revisionist line. The relative simplicity of the harmonisation of these two schools of thought makes for an appealing conclusion. However, there are a number of points that need to be highlighted that cast doubt

¹⁰⁷ Blacker, *Monkey Business*, p. 24.

¹⁰⁸ IWMSA Accession No. 946-1, Robert Lifford Valentine Ffrench Blake. Also in R. L. V. Ffrench Blake, *The 17th/21st Lancers*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1968), p. 115. Ffrench-Blake was an intelligent officer and is the author of a very good book on the Crimean War. See R. L. V. Ffrench Blake, *The Crimean War*, (London: Sphere, 1973).

¹⁰⁹ IWMSA. Accession No. 962-2, Thomas Wentworth Nickalls.

¹¹⁰ IWMSA. Accession No. 946-1, Robert Lifford Valentine Ffrench Blake.

¹¹¹ IWMSA. Accession No. 949-2, John Stanley Vincent Marling and Lieutenant Lawrence.

¹¹² IWMSA. Accession No. 968-1, Douglas Scott.

¹¹³ IWMSA. Accession No. 914-2, Donald McCorquodale.

upon such a neat supposition. Firstly, many of the comments made by the senior officers were made in light of a *de facto* mechanisation. Thus, with the decision having been made, it was no longer a question of debate for those senior officers, but, as the responsible officers, a matter of how best to implement those changes with the minimum of fuss. Their opinions upon the issue were no longer of relevance and, indeed, any negative views required shielding, in order to ensure a smooth transition. The Colonel of the 3rd Kings Own Hussars confirmed as much when he spoke to his regiment, '[i]t is not for us to question the wisdom or necessity for changes, but faithfully to carry them out to the best of our ability.'¹¹⁴ The 3rd Hussars had volunteered to participate in an experimental mechanisation of a cavalry unit.¹¹⁵ Secondly, although the 1928 changes engendered some discussion at all levels, there was no resultant change of attitude, merely a sense that it would probably come, but in the future and not of any immediate concern. There certainly appears to be no evidence of a cavalry lobby post-1928 calling for their mechanisation to be expedited. Thirdly, by the mid-1930s, the mechanisation of the cavalry had become inevitable in some form and so those that remained would have, to some degree, accepted the change mentally. Finally, it is also worth remembering that Jayne and some of his contemporaries have highlighted that some COs were not so progressive in general terms and had discriminated against those with insufficient income or who wanted to attend the Staff College. This supports French's assertion that the regimental system had created an introverted perception of their profession that revolved around the regiment.¹¹⁶

There is some evidence available from senior officers of the mid-1920s, when wholesale mechanisation was still an uncertainty. In 1926, the War Office set up a Cavalry Committee under the chairmanship of Montgomery-Massingberd, a future CIGS, to investigate the cavalry requirements of the British army. As part of this investigation, a questionnaire was sent out to many senior staff and regimental officers, including cavalry ones, to garner their opinion. Much of this particular evidence is of a more functional nature rather than evidencing social or cultural

¹¹⁴ French, *Military Identities*, p. 85.

¹¹⁵ See the chapter *The British Cavalry 1934-40*, p. 265.

¹¹⁶ French, *Military Identities*, p. 146.

attitudes. The attitudes exhibited were varied and whilst some of the theories postulated are, with hindsight, questionable in their plausibility, few officers showed an indefatigable belief in resisting some form of change to the cavalry arm.

Of the responses from these officers, arguably the most conservative response came from Colonel G. A. Weir. Weir held the combined position of commandant of the Equitation School and Inspector-General of Cavalry 1922-26 and was strongly in favour of retaining horsed cavalry, believing that the *arme blanche* was neither unscientific nor out-of-date. He believed that 'a mounted attack in open order was the quickest and most economical way of taking a position' and therefore he resisted any reduction in 'sabre-power.' Unfortunately, Weir did not elaborate upon what he meant by 'economical' and nor did he provide any examples to validate his assertion. In the same document he also advocated a preference for the lance over the sword.¹¹⁷ In 1922, Weir had given a lecture at the RUSI which went into detail on the campaign in Palestine from which he drew the same conclusions that he put before the Cavalry Committee.¹¹⁸ Liddell Hart mentions this lecture in his memoirs and comments how it was supported by a 'phalanx' of commanders.¹¹⁹ Whilst the attitude of the audience is unknown, only three officers are reported in *The RUSI Journal* as making a comment in the post-lecture discussion: Lieutenant-General Godley, General Horne and Lieutenant-General Chetwode. This would hardly seem a phalanx. Chetwode, who had chaired the meeting, whilst supporting Weir's sentiments, gave a word of warning that events in Palestine might not have been quite so favourable if the enemy had had either cavalry, gas, tanks or aircraft.¹²⁰ In his response to the Cavalry Committee, Weir also exhibited a strong sense of social class distinction within a cavalry regiment. It may have been necessary for an officer to have a high personal income, but Weir believed this was not the case for the cavalry trooper. Weir believed that a cavalry trooper was overpaid. Consequently, he argued that in order to reduce the cost of the cavalry, the War Office should

¹¹⁷ LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd 9/5/2 Item 157/108. Obituary, 'General Sir George Weir Former G.O.C.-in-C., Egypt', *The Times*, Friday, Nov 16, 1951, p. 8; Iss. 52160, col. E.

¹¹⁸ Colonel G. A. Weir, 'Some Reflections on the Cavalry campaign in Palestine', *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 67, May 1922, pp. 219-35.

¹¹⁹ B. H. Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, p.89.

¹²⁰ Lieutenant-General Philip Chetwode in discussion, Colonel G. A. Weir, 'Some Reflections on the Cavalry campaign in Palestine', *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 67, May 1922, pp. 219-35, p. 234.

‘[r]educe the men’s pay...the only “cost of living” they have to bear is “cigarettes and buns.”’¹²¹ It would seem from Weir’s comment that the financial standards of the other ranks should be sacrificed before the horse.

Another respondent to the questionnaire, Major-General C. A. C. Godwin looked to the past when he replied,

The need for mounted troops working with infantry formations is an old lesson, and modern experience goes to show that this need is as great today as ever it has been in the past¹²²

Godwin had been in charge of the 5th Indian Cavalry Brigade but at the time of replying to the questionnaire was technical advisor on cavalry duties at the Army Headquarters in India.¹²³

However, any other negative attitudes to mechanisation given to the Committee were not from cavalrymen. Colonel G.N.H Jackson was somewhat dismissive of modern technology when he asserted that ‘no ‘puffing-billy’ can replace [mounted] cavalry’ for the role of close reconnaissance: Jackson was at this time a commander of an Infantry brigade.¹²⁴ General Sir W. P. Braithwaite commented upon the ‘horse whose gradual disappearance we all, sentimentally, deplore.’ However, Braithwaite’s was only a sentimental attachment and he advocated the replacement of the horse with ‘mechanically propelled vehicles.’¹²⁵ But this sentimentality was from an infantryman not a cavalryman.¹²⁶ Thus, very few senior officers really lived up to the anachronistic, dyed-in-the-wool cavalryman so often portrayed.

¹²¹ LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd 9/5/2 Item 157/108.

¹²² LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd 9/5/2 Item 157/110.

¹²³ *The Times*, Wednesday, Mar 10, 1926; pg. 7; Issue 44216; col. E.

¹²⁴ LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd 9/5/2 Item 157/52.

¹²⁵ LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd 9/5/2 Item 157/54.

¹²⁶ Obituary, ‘General Sir Walter Braithwaite Long and Distinguished Service’, *The Times*, Monday, Sep. 10, 1945, p. 7, Iss. 50243, col. C. Also see Appendix I in Bond, *British Military Policy*, p.383.

It is difficult to sustain any solid case against senior serving cavalry officers of any completely regressive outlook. These senior officers, whilst not dismissing the social and sporting trappings of equine circles, were able to see that they were part of the British army and that the enjoyment of such pastimes was a separate matter to any future fighting efficiency. One RTC officer, who acted as an advisor to the 9th Lancers upon their mechanisation, believed that in his experience, whilst the senior officers were sad at the loss of the horse, all accepted that it was inevitable.¹²⁷

A possible exception to this was Field Marshal Lord Birdwood. An anonymous writer commented in 1928 that he was 'pretty silly' when C-in-C, India. This writer alleged that when Birdwood was advised that the mechanised 12th Lancers were to be posted to India, he wrote to the War Office stating that 'I have no use for an armoured car regiment in India, and demand that my 12th Lancers join me in India mounted.' The writer believed that he got his way and obtained a mounted unit to be posted to India and the 12th Lancers remained in Egypt.¹²⁸ This may be a little harsh on Birdwood and the facts of the matter may have been a little distorted. In his autobiography, *Khaki and Gown*, he made no mention of this matter.¹²⁹ This could have been to avoid the direct charge of being an anachronistic cavalryman, as the book was originally published in 1941 and the realities of modern warfare had been witnessed first-hand. He himself commented on his final page, '[w]ar, its weapons and its conduct, have indeed undergone vast changes since I first joined the Service.'¹³⁰ However, Birdwood had been Colonel of the 12th Lancers when their mechanisation was being vaunted and he had recommended that they should be mechanised rather than being retained as horsemen in an amalgamated regiment. For Birdwood, the loss of regimental identity was of a far greater concern than the loss of the horse.¹³¹ Birdwood had also been involved in the reorganisation of the post-war Indian cavalry and so he was aware of the impracticalities of amalgamation and also

¹²⁷ IWMSA. Accession No. 787-4, Robert H. Bright.

¹²⁸ IWM 9478 Misc 15 (331), 'Notes on the Mechanisation of the 12th Royal Lancers 1928', p. 1.

Birdwood had been commissioned in the 12th Lancers and was their Honorary Colonel.

¹²⁹ Field Marshal Lord Birdwood, *Khaki and Gown: An Autobiography*, (London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1942).

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 440.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, p. 407.

the financial factors that drove these reductions in numbers.¹³² Consequently, for him to have insisted that an entire regiment be reverted to horses would seem improbable. The Indian government at this time was very much against mechanisation and it is more likely that Birdwood, in his capacity as C-in-C, India, had to write to the War Office to advise that only a mounted British cavalry regiment would be accepted in India. Well after Birdwood's tenure in India, the 8th Hussars posting to India in 1936 was also cancelled owing to them being mechanised.¹³³

Birdwood does reveal some interesting attitudes in a follow up book to his memoirs, entitled *In My Time*.¹³⁴ In this, he allocated two pages to musing on the loss of the horse in the cavalry and this bears quoting in a little detail.

I cannot help feeling that the boys who are now following us into what are still called Cavalry regiments, can never have the really good times which we had when horses meant so much to us...Not a day passed but we rode; should there be no mounted parade, there would be a ride across country, or polo, or in some places pig-sticking. Will the mechanical-cavalry officer be able to afford his own stable? I rather doubt it. For him there will never be the joy of galloping with long lines of charging Lancers behind him, conscious that he is leading men prepared to charge anything on earth. The advent of the motor-car...is doubtless a great boon to humanity...But there are times when I could almost wish the internal combustion engine had never been designed!¹³⁵

What is apparent from Birdwood's comments is that, aside from being heavily laced with sentimentalism, he draws a clear distinction between his concept of what cavalry soldiering should be in war and peace. From his very brief pen picture, Birdwood implies that the prime focus of the cavalryman during peacetime was

¹³² Birdwood Papers, NAM 6707/19-591A, 'Papers relating to the Reorganization of the Indian Cavalry.'

¹³³ IWMSA. Accession No. 4527-1, John Winthrop Hackett.

¹³⁴ Field Marshal Lord Birdwood, *In My Time: Recollections and Anecdotes*, (London: Skeffington & Son, 1946).

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 36.

recreational rather than functional. It is this consistent undertone within the cavalry that is key to their negative image during the inter-war period; the gentleman amateur soldier. Also, in his passing comment on the ability of a new cavalry officer to afford stables, there is a strong inference in the change of class of a new cavalry officer.

Birdwood's reference to running a stable is interesting as there is other evidence of a lack of a professional focus in this respect. We have seen that many officers, predominantly junior officers, failed to study the extended rudiments of soldiering. But, many were so pre-occupied with equestrian sports, that they actually ran horse stables and training businesses from within the confines of the regiment, either on relatively small scales as individuals or partnerships, or on a larger scale as regimental officers' collectives. Major Colin Davy and Captain 'Roscoe' Harvey of the 10th Hussars, had, between them, established positive reputations in various equine sporting arenas. As a result of this they were 'determined to run a joint racing-stable' when they were posted to Egypt.¹³⁶

The officers of the 8th Hussars, in anticipation of their posting to India in 1935,

pooled regimental funds and the private financial resources of its officers to acquire a considerable string of unschooled polo ponies from Australia, one hundred and twenty of them in all...when the move to India took place, it would have with it a number of well schooled ponies of high reputation, which would find a ready and lucrative market among the maharajahs and the Indian cavalry regiments.¹³⁷

The purchase of such a large quantity of horses was a huge financial commitment and gives further evidence of the financial capabilities of cavalry officers, as well as

¹³⁶ Fitzgeorge-Parker, *Roscoe*, p. 53. Colin Davy, *Ups and Downs: The Reminiscences of a Soldier-Rider*, (London: Collins, 1939), p. 90.

¹³⁷ Fullick, *Shan Hackett*, p.26.

their split focus on the priorities of the regiment. It is unclear what constitutes regimental funds in this instance, but whether the Treasury would have been supportive of its use in such a speculative manner is unlikely.

The argument presented so far has been structured around the serving cavalry officer and how many of them managed to live the life of a *bon viveur* rather than focussing upon the serious nature of the military profession. General Burnett-Stuart, whilst GOC, Egypt in the early 1930s was particularly frustrated at the obsession with polo in the cavalry. After one exercise, he commented that ‘he was “dealing with professional polo players and amateur soldiers.”’¹³⁸ This was to fuel much of the animosity between the RTC and the cavalry of this period. French has argued that this animosity was built upon the ‘politics of the regimental system’ and was merely intensified by the social divide.¹³⁹ Much of this animosity also stemmed from the RTC rather than the cavalry, which supports French’s argument that ‘RTC officers were just as much concerned with preserving their regiment’s unique identity as were cavalrymen.’¹⁴⁰ When a committee was commissioned to consider the organisation of mechanised cavalry and the RTC, the witnesses from both sides were keen to retain their previous affiliation in any new combined organisation.¹⁴¹

For many cavalry officers, there was no reason for animosity as there were two distinct roles. Prior to 1936, the thinking was for cavalry to be in armoured cars and the RTC to be in tanks. Even post-1936 there was a differentiation between light tanks and heavy tanks.¹⁴² Horsbrugh-Porter believed that much of the friction was being generated in Britain by the die-hards, led by Liddell Hart, who were concerned that the cavalry would replace the RTC. Furthermore, many of the officers in the RTC had been in other regiments prior to transferring to the RTC, including many

¹³⁸ Winton, *To Change An Army*, p. 151.

¹³⁹ French, ‘The Mechanization of the British Cavalry’, pp. 312-3.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 299.

¹⁴¹ Section 9, ‘Report by a Committee assembled to consider the organization of the mechanized Cavalry and the Royal Tank Corps’, WO33/1509.

¹⁴² IWMSA. Accession No. 905-3, Andrew Marshall Horsbrugh-Porter, Accession No. 933-4, Kenneth Edward Savill, Accession No. 878-1, Dudley Jaffray Hynman Allenby, Accession No. 918-1, Peter Milner Wiggin, Accession Nos. 985-1 and 985-2, Thomas Brian Ashton Evans-Lombe.

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cavalry officers, and so he believed that it was a small proportion of RTC officers who would have held such a hostile viewpoint.¹⁴³ Although one RTC officer believed that these transferred officers were likely to be of inferior quality anyway by comparison to direct entry RTC officers.¹⁴⁴ It is unquestionable that there was a social pecking order in the army and that the cavalry regiments were in the upper echelons of that social hierarchy, however, this did not lead them to overt, flagrant gestures or thoughts of superiority over RTC personnel.¹⁴⁵ One officer regretfully admitted that 'one never thought much of the Tank Corps as such which was rather a pity because they had the hard end of the stick.' However, he was keen to express that this sense of superiority was always unspoken.¹⁴⁶ This was not the case for the RTC from whom there was a deep feeling of resentment.

The source of this resentment is not easy to analyse. As French has argued, there was unquestionably an element of a young regiment trying to establish its own identity.¹⁴⁷ This view was also held by Alanbrooke when briefly in command of the Mobile Division.¹⁴⁸ In so doing, it collectively behaved with an almost blinkered outlook, an unswerving belief in its validity and resentment towards others. In sifting through the first-hand evidence, there is a repeated notion of almost self-pity. Rupert Harding-Newman, who aided the 12th Lancers with mechanisation, felt that they lived in comfort compared to the RTC and he very much felt that the RTC was the poor relation striving to improve military knowledge whilst the cavalry carried on blithely having fun.¹⁴⁹ Frederick Gordon-Hall believed that the cavalry were a collection of snob regiments who saw the RTC as socially inferior and an encumbrance.¹⁵⁰ Another RTC officer, Kenneth Cooper, exhibited a sense of inverted snobbery by asserting that the RTC actually saw themselves as superior to

¹⁴³ IWMSA. Accession No. 905-3, Andrew Marshall Horsbrugh-Porter.

¹⁴⁴ IWMSA. Accession Nos. 787-1 and 787-2, Robert H Bright.

¹⁴⁵ French, *Military Identities*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁶ IWMSA. Accession No. 915-2, Michael John Lindsay.

¹⁴⁷ French, 'The Mechanization of the British Cavalry', p. 299.

¹⁴⁸ Field Marshal Viscount Alanbrooke, 'Notes on my Life' Vol. II The Inter-War Years 1919-35, p. 87, LHCMA Alanbrooke 5/2/14. See also Chapter The British cavalry 1934-40.

¹⁴⁹ IWMSA. Accession No. 834-1, Rupert Harding-Newman.

¹⁵⁰ IWMSA. Accession No. 858-2, Frederick William Gordon-Hall. French, 'The Mechanization of the British Cavalry', p. 313.

the cavalry for they were the new cavalry.¹⁵¹ Much of the social attitudes exhibited by the RTC seem to stem from nothing more than social prejudice with no real firm basis. Certainly, for much of the 1920s, the cavalry barely took any notice of the RTC for they came into little contact with them either socially or professionally, which the RTC mistook for arrogance and aloofness. Unfortunately, when the 11th Hussars began wholesale conversion in 1928, it inadvertently managed to confirm all the RTC's misconceptions whilst undergoing training at Bovington. Instead of using the officers mess with the RTC, the second-in-command of the 11th leased Hyde House which had 'several thousand acres of rough shooting', as it was felt that this would 'soften the blow' of the regiment being mechanised.¹⁵² Dudley Allenby, who was adjutant whilst the regiment was at Bovington, asserts that hiring Hyde House was practical as the mess at Bovington would have been overcrowded and that mess customs were different.¹⁵³ It is easy to understand how this action could have been misconstrued by some of the RTC officers at Bovington. Two officers of the 12th Lancers, who arrived at Bovington after the 11th Hussars had completed their training, felt that they were in receipt of some animosity as cavalrymen. Neither man was willing to comment in any detail upon this ill-will but alluded to the fact that it was due to the mess arrangements of the 11th Hussars.¹⁵⁴

However, as the 1930s progressed, many RTC officers began to realise that much of this enmity was unfounded. Alan Jackson when attached to the 3rd Dragoon Guards in 1932 believed he was very well treated and that it was pure mythology that the cavalry looked down upon the RTC.¹⁵⁵ His was not a lone voice in stating that on mixing with the cavalry regiments, there was no enmity from them and, whilst there were varying levels of enthusiasm and ability exhibited by individual regiments and individuals, the overarching attitude was of getting on with the process of

¹⁵¹ IWMSA. Accession No. 788-2, Kenneth Christopher Cooper. French, 'The Mechanization of the British Cavalry', p. 313.

¹⁵² LHCMA Blakiston-Houston, Lt. Col. J. M. Blakiston-Houston, *I'd Live it Again*, (Privately published: 1947), p. 39.

¹⁵³ IWMSA. Accession Nos. 878-1 and 878-2, Dudley Jaffray Hynman Allenby.

¹⁵⁴ IWMSA. Accession No. 892-2, George Jardine Kidston-Montgomerie and Accession No. 905-2 and 905-3, Andrew Marshall Horsbrugh-Porter.

¹⁵⁵ IWMSA. Accession No. 822-1, Alan Charles Jackson.

mechanisation.¹⁵⁶ The trouble for the cavalry was that for the senior advocates of armoured warfare, such as Burnett-Stuart and Hobart, they had become symbolic of the lack of real progress towards mechanisation within the army as a whole.

Whilst the image of the cavalry from within the army is quite complex and contradictory, from outside there was a clearer cultural image evolving. There was a tranche of vocal, retired cavalry officers who, when added to the collection of bright young things, served to provide weight to the notion of the foolish cavalryman. In a copy of the 17th/21st Lancers regimental journal from 1939 there was coverage of a meeting of the Kent branch of the OCA where its chairman commented

They all felt happy...that they did not have to do as the cavalrymen of to-day – water their ‘horses’ at the petrol pump...He was not quite sure that the authorities had not gone too fast and ‘chucked’ the horse too soon¹⁵⁷

Brigadier-General Anthony Courage when addressing an Old Comrades’ dinner of the 15th Hussars in 1933 confidently proclaimed

With a regiment like ours, all thoughts of mechanization are out of the question and I am quite sure, from what I know, that the danger to this Regiment from mechanization is over. They will stick to their horses. They are wearing their spurs now and may they keep them.¹⁵⁸

Interestingly, Courage, who was connected to the famous brewing family, had been floundering within the ranks of the 15th Hussars for some years prior to the outbreak of war. However, during the four years of war he had been raised from the rank of

¹⁵⁶ IWMSA. Accession No. 787-4, Robert H Bright, Accession No. 829-12, Nigel William Duncan, Accession No. 857-2, Patrick Robert Chamier Hobart, , Accession No. 876-2, Frederick Gregory Lindsay Coates, Accession No. 862-4, Henry Maughan ‘Bill’ Liardet, Accession No. 868-2, Ronald Frederick King Belchem.

¹⁵⁷ *The White Lancer & The Vedette*, Apr. 1939, No.1, p. 12. in Pyman Papers LHCMA Pyman 1/28

¹⁵⁸ Brigadier-General A Courage, ‘The Old Comrades’ Dinner, 15th *The Kings Hussars Old Comrades’ Association Journal*, 1933, p. 9.

Captain to Brigadier-General, commanding both the 2nd and 5th Tank Brigades and just prior to the war's end, No. 2 Tank Group.¹⁵⁹ It would seem that Courage's successful experience with tanks did not convince him of the necessity for mechanisation. From his comments above, it would seem that he believed mechanisation was a punitive action against those regiments who were not quite meeting a necessary standard. Courage's speech to the OCA in 1937 held a different viewpoint:

You all know my sentiments about this change
[mechanisation]...War and the engines of war have changed of recent
years to such an extent that man has to be more protected than was
ever anticipated before the Great War. This means armour. Speed is
another thing that has changed greatly in recent years; the internal-
combustion engine is the cause of this. You now have to combine
speed with protection, and in the new mechanized cavalry you have
that combination...On these grounds we must welcome
mechanization.¹⁶⁰

Certainly Courage's call was for a pragmatic acceptance of mechanisation but his turnaround in just four years is quite remarkable. Whilst the tank was undoubtedly some way from perfection at the time of his earlier speech in 1933, the degree of progress was such that all nations and soldiers were aware and for someone who had had first-hand fighting experience of the tank, his vision seemed to have been highly clouded by his devotion to the mounted arm.

Another former cavalryman, who added his voice to the remorse over the loss of the mounted cavalry, was, interestingly, Field Marshal Sir Philip Chetwode. Chetwode wrote to the War Office when it was announced that his regiment, the Scots Greys, were one of the last two regiments to have a stay of execution on their

¹⁵⁹Bryn Hammond, 'Anthony 'Giles' Courage', www.firstworldwar.bham.ac.uk/donkey/courage.htm, accessed 8th March 2009. Fuller mentions Courage briefly in his memoirs, Fuller, *Memoirs*, p. 94.

¹⁶⁰ Brigadier-General A Courage, 'The 26th Annual Dinner', *15th The Kings Hussars Old Comrades' Association Journal*, 1937, p. 8.

mechanisation. He opined that he 'only wish[ed] there were going to be more [mounted regiments] left, for I cannot help feeling you will want them some day.'¹⁶¹

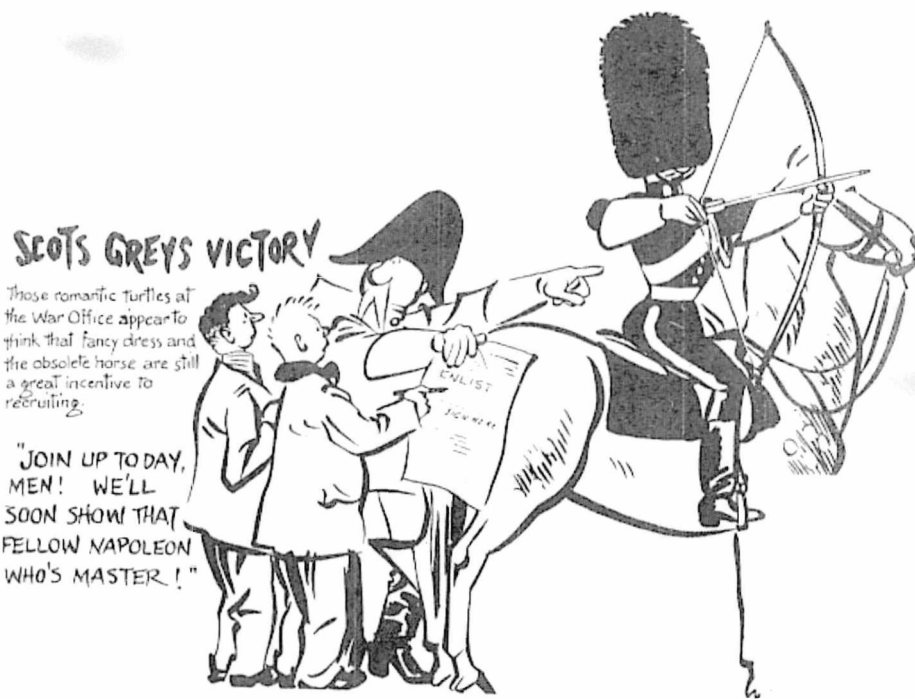
The question of when, or if, the Scots Greys should be mechanised became something of a public debate. Although the focus of the argument on retaining them mounted was more one of Scottish nationalism than a functional military one, it gave David Low, through his Colonel Blimp cartoon, a chance to poke fun at the War Office.¹⁶² The cartoon, under the title of 'Scots Greys Victory', depicted a cartoon picture of a mounted Scots Grey cavalryman holding a bow with a nocked arrow. The accompanying narrative stated that '[t]hose romantic turtles at the War Office appear to think that fancy dress and the obsolete horse are still a great incentive to recruiting.'¹⁶³ This was a little misleading as there was never really a victory to be had, as the War Office had not made up its mind on the next tranche of regiments to be mechanised.¹⁶⁴ The cartoon, however, was sufficient to implicate the cavalry in any publicly perceived anachronistic attitudes, which Low's fictional addition of the bow and arrow served to embellish.

¹⁶¹ WO32/4633, 'Suggested retention of the Scots Greys as Horse Cavalry and resuscitation of the Union Brigade (Mr. W. Elliot, M.P.)', Letter to A.G., Sir Harry Knox from Field Marshal Sir Philip Chetwode, 2nd November 1937.

¹⁶² For a more detailed analysis of the Scots Greys debacle, see chapter British Cavalry 1934-1940, pp. 300-305. WO32/4633, 'Suggested retention of the Scots Greys as Horse Cavalry and resuscitation of the Union Brigade (Mr. W. Elliot, M.P.)'. Also, French, 'The Mechanization of the British Cavalry', p. 318 and Larson, *The British Army*, p. 28.

¹⁶³ The Evening Standard, 6th November 1937, p.7. Also in Bryant, Ed., *The Complete Colonel Blimp*, p.129.

¹⁶⁴ WO32/4633, 'Suggested retention of the Scots Greys as Horse Cavalry and resuscitation of the Union Brigade (Mr. W. Elliot, M.P.)'



The perceived association of Blimp with the cavalry is a very real one, for although David Low stated that his satirical character was an attack on stupidity and was more political than military in its focus, it is also true that the genesis of Colonel Blimp was, in part, due to a letter from an old cavalryman to the newspapers advocating the continued use of spurs despite the cavalry's mechanisation.¹⁶⁵ Low was not the only cartoonist to satirise the mechanisation of the cavalry. Joseph Lee of the *Evening News* also drew cartoons pertaining to the cavalry.¹⁶⁶

All of these public images aided to cement in the collective perception the idea of the retrogressive cavalryman. This characterisation of the cavalryman was not limited to the cartoonist. In 1935, the author, C. S. Forester, published his novel *The General*, which portrayed the career of a cavalry officer from the Boer War to his rapid promotion during the Great War and his retirement upon being invalided out of the army. Much like Low's Colonel Blimp, the central character's association with the cavalry was not fundamental to the plot. The book was challenging the social attitudes of the elite, both within the army and society in general. In so doing,

¹⁶⁵ Low calculated that only 2% of his cartoons were aimed at the military directly. David Low, 'Was Colonel Blimp Right?' in Bryant, Ed. *The Complete Colonel Blimp*, pp. 117-120, p.118.

¹⁶⁶ For examples, see 'London Laughs', *Evening News*, 31st May 1938 and 'London Laughs', *Evening News*, 22nd September 1934.

Forester was highlighting that the perceived failings of Generals in the war were derived from the society these officers were created within rather than any particular tactical failing. Thus, Forester's critique was far kinder to the military than is often perceived as he sees them as victims of their upbringing; for him the charge of anachronism is social rather than military.¹⁶⁷ But the association of anachronism with the cavalry was again reasserted. This imagery would have gained some public support from those who had also served during the war and endured trench warfare and were critical of the consistent retention of the cavalry for exploitation of any breaches in defence: the famous 'G in Gap'.

There were other public associations with the cavalry. In Parliament several old cavalrymen were strident in their support of the cavalry. Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Martin Archer-Shee, Conservative MP for Finsbury, who had served with the 19th Hussars around the turn of the century, told the House of Commons that the cavalry consisted of a

somewhat superior class of man, more intelligent, perhaps because he comes from a better-off class who have been able to give him a better education...he is, as a rule, derived from a more intelligent class¹⁶⁸

He continued that this mixture of both class and tradition produced some of the best officers.¹⁶⁹ The debate on cavalry in the House would appear almost annually around the period when the army estimates were to be announced and discussed. One member in particular, John Tinker, Labour MP for Leigh, would lead the attack upon the obsolete nature of the cavalry and its drain upon public funds and he would trade verbal blows across the House with former cavalrymen. Captain Arthur Hope, Conservative MP for Nuneaton,¹⁷⁰ commented that it had become something of an amusing spectator sport for the House as he saw 'many cavalry officers thirsting for

¹⁶⁷ C. S. Forester, *The General*, (London: Penguin, 1968).

¹⁶⁸ Obituary, 'Lieut.-Colonel Sir M. Archer-Shee', *The Times*, Monday, Jan 07, 1935, p. 19; Issue 46955, col. A. Hansard Commons, Vol. 140, 4 Apr-22 Apr 1921, Col. 1994.

¹⁶⁹ Hansard Commons, Vol. 140, 4 Apr-22 Apr 1921, Col. 1995.

¹⁷⁰ Later Baron Rankeillour, Hope had served in the Coldstream Guards during the war. Obituary, 'Baron Rankeillour', *The Times*, Tuesday, May 27, 1958; pg. 10; Issue 54161; col. E

the blood of the Hon. Member for Leigh [Tinker].¹⁷¹ Another Labour MP, Colonel Wedgwood, later Lord Wedgwood, commented in 1921, that touching the cavalry was like touching the 'Ark of the Covenant' and at the mention of disbandment, he could hear the 'spurs rattling' on the benches.¹⁷² Wedgwood, who had had first-hand experience of armoured cars during the war, believed they were far more efficient and that the 'cavalry question' was a prime illustration of the 'conservatism' associated with army matters, what he called a 'stick to what you know' attitude.¹⁷³

Archer-Shee's assertion of the decline of social character of the cavalry officer should the horse be abandoned echoed a sentiment that was held by many senior officers as an observation of the army as a whole. With the commencement of mechanisation, the British army set up a committee to investigate 'the Value of the Horse in the Training of Officers.'¹⁷⁴ In the discussions around this debate, Montgomery-Massingberd, the CIGS, commented that

I...attach great value to retaining amongst candidates for the Army the class of boy who from his early days has been imbued with a love of the horse and of horse exercise of all sorts. Speaking generally we draw many of our best officers from this class and we cannot afford to do without them.¹⁷⁵

Edmund Ironside, when GOC Eastern Command, commented along similar lines when he observed that to remove the privilege of officers' horses as part of the mechanisation programme was having a negative effect upon parents sending their sons to the army and that the horse aided in 'training for the development of character and qualities of leadership: having always been closely linked to our

¹⁷¹ Hansard Commons, Vol. 287, 1934, Col. 655.

¹⁷² Hansard Commons, Vol. 139, Mar 7-24, 1921, Col. 1347.

¹⁷³ Obituary, 'Lord Wedgwood', *The Times*, Tuesday, Jul 27, 1943; pg. 6; Issue 49608; col. F.

Hansard Commons, Vol. 139, Mar 7-24, 1921, Col. 1348.

¹⁷⁴ WO32/4005, 'Report of the Committee on the Value of the Horse in the training of Officers and Reduction in the Establishment of Horses Consequent upon Mechanization.'

¹⁷⁵ WO32/4005, 'Report of the Committee on the Value of the Horse in the training of Officers and Reduction in the Establishment of Horses Consequent upon Mechanization.', Minute 7, CIGS to PUS, 14th October 1935.

National life, the horse cannot be lightly effaced, without serious re-actions.¹⁷⁶

Ironside's opinions were very much in-keeping with the original committee report published two years earlier which stated that the horse fostered qualities of leadership and character, along with physical fitness.¹⁷⁷

Similar sentiments upon recruitment had been voiced by General Sir Alexander Godley to a CID sub-committee in 1928, when he argued that the loss of horsed cavalry would mean the loss of the type of man, whatever rank, that would be required for 'the new mechanized cavalry' because his upbringing provided them with 'an eye for country, quickness of decision, [and a] habit of command', which for him were the requisite characteristics to serve with 'highly mobile forces.'¹⁷⁸

This conclusion upon the value of the horse in instilling military leadership qualities was merely an affirmation of an earlier committee report from 1921 on 'Use of Government Horses for Polo.'¹⁷⁹ This report asserted that in assessing the 'advantages of the game [polo] in training the officer' all witnesses brought before the committee were unanimous in its validity to an officer.¹⁸⁰ This was reiterated in two appendices to the report. The first was a letter to the committee from General Sir Henry Rawlinson who wrote that

The experiences of this war have in my opinion brought out strongly the value of polo and hunting as a school of training for officers...polo players and hunting men have succeeded under active service conditions where others have failed¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ WO32/4005, 'Report of the Committee on the Value of the Horse in the training of Officers and Reduction in the Establishment of Horses Consequent upon Mechanization.', Item 78A, Letter from GOC Eastern Command to Under Secretary of State, War office, 14th June 1937.

¹⁷⁷ WO32/4005, 'Report of the Committee on the Value of the Horse in the training of Officers and Reduction in the Establishment of Horses Consequent upon Mechanization.', Item 4A, Published report, April 1935.

¹⁷⁸ Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, Vol. 8, p. 336.

¹⁷⁹ WO33/3161, 'Report of Committee on Use of Government Horses for Polo.'

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 5.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, Appendix IV, Letter from General Sir Henry Rawlinson to the Secretary, War Office, p. 10.

The second was a submission from Field Marshal Earl Haig, on behalf of the Army Polo Association, which included the comment ‘that polo should definitely be recognized by the Army Council as a valuable means of training military officers for their duties in war.’¹⁸² However, all these assertions lack any supporting evidence. Furthermore, the degree of objectivity of the committee and its witnesses must be open to question. The committee, under the chairmanship of Chetwode, who was DCIGS at this point, consisted predominantly of cavalrymen, as did the list of witnesses. Good indications of the bias of those participating can be taken from the titles of two of those officers’ memoirs. Firstly, Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Beauvoir de Lisle, whose memoirs are entitled *Reminiscences of Sport and War* and Major-General John Vaughan’s, whose are called *Cavalry and Sporting Memories*.¹⁸³ It is clear from both titles that their sporting activities were of as much interest to them as their profession. Burnett-Stuart’s earlier comment on the cavalry’s fixation with polo was not without credence.

Larson has attributed this obdurate fixation with the horse for training purposes as the cavalry’s fundamental failing when facing mechanisation and at the core of the perception for its resistance to change. He supports this with evidence from Pile and Hobart. Pile claimed that if the cavalry officer had been allowed to keep horses for recreational purposes, mechanisation would have been readily undertaken. Hobart argued that until he dispensed with the horse, the cavalry officer would not mentally adjust to the machine.¹⁸⁴ There are several flaws with this straightforward assertion. Pile’s testimony implicitly accepts the argument that the cavalry did resist mechanisation, which would seem to be an RTC perception rather than a factual observation. Hobart’s argument seems to rest upon the sole premise that an officer would not be able to cope psychologically with separating his profession from his recreational pastimes. Both of these viewpoints are clearly prejudiced and in Hobart’s case he has failed to acknowledge those RTC officers who still retained

¹⁸² Ibid, Appendix V, Recommendations of the Army Polo Association Committee, p. 11.

¹⁸³ Henry Beauvoir de Lisle, *Reminiscences of Sport and War*, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1939). Major-General John Vaughan, *Cavalry and Sporting Memories*, (Bala Press, 1954).

¹⁸⁴ Larson, *The British Army*, p. 29.

horses themselves.¹⁸⁵ Horsbrugh-Porter, who was among a cadre of 12th Lancers assigned to the 11th Armoured Division in 1941 to aid training, claimed that Hobart was to change his opinion of cavalymen during his time in command.¹⁸⁶ This is not to dismiss the argument, but it was the army as whole, rather than the cavalry in isolation, that took this stance on the horse and training.

In tandem with the concept of using the horse for training was the idea that an ability to ride was central to the ability to command. Larson touches upon this without actually making the point explicit. He points out that the 1935 report upon the validity of the horse for training stated that the horse was required in order to attract the appropriate people into the army.¹⁸⁷ At Sandhurst there was no form of mechanical training but for all officers there was a riding school.¹⁸⁸ Interestingly, one cavalryman believed that for any officer with a modicum of intelligence, Sandhurst was ‘intellectually, an almost complete waste of an important 18 months of his life.’¹⁸⁹ The Staff College also maintained a drag hunt which for some was ‘the mainstay of the life of the Staff College, and it will be a sad day if a mechanical age ever renders its continuance difficult.’¹⁹⁰ An extreme exemplar of this concept was given in 1934, when an unknown author wrote,

the chief reason why certain people dislike getting on to a horse is that they are afraid; they consider the brute a nasty, unsafe form of convenience. They may be quite calm and brave in many other situations but there is a kink in the armour: we do not want kinks in the armour of our leaders; if the leaders are “nervy” about a horse, they are usually nervy about other things...Looking through the list of those who were in my batch at the Staff College just before the war, I note the names of several officers who were perniciously bad

¹⁸⁵ Robert Bright maintained his own horse as he was keen on horses. IWMSA. Accession No. 787-4, Robert H. Bright.

¹⁸⁶ IWMSA. Accession No. 905-5, Andrew Marshall Horsbrugh-Porter.

¹⁸⁷ Larson, *The British Army*, p. 29.

¹⁸⁸ IWMSA. Accession No. 968-1, Douglas Scott, Accession No. 892-1, George Jardine Kidston-Montgomerie, Accession No. 915-1, Michael John Lindsay.

¹⁸⁹ Blacker, *Monkey Business*, p. 16.

¹⁹⁰ Larson, *The British Army*, p. 21.

riders: not one of them made good on “active service,” whereas nearly all those who rode well became leaders and several of them now hold high ranks in the Army. As I write, I think of all the generals I have served under or who I know about. I cannot think of one who has been a success in war who has not been a good horseman; nor can I think of the name of any general who “hated the sight of a horse,” who has been a real leader of men. There may be such but I have not heard of them.¹⁹¹

Although this cannot be cited as an official standpoint, it would seem plausible to assume the officer in question held, or had held, a reasonably senior position owing to having attended the Staff College prior to the war. Also, its publication in *The Army Quarterly* gives it some credence and it would have been exposed to a broad readership within the army. There were those who thoroughly endorsed the idea that the horse did imbue leadership qualities and furthermore held that because of this, cavalry officers were amongst the better officers in the British army. Thomas Hutton, who served as military assistant to Milne when he was CIGS, was adamant on this point, and believed that ‘in the cavalry we had a magnificent body of officers and men with ideas far in advance of most of the rest of the army because they were a mobile force’ and that the personnel in the cavalry were ‘infinitely superior’ to that of the RTC.¹⁹² Although, this last comment would seem more class driven than based upon ability.

The picture that emerges from this analysis is, in truth, contradictory. There undoubtedly existed a tranche of young officers whose professionalism was questionable. Their commitment was primarily to the horse rather than the cavalry; the cavalry purely being the medium through which they could undertake their equine pursuits on a daily basis. However, many RTC officers joined their branch because they had an interest in automobiles. Belchem, whose family had been infantrymen traditionally, yearned to join the RTC because he ‘had been interested in

¹⁹¹ Anonymous, ‘A Horse! A Horse! My Kingdom for a Horse’, *The Army Quarterly*, 28, Apr. 1934, pp. 150-3. Also cited in Larson, *The British Army*, pp. 22-3.

¹⁹² IWMSA. Accession Nos. 895-1 and 895-2, Thomas Jacomb Hutton.

automobile engineering.’ Even before joining the army, he had undertaken evening lessons on the subject and during his holidays from Sandhurst worked in a local garage.¹⁹³ It would seem harsh to judge, with hindsight, young men who chose a profession that allowed them to mix personal interests with a career merely because their chosen profession was shortly to become outmoded. They are guilty of not considering the broader aspects of technology upon future military tactics, but how many new, young employees really take such a focussed attitude to their work? The transition from youthful exuberance to mature reflection is a complex matter which, in the protected environs of regimental association, was unsurprisingly gradual. This frivolous approach to soldiering and a love of horses was not restricted to cavalrymen. A junior officer in the RE, a so-called technical branch, wrote of his antics and attitudes in 1928

The temptation to bring a horse into the Mess after a good dinner is almost irresistible, and many a time have horses been ridden round the billiard table. If you put settees at right angles to the table you have some formidable fences...The joys that horses brought to soldiering were very great...There would never be a war because of The League of Nations. So the *arme blanche*, chivalry, polo and hunting, would go on for ever.¹⁹⁴

Finally, and perhaps the most obvious point, as junior officers, their influence on retarding military policy was, at most, limited.

For senior cavalrymen, the matter is even more complex to draw conclusions upon. At the regimental level, there is clear evidence that regimental parochialism was detrimental to the progression of officers within the army, and this had the possibility of affecting the quality of those officers attending the Staff College. This narrow-mindedness on behalf of some senior regimental officers was not unique to the cavalry and more an indictment upon the British army’s regimental system.

¹⁹³ Belchem, *All in the Day’s March*, p. 16.

¹⁹⁴ Lt.-Colonel M. C. A. Henniker, *Memoirs of a Junior Officer*, (London: Blackwood & Sons Ltd., 1951), pp. 86-7.

However, as a counterpoint to this, for the implementation of both motorisation and mechanisation, the regimental system was a help rather than a hindrance and it actually had a positive effect upon the cavalry. Many senior officers were neither so naive nor insular that they were unaware of the threat to the continued existence of the cavalry through both governmental financial stringency and technological advancements. Consequently, when faced with the irrevocable option of the disbandment of a regiment, any alternative, including mechanisation, was an acceptable option. This was initially witnessed with the creation of several amalgamated regiments in the early 1920s. For some, this system was unsatisfactory, and a number of the serving COs would have preferred the complete abandonment of a regimental system and conversion to a corps system of Lancers, Hussars and Dragoons rather than amalgamation. However, this brought them into conflict with senior ex-cavalrymen. For example, Haig had been quizzed directly on this point and he maintained that regimental identity was sacrosanct.¹⁹⁵ When giving evidence to the Cavalry Committee most officers stated that amalgamation had posed difficulties but the majority accepted that it was better than the alternative of disbandment.¹⁹⁶ The story was the same for the 11th Hussars and 12th Lancers in 1928 upon their conversion to armoured car regiments. Birdwood had used his influence to ensure that the 12th Lancers would continue to exist whatever its form and the CO of the regiment, Charrington, reminded all that it was the regiment not the function that was important.

Do not say “It is all over” – do not say “Ichabod, the glory is departed”, but let us all get down to our new job just as we all got down to it on our feet during the greater part of our long hard years in France...we still remain part of the Cavalry Corps, retaining our old titles, traditions and privileges and retaining also...the old spirit which has kept the 12th Royal Lancers a regiment – “Second to None”¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ Chetwode, DCIGS to Harris, 8/8/1921, WO32/5960, Proposals for reorganisation of Cavalry of the line: Amalgamation of various regiments 1921-2.

¹⁹⁶ LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd 9/5/2 Items 157/81 – 157/105. These items are various responses to a questionnaire from the 1926 Cavalry Committee upon the efficacy of amalgamation.

¹⁹⁷ Captain P. F. Stewart, *The History of the XII Royal Lancers (Prince of Wales's)*, (London: OUP, 1950), pp. 320-1.

Charrington's sentiments were echoed in the mid-1930s as each regimental CO called upon regimental pride and prove that they were be better than any other regiment. Consequently, the War Office was really pushing against an open door on mechanising the cavalry because of the regimental system. In 1927, the War Office did not hold such a negative view of the cavalryman and the Adjutant- General, Braithwaite, made the observation that

I feel that the good cavalryman will welcome this [mechanisation], and he is the man we want to carry with us. The man who goes into the cavalry for a few years to have a good time, may talk large on the subject, and possibly get silly questions asked in Parliament, but I think we can ignore him and the hypothetical member he may get to represent his views in Parliament¹⁹⁸

Thus, the War Office recognised the existence of a split between officers who had a professional outlook on soldiering and those that joined for a more pastoral existence. The statement implies that the War Office viewed mechanisation as a tool for weeding out those cavalrymen not focussed upon his profession. It also indicates that some of the debates raised within Parliament were treated with a degree of contempt by the War Office.

Furthermore, as has already been argued, the fact of the matter for regimental officers was whilst their regiments remained on horses they had to train as a mounted unit, even if within the conceptualisation of modern warfare. It was their role to train a regiment at a tactical level within a prescribed doctrinal approach.¹⁹⁹ The most innovative and far-sighted cavalry CO would have had extreme difficulty in experimenting with armoured warfare at a doctrinal level beyond these confines, especially as the British army was so poorly equipped.

¹⁹⁸ Minute AG to CIGS, 21/7/1927, WO32/2842 ARMY ORGANISATION: Cavalry Committee: Final report. The Quartermaster General minuted his endorsement of this view.

¹⁹⁹ See *Cavalry Training*, (1929), General Staff, *Cavalry Training (Horsed)*, (London: HMSO, 1937). Also, *FSR* (1920), *FSR* (1924), *FSR* (1929) and *FSR* (1935).

There were a few cavalrymen who were serving at senior staff level. It is here that a degree of culpability is to be found. None of them certainly opposed mechanisation, indeed many realised its necessity. General Sir David Campbell wrote to the Cavalry Committee in 1926,

That, however, cavalry can, and must, if it is to fulfil the role in the future that it has done in the past, receive most valuable assistance from mechanical inventions, imperfect as these still are, it is clear to all except the purblind, pigheaded Cavalry soldier of whom few, if any, exist amongst the cavalry leaders of today²⁰⁰

But, as Chetwode's comment with regard to the minor debacle surrounding the Scots Greys or Birdwood's over the loss of the horse, illustrated, there was perhaps a degree of superficiality exhibited and many of them never fully believed that the day of the horse was over. This is best highlighted by Haig's comment of 1925, which is frequently quoted by historians, that '[a]s time goes on...you will find just as much use for the horse – the well bred horse- as you have ever done in the past.'²⁰¹

Therefore, support for total mechanisation was always guarded and perhaps lacked total conviction. The standard historiographical argument of overt resistance to the replacement of the horse by the tank is difficult to sustain, instead their culpability lay in their attitude of inertia: they remained neither proactive nor reactive. There never existed a concerted call from senior cavalrymen, past or present, to expedite any transition, even when the War Office finally committed to mechanisation.

General Campbell was perhaps more progressive than many, but he still believed that any advancement towards a mechanical cavalry division had to be staged with the vehicles meeting set criteria.²⁰² Although, this was perhaps facing up to the realities of the lack of development in vehicles owing to a poor funding.

²⁰⁰ LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd 9/5/2, Item 157/107a, Letter to the Committee from General Sir David Campbell.

²⁰¹ Larson, *The British Army*, p. 22. It has been suggested to the author that the provenance of this quotation has been challenged recently and argued that its source was Haig's cousin, Neil, not Haig himself. However, it has not been possible to find supporting documentation for this assertion.

²⁰² Item 157/107a, Letter to the Committee from General Sir David Campbell. LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd 9/5/2.

The contrast between senior and junior officers was summed up by another former cavalryman of the period, General McCreery. In the foreword to the regimental history of the Queen's Bays, he stated 'no one can blame the young regimental officer, but his seniors cannot escape criticism for their failure to adopt the new weapon with enthusiasm.'²⁰³

The argument put forward by Larson, based upon RTC evidence, that the retention of horses for training purposes was promulgated by the cavalry, and that this would be detrimental to their psychological acceptance of mechanisation, is open to interpretation. Certainly the early report on the efficacy of polo was written by cavalrymen, but at this early stage wholesale mechanisation was unlikely and consequently its influence on retarding such is doubtful. The later report written when a conversion programme was already in place had input from various branches of the army and, consequently, the allegation against just the cavalry lacks foundation and is unfair. However, the negative cavalry propaganda generated within the army by the tank advocates together with the external perceptions served to establish this antipathy to modernisation by the cavalry as fact.

Unfortunately, the cavalry, cocooned socially and financially, did not do anything to discard this perception. A number of officers, such as Chetwode and Birdwood, harboured yearnings that the horsed cavalry would not be lost forever. This was born more from sentimentality rather than a logical analysis of the practicalities of modern warfare as Chetwode's letter illustrated where in one breath he berated the Scots Greys' CO and in the next he opined for the retention of more regiments. However, they were not the only ones to cling to this hope. Brigadier-General Sir Henry Croft, Conservative MP for Bournemouth, believed that 'the total abolition of the cavalry would be a frightful blunder.'²⁰⁴ James Chuter-Ede, Labour MP for South Shields, who was not a military man, echoed this sentimental attachment in Parliament and asked that although

²⁰³ General Richard L. McCreery, 'Foreword' in Major-General W. R. Beddington, *A History of the Queen's Bays (The 2nd Dragoon Guards) 1929...1945*, (Winchester: The Wykeham Press, 1954).

²⁰⁴ Hansard Commons, Vol. 310, 1936, Col. 731.

the horses have not been brought out of the stables. The lances appear to have been broken and the swords...have been turned into spanners...[but] is it certain that the day of the horse is over?²⁰⁵

Another was the MP for Wellingborough, Wing Commander Archibald James, who claimed he bore no favouritism coming from a technical arm, the RAF, and believed that the time had yet to come when machines were to totally replace horses.²⁰⁶ However, James had been in the 3rd Hussars prior to his transfer to the RFC during the war, so perhaps his claim of impartiality is open to challenge.²⁰⁷ There was a plethora of other sentimental items that appeared as mechanisation took place, either in articles, letters, pictures and verse. Following the mechanisation of the 12th Lancers in 1928, the artist Gilbert Holiday, who specialised in drawing horses, drew a picture entitled *Still the Same Spirit* depicting a Lance-Sergeant leaning against an armoured car staring wistfully at the heavens where amongst the clouds is depicted a

²⁰⁵ Hansard Commons, Vol. 321, 1937, Cols. 2520-1.

²⁰⁶ Hansard Commons, Vol. 310, 1936, Cols. 730-1.

²⁰⁷ Obituary, 'Wing Cdr Sir Archibald James', *The Times*, Wednesday, May 7, 1980, p. 21, Iss. 60619, col. G.

fictitious World War One scene of lancers charging German infantry.²⁰⁸

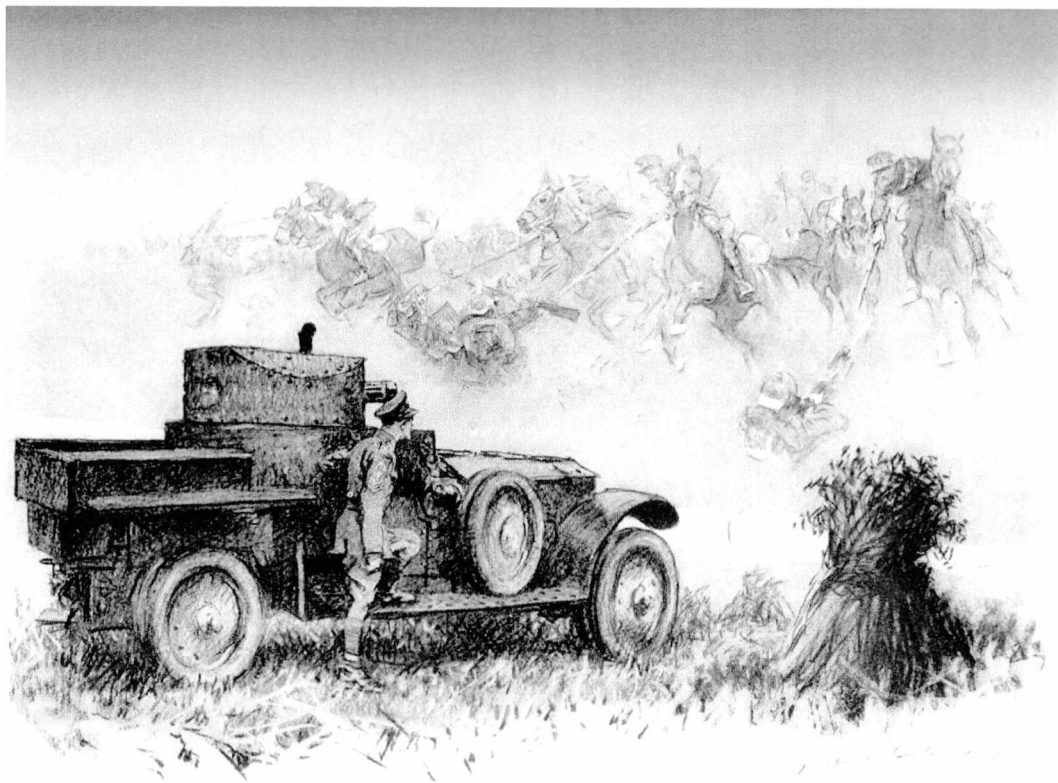


PLATE 6. *Still the Same Spirit*
From the drawing by Gilbert Holiday

Baden-Powell sent one of his own pictures to *The Cavalry Journal* when mechanisation of the cavalry was nearing its completion. The picture, originally entitled *Cast Out*, was re-titled *Farewell to the Horse* in the journal with an accompanying narrative stating that it represented ‘an incident of the Boer War, when a fine old troop horse had to be abandoned on the Veldt.’²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ Obituary, ‘Mr. Gilbert Holiday. Black-and-White Poster Artist’, *The Times*, Saturday, Jan 9, 1937; pg. 14; Issue 47578; col. C. For a reproduction of *Still The Same Spirit* see Stewart, *XII Royal Lancers*, plate 6, p. 320 and also, Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, pp. 337.

²⁰⁹ Frontispiece, ‘Farewell to the Horse’, *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. xxiii, Jan 1938.



FAREWELL TO THE HORSE

This is a reproduction of a picture by Lord Baden Powell, which was sent to the *Cavalry Journal* by the artist when mechanization had become almost complete. It represents an incident of the Boer War, when a fine old troop horse had to be abandoned on the Veldt.

There were articles that appeared in *The Cavalry Journal* in the post-mechanisation period that were to wax lyrical upon traditional cavalry. Lieutenant-Colonel B. G. Baker²¹⁰ in an article called *The Lance* wrote that the lance was the 'queen of weapons. It was a graceful thing, of ornamental value and has done good service in the cause of romance'; a statement of sentimentality and an interesting tacit acceptance of the inadequacy of the weapon itself.²¹¹ He compounded this later in his article with the further admission that 'lancers charged like any other cavalry and achieved much the same rather inadequate result.'²¹² Having made such a bold statement upon the inadequacy of the *arme blanche*, if not of the cavalry, he finished his article with a nostalgic and sentimental cry

²¹⁰ Baker was a post-war author and prior to the war had served in the 21st Hussars and the 9th Prussian Hussars. Obituary, 'Lieut.-Col. B. G. Baker', *The Times*, Thursday, Mar 14, 1957; pg. 15; Issue 53789; col. D

²¹¹ Lt. Col. B. G. Baker, 'The Lance', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXVII, No. 104, Apr. 1937, pp. 231-7, p. 231.

²¹² Ibid, p. 237.

There is a gleam of light yet, in the twilight of those things that are fading away before mechanization. The march of machinery is reacting on men and women to the effect that they are returning to the cult of the horse.²¹³

However, the best exemplar of sentimentality was to appear in *The Journal of the Seventh Hussars* which printed an anonymous prose entitled *A Cavalryman's Grief*

There's grief and mourning far and wide,
And flowing tears we cannot hide, ...
to the tank park one and all,
with spanners, oil and waste, we'll rush
Instead of comb and grooming brush ...
No more parry point and thrust
Our swords will lay red with rust.
All arms as sport no more we'll see
For mechanised we're soon to be.²¹⁴

This is an edited excerpt but the full poem is of a similar style. This sentimental outpouring gave the cavalry detractors fuel to manipulate sentimentality into anachronistic resistance. As Bond has commented, the popular image of the army of this period was 'profoundly influenced by the wickedly effective cartoons of David Low and by the satiric pens of brilliant mavericks and outsiders such as Fuller and Liddell Hart.'²¹⁵ The inability of the cavalry to combat such propaganda has resulted in the popular collective notion of the blimp cavalryman.

However, image and reality are often very distinct and come what may, the cavalry tried to cling to its individual identity. In so doing, it allowed itself to become the target of derision from some quarters, primarily the more extreme tank advocates. It

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ One of "C", 'A Cavalryman's Grief', *The Journal of the Seventh Hussars*, No. 1, Dec. 1936, p. 4.

²¹⁵ Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 9.

is easy to see how the cavalry obtained such a stigmatised cultural image but it is a harsh one.

4. British Cavalry and their International Counterparts

Most historiographical analyses of the cavalry revolve around how it retarded progress in the British army. However, there is little assessment of the thinking and attitudes of the British cavalry in comparison with other nations' armies or cavalry. This is a failing. No army exists in a vacuum as its main function is to deal with conflict with other nations or organisations and so it is essential that they keep abreast of developments elsewhere in order to assess their comparative military capabilities. This chapter seeks to address this shortfall. It does not seek to make a comparative analysis, as this would require an investigation of the pertinent primary documentation of the other nations. What it does seek to do, is to analyse how the British army, and in particular, the British cavalry, looked at foreign services and how it utilised that information.

The prime source for cavalry opinion was its quarterly publication, *The Cavalry Journal*. The quality of the journal was variable but it carried a variety of articles on a plethora of wide-ranging subjects that are of great use when analysing the cavalry, ranging from the theoretical to simple pure written entertainment.¹ An analysis of *The Cavalry Journals* published during the inter-war period highlights that the accusation that the cavalry was introverted is not an accurate one. In analysing the international developments within its own field, the journal had a sub-section set aside specifically for foreign cavalry matters.² It dealt with reviewing international publications, both military periodicals and books, in order to bring relevant works to the attention of the journal's readership. The journal was in regular receipt of the majority of the significant international military periodicals and commented upon each, even if this was to state that there was, in the reviewer's opinion, nothing relevant to the cavalry. Consequently, it is not unreasonable to assume that there was a high degree of thoroughness and the use of *The Cavalry Journal* gives a measure of how informed cavalymen were regarding international developments in overseas

¹ For a broader analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of *The Cavalry Journal*, see chapters The British Cavalry 1920-1933, p. 26 and The Social and Cultural Aspect of the Inter-War British Cavalry, p. 143.

² Editorial, *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXIV, Jan. 1934, p. 1. This is set against Bond's criticism of the British army of this period for being wholly introverted. Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 70.

cavalry branches. Undoubtedly, there were other reports that were received by the British army from overseas, for example from military attachés. How much of this information was disseminated downwards is impossible to ascertain but some reports from British observers overseas did appear as articles in the journal.

A review of *The Cavalry Journal* shows that the cavalry were very much aware of the new factors evolving in modern warfare around the world, and that these developments were challenging not just its function but its existence. The technological challenge to the cavalry role was worldwide even though different nations were confronted by different strategic, tactical and operational issues. This recipe of issues was no less true of the British army of the 1920s and 30s which had to fulfil the dual function of both a fighting force and policeman on a global scale. Consequently, international comparisons and observations were a crucial function in keeping the army aware of potential developments in military strategy and tactics and so the sections bound over to reviewing international literature and reports from officers who had been observing foreign cavalry at first-hand were of great interest.

International military comparisons are inevitably fraught with theoretical problems as each nation's forces are faced with their own unique limiting factors including geography, responsibilities, politics and finance. For example, German military forces of the inter-war period went from the famine of the imposed restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles to the feast of the militaristic attitude of the Nazi rule. These factors were unique to Germany and so any military evolution would similarly be unique. An indication of this can be seen when some German officers were attached to the 12th Lancers in 1934. The 12th Lancers had been mechanised for six years, yet the German officers were amazed at the inadequacy of the Morris armoured car they were using, a clear indication of how the *materiel* of the German army was being better funded than the British.³ Consequently, any hypotheses on the respective merits and failings of any two armies utilising a comparative basis without full contextualisation are built upon weak theoretical bases. What can be done is to

³ IWMSA. Accession No. 933-3, Kenneth Edward Savill.

analyse how an organisation, in this case the British cavalry, kept abreast of international opinions and developments and what conclusions they drew from these observations.

Of the international journals that were scrutinised in *The Cavalry Journal* three in particular were regularly cited. These were the French, *Revue de Cavalerie*, the *U.S. Cavalry Journal* and the German, *Militär-Wochenblatt*. The former two were specific cavalry journals from France and the United States and the latter a general weekly military journal from Germany. Arguably these three nations were, along with the United Kingdom, the dominant, influential military powers in the West. Germany had had the size of its army limited by the Treaty of Versailles, but the thinking of its military theorists remained highly regarded. One of the other main armies was the Russian army which also had a large proportion of cavalry. However, very little was ever really written about the Russian cavalry. Political ideology meant that access to details about Russian military capabilities was restricted. A few accounts were written about the Russo-Polish conflict of 1920 in which both sides' cavalries had played a significant role, but no critical analysis was ever written upon the Russian approach to cavalry and mechanisation. David Glantz has pointed out that in the 1920s, the Soviet army was only able to make very limited developments in mechanisation owing to a severe dearth of vehicles.⁴ The Army Council made a passing comment in 1927 that the Red army was 'increasing its mounted arm.'⁵ In 1929 there was a brief report upon the war establishment of the Russian cavalry which simply gave details of the structure and number of personnel in a cavalry regiment. It noted that in these large regiments, with 1,137 men, there were only 94 vehicles which were predominantly two-wheeled carts.⁶ This changed in the 1930s under the patronage of General Tuchachevski and mechanisation began to make progress. However, the successes of the cavalry in the Russian Civil War and the Russo-Polish conflict together with a favourable geography for using cavalry meant that their chance of supplanting the horse was reduced. Thus, a combined unit was

⁴ David M. Glantz, 'The Motor-Mechanization Program of the Red Army during the Interwar Years', Soviet Army Studies Office, U. S. Army, March 1990, pp. 9-12.

⁵ 'Memorandum on the Reorganisation of the Cavalry', WO32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

⁶ WO106/5727 War establishments of a Russian cavalry corps and cavalry division.

still in place at the 1936 manoeuvres observed by both Martel and Wavell, which, in their opinions, was proven impractical. They observed that whilst the cavalry were prepared to fight dismounted 'they still hoped for mounted action on the battlefield in co-operation with tanks.'⁷ Yet these observations were not reported upon in *The Cavalry Journal*. A further brake upon Soviet mechanisation was to take place in 1937, when Stalin purged a vast swathe of the Soviet officers on charges of high treason. Many of those killed were innovative officers, including Tuchachevski, and as a result Soviet army thinking was hindered as the Second World War approached.⁸

Of the other European nations with any significant cavalry presence; Spain, Italy and Poland, very little analysis was made on their current thinking on the future of the horse. There was mention that Italy had significantly reduced its cavalry contingent but nothing on its future policy. This was the same for both Spain and Poland.

Outside of Europe, another significant army during the inter-war period was the Japanese, with Japan being a nation that the British army viewed as a potential enemy. However, like the Russian cavalry almost no details ever appeared in *The Cavalry Journal*. The British did receive some information upon the Japanese army and its cavalry. The military attaché to Japan sent back a report on the Japanese army manoeuvres in 1936 which commented that the cavalry 'were only seen at the review.'⁹ In 1939, Lieutenant Pender-Cudlip of the RA spent three months on attachment with the 15th Cavalry Regiment. Pender-Cudlip observed that having previously been on attachment to the Japanese army he felt that this time he was attached to a less important arm and given less access than previously allowed and was always accompanied by an officer. In consequence, very little was learnt of any

⁷ WO32/4157 Soviet Army Manoeuvres: report by Major-General A. P. Wavell. Also mentioned in Charles Messenger, *The Art of Blitzkrieg*, (London: Ian Allen, 1976), pp. 84-8.

⁸ David M. Glantz, 'The Motor-Mechanization Program of the Red Army during the Interwar Years', Soviet Army Studies Office, U. S. Army, March 1990, p. 39. The case against Tuchachevski was for being a German agent. A fabrication concocted between the NKVD and the Nazi SS Security Service, although it remains unclear as to whether it was part of an NKVD plan or a manipulation by the SS. See Jacob W. Kipp, 'Military Reform and the Red Army, 1918-1941: Bolsheviks, *Voyenspetsy*, and the Young Red Commanders', in Winton and Mets (eds.), *The Challenge of Change*, pp. 108-161, p. 150 and footnote 115, pp. 160-1.

⁹ WO106/5514, Report in the Grand Manoeuvres, Imperial Japanese Army, 1936.

military value. However, although there was no evidence of mechanisation in the 15th Cavalry Regiment, Pender-Cudlip did briefly visit the 16th Cavalry Regiment which he believed was better equipped and saw vehicles being transferred to the 2nd Tank Regiment, giving credence to his belief that he was being channelled.¹⁰ There had been an earlier attachment in 1930 by Captain Ainger of 3rd Hussars which highlighted that very little had changed in twenty years. The Japanese Staff College studied Allenby's operations in Palestine as they believed this campaign was relevant to potential operations in Manchuria.¹¹ The Military Attaché in Tokyo reported in 1931 that the Vice-Minister for War in Japan acknowledged that the major European powers were equipping their cavalry with armoured cars and that the Japanese cavalry was 'conspicuously inferior in equipment.'¹²

As thinking developed about mechanisation, the British cavalry sought to compare its progress with other nations. *The Cavalry Journal* continued to present reviews and analyses of foreign publications, primarily military periodical journals. These were augmented by actual overseas field reports from cavalymen on observations with various units. These published pieces were utilised in a variety of ways. Firstly, it was used as a yardstick to ensure that the British cavalry was not falling behind in current cavalry ideology. More frequently, it was used to emphasise how the British cavalry was pioneering methods. In doing so it also kept itself abreast of any overseas innovations or modernisations of either an organisational or functional nature. Secondly, it also used it as validation of its own methodology in order to shore up and justify its current strategic and tactical ideologies. The main problem with this approach was that it did not necessarily encourage innovative tactical thinking and could be used to support traditional outlooks as well as any forward thinking concepts, thereby creating an international self-justifying cavalry fraternity.

For the British cavalry, the immediate period after the war was spent seeking to support the retention of the horseman and denying that the day of the horse was

¹⁰ WO106/5657, Strength, administration and organisation of the Japanese Army: Cavalry organisation.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

over.¹³ Much of this belief stemmed from the influence of the former commander of the BEF, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, and his assertion that his experiences of the recent war had convinced him more than ever that there remained a crucial and extended role for the cavalry.¹⁴ The journal used international sources to support of Haig's views. In France, Lt. Col. R. Boullaire of the 2nd Hussars boldly pronounced that the role of the cavalry had undeniably increased rather than diminished. Unlike Haig, Boullaire went on to elucidate why he believed this to be the case, which seemed to be based upon the premise that if the cavalry embraced all new technology and made it the cavalry's servant, it would create a mounted mobile unit of immense fighting strength that no longer required the infantry.¹⁵ Whilst this was ambitious, there is a sense of the kind of combined operations that were to prove so successful for Germany in the opening phases of World War Two. Boullaire's view was to be reaffirmed in the *Revue de Cavalerie* a year later by one of France's Generals, Maxime Weygand, who himself was a cavalryman. In this later article, Weygand concluded that the very machines that some believed would replace the cavalry would in fact make 'its actions more varied, more powerful, greater and more decisive' ensuring, in his view, that the cavalry 'will fear nothing.'¹⁶

However, the journal managed to find a higher profile supporter of Haig's viewpoint in General Pershing, the CO of the AEF in the First World War. In an article from the *U.S. Cavalry Journal* he stated that

The cavalry of the French and British was vital...at the opening of the war...During the period of trench warfare...some unthinking persons [thought] the day of the cavalry seems to have passed...The splendid work of the cavalry more than justified its existence and the expense of its upkeep.¹⁷

¹³ See chapter on the British Cavalry, 1920-1933.

¹⁴ Douglas Haig, 'Editorial', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. X, No. 36, April 1920, p.6.

¹⁵ This is an unnamed article by Lt. Col. R. Boullaire in the *Revue Militaire Generale*, Nov-Dec 1919, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. X, No. 36, April 1920, pp. 164-5.

¹⁶ J. J. Clarke, 'Military Technology in Republican France: The evolution of the French Armored Force, 1917-1940', (Unpublished PhD thesis, Duke University, 1969), p. 90.

¹⁷ From an unnamed and undated article by General Pershing in the *U.S. Cavalry Journal*, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. X., No. 37, July 1920, p.354.

Whether the original piece in the journal elaborated further on this confident statement is not clear from the evidence that is presented in *The Cavalry Journal*, but these are strong statements for someone who did not actually arrive on the Western Front until 1917. Thus the remarks can only, for the most part, be derived from second-hand accounts and certainly the comments bear a striking resemblance to the views of Haig himself.¹⁸ However, whether these were Pershing's own views or merely the regurgitation of Haig's own assessment of his cavalry arm during the war is, in the main, irrelevant. The fact that *The Cavalry Journal* was able to publish such high profile international advocacy of the cavalry's future was important to its self-esteem and strengthened the concept.

In 1926, the writer of the 'Dominion and Foreign Magazines' section in *The Cavalry Journal*, took great comfort from the 'cavalry periodicals' from overseas in their support for the cavalry and waxed lyrically that

In the middle of the last century the armchair doctrinaires solemnly announced that the 'long range rifle' had proclaimed the doom of the Cavalry. More recently in all countries gloomy, tank-obsessed, Ichabod-crying, mechanicalised Jeremiahs convinced themselves, if no one else, that the days of Cavalry were, as that eminent critic Mr. Curdle said of Hamlet, 'gone, utterly gone.' These prophets should take a course of Cavalry Periodicals. There are, fortunately, plenty in existence for them to choose from...¹⁹

He then drew attention to an article in the September-October 1924 issue of the *Revue de Cavalerie* analysing a recently published work by a German officer, Lt. Col. Brandt on 'Cavalry of the present day.'²⁰ Brandt's work was mentioned again in a subsequent issue of the journal when it appeared in the *U.S. Cavalry Journal*. On reviewing this issue of the U.S. journal, the writer commented upon the frequent use

¹⁸ The American Cavalry did not act as such for its period on the western front owing, in the main, to the lack of mounts and spent its time working with other units. Tedesco III, Chapter 1, pp. 2-3.

¹⁹ F. J. H., 'Dominion and Foreign Magazines', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XV, Jan. 1925, pp. 96-98, p.96.

²⁰ Ibid.

of Brandt's work by 'the Cavalry Press of foreign countries' and called for its translation into English.²¹ He pointed out that Brandt's work appeared in yet another overseas journal, the *Alere Flammam*, that highlighted Brandt's conclusion from the recent war that 'the obsession with trench warfare is gradually fading away and Cavalry is coming into its own again.'²² The review provides no explanation as to how Brandt came to this conclusion and echoes Haig's assertion. In a review of a journal from Italy, *La Cooperazione delle Armi*, the reviewer drew attention to an article by Captain Pelligra that looked at the issues confronting the cavalry. This again placed unbounded faith in the mounted soldier and he 'points out that in military history, whenever Cavalry has been pronounced to be an arm of the past, it has always risen to greater successes and renown than ever before.'²³ It would seem that Haig's unswerving belief in the immortality of the cavalry arm was internationally supported.

This support was not just from the cavalry fraternity. In 1923, the journal reviewed a French article by Colonel of Artillery Cambuzat, entitled 'Cavalry and Fire.' In the article he rejected those who would call for the end of the cavalry. For him the moral advantages remained in favour of the cavalry and they continued to be superior to tank, tractor and armoured car for flexibility.²⁴ Although Cambuzat does not define his meaning of flexibility, certainly the cross-country capability at this stage of all three vehicles was limited. In Britain, the tank theorist Fuller had had to acknowledge this current weakness.²⁵ The French were insistent that for the cavalry, machines should be *tout-terrain* in order to replace the horse, by which the vehicle must have the capability of moving quickly upon roads and other sympathetic surfaces but also have the ability to move across country when required, albeit at reduced speeds.²⁶

²¹ F. J. H., 'Dominion and Foreign Magazines', p.406.

²² Ibid, p.412.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Col. Cambuzat, 'Cavalry and Fire', *Revue de Cavalerie*, Sep. 1922, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIII, Jan. 1923, p. 104.

²⁵ See Chapter on The British Cavalry 1920-1933, p. 26.

²⁶ Clarke, 'Military Technology', p. 93.

The first mechanised cavalry units in Britain appeared in 1927-8 when the decision was taken to convert two cavalry regiments into armoured car regiments. It was perhaps no coincidence that this year saw the death of Haig and the introduction of an experimental mechanised force. In Haig, the British cavalry had a high profile advocate whose unswerving faith was a source of confidence, but he never really substantiated his views in any critical way and any supporting argument he may have had died with him. Consequently, any singular advocacy of the horse cavalry subsided and those that maintained such a belief were a minority. This is not to say that such views were to diminish elsewhere in the world.

In Germany, there remained a body of opinion that still held faith with a mounted force. In a German article that was translated and published in the *Revue de Cavalerie*, the author assured the reader that the cavalry had no need to fear its future as 'an enterprising cavalry, well led, can obtain astonishing results.'²⁷ According to Mary Halbeck, until 1934, the German High Command remained very conservative in nature and she cites a report of a Russian observer stating that

the Germans regard the question of a mechanized army extremely sceptically...All the generals declare that they are against mechanization...they undoubtedly lag behind the English and even the French and are conservative generals.²⁸

This statement as well as passing judgement upon the German High Command implied that the observer perceived that it was the 'English' who were leading the way in mechanisation.

In France, immediately after the war and throughout the 1920s, the French cavalry had undergone a number of transitions. In an article in 1933, General Boucherie outlined three stages of development that he believed the French cavalry had gone

²⁷ *Revue de Cavalerie*, Nov-Dec. 1928, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIX, April 1929, p. 319.

²⁸ Mary R. Halbeck, *Storm of Steel: The Development of Armor Doctrine in Germany and the Soviet Union, 1919-1939*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 165.

through. He believed that the three stages could be split between 1914-1925, 1925-1930 and 1930 onwards. In the first stage, the French cavalry had focussed upon increasing firepower. The second was the introduction of motorised vehicles by way of dismounted cavalry in lorries or *dragons portés*. In his final stage, Boucherie felt that there had been a three-way debate. The first questioning whether the cavalry should be replaced by the aeroplane; the second advocating that the cavalry should be disbanded as they could no longer protect motorised infantry and finally, the 'conservative' view that the horse was still the very core of a cavalry division. Boucherie did not hold with these viewpoints and advocated a combined horse and vehicle division. He believed that horse and vehicle complimented one another and that this was the model that had been accepted in France in 1931.²⁹ This outcome, which despite Boucherie's analysis would appear to be a fourth option, seems to be essentially an amalgam of all other three. This summary is broadly supported by Clarke in his analysis of the inter-war evolution of the French cavalry. However, he points out that the concept of motorisation in the cavalry was embraced by cavalrymen very quickly after the war. Clarke is emphatic in his assertion that the French cavalry did not let their love of the horse blinker them to the uses of the motor vehicle.³⁰ In the early 1920s, Major-General Sir Cyril Townshend believed that there was a body of opinion in French military circles that the tank was no longer of any use.³¹ Thus in France, by 1934, they had accepted the new technology but were a little way off embracing it. By comparison, the British cavalry had already undertaken a motorisation programme for its second-line transport and had also begun conducting an experiment in mechanisation with a squadron of the 3rd Hussars.³²

It was, however, in the United States that conservatism was to find its most extreme form. As late as 1939 *The Cavalry Journal*, now with a new full title *The Cavalry Journal Horsed and Mechanized*, printed an article from its U.S. counterpart citing the American Chief of Cavalry, Major-General J. K. Herr who wholeheartedly

²⁹ General Boucherie, 'Modern cavalry', *Revue Militaire Française*, November, 1933, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXIV, April 1934, pp. 296-7.

³⁰ Clarke, 'Military Technology', pp. 88-90.

³¹ 'Parliamentary Notes', *The Army Quarterly*, Vol. II, No.2, July 1921, p. 415.

³² See Chapter on the British Cavalry 1934-1940.

supported the retention of horsed cavalry. He believed that there was a minimum requirement of 'between 20,000 and 30,000 cavalymen.'³³ This can be compared with the size of the British cavalry which had approximately 6,000 men.³⁴ In the same issue, there was a more conservative article by a former British cavalry officer, Captain Baron George Marochetti of the 11th Hussars, entitled 'What does Palestine prove?' in which he argued that '[t]he disappearance of the horsed cavalry is deplored.' This was obviously a direct reference to the British cavalry where wholesale mechanisation had been authorised. He believed that there was a renewed requirement for horsed cavalry in Palestine and this showed that it was a mistake to dismount the cavalry and he foresaw a time when 'it might be necessary to remount some of the units recently mechanised.'³⁵ This staunch advocacy had all but disappeared in the British cavalry journal and it is interesting to note that Marochetti's article was published in the U. S. where his traditionalist views were more likely to find a receptive audience. Furthermore, at this stage, Marochetti's former regiment had been mechanised for eleven years.

However, this audience had an even more extreme spokesman than Marochetti or Herr, in Brigadier-General H. S. Hawkins. One of his articles from the *U. S. Cavalry Journal* was reviewed in its British counterpart and was given a generously larger précis than was usually given to other articles. In this piece, Hawkins argued vehemently for the primacy of horsed cavalry over its mechanised variant. To him the British philosophy illustrated 'complete confusion of mind and of ideas.' He maintained that the horse still had greater cross-country capacity which gave it stronger reconnaissance abilities. He believed that the cavalry still had a role in the mounted attack and drawing on the traditions of the American cavalry of the American Civil War and their skirmishes against the Native Americans, asserted that European soldiers had no comprehension of the efficacy of the pistol on horseback. He believed that increasing the armour on vehicles was only going to further impede their mobility. He then drew on recent post-war conflicts to support his advocacy of

³³ *U. S. Cavalry Journal*, Jan.-Feb. 1939 reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal, Horsed and Mechanized*, Vol. XXIX, No. 112, April 1939, pp. 327-8.

³⁴ See chapter on the British Cavalry, 1920-1933, p. 26.

³⁵ Captain Baron George Marochetti, 'What does Palestine prove?', *U. S. Cavalry Journal*, Jan.-Feb. 1939 reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal, Horsed and Mechanized*, Vol. XXIX, No. 112, April 1939, pp. 327-8.

flesh over armour, citing the successes of the cavalry in the Spanish Civil War and the relative failure of the tank in the recent conflict in China.³⁶ The journal's reviewer made no real observation upon the article, perhaps deciding that the contents were sufficient in themselves and just closed with the statement that he was sure that it would 'rejoice the heart of the most fervent champion of the horsed cavalry arm.'³⁷

Hawkins' stance was undoubtedly extreme by this stage, even in the more conservative climate of the U. S. cavalry and should perhaps be considered as an eccentric amusement.³⁸ But his articles continued to be published and he held down a regular column in the *U. S. Cavalry Journal*.³⁹ Hawkins' advocacy of the horse continued throughout the Second World War using various failings from the war as evidence that the horse was still a necessary weapon upon the modern battlefield. He remained unrepentant and in the last of his columns in late 1945 he berated commanders for not utilising horsed cavalry as these would have 'saved both time and losses.' Hawkins had gone further than any other and as Bielakowski states it had become 'a matter of faith'.⁴⁰

Whilst Hawkins had retired from the US army, there remained some serving high profile senior officers who supported the horse; the most well-known was General George S. Patton, Jr.. Patton had written to a friend stating that in spite of his association with the tank he was certain 'that the day of the horse is far from over and that under many circumstances horse cavalry and horse drawn artillery are more important than ever.'⁴¹

³⁶ Brigadier-General H. S. Hawkins, *U. S. Cavalry Journal*, Nov. – Dec. 1938, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXIX, No. 112, April 1939, pp. 325-6.

³⁷ *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXIX, No. 112, April 1939, p. 326.

³⁸ The traditionalists within the U. S. army had managed to retard the progress of mechanisation and any efforts had been more tokenistic than realistic. It was not until June 1940 that a decision was made to create a separate armoured force, removed from both the cavalry and the infantry, in order to expedite the process. See Alexander M. Bielakowski, 'General Hawkins's War: The Future of the Horse in the U. S. Cavalry', *The Journal of Military History*, No. 71, Jan. 2007, pp.127-138, p. 136.

³⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 136-7.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 138.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, pp. 136-7.

As with any chronological delineation, they are more a narrative construct than an actual divide. This was certainly the case with the British cavalry. Even though the voices calling for the retention of the cavalry in the early 1920s as a standalone unit were predominant, there were those calling for co-operation with the new weaponry; an acceptance that would enhance the future of the cavalry, not diminish it. The phrase being repeatedly utilised in conjunction with the notion of mechanisation was as 'an adjunct to the cavalry', rather than as a replacement. The main issue facing the cavalry as technology advanced was that it could neither travel as fast nor as far as motor vehicles. Much investigation had been done into reducing the weight carried by both horse and man in order to improve mobility, utilising motor transport to carry heavy equipment. In Britain, *The Cavalry Journal* had run a competition open to its readers offering a prize for the best solution in reducing the weight carried by the horse.⁴² This was still being advocated by a German writer in the *Militär-Wochenblatt* as late as 1929.⁴³

This was quickly followed by an acceptance of the use of both the armoured car and the light tank in tandem with the horse, thus increasing its firepower and ergo, the cavalry's offensive abilities.⁴⁴ This was undoubtedly further underpinned by the successes of the RAF in the Middle-East using just aircraft and armoured cars in policing actions. In 1928 two regiments of cavalry, the 11th Hussars and the 12th Royal Lancers were converted to armoured car units.

These concepts were acknowledged to be gaining ground on the Continent, where in 1924, the reviewer of the 'Dominion and Foreign Magazines' section within the journal noted that

⁴² For an example of this see 'The Mobile Division of the Future', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIV, Apr. 1924, pp. 155-164. p. 157. The competition was set in the same issue of the journal, pp. 165-6. A précis of the various proposals in response to the competition were given in the following issue, *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIV, July 1924, pp. 346- 353.

⁴³ *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIX, Jan. 1929, p.138.

⁴⁴ A good example of this is shown in an article by Major E. G. Hume, 'Mechanical Aids to Cavalry', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XV, Apr. 1925, pp. 177- 185. The emphasis being on their 'aids' to the cavalry not their primacy over the cavalry.

[t]he question of increasing the mobility of a division by making use of motor transport has been carefully studied during the past year both in France and Italy, and considerable attention has been given to the co-operation between cavalry, tanks and infantry in lorries or cross country tractors.⁴⁵

The Cavalry Journal gave an analysis of an account of French manoeuvres given in the *Revue de Cavalerie* where tracked armoured cars had been used in co-operation with advanced cavalry. The reviewer noted that the armoured cars 'seem[ed] to have fulfilled their rôle adequately.' The article further noted that armoured cars should not be heavily armoured in order to maintain their agility and speed cross country.⁴⁶ This view was picked up in an article in the *U. S. Cavalry Journal* by Patton who gave a fictionalised account of a future conflict. The style of the article was more akin to Wellsian science fiction but it illustrated his views upon the use of armoured cars in modern warfare. In it he concurred with the French premise that mobility, rather than armour, was key to the success of the armoured car. Patton's rationale for focussing upon the armoured car in this article was because 'there are no tanks available for issue in the Country [U. S. A] which can keep up with any unit of Cavalry.'⁴⁷

This combined utilisation of new technologies within the cavalry was wholeheartedly adopted by the French and the British kept a close and interested watch on the progress of this idea. An article by a Major E. G. Hume of the 18th (King Edward's Own) Cavalry, an Indian cavalry regiment, in 1925 gave a detailed overview of the structure of the French cavalry and its functions.⁴⁸ Hume pointed out that '[t]he organisation, equipment and training of the French cavalry differ at the present time considerably from our own.'⁴⁹ An earlier anonymous article noted that in the French

⁴⁵ 'Dominion and Foreign Magazines', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIV, Jan 1924, pp. 118- 120, p.118.

⁴⁶ Captain Gazin, *Revue de Cavalerie*, Dec. 1923, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIV, Apr. 1924, p. 249.

⁴⁷ Major G. S. Patton, Jr., 'Armoured Cars and Cavalry', *U. S. Cavalry Journal*, Jan. 1924, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIV, April 1924, p. 250.

⁴⁸ Major E. G. Hume, 'Notes on Modern French Cavalry', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XV, Jan. 1925, pp. 27-38.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

cavalry's new FSR, *Règlement de la Cavalerie*, its doctrine could be encapsulated with the simple statement that 'the cavalry manoeuvres on horse-back and fights on foot.'⁵⁰ In point of fact, as one French officer highlighted, their regulations struck far deeper to the core of the traditional nature of the cavalry by casting in stone the edict that 'shock action by cavalry is henceforth forbidden.'⁵¹

Of particular interest for the British cavalry was the creation in France of the *Division Légère* which was the 'smallest self-supporting tactical unit of all arms' and corresponded to a British Cavalry Brigade. The technological aspects held within this unit were a group of cyclists of some 450 men, an engineer unit also mounted on cycles, 24 guns of artillery, 36 armoured cars, 3 wireless cars and, interestingly, a force of 8 two-seater aircraft and one messenger plane.⁵² The cross country armoured car was still in the experimental stage and so the function of the road-bound armoured car was essentially reserved for the personal reconnaissance of the various commanders encompassed within the division.⁵³

The role of the *Division Légère* was, according to Hume, essentially the same as that of the British: it was merely the techniques used to undertake those functions that differed owing to the different organisational structure. Hume's assertion is correct at a surface level but he missed the deeper philosophy behind this new grouping. This was explained by *Chef D'Escadron* Chanoine of *L'armée d'Afrique*

A body of cavalry is no mere congeries of men and horses, but on the contrary, a complete organism, containing also machine guns, cannon, armoured cars and aeroplanes, the whole grouped with and forming the complement of the mounted body.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ 'The Mobile Division of the Future', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIV, Apr. 1924, pp. 155-164. p. 160.

⁵¹ *Chef D'Escadron* Chanoine 'Du Groupe de Reconnaissance', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XVIII, Apr. 1928, pp. 290-302, p. 290.

⁵² Hume, 'Notes on Modern French Cavalry', pp.27-8.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p.32.

⁵⁴ *Chef D'Escadron* Chanoine 'Du Groupe de Reconnaissance', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XVIII, Apr. 1928, pp. 290-302, p. 290.

This harmonised approach to conflict had been advocated in 1921 by Weygand for the whole army, which he foresaw as consisting of '[p]owerful combat forces' that utilised 'light tanks, aircraft, armored cars, auto-canons, and horse and self-propelled artillery'.⁵⁵ Weygand's acceptance of the impact of new technology upon warfare was exemplified in his memoirs where his views upon the role of tanks in the Great War were emphatic, '[w]e [the allies] had won the war thanks to the tanks, whose use had transformed the tactics of our attacks in 1918, and we were not stupid enough to forget it.'⁵⁶ Whilst this was written post-Second World War, Weygand's commitment to mechanisation during the inter-war period would testify that this was not written through the vantage of hindsight.

Possibly the most interesting variant of the French unit to the British unit was the attachment of an air *escadrille*. The duties of this attachment were long range reconnaissance and the prevention of enemy long range reconnaissance. This was a formal acknowledgement of the complementary functions of the two arms and, in Hume's view, 'the intimate *liaison* between these integral parts...if they are trained together, should lead to very efficient co-operation and mutual understanding.'⁵⁷ The author solidly supported this homogenised form of cavalry unit and foresaw that as technology improved with either an

efficient cross country armoured car or cavalry tank...[t]he possibilities of these two distinct attributes of modern cavalry, mobile and powerful fire effect and the *arme blanche*, need close attention so that one or the other, or a combination of the two, may be wisely used in dealing with any particular situation.⁵⁸

But Hume's analysis has the feel of separate units being grouped together rather than Chanoine's single 'organism.' Hume's continued reference to the *arme blanche* indicates that the old notion of cavalry still remained amongst the British cavalry

⁵⁵ Clarke, 'Military Technology', p. 90.

⁵⁶ Eugenia C. Kiesling, 'Resting Uncomfortably on its Laurels: The Army of Interwar France', in Winton and Mets (eds.), *The Challenge of Change*, pp. 1-34., p. 14.

⁵⁷ Hume, 'Notes on Modern French Cavalry', p. 33.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p.38.

whereas in France there had been an attempt to redefine and conceptualise the idea of cavalry.

The French concept of a 'Light Division' was drawn into the public domain by a letter to *The Times* by a serving MP, E. L. Spears. Spears was a former cavalryman himself but had spent much of the war as a liaison officer to the French caused him to have an admiration of all things French.⁵⁹ Spears' letter was damning of the War Office on its approach to 'mechanicalizing the army'. He stated that the War Office had been accused during recent parliamentary debates of failing to assimilate any lessons from the War, unlike the armies on the Continent, and for the implementation of any cogent policy on mechanisation.⁶⁰ He then laid out an argument in support of these views. He cited the case of the British cavalry as the most 'glaring example of our lack of progress compared with other countries'. He then proceeded to say that whilst the British cavalry had continued as though it was still 1914, the French Cavalry Division had changed its name and precept, with the horse being purely a mode of transport not of fighting. He then gave an extremely condensed outline of the divisional constituents in line with those given by Hume's article in *The Cavalry Journal*.⁶¹

It is interesting to note that much of the historiography of British armoured doctrine asserts that during the 1920s, Britain led the way and it was only in the 1930s that other nations began to overtake. However, from the above it would seem that for some, this ideological edge was overstated. Whilst the British army had all the technological elements, the focus was a disparate rather than a cohesive whole. The concepts of combined operations that had evolved and been established during the war were often set aside amidst inter-service enmity fuelled by post-war fiduciary

⁵⁹ Obituary, 'Sir Edward Spears', *The Times*, Jan. 28, 1974, p. 14. Spears had served in both the 8th and 11th Hussars. For an account of Spears' life and descriptions of his prominent Francophilia see Max Egremont, *Under Two Flags The Life of Major-General Sir Edward Spears*, (London: Phoenix, 1998). An example of his love of France was exhibited in being nicknamed the member for Paris whilst an MP, see Egremont, *Under Two Flags*, p. 124.

⁶⁰ As has been highlighted in an earlier chapter, the army, had in fact tried to learn lessons from the War, see chapter on The British Cavalry, 1920-1933, p.26.

⁶¹ E. L. Spears, "'Mechanicalizing" the Army', *The Times*, May 20, 1924, p. 10.

stringency strongly established by the Geddes Report in 1921; each service and individual branches within the army all squabbling over crumbs from the table. The ineffectiveness of horsed cavalry having been highlighted specifically in the report, gave other branches and services the ammunition to try and kill off the cavalry in order to free up funds for their own use. Against such a backdrop of financial backstabbing in the British forces, Clarke's conclusion on the evolution of the French inter-war cavalry makes for interesting reading.

Cavalry was the one branch which was able to reunify under its banner a variety of different arms—armored cars, horse troops, motorcycles, and motorized infantry...it was able to perfect small combined arms teams to a degree that was impossible for the Infantry and tanks corps...combined with motorized artillery and support elements to form the Cavalry Division, the continued perfection of “inter-arms” teams was logical. Since mobility and speed were the goal of each of these elements, each became increasingly oriented towards the machine, or, at least, towards the type of tactics and techniques that would insure their goal. In this way, the Cavalry was in the process of organizing complex command and supply systems which, unlike the tank regiments, could easily embrace and utilize the rapid movements which were being made in machine weapons.’⁶²

Thus, in France, rather than dissolving the cavalry it had become the nucleus around which the army could build a flexible fighting force. They had created a force that had the functional basis to meet the Germans head on in 1940, but as explained later, not the strategic application.

The argument put forward by many against the removal of the mounted cavalry, either by mechanisation or dissolution was a topographical one; the argument being that there remained many regions in the globe where the terrain was not conducive to

⁶² J. J. Clarke, ‘Military Technology’, pp. 105-6.

mechanised or motorised operations. In both articles above the French approach to mobile operations was attributed to the anticipated conditions of warfare by the French who were trained for 'conditions analogous to those of the Great War' whereas the British were prepared on the premise of a more mobile conflict involving inferior opposition in less developed terrain.⁶³ This statement highlights the dual role confronting the British army and how the cavalry perceived its primary role in guarding the Empire in colonial conflicts; Hume, the author of the article, was himself an officer in an Indian cavalry regiment.

This argument on terrain was reiterated by many and continued into the 1930s and remained the main lifebuoy for mounted cavalry. In 1929 *The Cavalry Journal's* foreign magazine reviewer stated that a paper in the *Militär Wochenblatt* dismissed the claims that vehicles had replaced cavalry and that irrespective of their capabilities their movements were 'restricted, if not merely to the roads, at least to country tolerably easily traversable' and so there continued to be 'a greater need than ever for the mounted man.'⁶⁴ In 1939, an extract on an article by an American artillery officer reporting on the current war between Japan and China argued that warfare in the rugged Chinese mountains was impossible without horses.⁶⁵

In France, the *Revue de Cavalerie* continued its advocacy of the horse following the French army manoeuvres in 1928 between the towns of Provins and Sézanne. It stated that

those who...could have seen the cavalry working over the very broken country bordering the Moselle...those impassioned devotees of mechanization could hardly seriously have suggested any arm which really and effectively could take its place. They must have been forced to admit that among descents so precipitous, in ravines so thickly wooded, so rocky and roadless, nothing in the way of a caterpillar

⁶³ Hume, 'Notes on Modern French Cavalry', p.36.

⁶⁴ *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIX, Jan. 1929, p. 138.

⁶⁵ Lt. Col. E. M. Benitez, 'Japanese Cavalry in the War with China', extract from *Krasnaya Konitza*, No.2, 1939 in WO208/1399 Japanese Army: The attack; cavalry.

tractor could have made any progress, while it would everywhere have been liable to surprise and capture.⁶⁶

These manoeuvres were of particular interest to the British cavalry as the 8th Hussars took part in them.⁶⁷ The British report on these manoeuvres was not complimentary, believing them to be unrealistic. However, the report agreed with the view of the *Revue de Cavalerie* that the terrain showed the advantage of horses over armoured cars. The report believed that armoured cars actually slowed the cavalry down and that the French seemed oblivious to any frailties that armoured cars may have to anti-tank guns.⁶⁸ The report did not make any further comment upon mechanisation in the cavalry, but its tone did not support the creation of a similar division advocated by some.

This analysis highlighted the potential frailty of the terrain argument. The region that the *Revue de Cavalerie* had asserted validated the retention of mounted cavalry was part of the very region on the Franco-German border that Hume had ascribed as being why the French had such a different outlook on its cavalry. An outlook that led to the creation of its light division. It seemed to be overlooked by Hume that the variable nature of the terrain had led the French to this combined approach and challenged the British perception that the arms needed to be separate, despite the varied geography of places such as the North-West Frontier.

In the United States, Major E. J. Dwan of the US cavalry acknowledged that all nations were studying the implementation of motor vehicles and that in the

United States, we are adopting motor transportation as rapidly as is justified by existing conditions...We...can scarcely visualize actions over

⁶⁶ *Revue de Cavalerie*, May-June 1928, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XVIII, Oct. 1928, pp. 664-5.

⁶⁷ The participation of a British regiment in French manoeuvres caused a degree of international unrest as the Germans saw it as a signal of intent of co-operation against Germany. Items 18A and 21A, WO32/3579, Report on manoeuvres of French Army and participation of British Cavalry, 1928.

⁶⁸ WO32/3579, Report on manoeuvres of French Army and participation of British Cavalry, 1928.

areas that are replete with systems of hard surface roads, such as are found in western Europe...The weakness of the armoured car, however, rests in its being practically confined to roads. This is a serious question in certain undeveloped portions of the United States.⁶⁹

This conceptualisation of the U.S. army merely echoed Pershing's immediately after the war, where he saw its future role as the defence of the U.S. upon the American continent, in particular on and around the Mexican border, and believed cavalry would play an important role.⁷⁰ Even Fuller had to concur with this perception when giving a presentation at the RUSI summarising 'mechanicalisation' of modern armies in 1924.⁷¹ Dwan's assertion of the armoured car being confined to the roads was clearly lacking an awareness of developments on the European continent, where the French had developed and utilised the half-tracked vehicle to great effect.⁷²

Aside from the latent isolationist attitude implicit in the above quote it also provided further validation to the British cavalry that when conducting border patrols in the Empire much as the USA were on their Mexican border which was 'a most mountainous country and one lacking in good roads and deficient of any really adequate water supply',⁷³ a man on horse was still paramount owing to the nature of the terrain. Commenting on an article written by Patton, the reviewer for *The Cavalry Journal* argued that Patton's outlook was of a 'very much saner outlook [than]...is presented by some'. In his article, Patton was confident that manoeuvre would reappear upon the battlefield and that even the most 'hardened mechanist' should realise that in 'parts of even civilized countries' there were areas impassable

⁶⁹ Major E. J. Dwan, 'The reorganization of the United States cavalry', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIX, Oct. 1929, pp. 602-615, pp. 609-610.

⁷⁰ George F. Hofmann, *Through Mobility We Conquer The Mechanization of the U. S. Cavalry*, (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), p.66.

⁷¹ Colonel J. F. C. Fuller, 'Progress in the Mechanicalisation of Modern Armies', *RUSI Journal*, Vol. LXX, Feb. 1925, pp. 73-89, p. 82.

⁷² Clarke, 'Military Technology', pp. 97-9. The first effective half-tracked vehicle was produced by Citroen in the 1920s and was licensed from the French by Germany in 1927, see James S. Corum, 'A Clash of Military Cultures: German & French Approaches to Technology between the World Wars', USAF Academy Symposium, Sept. 1994, p. 4, www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/saas/corum.pdf accessed 20th May 2008. Also, James S. Corum, 'A Comprehensive Approach to Change: Reform in the German Army in the Interwar Period', in Winton and Mets (eds.), *The Challenge of Change*, pp. 35-73., pp. 48.

⁷³ *United States Cavalry Journal*, Sept-Oct 1931, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXII, Jan. 1932, p.143.

to machines and that machines should not be ascribed with powers that they simply did not possess.⁷⁴ A report on the German army manoeuvres of 1928 spoke of categorising its mobile troops by its suitability to terrain type: *geländegängig* and *strassengängig*. The two classifications basically meant cross-country and road-bound and this classification was echoed in much of the German literature of the time.⁷⁵

In a later article from 1934, Patton actually drew attention to the fact that only 'England' seemed to have remained aware of the problems of terrain in their thinking upon mechanisation and that all other 'thought [was] expended on solving the problem of avoiding stabilization...for the situation as it exists in Western Europe.' He then went on to point out the discrepancies in infra-structure between Western Europe and other possible theatres of war.⁷⁶ This was perhaps true as the British army's colonial commitments engendered this outlook. The French, for example, also had colonial commitments in North Africa but its overriding strategic outlook was to defend against another invasion. Furthermore, as mentioned, the recent French army manoeuvres over variable terrain had proven a success. So prevalent was the discussion on terrain, that one writer in a Swiss journal, *Der Schweizer Kavallerist*, concluded that terrain was the only driver on decisions and Great Britain, Italy and Germany had, on this basis, elected to preserve their horsed units.⁷⁷ This is an interesting observation in that it would seem to support the view that the French had actually embraced technology on its own merits rather than for what it could not do. This is not to say that French armour theorists were unaware of the limitations of terrain on armoured warfare. The vast majority of French theorists rejected Fuller's concept of an all tank force because of geographical issues. Yet they believed it was folly to reject any mechanisation on this basis, for if hostilities did take place upon suitable terrain it was surely better to have the strongest relevant

⁷⁴ Major G. S. Patton, 'Motorization and Mechanisation in the cavalry', *United States Cavalry Journal*, July 1930, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XX, Oct. 1930, pp. 645-6.

⁷⁵ Lt. Col. Boelcke, *Schweizerische Monatshefte*, Nov. 1928, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIX, Jan. 1929, p. 139.

⁷⁶ Major George S. Patton, Jr., 'Mechanized Forces', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXIV, April 1934, pp. 217-228, p. 220.

⁷⁷ 'Horsed or Motorized Cavalry', *Der Schweizer Kavallerist*, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXIV, Oct. 1934, p. 616.

formation, especially because, if the enemy possessed modern potent armour they would elect to fight upon such terrain: as Colonel Léon Argeuyrolles of the French cavalry put it in 1934, '*gouvernons vers le large*', which is perhaps best translated into English as to 'see the bigger picture'.⁷⁸

Despite this apparent abandonment of the horse as a means of combat, the French had been involved in operations in Morocco dealing with tribal insurgents. Here they used mounted cavalry in the type of operations that had been confronting the British. The British press in 1925 ran several articles in which the French cavalry were described as playing a prominent role in repressing the rebels.⁷⁹ Two of these articles actually contained a subtitle drawing the readers' attention directly to the cavalry: 'Cavalry in Action'⁸⁰ and 'Big Cavalry Movement'.⁸¹ Even as late as 1932, the efficiency of the French cavalry in such colonial operations in Morocco was reported upon when dealing with tribal insurgents. What is unclear from the articles is just what regiments were utilised in these operations. It is likely that they were French Spahis, who were native colonial cavalry and functioned in a similar way to the Indian cavalry and so fell on the periphery of French strategic thinking.⁸² This reinforced Burnett-Stuart's assertion to the Cavalry Committee that the British could draw upon native cavalry to deal with colonial problems.⁸³ The *Revue de Cavalerie* would seem to confirm this with an article about six regiments of Spahi in action in Beirut against the *Druse* rebels between November 1925 and August 1926.⁸⁴

Even in these less favourable conditions there was evidence that the French were using technology in conjunction with the traditional arms. *The Times* correspondent

⁷⁸ Clarke, 'Military Technology', pp. 111-2.

⁷⁹ See 'The Fighting in Morocco', *The Times*, July 23, 1925, p.13. 'Jebel Druse Revolt', *The Times*, Aug 27, 1925, p.10. 'French Anxiety', *The Times*, Aug 26, 1925, p. 10. 'French Advance in Morocco', *The Times*, Oct 12, 1925, p. 16. 'French Clearing Operations', *The Times*, Oct 8, 1925, p. 14.

⁸⁰ 'The Fighting in Morocco', *The Times*, July 23, 1925, p.13

⁸¹ 'French Clearing Operations', *The Times*, Oct 8, 1925, p. 14.

⁸² The French Spahis were still operating on behalf of Vichy France in Syria in 1940 and were to clash in sporadic fighting with the British 1st Cavalry Division which at this time was also still on horseback.

⁸³ See Chapter on The British Cavalry, 1920-1933, p.26.

⁸⁴ *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XVIII, Apr. 1928, p. 318.

reported on some ‘stubborn fighting’ in Morocco where the countryside was cleared using artillery and aeroplanes, allowing the infantry to advance whilst the opposing retiring forces were ‘in much confusion’ owing to their being harassed by French cavalry.⁸⁵ The later 1932 operation was made in conjunction with armoured cars, although the article stressed that it was ‘[s]trong detachments of French cavalry supported by armoured cars’ that were pursuing the fugitive chief.⁸⁶ The phrasing of this is interesting as it gives the impression that the main role remained with the mounted cavalry and that the armoured cars’ role remained as the ‘adjunct.’ But it does give an indication that for the French there was some distinction between colonial and international conflict, although there was still the ability to use technology despite some assertions to the contrary in Britain. Finch has argued that the French learnt some important lessons on how to use the tank from their fighting the *Druse* and the Rif War but the overriding concern of invasion led them to err on the side of caution in adapting these lessons to a European theatre.⁸⁷

Spears’ critique of the War Office concurred with the French opinion and saw the terrain as something of a smoke screen. He decried the argument that for colonial and police work vehicles were without use. In fact for him, ‘[t]he exact opposite is true.’ He acknowledged that there were parts of the Empire and Europe where terrain did pose a problem and gave examples of the Alps and Waziristan but argued that because tanks could not be used in some regions was not a basis to dismiss their use completely. He believed that where they were employable, any technological advantage was always a boon and that in ‘less civilised’ countries this was all the more so.⁸⁸

Spears’ argument is pragmatic and difficult to refute, but it would seem for many, the colonial spats of the twentieth century would mirrored those of the Victorian era. But Badsey has shown that even during the nineteenth century there had been

⁸⁵ ‘The Fighting in Morocco’, *The Times*, July 23, 1925, p.13.

⁸⁶ ‘French Operations in Tafilet’, *The Times*, Jan. 22, 1932, p. 9.

⁸⁷ M. P. M. Finch, ‘*Outre-Mer and Métropole: French Officers’ Reflections on the Use of the Tank in the 1920s*’, *War in History*, 2008 15 (3), pp. 294-313.

⁸⁸ E. L. Spears, “‘Mechanicalizing’ the Army”, *The Times*, May 20, 1924, p. 10.

debates as to the efficacy of the British cavalry and the cavalry had been forced to evolve over the period up to 1914.⁸⁹ Indeed, only four years after Spears' article, Major Eden of the RA, echoed much of what Spears had argued regarding the advocacy of the creation of a mobile light division which he envisaged a flexible mechanised formation capable of offensive action acting in 'average conditions...in any part of the world.' By implication he challenged the terrain argument put forward and also saw the horsed cavalry as a hindrance to such a unit through its slower speed. Eden's article is interesting, for whilst much of the materiel advocated can be seen as perhaps a little naive, the utilisation of tankettes, for example; this limitation only reflected the deficiencies of the vehicles available at the time. Much of the theory proffered by Eden was reminiscent of that which was to transpire firstly in the French DLM and later with the mechanised cavalry of the US, and, to a lesser extent, the armoured divisions of the Second World War.⁹⁰

From the mid-1930s there started to be a refutation of the terrain argument. In 1934 a Major Mariot concluded on his article on 'The Problem of Cavalry' that the cavalry would only be able to act where open country could be found.⁹¹ In 1936 an anonymous article in the *Militär Wochenblatt* asserted that '[t]ank-proof terrain... will only rarely be found' and that the only such terrain was 'broken mountain country...extensive marches...thick forest...deep and broad water courses...[and dense] industrial and mining areas.' The writer dismissed these failings as a supporting argument for the retention of cavalry and argued that with the exception of crossing rivers, these obstacles posed as much of a problem for mounted cavalry as an armoured vehicle. Consequently, any 'comparison of cavalry and tanks in this connection is simply fallacious.'⁹²

This is an interesting article as it is not dismissive of the utilisation of cavalry in modern warfare, although initially this would seem the case. The writer is actually

⁸⁹ Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*.

⁹⁰ Major H. C. H Eden, 'A Mobile Light Division', *RUSI Journal*, Vol. LXXIII, Feb. 1928, pp. 54-60.

⁹¹ Major Mariot, 'The Problem of cavalry', *Revue de Cavalerie*, Sept.-Oct. 1933, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXIV, Jan. 1934, p. 143.

⁹² *Militär Wochenblatt*, Oct. 25, 1936, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XVII, Jan. 1937, p. 138.

decrying the use of negative arguments for advocating the retention of cavalry. The writer concluded his article with the notion that

The true value of cavalry lies elsewhere. It will be found in the skilful use of ground – not necessarily “tank-proof.” Cavalry should hold its own, if properly led, against any motorized unit, on most natures of terrain...cavalry should never be sent into a “tank-proof” area merely because of that denomination.⁹³

The nature of colonial work can be seen as guerrilla in nature and it was this type of operation that for some was the reason why the cavalry should be maintained upon horseback. An anonymous writer in the *Revue de Cavalerie* saw the Spanish cavalry as exemplifying this facet of warfare

one may easily realise how extraordinarily helpful a commander would find, in a country so difficult as Spain, a really useful cavalry, mobile, quick to manoeuvre, and able to hold its own in all the operations of irregular warfare.⁹⁴

Despite this sea-change against the terrain argument and the almost wholesale conversion of cavalry in Western Europe, in the United States there were still some reservations over terrain. General Hawkins, in one of his copious defences of the cavalry, utilised the conflict in Spain in the late 1930s where ‘horsed cavalry [had] more than justified its existence by its admirable services.’⁹⁵ Major E. M. Benitez also drew positive conclusions on horsed cavalry from the handling of the Insurgent Cavalry Division under the command of General Monasterio, citing three instances in the spring operations of 1938 when they demonstrated their value. His conclusion was that ‘the retention of horsed cavalry must be made dependent on the prevalent conditions...What may be suitable for England, France and Germany may not be the best solution for the Russian or Polish problems.’ He believed that the United States

⁹³ *Militär Wochenblatt*, Oct. 25, 1936, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XVII, Jan. 1937, p. 138.

⁹⁴ ‘X’, ‘The Spanish cavalry’, *Revue de Cavalerie*, Oct. 1926, translated in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XVIII, July 1928, pp. 422-7, p.422.

⁹⁵ Brigadier-General H. S. Hawkins, ‘Imagination Gone Wild’, *United States Cavalry Journal*, Nov.-Dec. 1938, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal, Horsed and Mechanized*, Vol. XXIX, Apr. 1939, p. 325.

should seek to come to its own conclusion on such a complex issue.⁹⁶ Both authors chose to ignore the immense impact of armoured vehicles and aircraft in this conflict. However, in July 1939, the War Office issued a letter citing the events of the Spanish Civil War as its rationale behind maintaining a single horsed cavalry division.⁹⁷

It is interesting that much of what was reported on the American cavalry in *The Cavalry Journal* focussed upon the extreme conservatism of people like Hawkins, whilst, for the British, Patton was the voice of reason. Patton's articles were reproduced and were seen as exhibiting rational pragmatism. His association with tanks during the Great War added an air of authority to his opinions. The War Office saw the American army as strongly supportive of mounted cavalry and viewed the American General Staff as progressive with no 'reactionary tendencies.'⁹⁸

However, *The Cavalry Journal* reviewers would not have been aware of the motivation behind Patton's thinking and writing. He was a complex character with an array of conflicting traits and these led to a degree of duplicity in his views on mechanisation.⁹⁹ Immediately after The Great War, Patton had struck up something of an unexpected friendship with an infantry officer named Dwight Eisenhower, the future World War Two Supreme Allied Commander in Europe. They spent much time together experimenting with tanks, to the extent that they were, in Eisenhower's own words, 'zealots'.¹⁰⁰ However, in 1920 Eisenhower was strongly censured for his so-called unconventional ideas and threatened with a court-martial. Despite a lack of evidence, Eisenhower believed Patton had received a similar warning and, certainly in 1920, Patton returned to the cavalry at his own request.¹⁰¹ After his return to the cavalry, the tenor of his writings became very much pro-cavalry, with vehicles

⁹⁶ Major E. M. Benitez, *United States Cavalry Journal*, Jan.-Feb. 1939, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal, Horsed and Mechanized*, Vol. XXIX, Apr. 1939, p. 328.

⁹⁷ Letter 79/Mob/2964, dated 20th July 1939 reproduced in its entirety in Figure 1, Denis C. Bateman, 'Goodbye to Boots and Saddles The Twilight of the British Cavalry', *British Army Review*, No. 114, Dec. 1996, p. 78.

⁹⁸ 'Memorandum of the Reorganization of the Cavalry', WO32/2846, ARMY ORGANISATION: Cavalry Reduction of expenditure on Cavalry.

⁹⁹ Stanley P. Hirshon, *General Patton: A Soldier's Life*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002), p. 706.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 152.

¹⁰¹ Dennis Showalter, *Patton and Rommel: Men of war in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: Berkley, 2005), p. 107. Hirshon, *General Patton*, p. 157.

playing a supporting role; it may not have been a complete about turn but it was not the fanaticism suggested by Eisenhower. George Marshall, the US Chief of Staff from 1939, saw his continued advocacy of the horse as nothing more than branch loyalty and believed him to be 'the best tank man in the army.'¹⁰² However, this comment has to be set against the fact that in the 1940 manoeuvres, where a mechanised unit was set against a unit containing horsed cavalry, Patton passed on advance information about the exercise to the officer commanding the cavalry. Despite having been forewarned, the cavalry were embarrassed and following the manoeuvres Marshall committed to complete mechanisation. Patton, having still advocated horse cavalry months before, assumed command of an armoured brigade.¹⁰³

Patton was an ambitious man and this underpinned much of his actions. Despite his flamboyant, outspoken persona, this was always tempered by his ambition. Thus his writings of the inter-war period were designed to create an image of an innovative, intelligent officer without damaging his career prospects through controversy. To this extent, it cannot be denied that he succeeded, not only in his homeland but in Britain as well. The British cavalry's perception of Patton, as repeatedly seen in *The Cavalry Journal*, was as the voice of reason on cavalry and mechanisation. In essence, on both sides of the Atlantic, Patton was telling the establishment exactly what it wanted to hear.¹⁰⁴ However, one writer, John Daley, has given a defence of Patton's 'equivocating course between horse and machine', arguing that it was based upon carefully considered professional opinion rather than promulgating his own career.¹⁰⁵

Despite the backward-looking perspective of the American cavalry elite, there existed a hard core of progressive cavalrymen who saw that the end of the horse was fast approaching and possessed a clear vision for the mechanisation of the cavalry. The commander of the 1st Cavalry Division in 1927, then stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas,

¹⁰² Showalter, *Patton and Rommel*, p. 204.

¹⁰³ Ibid, pp. 206-9. Hirshon, *General Patton*, pp. 228-231.

¹⁰⁴ For a full account of Patton's life and observations upon his complex nature see Hirshon, *General Patton*.

¹⁰⁵ John Daley, 'Patton Versus the "Motor Maniacs": An Inter-War Defense of Horse Cavalry', *Armor*, March-April 1997, pp. 12-5.

made the sardonic observation, '[w]hen the cowboy down here is herding cattle in a Ford, we must realize that the world has undergone a change'; this was the very frontier terrain that many used to advocate the retention of the horse.¹⁰⁶

Like the British, the Americans had also created its own experimental mechanised force. Importantly, from a cavalry perspective, it was placed under the command of Colonel Daniel Van Voorhis, whose previous command experience was on the traditional cavalry territory of the Mexican border.¹⁰⁷ He was, in the words of Hofmann, 'a spit-and-polish cavalryman'.¹⁰⁸ Yet, this apparent traditional cavalryman embraced mechanisation wholeheartedly and was one of the foremost protagonists in championing its cause. Under Van Voorhis' influence, a number of cavalrymen followed his lead. This influence, in the eyes of the Chief of Infantry, General Fuqua, was of concern as he felt the mechanised force was evolving into a separate branch under cavalrymen. For him there was no such thing as armoured cavalry and without horses there was no cavalry.¹⁰⁹ This statement goes to highlight the service branch rivalry that blighted U.S. mechanisation during the inter-war period. This problem was further exacerbated in 1931 when General MacArthur, as Chief of Staff, decentralised mechanisation policy, allowing each branch to follow its own path.¹¹⁰ In this way, American mechanisation policy was delegated to the individual arms in a similar way to the French during the inter-war period.

The Mechanised Force was disbanded by MacArthur in 1931, but the new air of autonomy allowed the cavalry to create a new mechanised cavalry regiment based at

¹⁰⁶ David E. Johnson, *Fast Tanks and Heavy Bombers Innovation in the U. S. Army 1917-1945*, (New York: Cornell university Press, 2003), p.125. See also David E. Johnson, 'From Frontier Constabulary to Modern Army The U. S. Army between the World Wars', in Harold R. Winton and David R. Mets (eds.), *The Challenge of*, pp. 162-219, p. 188.

¹⁰⁷ Johnson asserts that this appointment was no accident as two influential modernisers in the war department, Lt. Col. Adna R. Chaffee and Maj. Gen. George Van Horn Moseley, were both cavalrymen themselves. Moseley had been the commander in Texas who had commented upon the domestic use of the motor vehicle. Johnson, *Fast Tanks*, p.127.

¹⁰⁸ Hofmann, *Through Mobility*, p.126.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p.144.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p.146. However, there is evidence that this decentralisation was engineered by Chaffee in order to prevent the infantry from wresting control of the mechanised force from the cavalry and thereby retarding its development. This was possibly true but the solution became something of a double-edged sword. Winton, *To Change An Army*, p. 217, n. 155.

Camp Knox. Van Voorhis was immediately placed in charge of this unit and for the next few years armoured thought and theory flourished under him and several other positive cavalry officers. It was in this period that Van Voorhis was to propound a combined arms cavalry regiment, but was keen to maintain that although 'cavalry influence' was a positive thing, it had become something greater than that. Van Voorhis and two other cavalrymen, Adna Chaffee and Bob Grow, moved away from reconnaissance towards a combat unit.¹¹¹ In 1933, from discussions with German observers at Fort Knox, Van Voorhis believed that these nascent concepts were in advance of German thinking on mechanisation. Although this maybe overstated, it would seem evident that these cavalrymen were moving towards a newer concept of warfare.¹¹²

This progressive attitude was to come to a grinding halt in 1938, when a new Chief of Cavalry was appointed. In 1938 there had been two candidates for this position; Bruce Palmer, a protégé of Van Voorhis, and Major General John K. Herr, an ardent advocate of the horse. The Chief of Staff of the time was General Malin Craig, a former Chief of Cavalry himself in the early 1920s, and an old school cavalryman. It was therefore unsurprising that Herr was appointed in preference to Palmer.¹¹³ Herr's appointment was to damage the progress of mechanisation in the cavalry until America's entry into the war. Hofmann states that his obstinate defence of the horse actually threatened the existence of a separate mechanised cavalry.¹¹⁴ His defence really became something of a religious 'faith', much like Hawkins, that led, in instances, to irrational logic. A good example of this irrationality is a markedly contradictory statement he made that '[h]orse cavalry...has great strategic mobility when transferred by train or motor.'¹¹⁵ His advocacy of the horse also led him to view any cavalrymen who renounced the horse as guilty of heresy. One officer, having completed his tenure with the General Staff, advised Herr he wished to be assigned to tanks and was acidly told that he 'could expect no more friendship from

¹¹¹ Hofmann, *Through Mobility*, pp. 154-160.

¹¹² This was also reaffirmed in a later opinion by the U. S. military attaché in Berlin. Ibid, pp. 173-4 and p. 210.

¹¹³ Palmer bitterly resented this decision for many years after. Ibid, p. 227.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 236-7.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p.249.

the Office of the Chief of Cavalry.’¹¹⁶ Even the events of the Second World War failed to sway Herr’s opinion. In his book, *The Story of the U. S. Cavalry*, the final pages are given over to a bitter soliloquy:

That there was influence brought to bear by certain industries which would profit heavily by the production of the enormously expensive tank and other mechanized vehicles is almost certain. Then, there was the ever-eternal green-eyed monster of jealousy which had been aroused in the breasts of the other services, especially among soft and inactive officers behind desks, over the color and glamour attached to the cavalry, over the good times which the officers of that branch enjoyed in their sports at all cavalry posts, and over the certain indefinable social prestige which the man on horseback, the cavalier, the *hidalgo*, the gentleman, has always had over the man on foot. All these influences combined, and, amidst the excitement at the outbreak of war, managed to eliminate what they called an archaic branch.¹¹⁷

Any doctrinal lead that the cavalrymen of Fort Knox had had over the German armoured doctrine, whether real or imagined, was squandered under Herr’s stewardship of the cavalry.

It is interesting to note that the yardstick for armoured theory for the U. S. mechanised cavalry theorists was Germany even prior to the fall of France in 1940. There is, perhaps, the misconception, owing to the success of *Blitzkrieg* in the early years of the war, that the German cavalry was an extinct creature; this was far from

¹¹⁶ Messenger, *Blitzkrieg*, pp. 123-4.

¹¹⁷ John K. Herr and Edward S. Wallace, *The Story of the U. S. Cavalry 1775-1942*, (New York: Bonanza, 1984), pp. 253-4. There are many more embittered remarks in the final pages of this book, see pp. 252-261. It is also noticeable that of the images that are placed amongst the text of the book, there is only one of a horse-mechanised regiment and there is only brief acknowledgement of the existence of two mechanised cavalry regiments based at Fort Knox. The above quote is also used in Alexander M. Bielakowski, ‘The Last Chief of Cavalry – Major General John K. Herr’, *The Journal of America’s Military Past*, Vol. XXVIII, Fall 2001, pp. 67-82, pp. 78-9.

the truth.¹¹⁸ The German cavalry was in existence throughout the inter-war period and there remained a mounted unit fighting on the Eastern Front upon cessation of hostilities in 1945. The horse played a significant role for the German army throughout the Second World War. For example, the German Fourth Army had 52,700 horses prior to its offensive into France in May 1940.¹¹⁹ One British newspaper commented after the commencement of the Second World War that as far as cavalry was concerned '[t]he Germans have...never placed all their eggs in one basket', as the horse was superior in Winter on the Eastern Front. Furthermore, the report showed concern of an imminent invasion of Holland due to the appearance of mounted German cavalry on the Dutch border and that flooding would not present any problems to these horses compared to tanks.¹²⁰

As previously mentioned, the Russians viewed the German outlook up until 1934 as highly conservative and a review in *The Cavalry Journal* of General Von Seeckt's book *Thoughts of a Soldier*, published in 1929, was also deprecating of his chapter on cavalry. The reviewer chided that it could have been written in 1898, the significance of this date being prior to the experiences of the Boer War which had significantly impacted upon the British conceptualisation of cavalry. The reviewer quoted a rather romantic phrase from the book that stated how the German cavalry with 'its lances may flaunt their pennants with confidence in the winds of the future.' The reviewer continued that this was somewhat 'divorced from the realities' of the Great War, the Boer War and even the Russo-Japanese War and concluded that the Germans had nothing 'to teach us [the British] and much to learn from us.'¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Robert Doughty has attacked the concept of *Blitzkrieg* as being more myth than actuality. Colonel Robert Doughty, *The Myth of the Blitzkrieg*, MIT Seminar, 14th October 1998, see http://web.mit.edu/SSP/seminars/wed_archives_98fall/doughty.htm, accessed 1st May 2008. Rob Citino also points out that the term does not appear in pre-war German military publications and is only used once it has been utilised by their enemies. Rob Citino, "'Die Gedanken sind Frei': The Intellectual Culture of the Interwar German Army", *The Canadian Army Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 3, Fall 2001, pp. 48-55, pp. 53-4.

¹¹⁹ R. L. DiNardo and Austin Bay, 'Horse-Drawn Transport in the German Army', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Jan., 1988), pp. 129-142, p.131.

¹²⁰ 'The Cavalry factor', *The Scotsman*, 11/11/1939, p.9.

¹²¹ *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XX, Oct. 1930, pp. 651-2.

However, James Corum's book *The Roots of Blitzkrieg*, places Hans Von Seeckt at the very core of the evolutionary process of the German army.¹²² Much like the French, Von Seeckt envisaged cavalry as an 'all-arms light [division] for independent operations'. To do so required the support of mobile, motorised infantry, mobile artillery, wireless communication and air support. He perceived the eventual complete motorisation of the army but initial priority was to the cavalry.¹²³

Where he departed from French thinking was in his notions concerning defence. For him, defence was a transitory state prior to offence. However, he decried those who propounded the concept of envelopment; a concept often ascribed to cavalry. Von Seeckt believed that it was the tactic of envelopment in the Great War that had resulted in the extended lines of trench warfare as both sides sought to envelop the other, ultimately cancelling one another out. The key for Von Seeckt was mobile, tactical flexibility¹²⁴

As part of his reasoning, Von Seeckt had concluded that cavalry could never again be used *en masse*.¹²⁵ However, this would not seem to be the case for some of his colleagues. In an article by a French officer in 1929, it was noted that the principle 'of cavalry in mass is steadily kept in view in German military doctrine.'; very much in the classic tradition of the *arme blanche*.¹²⁶ This continued affirmation of the *arme blanche* is reinforced by the German Inspector-General of the cavalry in 1928, Lt. General Von Kayser who, when reviewing a book in the *Militär Wochenblatt* on movement in war, spoke out against any calls for the abolition of cavalry. Von Kayser, in a statement that was reminiscent of Haig, believed that any improvement in transport 'does not render cavalry superfluous...but actually increases its

¹²² James S. Corum, *The Roots of Blitzkrieg: Hans Von Seeckt and German Military Reform*, (Kansas: University of Kansas, 1992).

¹²³ Ibid, p. 32.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Robert J. O'Neil, 'Doctrine and Training in the German Army, 1919-1939', pp. 145-165, in Michael Howard Ed., *The Theory and Practice of War*, (London: Cassell, 1965), p. 146.

¹²⁶ Sqn. Commander Keime, *Revue de Cavalerie*, Sep.-Oct. 1928, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIX, Jan. 1929, p. 140.

possibilities' and called for the retention of the lance.¹²⁷ The lance had been formally dispensed with by the German cavalry in October 1927 and this allowed them to operate dismounted.¹²⁸ In another article from an alternative German military journal, the *Militärwissenschaftliche Mitteilungen*, a writer on modern cavalry insisted that the war strength of the cavalry should always be maintained, as the cavalry could not be improvised during war unlike the infantry or artillery.¹²⁹ This was a notion that was also prevalent in the British cavalry, but one reviewer in *The Cavalry Journal* was interested in the contents of an article in the *Revue de Cavalerie* explaining how to produce cavalymen in just twelve months.¹³⁰

The continued advocacy of the cavalry in Germany was referenced in *The Cavalry Journal* on numerous occasions. In 1929, it stated that the *Militär Wochenblatt* seemed to have taken upon itself the sole responsibility of combating cries of obsolescence against the cavalry.¹³¹ A year later it observed that this journal remained one of the few foreign journals that continued to deal with the mounted arm.¹³² Again in the same year, the reviewer stated that prior to 1914 the *Militär Wochenblatt* paid no especial heed to the concerns of the cavalry, 'but at the present time it seems to contain more articles than do other foreign military magazines dealing specially with matters affecting the mounted arm.'¹³³ Although this lack of discussion elsewhere should have hinted to the British cavalry that there was a general move away from thinking on horsed cavalry.

The possible clue to this conservative outlook within the German army at this time appeared in an article entitled 'German Cavalry of To-day.' In this article, the writer pointed out that the German army at that time had 21 infantry regiments and 18

¹²⁷ Lt. Gen. Von Kayser, reviewing a book by Maj. Gen. Von Borries, *The Army in a War of Movement*, in the *Militär Wochenblatt*, 18 May 1928. Reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XVIII, Oct. 1928, p. 666.

¹²⁸ Richter, *Cavalry of the Wehrmacht*, pp. 10-11.

¹²⁹ 'Modern cavalry', *Militärwissenschaftliche Mitteilungen*, Jan.-Feb. 1928, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XVIII, Apr. 1928, p. 318.

¹³⁰ *Revue de Cavalerie*, Jan.-Feb. 1930, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XX, Apr. 1930, p. 323.

¹³¹ *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIX, Jan. 1929, p. 138.

¹³² *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XX, Jan. 1930, p. 150.

¹³³ *Ibid*, p. 469.

cavalry regiments. The writer was especially keen to highlight the high proportion of cavalry to infantry in comparison to other European armies and took from this comfort that '[p]erhaps...[the] saying of the enthusiast for mechanization that "the days of the cavalry are over" is not yet true.'¹³⁴ However, the premise of this assertion was fundamentally flawed, as the number of regiments of infantry and cavalry in the German army was set out in the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.¹³⁵ This fact was pointed out in an editor's footnote which then correctly observed that it therefore did not follow that the ratio 'represent[ed] the views of the German authorities.'¹³⁶ It does indicate however that there was a degree of parity amongst these two established arms and so the political strength of the German cavalry within the army would have meant that any advocacy of traditional methods would have carried a high profile and sway. It must not be forgotten that this notion of a tradition of cavalry was far from unique to Britain and that prior to the War there were 113 German cavalry regiments.¹³⁷ Consequently, aside from the parity in numbers of existing cavalymen, there would also have been a vast tranche of ex-cavalymen who would have their own views upon the conceptualisation of modern cavalry; what Halbeck has ascribed as the old Prussian attitude.¹³⁸ The British army circulated a report on the German army manoeuvres of 1932 which included a summarisation by General von Hammerstein-Equord, who was the German *Chef der Heersleitung*, a role the report described as equivalent to both C.-In-C. and Chief of the General Staff. In this, he gave due attention to the cavalry

This year's manoeuvres were remarkable for the participation of relatively large forces of cavalry...And not without reason! The leading of modern cavalry formations presents one of the most difficult problems of war...The development of the air arm and the increasing importance of mechanization have altered the tasks of cavalry. We have learnt one thing, however...the time has not yet

¹³⁴ Carbine, 'German cavalry of To-day', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXIV, Oct. 1934, pp. 571-576, p.571.

¹³⁵ 'Carbine' was not the first to make this error as an earlier editor had pointed to how interesting it was 'to note the high proportion of Cavalry to other arms in the German Army.', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIII, Apr. 1923, p. 205.

¹³⁶ Editor's Footnote, *Carbine*, 'German cavalry of To-day', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXIV, Oct. 1934, pp. 571-576, p.571.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Halbeck, *Storm of Steel*, p.6.

come for entirely replacing the horse by the motor. The motor driven vehicle is certainly more speedy than the horse but in tactical mobility the horse has still in many situations an advantage over the motor. The reply to the oft repeated question – Horse or Motor? will remain for a long time Horse and Motor.¹³⁹

In her book *Storm of Steel*, Halbeck asserts that this dialectic of old Prussian cavalry traditionalism versus new young cavalry technologists was the feature between 1924 and 1934 of military ideological debate.¹⁴⁰ A prime example of this had been the debate over the retention of the cavalry lance where senior cavalry officers sought its retention against the views of the cavalry's junior officers.¹⁴¹ By 1934 there was the beginning of a fundamental shift in attitude as the older generation was retiring and its replacements viewed the use of the horse in very limited terms. Although the British military attaché in Berlin reported in 1935 that the cavalry was still very much in a 'state of flux', with 'the advanced school' trying to abolish the cavalry whereas there remained those that advocated horsed cavalry, particularly for an eastern front.¹⁴² However, the future for them was a tank force and the 'personnel nucleus' for this force would be the cavalry; this was to prove to be the case.¹⁴³ Indeed, by the late 1930s 'the [German] cavalry was hemorrhaging[sic] its best and most energetic officers to the new armoured force'.¹⁴⁴ In fact, according to notes circulated in the British army, the vast majority of cavalry regiments were transferred to the Tank Corps, thus it was not so much that officers were voluntarily moving to the armoured force.¹⁴⁵ It is interesting to note here that the German army did not appear to have any organisational issues in amalgamating the two units compared with those encountered by the British.¹⁴⁶ Consequently, the cavalry drop from Halbeck's book as post 1934 the theory of armoured warfare begins to dominate.

¹³⁹ 'Note on German Army Manoeuvres', WO190/170.

¹⁴⁰ Halbeck, *Storm of Steel*, pp. 64-8, pp. 164-6.

¹⁴¹ Corum asserts that the cavalry were the most conservative branch of the army and its senior officers very reactionary. Corum, *The Roots of Blitzkrieg*, pp. 71-2.

¹⁴² Item 19A, 'Note on German Cavalry Organisation', WO190/305, German Cavalry organisation 1935.

¹⁴³ Corum, *The Roots of Blitzkrieg*, pp. 208-9.

¹⁴⁴ Showalter, *Patton and Rommel*, p. 161.

¹⁴⁵ WO190/458, German views on motor cavalry.

¹⁴⁶ WO33/1509 Report by a Committee assembled to consider the organization of the mechanized Cavalry and the Royal Tank Corps. See also Chapter on British Cavalry 1934-40.

This apparent complete emancipation from the horse is however a little deceptive. With the replacement of the *Reichswehr* in 1935 by the new *Wehrmacht* there were thirteen horse regiments. These thirteen regiments over the next three years were converted into cavalry regiments.¹⁴⁷ The terminology here is interesting as it is apparent that for the German High Command the word cavalry was defined by a tactical role not its functional implementation. A cavalry regiment incorporated anti-tank motorised units, armoured scout platoons, motorised pioneer platoons and bicycle troops as well as horsemen.¹⁴⁸ In so doing, it bore a remarkable resemblance to the French Light Division created a decade earlier.

In 1936 an exchange of officers was organised between Britain and Germany and one of these was Captain E. R. Sword of the 4th Queen's Own Hussars who went to the 15th Cavalry Regiment at Paderborn, Westphalia. It is interesting to note that the CO of the 15th Regiment was Lt. Col Graf von Rothkirch und Trach, proving that the attachment to the aristocracy that was so often blamed for the British cavalry's conservatism was just as prevalent in the German cavalry whose aristocratic tradition was just as renowned.¹⁴⁹ Sword made comment that '[t]he officers with whom I came into contact came from much the same type of families as our own.'¹⁵⁰

Sword's account of his time in Germany certainly attested that in the latter half of the 1930s the German cavalry was still very much alive. He confirmed that the regiment was in the process of re-organisation and that the Headquarter Squadron would in the future include anti-tank guns, a sapper unit and a signals unit.¹⁵¹ With this, Sword was ratifying what the military attaché in Berlin had intimated a year earlier.¹⁵²

Sword was extremely taken with the training regime and he provided an interesting description:

¹⁴⁷ Richter, *Cavalry of the Wehrmacht*, p. 15.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Captain E. R. Sword, 'An Attachment to German cavalry', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXVI, Apr. 1936, pp. 211-217, p.211.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, p.213.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p.211.

¹⁵² Item 19A Note on German Cavalry Organisation, WO190/305 German Cavalry organisation, 1935.

There was little ceremonial drill of any kind...a great deal of attention was paid to verbal appreciations of the ground and of the situation. Every officer, N. C. O. and man was continually being called on to give an appreciation, with the result that they were automatically able to sum up situations surprisingly quickly and accurately...Much emphasis was laid on the use of ground and concealment, and particularly on camouflage...On several occasions I saw defensive positions from the enemy's direction, and was rarely able to locate the troops. Every rifleman was usually protected from view by some form of cover, either natural, or by an arrangement of branches, etc., which he had collected. The anti-tank guns were particularly efficient at concealment...In a defensive position silence was insisted on, and maintained...In general, I noticed that each individual problem was treated on its merits, and originality was encouraged.¹⁵³

The whole tenor of Sword's appraisal was one of awe and respect. This was affirmed when he was interviewed after the war when he confirmed that he believed the individual training was 'extremely good.'¹⁵⁴ Never once did he draw a comparison with the British cavalry and all the concepts; individuality, camouflage and flexibility, seemed to be almost incomprehensible to him. The French may have taken the initial steps towards a more flexible cavalry but the Germans took it a stage further. For one German officer, Major Balck, the fundamental difference was the interpretation of what reconnaissance was. It was a difference that seemed for him to be a signifier of the different military cultures. For Balck, the *raison d'être* for reconnaissance in the French army was 'security'. In essence, the reconnaissance was not to engage with the enemy if possible, merely to ascertain its strength and position and report back. The weakness in this, from the German perception, was it allowed the enemy the initiative. The German strategy was that a reconnaissance unit should not baulk at engaging the enemy upon it being discovered. It should do so and

¹⁵³ Sword, 'An Attachment to German cavalry', pp.214-5.

¹⁵⁴ JWMSA. Accession No. 9332-1, E. R. Sword.

be supported as soon as possible. In this way the tactical advantage rests with the aggressor in both surprise and selection of battleground.¹⁵⁵

This battlefield stratagem had been in effect for some time within the German army. In the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, Wawro observed that the French, still inculcated with the notion of the set-piece battle, had great difficulty in understanding when they were being engaged in a larger scale clash, as invariably it would start as a skirmish that the Prussians would then feed troops into and so would evolve into a full scale battle.¹⁵⁶

To perform this function Balck believed that the role of the horse remained invaluable. His reasoning for this was partially based upon the terrain argument but the more significant argument for him was the frailty of armoured units to anti-tank weaponry. These two factors in combination meant the 'high degree of mobility' afforded by motor vehicles 'could no longer be exploited.' Consequently, he believed that the flexibility afforded the reconnaissance unit by the horse in fulfilling this, in essence a rapid response mounted infantry unit, was indispensable.¹⁵⁷

This concept was still fully endorsed in 1939, when an account by a *Leutnant* of the 17th Cavalry Regiment contained the following:

great demands are made of the cavalry as a reconnaissance and fighting force. The cavalry has been given fast, mobile elements and heavy weapons to enable it to deal with any situation. Today the cavalry encompasses every type of military role like no other branch of the service...with its horse and bicycle troops and armoured car platoons it is a reconnaissance and combat unit...horse and bicyclists are mobile

¹⁵⁵ Major Balck, 'Divisional cavalry', *Militär Wochenblatt*, 11 Feb. and 4 Mar. 1933, translated in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXIV, Jan. 1934, pp. 97-111, pp. 97-106.

¹⁵⁶ Geoffrey Wawro, *Franco-Prussian War: The Conquest of France in 1870-1871*, (New York: CUP, 2003), p. 111.

¹⁵⁷ Major Balck, 'Divisional cavalry', *Militär Wochenblatt*, 11 Feb. and 4 Mar. 1933, translated in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXIV, Jan. 1934, pp. 97-111, pp. 110-1.

infantry. Should the patrol encounter stiff enemy resistance, the cavalry possesses the offensive strength to break that resistance. Heavy machine-gun teams... make things hot for the enemy...anti-tank platoon[s] provides protection from enemy tanks...The aggressive spirit of a Seydlitz, of a Zeiten, lives on in our Wehrmacht's all-terrain force...Often the mission of a horse troop is to make contact with the enemy...then attack and destroy him.¹⁵⁸

Whilst there is a notable air of confident, nationalistic bravado in the account, it does confirm this commitment to a homogenised fighting unit. For Germany, the concept of cavalry had evolved into a fast-moving, elite, self-reliant strike force that could aggressively probe the enemy's positions, glean important information of its status, forcing conflict on their own terms and potentially intimidating the enemy into inaction; it had brought mobility back into warfare. The key to the new, redefined German cavalry unit was its marked increase in firepower, not just AFVs, but new heavy machine-guns, anti-tank guns and artillery. In fairness to the British cavalry, the financial resource for this sort of equipment was not available.¹⁵⁹

In contrast to this, whilst the French had evolved a combined arms unit, it was not to be used in a dynamic way. Balck's criticism of French doctrine had been highlighted in Britain six years earlier by Liddell Hart who saw the French application of armour as melding with philosophies of 1918, thereby creating a concept of manoeuvre analogous to 'a moving wall of fire' and as such tanks were mobile 'pill-boxes'. The French cavalry role was then simply that of 'feelers...tentacles of the octopus-like main army'.¹⁶⁰ Thus it was fundamentally designed to gather intelligence about the enemy; its position and strength. Consequently, there was no utilisation of this mobile unit to create a mobile form of warfare. By ascertaining the enemy's position and then reporting back to the French High Command, it was actually engendering and reinforcing a static mentality. There remained a sense of seeking out of a set-

¹⁵⁸ Leutnant Elert, 'The Versatility of the Cavalry', cited in Richter, *Cavalry of the Wehrmacht*, pp.24-7.

¹⁵⁹ See chapters on The British Cavalry 1920-1933, p. 26 and The British Cavalry 1934-1940, p. 265.

¹⁶⁰ Liddell Hart, *Modern Armies*, pp. 244-8. Liddell Hart repeats this criticism of the French in his later memoirs, where he uses the analogy of a 'steam-roller of fire'. Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, p. 103.

piece battle in the style of the nineteenth century and a defensive mindset that had led to the stasis of trench warfare. Their adoption of technology was in the hope not to create a new type of warfare but to return to the old 'classic' style. One observer has stated that despite the existence of armoured vehicles in 1939, the French 'strategic and tactical thinking was still based entirely upon the experiences of 1918.'¹⁶¹ This is illustrated by the disbandment of the Tank Corps in 1920 and the control of tanks being dissipated across the traditional elements of the army.¹⁶²

This criticism of the French outlook has been supported by other writers and for many, at the core of the criticism is Marshal Pétain. Through the inter-war decades Pétain, the hero of Verdun in 1916, was able, by dint of either position or reputation, to influence the nature of France's military policy. Pétain's policy was defensive in the extreme and the concept of the Maginot Line was the tangible manifestation of such a strategy.¹⁶³ The Maginot Line was to consume millions of Francs in its construction between 1927 and 1940, however, it is improbable that should the Maginot Line had not been constructed, whether any of these funds would have aided the modernisation and mechanisation of the French army; it was a manifest product of the French mindset of the inter-war period.¹⁶⁴ Whilst much of the literature on Pétain has often been skewed due to the negative perspective of his collaboration with Germany after France's defeat in 1940, the accusation that his pre-war approach was negative would also appear to be difficult to refute. In Richard Griffiths' biography of Pétain, which seeks to treat him more even-handedly, he makes this summation of French policy

the defensive policy which lay at the base of most of France's military problems was a hangover from the lessons of the First World War. Pétain was one among many who were responsible; but he, because of his high office and his high reputation, must bear the greatest responsibility. The French army, between the

¹⁶¹ Général D'Armée André Beaufre, 'Liddell Hart and the French Army, 1919-1939' in Michael Howard, Ed., *The Theory and Practice of War*, (London: Cassell, 1965), p. 136.

¹⁶² Clarke, 'Military Technology', pp. 37-8.

¹⁶³ Nicholas Atkin, *Pétain*, (Harlow: Longman, 1998), pp. 41-4. Pétain's post-war influence mimicked Joffre's pre-war influence, Clarke, 'Military Technology', p. 34.

¹⁶⁴ Clarke, 'Military Technology', p. 44.

wars, was ruled by old men, whose experience of one war remained their lesson for the future.¹⁶⁵

However, despite this modern criticism of French strategic mentality, there was one contemporary apologist that existed in Britain: Basil Liddell Hart. He pointed out that unlike the British army, which had had to adopt a 'handy-man' approach to doctrine, the paramount reason for the existence of the French army was to repel an invader over its eastern border. He did not believe that the French held any other militaristic ambition, they did not seek to invade any European neighbour, and so it was almost inevitable that France would adopt a defensive stance.¹⁶⁶ He later goes on to highlight that this had, unfortunately, warped the French conceptualisation of mobile warfare and he pondered, a little presciently, what would happen if a more mobile enemy were to simply refuse to stand in front of the French military 'steam-roller'.¹⁶⁷

In light of this close association of Pétain with French military policy and a somewhat dour perspective on modern warfare, it would seem remarkable that in the early 1920s, the conceptualisation of a modern mobile unit was being held by some in France as the exemplar of modernisation. There were several factors that influenced this. Firstly, between 1921 and 1926 the Director of Tank Studies in the French army was General Estienne, who since before the end of the war, had been a leading advocate of change and perceived the requirements of both new strategy and new organisation. If evidence was needed of his foresight, the tank he actually conceived during this period was the one to eventually be put in place in 1939.¹⁶⁸ Estienne advocated a separate armoured branch held in reserve and part of the function he ascribed to this unit was those 'formerly performed by cavalry'.¹⁶⁹ Whilst much of Estienne's work at this time was given token interest by Pétain and France's political

¹⁶⁵ Richard Griffiths, *Marshal Pétain*, (London: Constable, 1970), p. 156.

¹⁶⁶ Liddell Hart, *Modern Armies*, pp. 241-2.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 250-1.

¹⁶⁸ Estienne has earned the soubriquet of the 'Father of Tanks' in France, and it is his name that is attached to the largest tank museum in the world. See www.musee-des-blindes.asso.fr/2blindes/2jpresent.htm, accessed 18th March 2008.

¹⁶⁹ Bond and Alexander 'Liddell Hart and De Gaulle: The Doctrines of Limited Liability and Mobile Defense' in Peter Paret, Ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p. 603.

leaders, it is evidence that not all French thinking was stagnant, especially in the first half of the 1920s when he inspired many younger officers.¹⁷⁰ This inspirational leadership, together with a supportive Chief of Staff, General Edmond Buat¹⁷¹, gave encouragement to exploitation of the potential of motorization and mechanisation.¹⁷² But Estienne was forced to retire from the army in 1927 and so had to watch France's armoured policy atrophy.¹⁷³ In this same year a memorandum signed by the Army Council stated 'that a reaction was taking place in France in favour of cavalry.'¹⁷⁴

It was not until the publication of de Gaulle's book *Vers l'armée de métier* (Towards a Professional Army) in 1934 that any real debate was engendered in France, although much of de Gaulle's thinking merely replicated Estienne's ideas. Unfortunately, de Gaulle's ideas met strong resistance for several reasons. Firstly, a clash of personalities with many senior officers, including Pétain, and secondly, a major concern over his involvement with politics. It was not until Gamelin had taken over the reins of the French army in 1935 that large scale implementation of armour began.¹⁷⁵ Consequently, not only did Pétain repress any dynamic armoured policy but de Gaulle inadvertently achieved a similar result.

The second reason is that although *prima facie* the *Division Légère* was innovative it actually still fitted in with the defensive ideology. As highlighted earlier, this was not a mobile fighting unit; this was a flexible, mobile intelligence gathering unit that was geared to help the French to prepare their defences better against an aggressor.

Indeed, Pétain's main perception for the utilisation of the tank was as an adjunct to

¹⁷⁰ He had petitioned Pétain not to place the tank corps in the hands of the infantry but was ignored. Clarke, 'Military Technology', p. 56.

¹⁷¹ Although Griffiths points out that Buat was one of Pétain's former subordinates, as was Buat's successor as Chief of Staff, General Debeney. Griffiths, *Marshal Pétain*, p. 102. Liddell Hart also affirms that prior to his death in post, Buat was a strong advocate of the tank, Liddell Hart, *Modern Armies*, pp. 244.

¹⁷² Bond and Alexander 'Liddell Hart and De Gaulle', pp. 602-3.

¹⁷³ Ibid, p. 604. Also, J. J. Clarke, 'Military Technology', p. 59.

¹⁷⁴ 'Memorandum on the Reorganisation of the Cavalry', WO32/2846, 32/2846, Reduction of Expenditure on Cavalry.

¹⁷⁵ Atkin, *Pétain*, p. 45-6. See also, Clarke, 'Military Technology', pp. 155-6. Messenger goes on to say that in reality the book made little impression anywhere other than in Russia, Messenger, *Blitzkrieg*, p. 90. Kiesling comments that his book took on a retrospective prominence thanks to the mythology surrounding both his career and the success of the German tanks in France in 1940. Kiesling, 'Resting Uncomfortably on its Laurels', p. 19.

the infantry in supporting a defensive position.¹⁷⁶ Even forthright proponents of mechanised cavalry, such as General René Altmayer, did not see it fulfilling an offensive function.¹⁷⁷ The British Mobile Division was assigned to Altmayer's brother's command in France in 1940. Sadly, for the British, both Altmayer's and his superior, Weygand's, tactical use of armoured vehicles was found to be flawed.¹⁷⁸ It would seem that to be in favour of armoured warfare did not necessarily mean an understanding of its tactical usage.

Although relegated to a footnote, Griffiths actually makes a telling observation on Pétain's view on all new technology. In 1937, Pétain wrote that technology had resulted in '[t]actics and strategy hav[ing] been completely changed', but Griffiths points out that the emphasis is on the notion that any changes were in the past and were no longer evolving.¹⁷⁹ Under Pétain's influence the use of technology was not avoided in the French army but harnessed to fight an old war. Griffiths quotes a contemporary American journalist who commented that the thinking of the older French commanders was imprisoned in the logic of 1914-18 who were unable to break free of such shackles. Griffiths further concludes that '[a]ny drawbacks in tactics and armaments in 1940 stem from the Pétain era, rather than from the faults of the men left holding the baby.'¹⁸⁰ Unfortunately for Gamelin, all his efforts to redress these errors from 1935 onwards were in vain. He was to be one of a number of individuals that Pétain was to hold responsible in 1940 for France's defeat; mistakes that were Pétain's not Gamelin's¹⁸¹.

From a specific cavalry perspective in the French army, an interesting figure from the inter-war period was General Maxime Weygand. Weygand, born in 1867, had joined the 4th Dragoons in 1888, had graduated from the Cavalry School at Saumur and was

¹⁷⁶ Griffiths, *Marshal Pétain*, p. 142. For a fuller narrative on Pétain's views on tanks see Griffiths, pp. 137- 142.

¹⁷⁷ Clarke, 'Military Technology', p. 114.

¹⁷⁸ Julian Thompson, *Dunkirk: Retreat to Victory*, (London: Pan, 2009), pp. 274-291.

¹⁷⁹ Griffiths, *Marshal Pétain*, p. 142.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, pp. 156-7.

¹⁸¹ Atkin, *Pétain*, p. 48. Martin S. Alexander's specific analysis of Gamelin is the singular attempt to rehabilitate him in the historiography of the fall of France, in a book entitled, *The Republic in Danger*, where he draws the conclusion that the responsibility lay with a wider group of civil and military leaders and that Gamelin's 'real failure' was his inability to change the ideological culture of the French high command. Martin S. Alexander, *The Republic in Danger: General Maurice Gamelin and the politics of French defence, 1933-1940*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), p.399.

a passionate horseman.¹⁸² Weygand held various senior positions in the post-war period, culminating in being Chief of Staff between 1930-5. Weygand did much in this period to modernise the French army and both Bond and Alexander rank him alongside Gamelin and de Gaulle in this role citing that he was ‘an officer of great energy, outstanding ability, and much experience’; this was also the view of Colonel C. J. C. Grant of the Coldstream Guards.¹⁸³ As such he helps to further dispel the myth that all cavalrymen were firmly ensconced in the nineteenth century and were ardent advocates of the horse over the petrol engine. However to counterbalance Weygand’s progressive outlook, there remained some cavalrymen who could not accept the complete mechanisation of the cavalry.¹⁸⁴

Both Weygand and Gamelin did their best against considerable political and economic problems to bring about a degree of modernisation to the French army.¹⁸⁵ In September 1930 France saw its first corps-scale manoeuvres of the post-war period. In a report by the British military attaché, these marked a pronounced change in direction for the French in moving away from 1918 attitudes towards a more dynamic, mobile approach to warfare.¹⁸⁶ Under Weygand, ‘[t]he early 1930s were rich in technical and doctrinal reflection and experiment’. Further manoeuvres in 1932 at Mailly Camp saw the successful testing of an experimental mechanised cavalry brigade that resulted in the establishment of a new ‘Type 32’ Light Cavalry Division. This was still a hybrid of both animal and machine as it still had some 5,600 horses but was deemed suitable that four of the five cavalry divisions were thus transformed: three remained this way at the outbreak of war in 1939. Weygand continued his progression towards mechanisation with the creation in May 1933 of the first light mechanised division through the conversion of the 4th Cavalry Division. This included 240 armoured combat vehicles plus ancillary supporting units. It was

¹⁸² Obituary, ‘General Maxime Weygand: Triumph and Disaster for French Arms’, *The Times*, 29 Jan. 1965, Iss. 56232, Col. D, p. 14.

¹⁸³ Brian Bond and Martin Alexander ‘Liddell Hart and De Gaulle: The Doctrines of Limited Liability and Mobile Defense’ in Peter Paret, Ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy*, pp. 606-7. Col. C. J. C. Grant, ‘Marshal Foch 26th of March to the 11th of November 1918’, *The Army Quarterly*, Vol.1 No. 2, Jan 1921, pp. 264-5.

¹⁸⁴ Clarke, ‘Military Technology’, pp. 113-4.

¹⁸⁵ For Weygand, some of these political problems were self-induced, as many politicians felt his personal political outlook was a little extreme and that he was as likely to undertake a *coup d’état* with these new weapons to defend the nation. Clarke, ‘Military Technology’, pp. 112-3.

¹⁸⁶ Bond and Alexander ‘Liddell Hart and De Gaulle’, p. 608.

permanently established in late 1933 and resultantly created the first armoured division in Europe, preceding the German Panzer divisions.¹⁸⁷

Weygand continued to support the introduction of armour into the army and indeed managed to retain funding allocations against mounting political pressure through the economic depression of the early 1930s. In order to keep up with thinking on armoured doctrine he twice visited Britain in 1933 and 1934 to witness British experimentation with armour. However, he was not without his opponents. In 1932 Weygand was forced to abandon ideas of an independent tank force, separate from the cavalry or infantry. However, as mentioned earlier, Weygand combat record with tanks did not match his advocacy. This probably stemmed from the fact that aside from two weeks in 1914, he had been a staff officer during the war and so had had no command combat experience.¹⁸⁸ Four years later, Gamelin, was also forced to abandon the idea of an independent tank force, even though he was trying not merely to emulate a German Panzer Division but surpass it. It was this adherence to military organisational orthodoxy by the General Staff that was as much a hindrance to French performance in 1940 as any particular resistance to mechanisation.¹⁸⁹

Surprisingly, in light of the above critique of French military thinking, *The Cavalry Journal* had in 1919, cited Lt. Col Boullaire making observations that bear striking similarities to the later German thinking. He stated that ‘the horse and the machine must work with and for each other’ and spoke of ‘developing its [the cavalry’s] spirit of enterprise and daring, since it can now strike harder and with a longer arm while not relying, as of old, upon the close support of the Infantry.’ This acceptance of all things new would only add to the power of the cavalry without losing its mobility.¹⁹⁰ Where Boullaire differed from later German thinking was his insistence that there would remain mounted combat, thus instead of purely a mode of transport he saw it

¹⁸⁷ Bond and Alexander ‘Liddell Hart and De Gaulle’, p. 608. See also, J. J. Clarke, ‘Military Technology’, pp. 115-6.

¹⁸⁸ Col. C. J. C. Grant, ‘Marshal Foch 26th of March to the 11th of November 1918’, *The Army Quarterly*, Vol.1 No. 2, Jan 1921, pp. 264-5.

¹⁸⁹ Bond and Alexander ‘Liddell Hart and De Gaulle’, pp. 609-10.

¹⁹⁰ Lt. Col. R Boullaire, *Revue Militaire Generale*, Nov.-Dec 1919, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. X, Apr. 1920, p. 165.

as a combat tool as well, echoing the pre-war debate of mounted infantry versus cavalry.

This debate seemed to have provided a mental blank spot for many in both France and Britain who could not seem to accept that a mounted infantryman was just as able, with adequate training to be competent in horsemanship and gain the alleged benefits that horse riding brought; an appreciation for terrain.¹⁹¹ However, not only was the rejection of the concept a little irrational, it also was something of a red-herring in the debate on the future of the cavalry. The question was whether the mounted soldier, in whatever guise, had a future on a modern battlefield? The form of that mounted soldier was very much a secondary debate. In 1923 Lieutenant-Colonel Langlois challenged his cavalry colleagues in just this manner when he wrote

Will the cavalry identify itself exclusively with the horse, or with the spirit of the service? Can the two elements be disassociated? Can the *esprit cavalier* be associated with a means of transport having the same characteristics as the horse—speed and cross-country ability?¹⁹²

For the Americans, as early as 1916, two perceptive cavalry officers, Carl Boyd and Frank Parker, had realised that mechanisation was not just inevitable, but a necessity if the cavalry was to survive as a service branch.¹⁹³ Parker was later to write a paper that he submitted to the AEF command on the concept of using combined arms for deep operations utilising a mechanised force. His conceptualisation met with great approval from British tank theorist, Fuller, although Fuller was prone to a degree of sycophancy towards anyone whose ideas broadly concurred with his own.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Col. of Artillery Cambuzat, 'Cavalry and Fire', *Revue de Cavalerie*, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XIII, Jan. 1923, p.104.

¹⁹² J. J. Clarke, 'Military Technology', p. 94.

¹⁹³ Hofmann, *Through Mobility*, p. 48.

¹⁹⁴ Hofmann, *Through Mobility We Conquer*, p.59. Hofmann's first chapter in this book is entitled 'Frank Parker: Early Mechanized Cavalry Theorist' (pp. 43-76) and whilst it is more of a synopsis of the events surrounding the cavalry and mechanisation from an American perspective during the First World War, it does give further evidence of Parker's innovative thinking.

But for many, thinking on cavalry and technology remained misdirected. The notion of 'linear defence' was firmly embedded in the French military psyche and it proved difficult to remove.¹⁹⁵ In 1930 new cavalry regulations were issued in France but these still contained notions of trench warfare and static fronts; in Clarke's words the cavalry were still unable to 'think big.'¹⁹⁶

Major A. R. Mulliner of the 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars believed that Britain was not grasping the impact of additional firepower compared with other nations and asserted that all the '[g]reat powers...visualize the introduction of mechanization as assisting the Cavalry Arm, by the formation of highly mobile-hard hitting forces' which he saw as in direct contrast to British thought that mechanisation would supersede the cavalry.¹⁹⁷ But this force was still a cavalry unit and the notion of increased firepower dovetailed into the concept of mechanisation should be seen as an adjunct.

As with Germany, the mid-1930s was the significant transitional point for other Continental cavalry. In October 1934 the reviewer of the foreign military press in *The Cavalry Journal* noted that in the past quarter nothing of note had been published that was of 'unusual cavalry interest. The mechanisation of the cavalry division is everywhere being discussed and accepted as inevitable.'¹⁹⁸ To this end, the dominant theme that comes from the foreign military press on the topic was how Britain was leading the way with the mechanisation of the cavalry. In 1932 one French writer was reported as acknowledging 'that the British Army is rather ahead of those of the other European Powers in the development and tactical employment of tanks and armoured cars.'¹⁹⁹ In the same issue of *The Cavalry Journal*, another reviewed article stated that although all nations had had to address the issue of innovative

¹⁹⁵ Clarke, 'Military Technology', p. 129.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, pp. 118-9.

¹⁹⁷ Major A. R. Mulliner, 'Cavalry Still An Essential Arm', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XVII, Oct. 1927, pp. 640-647, p. 644.

¹⁹⁸ *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXIV, Oct. 1934, p.614.

¹⁹⁹ Colonel Danbert, 'Le Groupe de Reconnaissance', *Revue de Cavalerie*, May-Jun. 1932 reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXII, Oct. 1932, p. 628.

weapons, 'Great Britain had gone further than others in motorizing its cavalry.'²⁰⁰ In 1934 it was reported in an Austrian journal that 'continental opinion is looking to Britain for the conclusions to be drawn from our [British] motorization and mechanization trials.'²⁰¹

These reviews and assessments are interesting for a couple of reasons. The reality was that no definitive progress had actually taken place with respect to the future of the cavalry; was it to remain? How it was to operate and with what tools? There had been a reduction in the number of regiments, but that was fundamentally economic in its origin; two regiments had been converted to armoured car units; the Yeomanry cavalry had been substantially changed with the majority being converted into artillery units, and lorries had been provided to the cavalry to carry equipment. But there still remained a lack of clarity as to just how the cavalry was to be involved in modern warfare and so regiments continued to exist, both home and abroad, in a pre-1914 bubble.

This apparent reverence of British mechanisation was, with hindsight, a little misplaced and may have inculcated a degree of arrogance. Certainly, in the 1930s, there appeared no in depth analysis of foreign cavalry outside of skimming international publications and drawing attention to these with the odd suggestion that the complete publication was worth reading. A somewhat 'cavalier' approach to a wider appreciation of cavalry doctrine. In an introductory essay to Hofmann's book on American cavalry mechanisation, General Donn Starry points out that the British cavalry 'stood back from both the general debate about mechanization of the whole force and the debate about tank development and employment.'²⁰² The reality was that this reverence was distinctly misplaced. Robert Doughty comments that 'the wartime doctrine for the employment of the mechanized [French] cavalry units, except for the emphasis on cavalry-type operations, closely resembled the eventual

²⁰⁰ Major de Muralt, 'Modern cavalry', *Revue Militaire Suisse*, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXII, Oct. 1932, p. 629.

²⁰¹ Major Gen. M. Wiktorin, *Militärwissenschaftliche Mitteilungen*, reviewed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXIV, Jan. 1934, pp. 145-6.

²⁰² General Donn A. Starry, 'Introductory Essay', pp. 1-37, in Hofmann, *Through Mobility*, pp. 16-7.

doctrine of most Western powers for the employment of mechanized units during the battles of World War II.' Jeffrey Gunsberg, in his analysis of the 'First Great Tank Battle', points out how remarkably similar in make up a German panzer division was to a French DLM.²⁰³ The French were aware of the similarities and in a war game in 1937 devised a scenario to test a DLM against a German armoured division. The result proved favourable for the DLM and in the same year a German officer commented that Germany could learn much from the French approach to armour.²⁰⁴ Furthermore, in both Gunsberg's and Doughty's opinions, the light mechanised division's cavalry tank, the SOMUA S-35, was 'the best tank on the battlefield in May-June 1940' owing to its 'great mobility, superior weapons, and excellent armor protection.'²⁰⁵ A British cavalryman in his memoirs also recalled that the DLM's Panhard armoured car was 'infinitely superior to our Morris'.²⁰⁶

The second point is that the standard historiography on British armoured doctrine of the inter-war period points to the 1930s as the time when Britain lost the strategic lead in armoured warfare. Yet based upon the reviews of international literature Britain was still the benchmark on mechanisation. By monitoring the international situation, the British cavalry perceived that it was keeping in touch with developments in modern warfare. But much of this observation was superficial and as such the cavalry was deluding itself. The section on international periodicals rarely extended beyond two or three pages of *The Cavalry Journal*. Any specific, extended articles on overseas cavalry rarely went beyond a descriptive narrative. None of these literary pieces went into a reasoned critique, analysing why the British cavalry should or should not follow suite. Furthermore, these pieces never engendered either supplemental articles or correspondence. Frequently, the tenor of the author was a little condescending viewing the subject nation as lagging behind

²⁰³ Jeffrey A. Gunsberg, 'The Battle of the Belgian Plain, 12-14 May 1940: The First Great Tank Battle', *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 56, No.2, Apr. 1992, pp. 207-244, p. 212. This is also reiterated in Kiesling, 'Resting Uncomfortably on its Laurels', pp. 1-34., pp. 14 and 20.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, pp. 1-34., pp. 20-3.

²⁰⁵ Robert Allan Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster: The Development of French Army Doctrine 1919-1939*, (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1985), pp. 169-170. Jeffrey A. Gunsberg, 'The Battle of the Belgian Plain, 12-14 May 1940: The First Great Tank Battle', *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 56, No.2, Apr. 1992, pp. 207-244, pp. 212-3.

²⁰⁶ Tim Bishop, *One Young Soldier The Memoirs of a Cavalryman*, Bruce Shand Ed., (Norwich: Michael Russell, 1993), p. 65. Andrew Horsbrugh-Porter also believed the French had good tanks. IWMSA. Accession No. 905-6, Andrew Marshall Horsbrugh-Porter.

Britain. Alternatively, the tone was self-congratulatory about the fact that international thought concurred with British doctrine.

What was overlooked in all these writings was that cavalrymen from overseas were involved in thinking about the way forward and engaging in the process of mechanisation. Despite those who liked to portray an image to the contrary, there were many British cavalrymen who realised and accepted both motorisation and mechanisation. To cite just one example, General David Campbell was a strong advocate of mechanisation. Campbell's provenance was both horseman and cavalryman. He had been commissioned into the 9th Lancers at the age of twenty in 1889, was a highly successful steeplechase jockey having won the Grand National in 1896, became the 9th Lancers' CO in 1912 and as such, had led the last charge involving British cavalry against another cavalry unit in 1914.²⁰⁷ Despite such a strong association with traditional cavalry, Campbell strongly advocated mechanisation. So much so that he tried to dissuade Fuller from tendering his resignation from the British Experimental Force.²⁰⁸ Fuller himself commented that in 1916 two of the three brigade leaders in the tank corps were cavalrymen and acknowledged their abilities.²⁰⁹

However, those cavalrymen in Britain who were in support of mechanisation were inert compared to their international counterparts. Nowhere in Britain were there high profile, vociferous cavalrymen pro-actively campaigning for cavalry mechanisation. Nowhere was there a Weygand, a Van Voorhis or a Chaffee, all of them steeped in cavalry tradition but all of them supporting a form of mechanised cavalry, even Estienne, though an engineer, championed mechanisation via the cavalry. It cannot be argued that the cavalry did not possess any high profile

²⁰⁷ See chapter on The British Cavalry 1920-1933, p. 26. Obituary, 'General Sir David Campbell Soldier, Sportsman, And Administrator', *The Times*, Friday, Mar 13, 1936; p. 16; Issue 47322; col. B. See also John Bourne, 'Sir David Graham Muschet ("Soarer") Campbell', www.firstworldwar.bham.ac.uk/donkey/campbell.htm, accessed 16th May 2008. For Campbell's own account of his charge with the 9th Lancers, see E. W. Sheppard, *The Ninth Queen's Royal Lancers 1715-1936*, (Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1939), pp. 242-4.

²⁰⁸ Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, pp. 114-5.

²⁰⁹ Fuller, *Memoirs*, p. 94. One of these brigade leaders, Colonel A. Courage, previously with the 15th Hussars, went on to be the Tank Corps Sub-Editor for *the Cavalry Journal*.

characters. In Field Marshal Earl Haig, the cavalry had perhaps the highest profiled General in the country whose popularity remained high on the back of winning the war.²¹⁰ He had seen the gradual increase in technology throughout the war and, far from being a technophobe, was a keen supporter of such.²¹¹ *The Cavalry Journal* was reinstated after the war under his stewardship and consequently he was in a strong position to nurture and encourage a mechanised cavalry for the future. However, his continued advocacy of the cavalry was never given any substance and remained shrouded in mysticism. If his strident advocacy was based upon the adoption of technology it somehow got lost. This defence is in stark contrast to Weygand's, who also asserted that the cavalry was to remain but attributed it to technology. In so doing, Weygand set a tangible challenge to the cavalry's deprecators that was not based upon the smoky sensibilities of the past that could be blown away with ease.

Aside from Haig, there were other senior cavalrymen of standing such as Baden Powell, Allenby, and Chetwode²¹² or indeed, Hubert Gough, but no one came forward. Chetwode had held the post of Deputy CIGS between 1920-2 predominantly under Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson and, like a good cavalryman, had held the reins when Wilson took an extended leave of absence in 1921.²¹³ In 1932, he was also considered as a possible replacement for Field Marshal Sir George Milne as the CIGS.²¹⁴ Chetwode, along with Baden-Powell, had sat on the managing committee of *The Cavalry Journal* for the whole period between 1920-40. Chetwode did appeal in 1936 for articles of a more technical nature but failed to put pen to paper himself to champion a cavalry stance.²¹⁵ Allenby had commanded units on the Western Front and then was responsible for the much lauded campaign in Palestine that utilised the mobility of the cavalry which for some was the precursor of the deep

²¹⁰ The fall in Haig's stock did not begin to occur until after his death in 1928, and is predominantly a post Second World War phenomena.

²¹¹ See chapter on The British Cavalry 1920-1933, p. 26. Also in Messenger, *Blitzkrieg*, p. 36.

²¹² All of these gentlemen participated in the management committee of *The Cavalry Journal* during the inter-war period.

²¹³ Keith Jeffrey Ed., *The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson 1918-1922*, (London: Bodley Head, 1985), p. 220.

²¹⁴ Winton, 'Tanks, Votes, and Budgets', p. 90.

²¹⁵ AGM of *The Cavalry Journal* Committee, Nov. 1936 printed in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXVII, No. 103, Jan. 1937, p. 122. See Appendix for details of managing committee, p. 348.

mobile operations so central to the concept of *Blitzkrieg*. He did write an open letter to the *U. S. Cavalry Journal* in January 1922 supporting a concept of cavalry that embraced both horse and machine. This suitably encouraged American officers to begin to put forth their opinions in writing.²¹⁶

There were others of a lower profile that could have stepped to the fore: David Campbell was Military Secretary in 1926 and GOC Aldershot 1927-31. Campbell had written a memorandum to the incumbent CIGS in 1927, General Sir George Milne, stating that 'the role of cavalry, even when unopposed by Tanks, had materially changed, and its usefulness had greatly diminished.'²¹⁷ However, his views were never represented in *The Cavalry Journal*. Another such officer was Colonel A. Courage, a former cavalryman and commander of 'B' battalion, Tank Corps, who was, for a period, a sub-editor of the journal.²¹⁸ Major E. W. Sheppard was a retired officer from the RTC, who was a productive writer and wrote several articles and reviewed books in the journal, as well as publishing a number of books prior to 1939.²¹⁹ Yet all failed to put pen to paper in a comparable way to their international colleagues. The reason for this is difficult to discern.

Sheppard did write two consecutive articles on *French Views on Modern Cavalry* for the journal in late 1938 and early 1939 that were more analytical than had previously been seen.²²⁰ Aside from Chetwode's aforementioned rejoinder, there are clues in his concluding paragraph that provide an explanation as to this sudden change.

the French, who began to undergo conversion from horse to
mechanization before ourselves, have undoubtedly much to teach

²¹⁶ Messenger, *Blitzkrieg*, p. 53.

²¹⁷ Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, p. 109. Also Messenger, *Blitzkrieg*, p. 40.

²¹⁸ See <http://www.royaltankregiment.com/pages/options/2rtr/2RTRhis.htm#2>, accessed 16th May 2008.

²¹⁹ See E. W. Sheppard, *The Ninth Queen's Royal Lancers 1715-1936*, (Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1939), E. W. Sheppard, *A Short History of the British Army to 1914*, (London: Constable, 1929), E. W. Sheppard, *Tanks in the Next War*, (London: Bles, 1938), E. W. Sheppard, *Deeds that Held the Empire: By Land*, (London: John Murray, 1939). These are just examples from his pre-war catalogue; he continued to publish several books both during and after the Second World War.

²²⁰ E. W. Sheppard, 'French Views on Modern Cavalry', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vols. XXVIII & XXIX, Nos. 110 & 111, Oct. 1938 and Jan 1939, pp. 513-27 and pp. 73-84.

us...It is for us to profit, not only by their ideas, but still more by their example, now that we have entered once for all [sic] on the road of cavalry mechanization and left behind us for ever a glorious but irrecoverable past.²²¹

The function of this article was to try and bring the British cavalry up to date and, in so doing, gave a tacit acknowledgement that it had neglected thinking about armoured doctrine for the past twenty years in comparison to other major armies.

There were, however, some organisational differences in the British army by comparison to the other major nations that may have affected the thinking of the cavalry. Firstly, the British army was the only army to have a separate, distinct tank corps. Consequently there is an argument that any theorising on the future of armoured warfare in Britain should have been led by this branch, being the specialists. In both France and the United States, the Tank Corps created during the war were disbanded and this left a void that became a battleground for the two traditional arms, cavalry and infantry, to fight for control over the implementation of mechanisation. Therefore, although this policy has led to criticism that it created a discordant approach to a national armoured doctrine, it did provide a participatory atmosphere for discourse amongst cavalrymen on how best that their branch should, or indeed should not, mechanise. Posen, commenting upon the evolution of the French DLM from the horsed cavalry, asserts that it is folly to give a traditional branch new technology: 'the worst way to assure its effective exploitation.'²²² He is perhaps correct in a solely theoretical sense, although he does not substantiate this observation in any great degree. Indeed, Gutenberg's general assessment of the performance of the DLMs in Belgium in May 1940 is far from deprecatory and refers to the 'elite' cavalry corps and in so doing challenges Posen's assertion.²²³

²²¹ E. W. Sheppard, 'French Views on Modern Cavalry', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXIX, No. 111, Jan 1939, p. 84.

²²² Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine France, Britain, and Germany between the World wars*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 132.

²²³ Gunsberg, 'The Battle of the Belgian Plain', pp. 207-244. The main combatants in this battle were DLMs and from this article the implication is that they were capable of matching the German panzer divisions but lost out owing to other factors. In particular see the conclusion on pp. 240-4. The reference to 'elite' is on p.240.

Horsbrugh-Porter, who was in France with the 12th Lancers, was unimpressed with the French army as a whole, but believed that the DLMs were 'first-class.'²²⁴

But, such an exclusive policy as advocated by Posen has organisational ramifications of its own. By handing control to a new branch there was a strong possibility that this had an alienating effect upon the excluded branches, leading to disaffection, demoralisation and animosity. This was the potential problem in Britain and, despite criticism of his cautious approach to mechanisation, General Sir George Milne's concern for the morale of the traditional branches as CIGS 1927-1933 was not such a hollow argument as some would assert.²²⁵ Milne's future replacement as CIGS, Lieutenant General Sir Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, also held this perspective.²²⁶ Massingberd was to visit France in 1935 and was impressed with the way that the French had retained the horse for its officers even when mechanised, as they felt it remained a valid tool for both training and recruitment; a perspective he fully agreed with.²²⁷ The developments among cavalrymen in France and the United States evidenced that in a positive environment, they were as adept as any in accepting, embracing and theorising new technology. Thus, had the armoured theorists of the RTC been less confrontational, they may have been rewarded with a more committed, enthusiastic branch willing to follow their lead. This in turn may have created a more robust combined arms doctrine fully endorsed by all branches. This was certainly a perspective held by General Burnett-Stuart who believed that the existence of the RTC was a stimulus for the existing arms.²²⁸ This attitude can be witnessed in Germany, for whilst discourse in France and the United States was born from competition for armoured theoretical superiority between the various service branches, in Germany there was a culture of open discourse.²²⁹ The Treaty of Versailles merely served to magnify this culture, as its

²²⁴ IWMSA. Accession No. 905-6, Andrew Marshall Horsbrugh-Porter.

²²⁵ Fuller, *Memoirs*, p. 421.

²²⁶ Winton, 'Tanks, Votes, and Budgets', p. 86.

²²⁷ Minute 7, 'Report of the Committee on the Value of the Horse in the Training of Officers and Reduction in the Establishment of Horses consequent upon Mechanization', WO32/4005.

²²⁸ Winton, 'Tanks, Votes, and Budgets', p. 86.

²²⁹ Citino, "'Die Gedanken sind Frei'", p. 53. Also James S. Corum, 'A Clash of Military Cultures: German & French Approaches to Technology between the World Wars', USAF Academy Symposium, Sept. 1994, p. 30, <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/saas/corum.pdf> accessed 20th May 2008.

constrictive edicts meant that the German army had to work as a cohesive whole. So this provided a fertile environment that was censure-free. This mindset was combined with the fact that the immediate post-war CO was Hans Von Seeckt, the bulk of whose experience from the war was on the Eastern Front where mobility and the cavalry had still played a positive role.²³⁰ This environment encouraged cavalrymen to participate in the mechanisation of both the German army and the mounted arm.

Secondly, the British cavalry never possessed any financial control over mechanisation. The devolution of mechanisation to branch level in France and the United States meant that these branches received a financial inducement to think about how they spent money on new technology. The control of the purse strings meant that the cavalry were able to both theorise about armoured doctrine and stipulate the design of the vehicles.

These differences may highlight why the British cavalry did not engage so predominantly with the mechanisation debate in comparison to those overseas, leaving only those who were more vehemently opposed to modernisation. In so doing, it gave the staunch mechanists the very ammunition to denigrate the cavalry and advocate the tanks corps. Undoubtedly, there were those cavalrymen who were unable to imagine life without their beloved horse, but in reality many of these were ex-cavalrymen born in a different era. There was never any high-ranking serving British cavalryman who held the blinkered view of the American Chief of Cavalry, Major-General John Herr, over the utilisation of the horse in modern warfare. Possibly the best quote that exemplifies his attitude was '[a]s always, Cavalry's motto must remain: When better roller skates are made, Cavalry Horses will wear

²³⁰ Messenger, *Blitzkrieg*, pp. 56-7. See also, James S. Corum, 'A Comprehensive Approach to Change: Reform in the German Army in the Interwar Period', in Winton and Mets (eds.), *The Challenge of Change*, pp. 35-73., pp. 38-9.

them.²³¹ The image of Colonel Blimp should more correctly be attributed to him rather than any in the British cavalry.²³²

The British cavalry of the inter-war period can be criticised for lethargy and complacency in its thinking on mechanisation compared to its international counterparts. For despite the organisational differences highlighted that may have affected their outlook, these are just excuses and there is no excuse for a professional soldier not contemplating how best to go about his duty. As Citino says, whatever 'the constraints that politics and economy may place upon an army, thoughts are free.'²³³ Instead, for much of the period any analysis of its international counterparts was used to bolster and validate the British cavalry's own position. Sheppard in his 1939 article on French cavalry put up a defence for this stating that there was not so much 'scope...in the British army for discussing and even criticising the ideas and methods laid down by their superiors'.²³⁴ This undoubtedly held a degree of truth but articles did appear in journals such as the *RUSI Journal* that were thought-provoking without being provocative. His comment is not a legitimisation for *laissez faire*. But Sheppard's comment does have some validity and the British cavalry should not bear the blame alone. In 1940, they were the only cavalry arm in the world that was, theoretically, fully mechanised, an indication that as a branch it was far from regressive. Furthermore, there is evidence that the two cavalry regiments that had been mechanised in 1928, operated efficiently and skilfully during the Second World War, so refuting any notion of lack of ability and adaptability of the cavalryman.²³⁵ The British cavalry, had they followed the lead of their mechanised brethren from overseas and pushed harder for mechanisation and received more positive encouragement from armoured theorists, especially those in the RTC, had

²³¹ Johnson, 'From Frontier Constabulary to Modern Army', p. 188.

²³² The only serving officer who perhaps came close to this in the British cavalry was Colonel Gaisford-Lawrence, commanding officer of the Royal Scots Greys, who in 1939 petitioned Parliament for the retention of his regiment on horseback.

²³³ Citino, "Die Gedanken sind Frei", p. 48.

²³⁴ E. W. Sheppard, 'French Views on Modern Cavalry', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXIX, No. 111, Jan. 1939, pp. 73-84, p. 83.

²³⁵ The two regiments in question were the 11th Hussars and the 12th Lancers. Liddell Hart in his memoirs commented upon how enthusiastically mechanisation was received by these regiments and also upon the performance of the 11th Hussars in the North African campaign. B. H. Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, p. 132.

²³⁶ Liddell Hart, *Modern Armies*, p. 60.

the capacity to make an invaluable contribution to the war from the outset. In doing so they may have validated Liddell Hart's cry, 'The cavalry is dead! Long live the cavalry!'²³⁶

²³⁶ Liddell Hart, *Modern Armies*, p. 60.

5. The British cavalry 1934-1940

The traditional historiographical interpretation of the cavalry for the period from 1934 is a negative one. It argues that despite the inevitability of mechanisation and the growing threat of another major war, the British cavalry resisted modernisation and tried to retain its horses. As a consequence of this resistance, the British army was easily pushed aside when it was thrown into battle in 1940 against a German army skilled in mechanised armoured warfare. This chapter challenges this perception. It asserts that the cavalry actually helped to bring about its mechanisation and managed to expedite a process that had not been commenced earlier. In so doing, the British army did its best to be the only mechanised army in 1939. The failures of 1940 were due to factors that were beyond the control of the cavalry. It will also show that the parochial attitude of the RTC had the potential for retarding the mechanisation of the British army far more than the cavalry.

For the British cavalry, the period up to 1933 had been a period influenced by financial retrenchment. Aside from two regiments that had been converted to armoured car regiments, some economies in manpower which included the amalgamation of several regiments and the mechanisation of some logistical aspects, the cavalry began 1934 in similar guise to 1914. There had been discussions in various quarters over its utility in modern warfare and how, or if, it could operate on a modern battlefield following the arrival of motor vehicles but despite this, no clear policy had evolved. Any general mechanisation policy still lacked cohesion and the experimental armoured force had been discontinued. Peden has argued that the poor state of the army allowed Britain to reassess and re-shape its defence policy in the 1930s and if Britain had invested heavily in its military much of this equipment would have been obsolete by 1939.¹ This is an *a posteriori* argument and by such logic changes should never be embraced in the anticipation of something better being developed. Ignoring the overarching flaw in this logic, there are specific points pertinent to this debate that also discredit this approach. Firstly, there is an inference that the British army did modernise by the time war was declared, but, as this chapter will show, the lack of funding for development and equipment during the 1920s and

¹ G. C. Peden, *British Rearmament and the Treasury: 1932-1939*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1979), p. 107.

1930s meant that much of the equipment the British army had in 1939 was obsolete. Secondly, it was impossible to know if and when the British army was going to be needed. As international events unfolded, it was just as plausible that war could have occurred far earlier with the Abyssinian Crisis, the German invasion of the Rhineland or even, as the COS had pointed out, the tensions in Asia following the Mukden incident.² Furthermore, the development of a clear armoured doctrine was hampered due to a lack of equipment.

The low level of funding was not the only factor affecting the mechanisation of the army in this period. In 1932, a disarmament conference was held in Geneva by the members of the League of Nations. The conference failed to come to any positive outcome, but the faith placed in its potential by politicians, was to obstruct any significant rearmament programme.³

During the 1930s, there were two men who were to have considerable influence upon military policy: Neville Chamberlain and Basil Liddell Hart. From 1931-1940, Chamberlain was arguably the most influential politician in the Cabinet.⁴ From 1931-1937, he was Chancellor of the Exchequer and 1937-1940 he was the Prime Minister. During this period, Chamberlain and the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, Warren Fisher, were able to manipulate defence policy as they saw fit.⁵ In the early 1930s, Chamberlain believed there were two problems in increasing army expenditure. On a larger scale, he was concerned it would impact on the financial security of the nation. On a smaller scale, he believed that increased expenditure on the army could be interpreted as an aggressive act.⁶ Harris states that Chamberlain's attitude meant that the army remained the 'Cinderella Service' throughout the

² Mearsheimer outlines ten international crises in the period 1931-39. John Mearsheimer, *Liddell Hart*, pp. 131-2. Dunbabin mentions the Mukden incident as the start of a change of attitude in British policy, J. P. D. Dunbabin, 'British Rearmament in the 1930s: A Chronology and Review', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 3, Sept. 1975, pp. 587-609, p. 590.

³ Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 193.

⁴ Robert Paul Shay, *British Rearmament in the Thirties. Politics and Profits*, (Princeton: PUP, 1977), p. 15.

⁵ Peden, *British Rearmament*, p. 59. See also Keith Neilson, 'The Defence Requirements Sub-Committee, British Strategic Foreign Policy, Neville Chamberlain and the Path to Appeasement', *English Historical Review*, 118, 2003, pp. 651-84, pp. 654-5.

⁶ Dunbabin, 'British Rearmament in the 1930s', p. 590.

1930s.⁷ The Treasury's attitude began to alter with the publication of the first report by the DRC, which highlighted a significant deficit in military hardware.⁸ The DRC was created in November 1933 and was tasked to investigate the inadequacies of British defence. Its creation seems to have been driven by three senior civil servants; Sir Robert Vansittart, PUS at the Foreign Office; Sir Warren Fisher, who was, as mentioned, Permanent Secretary to the Treasury and also the Head of the Civil Service; and Sir Maurice Hankey, Secretary to the Cabinet. Much has been written about this committee and its influence upon defence policy in the 1930s, but Neilson believes that its true function has been concealed. He sees the DRC as having been 'an arena in which British strategic foreign policy was threshed out...and whose decisions largely determined the path that British strategic defence policy took in the years until 1939.'⁹

In order to draw opinions upon military deficiencies, it was necessary for the DRC to decide which nation posed the greatest military threat. In this there were two candidates: Germany and Japan. The DRC was to decide, after much debate, that Britain's ultimate enemy was Germany and that for Japan, a policy of 'accommodation and friendship' should be sought.¹⁰ For the army, the significance of this was a move towards preparing a force suitable for a Continental conflict, although somewhat contradictorily, the COS still prepared their analysis of deficiencies by prioritising defence in the Far East followed by Germany.¹¹ The cost of these deficiencies totalled £71 million and more than half, £40 million, was required by the army alone.¹² However, 'expert opinion' was challenged and Chamberlain arranged for the Treasury to prepare a comprehensive review of the DRC report. Chamberlain also challenged the precepts upon which the report was prepared and although he opted for prioritising a German threat, he saw the defence of Britain through the increase of air defence not through a Continental

⁷ Harris, *Men, ideas and tanks*, pp. 273-4.

⁸ For a full account of the affect of this initial report on the Treasury see Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 191-213. Also discussed in Dunbabin, 'British Rearmament in the 1930s', p. 590.

⁹ Neilson, 'Defence Requirements Sub-Committee', pp. 651-3. For a list of the prominent works see fn. 1, p. 651.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 666-72.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 672.

¹² *Ibid.*

commitment.¹³ After much Cabinet wrangling, Chamberlain reduced the DRC's £71 million to £50 million and reallocated the three service arms quotas; the army's slice was cut to £20 million, the Royal Navy's was also cut, with the RAF having their budget virtually doubled.¹⁴ By 1935, the Treasury was aware of the level of investment in rearmament by Germany and that expenditure on the army had to be increased, but Chamberlain refused to allow increased funds to the army, as he believed that letting expenditure get out of control would destabilise the economy.¹⁵ Therefore, serious rearmament of the army did not begin until 1936; later than the other two service arms.¹⁶

In this period, Chamberlain has become synonymous with the policy of appeasement. There have been two interpretations of this policy. One argues that it was a policy to meet Hitler's demands in order to secure peace. The other states that it was a cynical policy to obtain more time for Britain to rearm.¹⁷ It is not the intention of this chapter to be drawn into a debate on the validity of the policy of appeasement, but as Dunbabin has stated, 'Chamberlain had never liked the idea of sending a large army to the continent'¹⁸; it was an idea Liddell Hart agreed with. Based upon a lecture to the RUSI in 1931, Liddell Hart had published *The British Way in Warfare* which advocated a limited approach to war, utilising a naval blockade and economic sanctions.¹⁹ *The Cavalry Journal* was unimpressed with his theories and felt that he was twisting history to validate his theories. Indeed, the reviewer believed that he should stick to mechanisation as he felt Liddell Hart was 'at his best' when

¹³ Ibid, pp. 674.

¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 677-8.

¹⁵ Dunbabin, 'British Rearmament in the 1930s', p. 599. Bond, *British Military Policy*, pp. 192-3. This orthodoxy has been challenged recently by a number of academics. See Christopher Price who argues that Britain could have afforded to re-arm. Christopher Price, *Britain, America and Rearmament in the 1930s: The Cost of Failure*, (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2001) and John Ruggiero, *Neville Chamberlain and British Rearmament: Pride, Prejudice and Politics*, (London: Greenwood, 1999).

¹⁶ Harris, *Man, ideas and tanks*, p. 237 and p. 273. Harris provides a succinct outline to Chamberlain's control in a chapter on the British General Staff. See pp. 200-3 in J. P. Harris, 'The British General Staff and the Coming of War, 1933-9', in D. French and B. Holden-Reid Eds., *The British General Staff: Reform and Innovation, 1890-1939*, (London: Frank Cass, 2002), pp. 196- 211.

¹⁷ Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 280. Bond argues that there is more support for the view that it was a policy to stop Hitler rather than to gain time.

¹⁸ Dunbabin, 'British Rearmament in the 1930s', p. 602.

¹⁹ Liddell Hart, *The British Way*. See also, Brian Bond, *Liddell Hart A Study of his Military Thought*, (London: Cassell, 1977), pp. 65-87.

advocating modernisation in the army.²⁰ Liddell Hart's influence was to increase as the 1930s progressed and his career was at its height during the period 1935-9, when he was able to exert considerable influence on the War Office. In 1937, he became Hore-Belisha's unofficial military adviser.²¹ He continued to advocate a policy of limited liability in a subsequent publication, *Europe in Arms*.²² At the core of this remained the idea that it was a mistake to send an army to the Continent. This publication was popular with Chamberlain and when Hore-Belisha was made the Secretary of State for War, Chamberlain urged him to read this book, in particular the chapter entitled 'The Role of the British Army.'²³ This gives support to the army's view on Hore-Belisha, whom they perceived as Chamberlain's man.²⁴ This was to have a negative effect on modernising and rearming the British army. The result of Liddell Hart's advocacy was summed up by Bond who stated 'in practice [he was] undercutting his own Herculean efforts to reform the Army.' Bond went on to say that between 1934-8, the limited liability school effectively nullified the army's claims for funding when compared to the other two services. Although, as he points out, whether this truly made any difference to the events in 1940 is impossible to say.²⁵ The British General Staff of this period have been criticised by historians but Harris puts up a convincing defence of the General Staff and points out that, whatever Liddell Hart and politicians thought, they never wavered from their view of the necessity for a Continental commitment and that Germany was the significant military threat. Furthermore, their predictions upon initial German strategy were remarkably prescient.²⁶

²⁰ Review of Liddell Hart, 'The British Way in Warfare', in *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXII, Oct. 1932, pp. 632-3, p. 633. For an analysis of Liddell Hart's ability to manipulate history see Mearsheimer, *Liddell Hart*.

²¹ Hore-Belisha had become Secretary of State for War in May 1937. Bond, *Liddell Hart*, p. 88. Larson, *The British Army*, p. 198.

²² Basil Liddell Hart, *Europe in Arms*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1937).

²³ Bond, *Liddell Hart*, pp.92-3.

²⁴ Harris, *Men, ideas and tanks*, p. 284. For an analysis of the sway Chamberlain held over Hore-Belisha, see J. P. Harris, 'Two War Ministers: A Reassessment of Duff Cooper and Hore-Belisha', *War and Society*, Vol. 6, No. 1, May 1988, pp. 65-78, pp. 69-70.

²⁵ Bond, *Liddell Hart*, pp.114-5. For an analysis of Liddell Hart's thinking during the 1930s, see Bond's two chapters, 'The British Way in Warfare, 1930-34', pp. 65-87 and 'Limited Liability, 1935-39', pp. 88-118. Also see Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 173.

²⁶ Harris, 'British General Staff', pp. 196 – 211.

The reality for the British army was that in 1938, it was tank production that bore the brunt of financial rationing. The same time most of the cavalry was being mechanised. The government was unwilling to disrupt the economy and Treasury control of finance meant that governmental priorities were adhered to. The Field Force was given a low priority and it was not until 1939 that tank production was given precedence over locomotive and railway work.²⁷ Thus, the perspective of the cavalry in the wider picture of the British army was debateable, as the lack of political and economic will exhibited by the government, combined with very little public support, meant that the move towards any modernisation was always going to be slow. Liddell Hart's role as advisor to Hore-Belisha was to lose him much support within the army. Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Pownall, who was never afraid to have a strident view on matters, believed Liddell Hart's views on limited liability when advising Hore-Belisha had done much damage to the army and claimed, hopefully in black humour, that Liddell Hart should have been 'shot dead.'²⁸

The confusion surrounding army doctrine was indicative of general national policies of the decade. Johnson believed that, even more than the 1920s, the 1930s was a period of 'introspection, argumentation and vacillation' that saw the economy become 'the political demi-God.'²⁹ Churchill, always the consummate orator, damned defence planning in 1936 with the accusation that 'they go in strange paradox, deciding to be undecided, resolved to be irresolute, adamant for drift, solid for fluidity, all-powerful to be impotent.'³⁰

Hore-Belisha's tenure at the War Office was a tempestuous one. His relationships with both CIGS during his term in office were not harmonious. His first CIGS was

²⁷ Robert Paul Shay, *British Rearmament*, pp. 174-6.

²⁸ Larson, *The British Army*, p. 206. For an insight into Pownall's views, see the published version of his diaries edited by Brian Bond. Brian Bond, Ed. *Chief of Staff The Diaries of Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Pownall, Volume One 1933-1940*, (London: Leo Cooper, 1973) and Brian Bond Ed. *Chief of Staff The Diaries of Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Pownall Volume Two 1940-1944*, (London: Leo Cooper, 1974).

²⁹ Johnson, *Defence By Committee*, p.247.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p.235.

Field Marshal Sir Cyril Deverell and their relationship devolved into a personal battle rather than a professional relationship.³¹ Therefore, it was without surprise that, when Hore-Belisha, with Liddell Hart's advice, purged the senior General Staff in 1937 to make way for younger officers, he requested Deverell to tender his resignation; his replacement was Lord Gort. However, within a short space of time this relationship was to sour and it was Gort's more placatory deputy, Adam, who facilitated a smoother running of the War Office.³² It is impossible to gauge the impact such discord had on the administration and preparation of the army in the years prior to the outbreak of war, but it is hard to imagine that it had a positive influence. The political wrangling and behind the scene personal politicking were to have a significant impact upon the period.

Whilst such wrangling was taking place, 1934 saw very little change for the cavalry. Firstly, despite the lack of any real investment, the army continued to search primarily for an improved four-wheeled vehicle. This was because they considered these to be more mobile than tracked or half-tracked vehicles and consequently more suited to the cavalry.³³ Thus, the main priority remained motorisation rather than mechanisation. The cavalry had fully supported motorised transport vehicles to aid its mobility and this had been established as a key goal through Montgomery-Massingberd's cavalry committee reports of 1926-7. For the cavalryman, there was very little more to consider until perceived technical failings of AFVs were resolved.

A sense of apathy was evident and some cavalrymen were looking elsewhere for careers; in *The Cavalry Journal* there was a brief article on post-cavalry careers in the Palestinian Police. This article implied that the loss of the horse was an ever-growing certainty and that a position with the Palestine Police would appeal 'to such men who are looking out for an appointment in which the horse can still be their friend.' The article further concluded with the rousing, romantic appeal that a new

³¹ Larson, *The British Army*, pp. 207-8.

³² Harris, *Men, Ideas and tanks*, p. 294. Brian Bond 'Leslie Hore-Belisha', pp. 113-4.

³³ '3rd Hussars Experiment in Mechanization. April – September, 1935', 26/9/1935, WO32/2847, ARMY ORGANISATION: Cavalry: Introduction of a Mobile Division. Brian Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 162.

police recruit would patrol 'the same ground as Allenby's cavalry, and will cross where the Bucks and Dorset Yeomanries made their famous charge.'³⁴ The appeal of remaining with horses in an armed police force was not just imagined. General Sir John Hackett, a highly intelligent officer, transferred in 1936 from the newly mechanised 8th Hussars to the Trans-Jordanian Frontier Force in order to continue soldiering with horses.³⁵

The assertion that there was a perceived decline in morale of the traditional arms is not without foundation. Burnett-Stuart, an advocate of armoured warfare, decided that the mobile force exercises of 1934 should be configured in such a way to boost the morale of the infantry and cavalry.³⁶ Somewhat surprisingly, Hobart, arguably the staunchest serving tank advocate, believed that such an approach was necessary and stated that 'from the big point of view much good has been done, and there has been a great restoration of confidence in those two arms [infantry and cavalry].'³⁷

However, it was with a degree of irony that any achievements by the cavalry during these particular exercises were due to officers' wives driving about the countryside in cars obtaining information on the opposing forces whereabouts.³⁸ Whilst, as civilians, they were undoubtedly ignored by the forces they were observing, the fact that they were able to provide fast, reliable, accurate reconnaissance information through the use of motor vehicles perhaps provided some food for thought for the cavalry. Unfortunately for mechanisation, the most capable thinker on armoured warfare at this time, George Lindsay, did not perform well in the manoeuvres and this cast a pall upon the remainder of his career.³⁹

³⁴ Inspector-General R. G. B. Spicer, 'The Palestine Police as a Post-Cavalry Career', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXIV, Jan. 1934, pp67-70.

³⁵ IWMSA. Accession No. 4527-2, John Winthrop Hackett. See Hackett's biography, Fullick, *Shan Hackett*, for a full account of Hackett's achievements as both a soldier and a scholar.

³⁶ Liddell Hart, *The Tanks*, p.332. Later in this book, Liddell Hart actually remarks upon the marked similarities between the obstructions that Burnett-Stuart created for the armoured force in this exercise to those actually encountered on the British army's push towards Arnhem ten years later, see p. 333.

³⁷ Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 169.

³⁸ IWMSA. Accession No. 892-3, George William Draffen, Accession No. 867-1, Eric Francis Offord. Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 168.

³⁹ Harris, *Men. Ideas and tanks*, pp. 249-52.

In 1933, Montgomery-Massingberd had become CIGS and the fate of the cavalry seems to have been inextricably linked with him. His appointment as CIGS gave Liddell Hart cause for concern, as he saw him as singularly career-minded and a conservative on army mechanisation. Liddell Hart believed his appointment was a step in the wrong direction.⁴⁰ However, Harris states that Montgomery-Massingberd became something of a '*bête noire*' for Liddell Hart and consequently his views are lacking in balance. He agrees that Montgomery-Massingberd was fundamentally conservative but believes that much of the criticism directed at Montgomery-Massingberd is 'unbalanced and unfair' and that some of his viewpoints should be set against the standards of the time not of those prevalent today.⁴¹ Whilst Liddell Hart's opinion upon those who did not wholeheartedly endorse mechanisation cannot be perceived as anything but prejudiced, his concerns over Montgomery-Massingberd do have some credence. In the 1920s he had already advocated his concept of evolution not revolution when chairing the Cavalry Committee.⁴² In May 1933 Liddell Hart quoted Montgomery-Massingberd as saying that there was 'not likely to be...a big war in Europe for many years to come' complemented this outlook. Liddell Hart supported this with a further quote by the MGO, who asserted that there would be no war 'in our lifetime.'⁴³ This was only going to underpin a sedentary approach to mechanisation, especially where the traditional arms were concerned. The danger of these quotations is that Liddell Hart does not reference his sources and does not contextualise them. He uses them as a critique of Montgomery-Massingberd, but as already seen, Liddell Hart was also advocating non-intervention in Europe and so is guilty of duplicity. In contradiction to these quotations, Montgomery-Massingberd stated to the DRC that the fate of the nation was linked to events on the Continent and that a British Field Force was required to support France against any future German aggression.⁴⁴ In his memoirs, Montgomery-Massingberd argues that his period as CIGS was overshadowed by the permanent potential of war due to the events in Manchuria in 1933, Abyssinia in 1935 and the Rhineland in

⁴⁰ Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, pp. 70-1. Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 162.

⁴¹ Harris, *Men, ideas and tanks*, pp. 242-3.

⁴² Field Marshal Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, *The Autobiography of a Gunner*, p. 53, LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd 10/11. Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 147.

⁴³ Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, p. 228. Also in Liddell Hart, *The Tanks*, pp.301-2.

⁴⁴ Harris, *Men, ideas and tanks*, p. 243.

1936.⁴⁵ This does not quite square with his assertion of no war, for whilst only one event was in Europe, each event was with a significant world power: Japan, Germany and Italy.

Liddell Hart also believed that Montgomery-Massingberd would be openly repressive towards independent thought.⁴⁶ Montgomery-Massingberd had repeatedly spoken disparagingly about Fuller's writings, which he perceived as disloyal and argued that loyalty in a soldier was far more important than intelligence.⁴⁷ Liddell Hart speculated that Fuller's placement upon the retirement list only seven months after Montgomery-Massingberd's appointment as CIGS was not a coincidence.⁴⁸ Liddell Hart's assertion of Montgomery-Massingberd's negative effect does have some validity. In 1933, Montgomery-Massingberd suppressed the general circulation of the army's official analysis of the First World War, the Kirke Committee Report, allowing only small, diluted elements to be distributed to more senior officers.⁴⁹ Yet, as French has pointed out, much of what was contained in the report was not radically new, merely an affirmation of post-war doctrine. He further argues that the edited published version did not detract from the original.⁵⁰

The strongest case for criticising Montgomery-Massingberd's conservative approach was that he was an advocate of the horse being good training for officers. When the cavalry was being mechanised, he endorsed that two horses should still be allocated to officers in these regiments and that one horse should be introduced for RTC officers for this reason. Montgomery-Massingberd took great exception to the DUS for War commenting that the era of the horse was over and that the only real reason for retaining them was one of sentimentality for those existing officers 'who had been brought up to regard the horse as a most usual appendage.'⁵¹ In a minuted

⁴⁵ Field Marshal Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, *The Autobiography of a Gunner*, p. 59, LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd 10/11.

⁴⁶ Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 162.

⁴⁷ Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, pp. 102-3.

⁴⁸ Liddell Hart, *The Tanks*, pp.302-3.

⁴⁹ Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, p. 213.

⁵⁰ French, 'Doctrine and Organization', p. 512. French, *Raising Churchill's Army*, p. 32.

⁵¹ Item 5A, WO32/4005 'Report of the Committee on the Value of the Horse in the Training of Officers and Reduction in the Establishment of Horses consequent upon Mechanization'.

response, Montgomery-Massingberd countered that his advocacy was more than mere sentimentalism, but as a means of exercise and a means of officer selection. He believed that boys who grew up with a love of horses made the best officers and the army could ill-afford to lose such men.⁵² Montgomery-Massingberd went as far as to refute a minute written in 1926, by the QMG, Sir Walter Campbell, which had challenged the validity of the horse in training. Montgomery-Massingberd argued that much had changed since Campbell's comment.⁵³ The logic of this argument is difficult to comprehend. Undoubtedly, much had changed since Campbell's comment but towards mechanisation not away from it. The Secretary of State for War, Duff Cooper, did not endorse Montgomery-Massingberd's view, as he believed learning to drive along a main road was just as likely to engender quickness of thought.⁵⁴ Furthermore, he quite accurately pointed out that there were alternative, cheaper methods for officers to maintain their level of fitness.⁵⁵ Towards the end of his tenure as CIGS, Duff Cooper believed Montgomery-Massingberd was out of touch and that it was not without merit that the 'poor old man' was soon to be retiring.⁵⁶ When Ironside was made CIGS on the outbreak of the Second World War, he was brutal in his condemnation of Montgomery-Massingberd, and his predecessor, Milne, for the state of the British army. He believed both men 'ought to be shot.'⁵⁷ However, some of this enmity was possibly derived from his personal feeling that his own career had been stifled under the stewardship of these two men.⁵⁸ Ironside had been Commandant of the Staff College between 1922-6 and had advocated during this period for 'an élite mechanized army with close air support for use in global small wars.'⁵⁹ However, his condemnation of his predecessors was somewhat duplicitous. In 1937, when he was GOC, Eastern Command, he had written a letter to the War Office also arguing that the horse was part of national life

⁵² Minute 7, 'Report of the Committee on the Value of the Horse in the Training of Officers and Reduction in the Establishment of Horses consequent upon Mechanization', WO32/4005.

⁵³ Minutes 13 and 15, 'Report of the Committee on the Value of the Horse in the Training of Officers and Reduction in the Establishment of Horses consequent upon Mechanization', WO32/4005. Also reasserted in Minute 21.

⁵⁴ Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, pp. 300-1. Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 163.

⁵⁵ Minute 23, 'Report of the Committee on the Value of the Horse in the Training of Officers and Reduction in the Establishment of Horses consequent upon Mechanization', WO32/4005.

⁵⁶ Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, p. 300.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 71.

⁵⁸ Brian Bond, 'Ironside' in John Keegan, Ed., *Churchill's Generals*, (London: Abacus, 1999), pp. 17-33, p.17.

⁵⁹ John C. Cairns, 'Ironside, (William) Edmund, first Baron Ironside (1880-1959)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Oct 2007 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34113>, accessed 13th July 2010].

and, like Montgomery-Massingberd, believed it to be a means of physical exercise and imbuing leadership qualities. He argued there was still a need for horsed cavalry in those regions in the world where 'mechanised forces cannot operate.'⁶⁰ This was still his view two years later when, in a War Cabinet memorandum, he supported the despatch of the 1st Cavalry Division to Palestine where conditions were suitable for horsed cavalry unlike France.⁶¹ Ironside's inconsistent perspective gives an indication as to the lack of clarity amongst senior officers of the period and an example of their ability to vacillate upon doctrinal matters.

There were others who also called for the retention of the horse. As late as April 1937, when the first tranche of cavalry conversions had been announced, a senior officer writing under the *nom de plume* 'You Have Been Warned', wrote a lengthy and impassioned plea for the retention of horses for all army officers.⁶² This article was cited by the journal's managing editor as being in response to a further call from Field Marshal Sir Phillip Chetwode for articles dealing with current and future developments in both training and equipment.⁶³ The article argued that the proposed removal of horses from mechanised units had 'shaken the confidence of the Army.' The author believed that the provision of a horse was considered part of an officer's remuneration. The horse was also a key element in an officer's fitness regime, and finally, it aided military training.⁶⁴

However, as exemplified by Harris, recent historians argue for a reassessment of Montgomery-Massingberd's period as CIGS. It was Montgomery-Massingberd who decided that the mobile element of any European expeditionary force should consist of a harmonised mobile division providing a more balanced approach and that one of

⁶⁰ Item 78A, WO32/4005, 'Report of the Committee on the Value of the Horse in the Training of Officers and Reduction in the Establishment of Horses consequent upon Mechanization'.

⁶¹ Memorandum 109, 'Despatch of Yeomanry Division to Palestine', CAB80/4, Memoranda Nos. 71-115

⁶² You Have Been Warned, 'The Army, The Officer and The Horse', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXVII, Apr. 1937, pp. 238-55.

⁶³ Editorial, *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXVII, Jan. 1937, p.122 and Managing Editor's note to You Have Been Warned, 'The Army, The Officer and The Horse', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXVII, Apr. 1937, p. 238. The Managing Editor was Major-General T. T. Pitman, who had held this position from 1924.

⁶⁴ You Have Been Warned, 'The Army, The Officer and The Horse', pp. 238-55.

the two cavalry brigades should be mechanised. Any shortages of mounted cavalry in other theatres, especially India, could be met from the Indian cavalry and in protracted hostilities, more cavalry could be obtained from Australia.⁶⁵ This conceptualisation of a mobile division is similar to Lindsay's, and whilst his career had stagnated, Montgomery-Massingberd remained a strong supporter of his ideas.⁶⁶ Montgomery-Massingberd also gained the respect of the most outspoken tank zealot of this period, Hobart, who believed that the tank advocates were fortunate to have such a 'far-seeing, resolute and open-minded a CIGS who is giving us a chance to try and is so remarkably understanding'; this coming from Hobart was high praise.⁶⁷ However, this seemingly enlightened approach has to be tempered with the fact that the idea of mechanised cavalry was unarmed light cars and lorries. This was merely a reiteration of the conclusions made by the Cavalry Committee in 1927 and really created mobile infantry rather than any armoured force.⁶⁸ Therefore, whilst the General Staff policy under Montgomery-Massingberd was mechanisation, it was in order to re-create a traditional field force in a modern guise. In his address at the post-manoeuvres conference in 1935, he criticised those using armoured cars stating that 'reconnaissance is their rôle and not shooting up convoys or headquarters.'⁶⁹ He also wanted to replicate the standard attachment of a horsed cavalry regiment to an infantry division by experimenting with mechanised cavalry.⁷⁰

Winton and Bond's rationale for crediting Montgomery-Massingberd was not on his approach to armoured warfare, but that he was one of the few soldiers that would have been able to undertake such a programme without engendering disaffection. This was due to his association with the cavalry and a similar social outlook.⁷¹ It is certainly evident when reading Montgomery-Massingberd's autobiography that he had had a long association with the cavalry during his career. This had engendered a

⁶⁵ Minute 1, WO32/2847, Introduction of a Mobile Division.

⁶⁶ Harris, *Men, ideas and tanks*, p. 260.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

⁶⁸ Minute 3, WO32/2847, Introduction of a Mobile Division.

⁶⁹ WO279/56 Report on Army Manoeuvres, 1935.

⁷⁰ Harris, *Men, ideas and tanks*, pp. 257-8.

⁷¹ Winton, *To Change an Army*, pp. 188-9. Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 174. Bond's two chapters on mechanisation fundamentally reiterate Winton's doctoral thesis of 1977, which was subsequently published in 1988.

great deal of fondness and sympathy for this particular arm.⁷² This viewpoint, however, requires a little more critical analysis as it tacitly accepts the embedded Liddell-Hartian view that the cavalry was resisting or could have resisted such a move. This is an assertion that is difficult to support, despite a large amount of historiography sustaining this view.

By the 1930s, the tank advocates' opinion on cavalry mechanisation appears confused. Liddell Hart argued that the cavalry were resistant to such change and consequently the process was slowed. Furthermore, such a transition was more complex owing to the amount of time required to retrain cavalymen. Liddell Hart believed an expansion of the RTC would have been far more expeditious and that any cavalymen interested and suitable could have transferred over to the RTC. Furthermore, the new units raised would have been able to bear the nomenclature of the former cavalry regiments as a means of retaining tradition.⁷³ However, as has been seen, this had not been his view during the 1920s; Liddell Hart had originally argued that cavalymen had the necessary qualities to deal with armoured warfare.⁷⁴ Similarly, Lindsay had been strongly against giving cavalry armoured cars in 1926.⁷⁵ However, by the mid-1930s the RTC, including Lindsay, had reversed their view and were not against such a move.⁷⁶ This really emphasises the vacillation and lack of clarity on thinking on armoured warfare.

The logic on these standpoints requires scrutiny. Firstly, new recruits, whether freshly enlisted or transferred from another unit, would all have required training. Even if all the officers and NCOs for these new units were created by promotion from existing RTC units, which, in itself is a major assumption, this would have still created a vacuum that would have had to have been filled by new recruits, all of

⁷² Field Marshal Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, *The Autobiography of a Gunner*, pp. 7-8 and pp. 55-6, LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd 10/11. It is this author's opinion that a monograph upon Montgomery-Massingberd is currently lacking.

⁷³ Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, pp. 265-6.

⁷⁴ See *The British Cavalry 1920-33*. Also Harris, *Men, ideas and tanks*, p. 259 and Larson, *The British Army*, pp. 27 and 173.

⁷⁵ Larson, *The British Army*, p. 126.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 173. Harris, *Men, ideas and tanks*, p. 260.

whom would have required training. On this basis, the conversion of existing cavalrymen would arguably be quicker, as they all had had training in soldiering. As seen with the earlier mechanisation of two cavalry regiments, the focus of their training would only have to be upon the technicalities of driving AFVs. An accompanying assumption on this idea of raising new recruits was that the army would be able to raise the requisite number. This was an assumption that was clearly laced with a large degree of uncertainty.⁷⁷ A far more logical route was to convert the cavalry, where there was already a substantial body of men.

The arguments presented by Liddell Hart on the mechanisation of the cavalry are prone to a lack of coherence. Indeed, his comment in a letter to the editor published in *The Daily Telegraph* stated that,

Much confusion of thought might be avoided if it was realised that the essential value of cavalry has lain in their mobility, and that the horse was only a means to an end. The bullet has crippled the practical mobility of the horse; but the developments of the fast tank offers a chance to resurrect cavalry in a mechanical form, and restore its former powers.⁷⁸

If this was the case, then the obvious and logical course of action would have been to mechanise the cavalry, exchanging their mode of transport.

To further compound the above dissection of his logic, he also commented in 1933 that the new configuration of three German cavalry divisions gave a clear indication they were to be converted into mechanised divisions.⁷⁹ He made no comment that mechanising the German cavalry units was a bad decision. Whilst British cavalry divisions may not have matched this new German configuration, there was no acknowledgement of the possibility that such a move could be considered: for the

⁷⁷ See chapter on The Social and Cultural Nature of the Inter-War British Cavalry, p. 143.

⁷⁸ Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, p. 240.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 228-9.

tank advocates there seemed to have been only one way forward. The committee that reported upon the amalgamation of the RTC and cavalry pointed out that witnesses to the committee believed that 'the roles of the mechanized cavalry regiment and the tank battalion are essentially different...From this point of view amalgamation is unnecessary.'⁸⁰ Thus, much of the rhetoric surrounding the mechanisation of the cavalry is confused. The argument, provided predominantly by RTC officers and its advocates, seems to logically flounder by contradicting itself, stating that the cavalry should be disbanded, but there was a cavalry role and that this role should remain distinct from the core tank role.

A further argument that seems to be often overlooked in the debate upon whether or not to mechanise the cavalry was the practicality of disbanding the cavalry. The governments of the inter-war period had repeatedly viewed cavalry from a financial standpoint and that shedding both men and horses from the army budget would result in savings, but, as has been argued in this thesis, this was by no means a certainty. One potentially significant cost, for which there appears to be no evidence, was a political one. The decision to disband a long-standing service arm which held such social prestige and romanticism was likely to prove unpopular. To further compound this, the reality of making thousands of men unemployed was also likely to be both unpopular and an economic risk in a fragile economy. There is no evidence to support this contention but it must have been a consideration; a far more politically expedient route was to retain these men.

The counter to this argument was that should the cavalry be mechanised, cavalrymen would leave the army in droves, but this was, by and large, an unsubstantiated claim. Indeed, when mechanisation did come, this claim was proven to be unfounded.⁸¹ Other than in the tank advocates' own minds, there appears to be very little concrete evidence to demonstrate that the cavalry, as an organisation, ever stood in the way of mechanisation. There may have been some individuals who voiced negative

⁸⁰ WO33/1509 Report by a Committee assembled to consider the organization of the mechanized Cavalry and the Royal Tank Corps.

⁸¹ There are no figures available on how many men did leave upon mechanisation, however see chapter The Social and Cultural Nature of the Inter-War British Cavalry, p. 143.

opinions and many may have been sad at the thought of losing the horse, but this is not the same as actually preventing a scheme for mechanisation. For example, one regimental journal stated

This mechanised business is still a sore point with quite a number of us, but we hope, and shall do our best, to keep up the standard of efficiency when driving, as we have in riding.⁸²

However, this was only exhibited in one squadron's notes and was hardly a statement of rebellion.

Indeed, the evidence supports an argument that it was cavalrymen who eventually tipped the scales in favour of a decision to commence its mechanisation.

Montgomery-Massingberd's call for a mobile division was to be the turning point for the cavalry as it called for a motorised cavalry regiment and, as such a regiment did not exist, one had to be created. It is at this point that the British army took the first steps towards the mechanisation of the cavalry and, in this sense, Montgomery-Massingberd is to be awarded some credit. Montgomery-Massingberd asked the Inspector of Cavalry to select a suitable cavalry regiment 'to carry out an experiment in mechanization.'⁸³ The regiment chosen for this task was the 3rd Hussars commanded by Colonel Grubb. The reaction, according to the 3rd Hussars regimental history, was that '[i]t would be idle to assume that either officers or the troopers...took kindly to their task.'⁸⁴ The author does not really provide too much verification of this assessment and it has the taint of replicating the standard historiography. The regiment's own journal, the 3rd *The King's Own Hussars Magazine*, gave a more balanced view. It did state 'it [the experiment in mechanisation] was a pretty distasteful proposition...and a great many of us

⁸² "'A" Squadron Notes', *The Journal of the Seventh Hussars*, No. 1, Dec. 1936, p. 4.

⁸³ Hector Bolitho, *The Galloping Third The Story of the 3rd The King's Own Hussars*, (London: John Murray, 1963), p. 242.

⁸⁴ Bolitho, *The Galloping Third*, p. 243.

comforted ourselves with the thought that the experiment was doomed to failure.’⁸⁵
However, the very next paragraph reads

To failure, however, the experiment was not doomed. When we got going, we got keener and keener on the task. Moreover, the more we delved into it the more we believed in it, until finally we became convinced that the days of Cavalry, mounted on horses, are very nearly over.⁸⁶

In the same issue of the journal, the news section of the squadron participating in the experiment made revealing comments upon the attitude towards mechanisation. It commented that a large number of men performed well in undergoing driving tuition and that as a result ‘we hear nothing else, but about the interior of cars these days.’ Furthermore, it had resulted in sufficient interest for some cavalrymen to purchase their own vehicle and whilst some of these vehicles were of considerable vintage and doubtful quality, ‘the owners seem[ed] to get a “kick” out of them.’⁸⁷ Thus, whilst there may have been a degree of initial reticence amongst cavalrymen, this seemed to have been quickly overcome. Many regimental histories portray cavalry regiments as meeting mechanisation with a sense of stoicism but this would seem to have been overplayed and was, in fact, quickly replaced with a deal of enthusiasm.⁸⁸

Upon completion of the 1935 experiment, Grubb produced a report for the War Office which was fully supportive of mechanisation, believing that the task of replicating the role of horsed cavalry by the use of machines was successful. His only reservation was that the experiment had been limited in its scope by using only one squadron.⁸⁹ Grubb made several observations on the experiment. Firstly, he believed that not all men would make good drivers. Secondly, he supported wheeled

⁸⁵ ‘Mechanization of Cavalry’, 3rd *The King’s Own Hussars Magazine*, Vol. 1, No.4, Jan. 1936, pp. 3-6, p.3.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ ‘A Smell of Petrol from “A” Squadron’, 3rd *The King’s Own Hussars Magazine*, Vol. 1, No.4, Jan. 1936, p.6.

⁸⁸ For examples of this stoicism, see Bolitho, *The Galloping Third*, p. 243.

⁸⁹ ‘3rd Hussars Experiment in Mechanization. April – September 1935’, p.2, WO32/2847, Introduction of a Mobile Division.

vehicles over tracked vehicles as he considered them far more mobile, although this may have been influenced by the current capability of tracked vehicles which had yet to be fully developed. He also challenged the standard assertion that horsed cavalry remained of significant use for imperial policing. The 3rd Hussars had returned from Lucknow three years previously after a five year posting and so most of its officers had recent experience of this aspect of soldiering. In Grubb's words, they were 'convinced that this work [internal security] could have been done more effectively in all weathers, by a Mech[anical] Cav[alry] Reg[imen]t.'⁹⁰ This point is significant as it strongly rebuts the argument of retaining the horse for policing the Empire. The attitude evinced by the officers of the 3rd Hussars would seem to overturn any notion that cavalrymen were intransigent.

Grubb's only questionable view was that he felt that mechanisation could actually help the retention of a mounted troop; this troop fulfilling roles that mechanised vehicles could not undertake. The necessary horses could be transported by means of a trailer attached to a section vehicle.⁹¹ This does suggest an officer who did want to retain his horse in some form. The commander of the 2nd Cavalry Brigade, Colonel F. B. Hurndall, when submitting the report to the War Office, disagreed with Grubb's notion of using a horse trailer, commenting 'I foresee endless difficulties arising, and do not consider it a practical proposition in war.'⁹²

Harris is critical of Grubb, as he feels he set too narrow an objective, but concedes that the General Staff should have also given him more guidance and provided someone with more experience with mechanised vehicles to help supervise the experiment, someone such as Lindsay.⁹³ Harris is correct that more guidance should have been given, but Grubb should not be judged too harshly. He was instructed to assess if mechanised cavalry could replace horsed cavalry and to expect him to postulate beyond this is unrealistic. In his report, Grubb freely admitted he was not

⁹⁰ '3rd Hussars Experiment in Mechanization. April – September 1935', WO32/2847, Introduction of a Mobile Division.

⁹¹ '3rd Hussars Experiment in Mechanization. April – September 1935', p. 5, WO32/2847, Introduction of a Mobile Division.

⁹² WO32/2847, Introduction of a Mobile Division.

⁹³ Harris, *Men, ideas and tanks*, p. 262.

trying 'to do something new.'⁹⁴ The recently revised edition of the *FSR* did not provide any new approaches to using motorised troops. The section on infantry did not evidence any fundamentally new approaches in using vehicles other than as a means of transportation and it still spoke of using cavalry for its traditional roles: reconnaissance, protection and special duties. It accepted that cavalry could be outpaced in favourable conditions for mechanical vehicles, so against this criticism, Grubb's attempt to see if the cavalry could perform its duties in vehicles that would allow the cavalry keep abreast of other mechanised arms was not so unreasonable.⁹⁵ Furthermore, as Harris himself points out, Lindsay, in his conceptualisation of a mobile division, wished to include a motorised cavalry brigade, consisting of armoured cars and troops armed with rifles and machine guns mounted in light motor vehicles, which would locate the enemy and pave the way for a tank assault.⁹⁶ In essence, this was a reconnaissance role, so Lindsay was also confined to the traditional perspective, thus it is uncertain whether he, or any other tank advocate would have given Grubb a broader outlook. In 1935, it was Lindsay that recommended to Montgomery-Massingberd that three cavalry regiments should be motorised.⁹⁷ Also, in his address on the 1935 manoeuvres, Montgomery-Massingberd was clearly happy with the performance of the 3rd Hussars and commented that '[t]he experimental squadron...was...well handled, though perhaps employed on rather a wide front for its size,' echoing Grubb's view that a squadron had been rather small to experiment with.⁹⁸ The last comment inferred that Montgomery-Massingberd was considering an expansion of the experiment. He went on in his address to argue that he viewed both the weapons carried by a man and his means of transportation were not 'a matter of tradition' but that tradition was based upon a units 'efficiency, gallantry and loyalty.' He praised the way in which the two cavalry regiments and the RHA had embraced mechanisation and held them up as an example to the rest of the army.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Minute 13A, '3rd Hussars Experiment in Mechanization. April – September, 1935', 26/9/1935, WO32/2847, ARMY ORGANISATION: Cavalry: Introduction of a Mobile Division. Also in Larson, *The British Army*, p. 181.

⁹⁵ *FSR* (1935), pp. 2-8.

⁹⁶ Harris, *Man, ideas and tanks*, p. 246.

⁹⁷ Bond, *British Military Policy*, p. 166.

⁹⁸ CIGS Address, 21/9/1935, WO279/76, Report Army Manoeuvres, 1935.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

The evidence and report provided by this experiment convinced the War Office that mechanisation was the right direction and in December 1935 it was announced that three mechanised cavalry brigades would be created, two based at home and one in Egypt. This meant that aside from the two regiments already converted in 1928, a further eight would be converted: five into motor cavalry regiments, essentially mobile infantry, and three into light tank regiments. However, whilst this was a firm commitment towards mechanisation, it was given with a caveat that regiments would only be formed ‘as and when funds permit.’¹⁰⁰ Thus, it was not the cavalry that was slowing modernisation it was the Treasury. Indeed, it is clear that even allowing for Grubb’s partial nod towards horses, it was the cavalry’s affirmation of experimenting with armour that had helped to push the War Office towards a policy of mechanisation for the cavalry. Surprisingly, in Bond’s analysis of what he calls the second phase of mechanisation, he barely mentions the 3rd Hussars experiment.¹⁰¹

The availability of funding was to prove a considerable braking force upon the pace of mechanisation for the selected regiments. By January 1936, the 9th Lancers, who were being converted to a light tank regiment, had only received ‘token’ equipment.¹⁰² The 3rd Hussars were a little more fortunate in receiving vehicles, although they obviously had the advantage of having commenced 12 months earlier and being a motor cavalry regiment, their requirement was only for transport vehicles. In 1936 Lieutenant-Colonel de Wend-Fenton, the new commander of the 3rd Hussars, reported upon the 3rd Hussars expanded mechanisation and gave a more positive attitude than that of his predecessor. Wend-Fenton argued that cavalry units should be organised on a far more flexible basis with a common vehicle. He believed that having various vehicles within a unit just made command difficult and that all personnel could be trained on such a vehicle. This he believed would make a far more effective unit as any casualties, either of men or vehicles, could be easily replaced, as opposed to having specialist men and vehicles.¹⁰³ He was certainly moving towards a more mobile, flexible fighting force. He also argued that the

¹⁰⁰ Item 1B, Letter dated 18th December 1935, WO32/2847, Introduction of a Mobile Division.

¹⁰¹ See chapter 6, ‘Mechanization: the second phase, 1933-1939’ in Bond, *British Military Policy*, pp. 161-90. There is a brief mention on p. 170.

¹⁰² Item 1A, Letter dated January 1936, WO32/2847, Introduction of a Mobile Division.

¹⁰³ ‘3rd Hussars Report on the Experiment in Mechanization, 1936’, 30th September 1936, WO32/2847, Introduction of a Mobile Division.

vehicles should be tracked in order to be able to undertake the task of reconnaissance, as cross-country performance was paramount, although he acceded that tracked vehicles still had disadvantages by way of reliability, noise, cost in manufacture and fuel usage, and its relative speed on roads compared with wheeled vehicles. He also requested that all vehicles should have some form of armour to protect men, even if only from small arms fire. This would help minimise casualties as vehicles that were simply transportation vehicles left men exposed targets.¹⁰⁴ An indication that cavalry thinking on mechanisation was progressing.

Like his predecessor, Wend-Fenton's report was also submitted to the War Office with a covering memorandum from the new CO of the 2nd Cavalry Brigade, Brigadier C. A. Heydeman. Heydeman's summation was enlightening and gave a very reasoned and positive attitude towards the mechanisation of the cavalry. He supported Wend-Fenton's view that cavalry should be placed in a track vehicle or in armoured cars similar to those used in the German army. However, he extended Wend-Fenton's view and argued that unless the cavalry was to turn into merely mobile infantry it needed to be placed in a fighting vehicle not purely a transportation vehicle. This would not only enable them to provide better reconnaissance, but he feared potential logistical problems, if cavalry were sent on to reconnaissance missions using only roads, as there was the potential, when fighting on a larger scale, to slow or even block any supporting troops trying to advance along those same roads.¹⁰⁵

Consequently, Heydeman believed that the advantages of tracked vehicles far outweighed any disadvantages that Wend-Fenton had highlighted. Furthermore, he argued that once a positive decision had been made to introduce the tracked vehicle, these issues would be quickly overcome as manufacturers would then be incentivised to commit to research on these problems, whereas they were currently unwilling to gamble on research expenditure all the time the army vacillated. He also argued that

¹⁰⁴ '3rd Hussars Report on the Experiment in Mechanization, 1936', 30th September 1936, WO32/2847, Introduction of a Mobile Division.

¹⁰⁵ 'Mechanisation Report – 3rd The King's Own Hussars', 13th October 1936, WO32/2847, Introduction of a Mobile Division.

if the War Office accepted Wend-Fenton's point upon providing armour, he saw little point in creating a further type of vehicle and believed the logical conclusion was merely to provide the cavalry with light tanks or armoured cars.¹⁰⁶

The logic of Heydeman's argument is difficult to refute and would indicate someone who not only agreed with the notion of cavalry mechanisation, but wished to proceed in a more positive manner rather than merely testing the water. His summation clearly indicated this when he stated that whilst there was no 'definite finality in mechanisation,' at some point a decision had to be made as this indeterminate middle-ground was causing confusion. He felt there were too many types of cavalry making training difficult and officers were struggling to clarify their own ideas. He rounded off his memorandum by arguing that there was little point in creating motor cavalry and that cavalry regiments should be put into light tanks in order that they could fulfil their traditional cavalry function.¹⁰⁷ Whilst Heydeman may still have envisaged a traditional role for mechanised cavalry, the RTC were also advocates of this approach.¹⁰⁸ Burnett-Stuart, an advocate of armoured warfare, was GOC, Southern Command, at this point and fully endorsed Heydeman's comments and believed that the 3rd Hussars had been left in a state of uncertainty, but was now well led and should be provided with the right equipment in accordance with the findings of this experiment to allow it to 'get to work.'¹⁰⁹ Burnett-Stuart was another senior officer who envisaged the role of the mobile division as that of a horsed cavalry division.¹¹⁰ It is interesting that this portrayal of Heydeman as a more progressive cavalryman contradicts the image of him outlined by Alanbrooke. He saw Heydeman as someone who vehemently clung to the notion of horses. Heydeman was subsequently posted to India in 1939 and this would seem a sideways move.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ See earlier Chapter The British Cavalry 1920-33.

¹⁰⁹ Item 35A, 'Mechanisation Report – 3rd The King's Own Hussars', 13th October 1936, WO32/2847, Introduction of a Mobile Division.

¹¹⁰ Harris, *Men, ideas and tanks*, p. 286.

¹¹¹ Field Marshal Viscount Alanbrooke, 'Notes on my Life' Vol. II The Inter-War Years 1919-35, p. 88, LHCMA Alanbrooke 5/2/14. David French, 'Colonel Blimp and the British Army: British Divisional Commanders in the War against Germany, 1939-1945', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 111, No. 444 (Nov., 1996), p. 1194.

The 3rd Hussars experimental period of 1935-6 was arguably the turning point in the mechanisation of the British cavalry. Whilst this was instigated by Montgomery-Massingberd, the positive reports produced by Grubb, de Wend-Fenton, the positive attitude of the officers of the 3rd Hussars, as well as Brigade COs Hurndall and Heydeman, meant that it was the constructive view of cavalrymen that encouraged the War Office to make the decision to move away from horses to mechanised vehicles. This is a direct challenge to the historiographical views put forward by many historians.

Furthermore, once given the task to mechanise, it was undertaken with minimal fuss and as effectively as possible given the quality and availability of the equipment. The attitude exhibited by the conversion of the 11th Hussars and 12th Lancers in 1928 was repeated in the 1930s. George Draffen of the Queen's Bays, who had joined the cavalry because he was fond of horses, admitted that he enjoyed driving a tank as it was both exciting and new.¹¹² *The Journal of the Seventh Hussars* commented that the regiment's transition to light tanks was completed in a year, 'which is a great achievement.' Although, it too was suffering from the shortage of vehicles and went on to say, '[o]ur tanks are not all thoroughbreds and their ages and type vary considerably, but we can make them go.'¹¹³ Ralph Younger of the 7th Hussars summed up the general feeling in his regiment as 'acceptance with slight regret.'¹¹⁴ Younger's assertion seems to have been the general perspective for cavalrymen at the time, namely an acknowledgement of the inevitability with a sense of sorrow.¹¹⁵ Brigadier C. N. Barclay, an infantryman, also believed that cavalry officers accepted the change 'with sadness and deep regret, but with a determination to make their Regiments as successful with armour.'¹¹⁶ This was endorsed by the RTC instructors who were assigned to teach the cavalry.¹¹⁷ In a minute dated October 1936 the DSD pointed out that

¹¹² IWMSA. Accession No. 893-1 and 893-3, George William Draffen.

¹¹³ 'Editorial', *The Journal of the Seventh Hussars*, No. 2, Dec. 1937, p. 3.

¹¹⁴ IWMSA. Accession No. 913-1, Ralph Younger.

¹¹⁵ There are many recorded interviews held within the Imperial War Museum sound archive with cavalrymen of the period, most of whom echo this sentiment. For other examples see IWMSA. Accession No. 915-2, Michael John Lindsay or Accession No. 914-2, Donald McCorquodale.

¹¹⁶ Brigadier C. N. Barclay, *History of the 16th /5th The Queen's Royal Lancers 1925 to 1961*, (Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1963), p. 5.

¹¹⁷ IWMSA. Accession No. 787-4, Robert H. Bright.

The [cavalry] regiments concerned have long been waiting for the word “go”: we are most anxious – and so are they that they should get rid of their horses at once, and devote their energies to training themselves in their mechanized form¹¹⁸

Consequently, the cavalry may have approached mechanisation with caution but it never resisted it, contrary to the assertions of the tank advocates. Indeed, Liddell Hart’s notion of creating new armoured units retaining the cavalry nomenclature was effectively what happened when the cavalry was mechanised. To this extent, he was arguing over mere semantics, giving credence to French’s assertion that much of the debate surrounding mechanisation was as much about the establishment of the RTC’s regimental identity, as it was about efficiency in armoured warfare.¹¹⁹ Liddell Hart admitted as much when he commented that ‘[t]he new arm [RTC] was regarded as an intrusive junior to be kept in its place rather than as the heir-apparent to the crown of the military realm.’¹²⁰ Horsbrugh-Porter, of the 12th Lancers, believed that much of the friction was stirred up by the tank activists who were concerned that the cavalry would take over the ‘sacred cow,’ a view endorsed by Dudley Allenby of the 11th Hussars.¹²¹ This was also partly Alanbrooke’s viewpoint when appointed to command the Mobile Division in 1937-8, although he believed it was the extremists on both sides that caused unnecessary friction.¹²²

There is a criticism that mechanising the cavalry and putting them in tanks, was merely a change in mode of transport rather than in mode of operation; a notion that they still maintained the cavalry spirit. This argument is not without merit. Michael Lindsay of the KDG admitted that they still saw the tank as a horse and as one cavalryman pointed out many of the commands remained the same, such as ‘prepare

¹¹⁸ Minute from DSD to DF(a), WO32/2826 ARMY ORGANIZATION: The Mobile Division: Cavalry mechanization. The social and cultural attitudes of the cavalry towards mechanisation are explored in detail in the chapter *The Culture of the British Cavalry, 1920-40*.

¹¹⁹ French, ‘The Mechanization of the British Cavalry’, pp. 311-3.

¹²⁰ Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, p. 266.

¹²¹ IWMSA. Accession No. 905-3, Andrew Marshall Horsbrugh-Porter. IWMSA. Accession No. 878-3, Dudley Jaffray Hynman Allenby.

¹²² Field Marshal Viscount Alanbrooke, ‘Notes on my Life’ Vol. II *The Inter-War Years 1919-35*, p. 87, LHCMA Alanbrooke 5/2/14.

to mount.’¹²³ However, this was not driven solely by the cavalry. Liddell Hart stated that the final configuration arrived at in 1937 by the General Staff was identical to that proposed by Hobart three years earlier, with cavalrymen manning the light tank element.¹²⁴ This was to fulfil its traditional role of reconnaissance.¹²⁵ The first training pamphlet issued by the War Office on mechanised cavalry in armoured cars reiterated the point that their role was the same as that of horsed cavalry and that much of the information held in the horsed cavalry training manual remained pertinent.¹²⁶ A further training pamphlet issued by the WO in 1938 stated that divisional mechanised cavalry units undertook ‘the same role of close reconnaissance and protection as formerly’ and ‘[t]he broad principles underlying the movement of horsed cavalry apply to the movements of mechanised divisional cavalry.’¹²⁷ This was still the perceived doctrine in 1939 with another, more comprehensive pamphlet.¹²⁸ Furthermore, the training that the cavalry received, which was devised by the RTC, was mostly functional not tactical. All cavalry regiments, even those converted in 1928, received several months driving and maintenance training at Bovington, followed by a gunnery course and a wireless course at Lulworth.¹²⁹ Consequently, regiments were given little knowledge upon armoured theory and doctrine. This was compounded by a lack of actual vehicles to train upon once the men had returned to their regiments. Draffen’s overriding memory of his regiment’s mechanisation was driving around in a lorry with a flag in it. When his regiment was at Tidworth, he claimed he barely saw a tank, with those that were available only utilised for instruction and not for exercises. This situation had barely altered when his regiment went to France.¹³⁰ Draffen’s regiment was not the only one to have its training hampered through a lack of equipment.¹³¹ A War Office letter dated 5th

¹²³ IWMSA. Accession No. 915-2, Michael John Lindsay and Accession No. 13390-1, John Thomas Barnes.

¹²⁴ B. H. Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, p. 265.

¹²⁵ WO33/1509 Report by a Committee assembled to consider the organization of the mechanized Cavalry and the Royal Tank Corps.

¹²⁶ *Cavalry Training (Mechanized)*, Pamphlet No. 1 – Armoured Cars, (London: HMSO, 1937), pp. 1, 12 and 16.

¹²⁷ WO231/133, Military Training Pamphlet No. 4 Notes on mechanized cavalry units, pp. 1-2.

¹²⁸ WO231/142, Military Training Pamphlet No. 12. Notes on organization, training and employment of a mechanised cavalry regiment.

¹²⁹ IWMSA. Accession No. 892-3, George William Draffen, Accession No. 892-1 and 892-2, George Jardine Kidston-Montgomerie, Accession No. 913-2, Ralph Younger, Accession No. 905-3, Andrew Marshall Horsbrugh-Porter.

¹³⁰ IWMSA. Accession No. 892-3, George William Draffen.

¹³¹ IWMSA. Accession No. 913-2, Ralph Younger, Younger served with the 7th Hussars; Accession No. 914-2, Donald McCorquodale, McCorquodale served with the KDG; Accession No. 915-2,

October 1936 acknowledged that there was a question of supply on mechanising the cavalry; it commented that the 9th Lancers

will receive a small number of light tanks for training purposes during the coming winter, and, it is hoped, its full peace establishment of light tanks before the collective training season of 1937. Most of the light tanks issued will be of the older types with only a small proportion of the newer types, but it is expected that the former will all be replaced by the end of 1937.¹³²

The CO of the 9th Lancers at the time was Lieutenant-Colonel C. W. Norman who confirms the regiment's lack of equipment in his introduction to the regimental history.¹³³ Douglas Scott's regiment, the 3rd Hussars, went to France in 1940 with tanks that had plywood mock up guns and were told that the guns would follow subsequently.¹³⁴ The same regiment had been issued 28 Hotchkiss guns in 1936, a gun which had been described in the cavalry committee report ten years earlier as out of date.¹³⁵ Norman told of a German officer attached to the 12th Lancers in 1938 who reported home that whilst the regiment trained all week, on Friday the majority of the personnel disappeared, which he could only assume meant that there was a secret training area where the regiment undertook more progressive training with up-to-date- equipment.¹³⁶ As another cavalryman pointed out this was indicative of the lack of general preparedness of the army as a whole, not just the cavalry. For example, in exercises rattles were used to mimic machine guns.¹³⁷ One cavalry officer declared that the lack of equipment meant that no one really knew the characteristics of many weapons and that 'training was somewhat fanciful!'¹³⁸ Therefore, if the cavalry behaved as if they had transferred from one form of charger

Michael John Lindsay, Lindsay also served with the KDG. Also Richard Napier, *From Horses to Chieftains My Life with the 8th Hussars 1935-1959*, (Bognor Regis: Woodfield, 2002), p. 139.

¹³² WO32/2826 ARMY ORGANIZATION: The Mobile Division: Cavalry mechanization

¹³³ Major-General C. W. Norman, 'Introduction' in Joan Bright (Ed.), *The Ninth Queen's Royal Lancers 1936-1945: The Story of an Armoured Regiment in Battle*, (Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1951), pp. xxi-xxiii.

¹³⁴ IWMSA. Accession No. 968-2, Douglas Scott.

¹³⁵ Minute 22, WO32/2847, Introduction of a Mobile Division., WO32/2841, Cavalry Committee: Interim Report 1926-27.

¹³⁶ Norman, 'Introduction', p. xxiii. Also in IWMSA. Accession No. 933-3, Kenneth Edward Savill.

¹³⁷ IWMSA. Accession No. 10340-1, David de Crespigny Smiley.

¹³⁸ Evans, *The Years Between*, p. 104.

to another, it was hardly surprising as they had no other form of training. As late as 1938, the DCIGS, Adam wrote in very clear terms on the state of readiness of the mechanised cavalry

The present situation is impossible...if we do not do something the cavalry will not be ready for war within three years. Questions of regimental spirit, etc. [Cavalry and RTC] cannot be allowed to count against training for war...Personally, I feel that now or never is the time for considering amalgamation [with the RTC]...The cavalry depot is now on the tapis: cost £450,000: ready in 1941. This is useless to get the cavalry ready for war.¹³⁹

Harris also argues that the tactical mistakes made by the cavalry in the Western Desert in the Second World War were as much to do with the training that they received from the RTC as it was from inherent cavalry notions.¹⁴⁰

It is difficult to disagree with Liddell Hart's assertion that the late decision to mechanise the cavalry, compounded by a severe lack of modern equipment, was a significant factor in the poor performance of the British armoured divisions in World War Two as they were novices by comparison to the German armoured divisions; although it would be too simplistic to allege this to be the only factor.¹⁴¹ Also, this comment, written in his memoirs does not acknowledge his own influence in the events during this period. After all, he had argued against the mechanisation of the cavalry. In 1935, the cavalry itself was still thinking predominantly in terms of working alongside tanks rather than in them. As always, Liddell Hart, had no qualms in pointing out who he believed was responsible for this view, Field Marshal Sir Philip Chetwode. Chetwode, as C-In-C, India, had witnessed two successful displays by light tank companies in India, a place which had been perceived by many as wholly unsuitable to AFVs and frequently used to support the maintenance of horsed cavalry. Chetwode's interpretation of this success was to repeat the long-standing

¹³⁹ Memo DCIGS to CIGS/AG, 'Re-Organization for War: Re-Organization Proposals. Urgent Decisions', LHCMA Adam 2/2/1

¹⁴⁰ Harris, *Men, ideas and tanks*, p. 260.

¹⁴¹ Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, pp. 132-3.

cavalry argument of how light tanks working alongside cavalry could serve to improve the fighting capability of the mounted arm, merely applying this old notion to a new region.¹⁴² In the same year as the light tank successes, an extended article appeared in *The Cavalry Journal* entitled 'The Tactical Employment of Light Tanks with the Army in India.' This was a thorough article which covered a wide array of issues in utilising light tanks in some detail. Whilst the title was set to give an overall picture of the value of the light tank, the author argued vehemently and predominantly in favour of their being assigned to co-operate with cavalry, 'with which they form such a formidable combination that they restore the former value of mobile troops.' The article even made reference to the ability of the cavalry to charge an army with the *arme blanche*.¹⁴³ Whilst Liddell Hart does not provide any solid evidence of Chetwode's hand, he was at this time the Chairman of the journal's managing committee.¹⁴⁴

As the likelihood of mechanisation of the cavalry loomed ever nearer, so the conservative element spoke out more vociferously in support of horsed cavalry. In July 1935, one writer wrote that the horse remained 'indispensable' and that it was still the most efficient and economic mode of transport. He believed the increased use of the horse in London supported this view, although he seemed to overlook a fundamental point that horses were not being shot at in London.¹⁴⁵ In a review of a book written by a senior German cavalryman, General von Poseck, the reviewer highlights how von Poseck frequently repeated the argument that not all conditions were suitable for mechanised vehicles. The reviewer summed up his article by admonishing those countries who had drastically reduced their mounted cavalry for the potential folly of their cuts and how it will be difficult for these nations to reinstate any cavalry as it was harder to train a man on horseback than in a vehicle, a warning that he felt the British army would do well to heed.¹⁴⁶ The tone of the

¹⁴² Liddell Hart, *The Tanks*, p.339.

¹⁴³ Major M. S. Bendle, 'The Tactical Employment of Light Tanks with the Army of India', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXV, Jan. 1935, pp. 46-71.

¹⁴⁴ See Appendix, p. 348.

¹⁴⁵ Captain H. Barrowcliff-Ellis, 'The Horse in Chemical Warfare', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXV, July 1935, p.616.

¹⁴⁶ Lieut. - Colonel B. G. Baker, 'Reflections on the Use of Modern Cavalry', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXV, July 1935, p. 357.

article was obviously set against the ever-growing likelihood of the cavalry's mechanisation. It was this kind of reticence by cavalrymen that Liddell Hart referred to in his memoirs.¹⁴⁷

However, whilst it was predictable that the more conservative element amongst cavalrymen would begin to shout louder against the seeming inevitable, it is false to draw a general negative conclusion of all cavalrymen, based upon these more vociferous remarks. In an article in *The Cavalry Journal* entitled, 'Over the Port', an anonymous author told a fictional tale of a young cavalry subaltern outlining the realities of mechanisation to his Uncle, an old cavalryman and MP. At each point in the imaginary conversation, the young officer eloquently discounts each standard objection to armoured vehicles over cavalry, such as noise, inability to learn new skills and terrain. On the standard terrain issue, which had so often been the bedrock of any argument against total mechanisation, the writer, through the voice of his fictional character, highlighted that it was a little duplicitous of the cavalry for decrying tank officers for their notion of 'good tanking ground', when the cavalry were equally prone to using the phrase 'good cavalry country'. The article did contain the old argument of the horse being good training for officers and the retention of some mounted regiments, but its main thrust was that the future of the cavalry lay in its conversion to light tanks.¹⁴⁸

This reluctance to accept wholesale mechanisation by some, was not just the preserve of cavalrymen. Major Eric Sheppard, a retired RTC officer, who wrote prolifically and was the RTC representative on *The Cavalry Journal*, still wrote about operations where the cavalry could perform unique actions. In one article, he concluded that

every modern army, and our own most of all, has to face the fact that it may at any time be called upon to undertake operations in underdeveloped countries, where its armoured fighting vehicles may find their normal range of activity seriously curtailed by

¹⁴⁷ Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, pp. 239-40.

¹⁴⁸ 'Over the Port', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXV, July 1935, pp. 433-8.

conditions of climate or terrain. In warfare such as this, cavalry may again come into its own for the time being, and a policy of energetic but judicious raiding may well be highly effective.¹⁴⁹

This perception of a dual existence was merely reinforced when the announcement to mechanise was eventually made, as the decision was to mechanise only some of the cavalry, not all, with the remaining horsed element given a vague job description of either 'divisional or army troops, as circumstances require.'¹⁵⁰ The *Cavalry Training (Horsed)* manual of 1937 stated that the role of the mounted cavalry remained as previously stated in *FSR (1935)*.¹⁵¹ A former cavalryman wrote to *The Cavalry Journal* arguing that there should be a clear distinction and re-organisation made between, what he termed 'Motor Cavalry' and 'Horsed Cavalry' and '[a] clean break should be made with roads and wheels.'¹⁵² This somewhat indeterminate definition of cavalry was causing it recruitment problems. Those new recruits who were attracted to a mechanised unit were inevitably drawn to the RTC, as they were unlikely to want to run the risk of being transferred to a mounted regiment. For those who remained committed to a mounted unit, the converse also applied, indeed the likelihood that the remaining mounted units would also become mechanised provided a deterrent to such a potential recruit.¹⁵³ Of course, there was the argument that a modernised army would not want this type of recruit, which undoubtedly had merit. Duff Cooper had argued that any young officer who joined solely for the opportunity to hunt and play polo was unlikely to be a useful recruit.¹⁵⁴ But, as the army perceived a specific role for the mechanised cavalry, if they were not fully recruited, its overall armoured doctrine was going to be difficult to implement. Deverell, on becoming CIGS in 1936, pointed this balancing act out. He agreed that if he was starting from scratch, he would not advocate the use of horses, he argued this was not the case and he gave the honest, if alarming, perspective that the army still did not fully understand how a

¹⁴⁹ Major E. W. Sheppard, 'Two Cavalry Raids of the Great War', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXVI, Jan 1936, pp.28-9.

¹⁵⁰ 'Army Re-organisation', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXVI, Apr. 1936, pp. 283-5.

¹⁵¹ War Office, *Cavalry Training (Horsed)*, (London: HMSO, 1937), p. 118. Cavalry training manuals had now been split into two volumes one for horsed training and one for mechanised training.

¹⁵² Lieut.-Colonel A. G. Armstrong, 'Correspondence', *The Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXVI, July 1936, pp.442-3.

¹⁵³ Section 3, WO33/1509 Report by a Committee assembled to consider the organization of the mechanized Cavalry and the Royal Tank Corps.

¹⁵⁴ Minute 23, WO32/4005, Report of the Committee on the Value of the Horse in the Training of Officers and Reduction in the Establishment of Horses consequent upon Mechanization.

mobile division would function. Thus, any action that smoothed over the transition and allowed them to do so, was a prudent one.¹⁵⁵

Even when the decision was made that all but two regiments, were to be mechanised the mentality remained bound to concepts derived from traditional horsed cavalry. A committee chaired by Major-General Sergison-Brooke to investigate the organization of the mechanised cavalry and the RTC, wrote that the investigation was necessary because modern transport had meant that the cavalry had had to be provided with armoured vehicles 'to perform its traditional role.'¹⁵⁶ A set of army notes in 1938 stated '[t]he broad principles underlying...horsed cavalry apply to movements of mechanised Divisional Cavalry.'¹⁵⁷

The mechanisation process of the cavalry remained hampered by the unwillingness of government to commit further funds for vehicles. In his chronological summary of the period, Dunbabin states that 'the army was consistently [financially] restrained until 1939.'¹⁵⁸ In 1934, when Montgomery-Massingberd was advocating his new mobile division, the QMG advised that whilst the new organisation was both strategically and tactically desirable, 'like so many desirable reforms, I fear it will be expensive.'¹⁵⁹ In early 1938, it was decided to set up a committee to consider the organisation of mechanised cavalry and the RTC, but the three man committee was advised that cost was an issue and that they needed to try and keep their expenses to a minimum.¹⁶⁰ A clear indication of the frugality expected of the army at this time.

During this period, there was another factor that hampered mechanisation that is often overlooked and this was the requirements of the Indian government who demanded

¹⁵⁵ Minute 28, WO32/4005, Report of the Committee on the Value of the Horse in the Training of Officers and Reduction in the Establishment of Horses consequent upon Mechanization.

¹⁵⁶ Section 3, WO33/1509 Report by a Committee assembled to consider the organization of the mechanized Cavalry and the Royal Tank Corps.

¹⁵⁷ LHCMA Liddell Hart 9/28/76, 'Notes on Mechanized Cavalry Units', May 1938.

¹⁵⁸ Dunbabin, 'British Rearmament in the 1930s', p. 604.

¹⁵⁹ Minute 5, WO32/2847, Introduction of a Mobile Division.

¹⁶⁰ WO32/16406, Committee on Organisation of Mechanised Cavalry and Royal Tank Corps.

that five horsed regiments were retained in India. This had posed a logistical problem for the War Office trying to maintain this policy with sufficient men whilst undertaking a mechanisation programme.¹⁶¹ In 1934, it was reported that the conversion of a cavalry brigade, unless mechanisation also took place in India, would mean that a further 110 other ranks would have to be recruited at home in order that sufficient men were available to be drafted to India. This would cause a considerable increase to the cavalry budget.¹⁶² The key issue was that it compounded any lack of clarity it caused for the mechanisation programme. As Sergison-Brooke's committee pointed out

Doubts about the future role of the cavalry, uncertainty about the fate of individual regiments, liability for service in horsed regiments, and other factors have tended to make the cavalry unpopular with recruits, whilst the retention of obsolete establishments has discouraged serving soldiers from qualifying as tradesmen in those regiments which have been, or are being, mechanized. At the same time, the regiments have found it increasingly difficult to carry on with the widely different functions of training recruits from the very earliest stages, and transforming troopers into mechanists and drivers.¹⁶³

This was in comparison to the RTC which was restricting its intake on new recruits as it was oversubscribed.¹⁶⁴ Arguably, this gives credence to Liddell Hart's assertion that the cavalry should have been subsumed into the RTC; however, this does not present the whole picture. Firstly, the practice of recruiting and training at a central depot rather than at a regimental level had proven far more efficient, thus some of the disparity was due to administrative inefficiency rather than unpopularity. Secondly, in 1938, there were eighteen mechanised cavalry regiments compared with eight regiments in the RTC making the demand for cavalymen actually higher than RTC. Furthermore, only two tank regiments compared with seven cavalry regiments served

¹⁶¹ WO33/1509, Report by a committee assembled to consider the organisation of the mechanized cavalry and the Royal Tank Corps.

¹⁶² Minute 4, WO32/2847, Introduction of a Mobile Division.

¹⁶³ WO33/1509, Report by a committee assembled to consider the organisation of the mechanized cavalry and the Royal Tank Corps.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

abroad and service overseas had traditionally been unpopular with potential recruits and their parents.¹⁶⁵

Whilst the progress towards mechanising cavalry and the creation of an armoured mobile division was hampered greatly by government funding, there is some evidence to support the historiographical argument that the attitudes of the units involved hindering progress. However, this evidence does not uphold the standard derisory criticism of the cavalry as the opposing force but the RTC. Alanbrooke, when appointed CO of the mobile division, pointed out that whilst he was pleased to receive the appointment, it was with some surprise, as it had been widely anticipated that Mike Houston of the 12th Lancers, recently the Inspector-General of the Cavalry, was to be appointed.¹⁶⁶ The appointment of a cavalryman to lead such a division had been advocated by Devereil when CIGS.¹⁶⁷ However, in Alanbrooke's opinion, the decision to overlook Houston was likely to have been based upon advice from Liddell Hart to the new Secretary of State for War, Leslie Hore-Belisha.¹⁶⁸ Alanbrooke was correct in this assumption and the appointment of the CO for the Mobile Division was a source of much enmity between Devereil and Hore-Belisha.¹⁶⁹ Alanbrooke's appointment as the first commander was undoubtedly to appease both parties in this newly formed unit. This is not to decry his abilities as a soldier but he was able to demonstrate sympathies for both factions. He was a supporter of armoured warfare and he also had links to the cavalry, as both his elder brothers, Victor and Ronald, had served with the 9th Lancers and the 7th Hussars respectively.¹⁷⁰ Alanbrooke saw his first task was to 'span the large gap that existed between the extremists of the Tank Corps and of the Cavalry.' He did point out that there was some resentment at losing their horses from the cavalry but that it was '[t]he Tank Corps, suffering

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Field Marshal Viscount Alanbrooke, 'Notes on my Life' Vol. II The Inter-War Years 1919-35, p. 86, LHCMA Alanbrooke 5/2/14. Mike Houston was something of a soubriquet for Major-General J. G. Blakiston-Houston.

¹⁶⁷ J. R. Colville, *Man of Valour: The Life of Field Marshal The Viscount Gort*, (London: Collins, 1972), p. 79.

¹⁶⁸ Field Marshal Viscount Alanbrooke, 'Notes on my Life' Vol. II The Inter-War Years 1919-35, p. 86, LHCMA Alanbrooke 5/2/14.

¹⁶⁹ Harris, *Men, ideas and tanks*, pp. 283-5.

¹⁷⁰ Montgomery-Massingberd spoke highly of Alanbrooke, and knew the Brooke family as they were both from Ireland and mentioned in his memoirs the two elder brothers association with the cavalry. Field Marshal Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, *The Autobiography of a Gunner*, p. 57, LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd 10/11.

perhaps from a slight inferiority complex due to their youth...and lack of tradition' whose attitude was proving more awkward. Alanbrooke was particularly damning of those who resisted the combined unit, but he argued that the majority saw beyond parochial interests to create 'the best armoured force in the minimum of time.'¹⁷¹ Indeed, of the two arms, Alanbrooke spoke in glowing terms of the cavalry

My recollection of those days certainly rests mainly with the wonderful spirit with which the Cavalry faced this very great change, a change which could not fail to cost them incalculable regrets.¹⁷²

The CO of the 1st Cavalry Brigade, Willoughby Norrie, was 'a loyal supporter' and 'one whose opinion I greatly valued in all questions connected with the conversion from horses to tanks' and in matters of administration he was assisted by the CO of the 10th Hussars, Balfour Hutchison, 'who put his whole heart into the job.'¹⁷³ Thus, whilst the *materiel* may have been poor, the attitude of the cavalry at this point was extremely positive. This enthusiasm was causing concern for the RTC who seemed to be intimidated by the cavalry's mechanisation. In Sergison-Brooke's committee's report, it pointed out that a number of RTC officers were 'averse' to the creation of a single armoured corps as they feared that it would not be an equitable amalgamation and the RTC would be absorbed into the cavalry. The report was adamant that this would not be the case and that the two formations undertook different functions and amalgamation was for practical and logistical reasons only.¹⁷⁴ For much of the 1930s, the RTC and its advocates had argued vigorously for the expansion of the RTC at the expense of the cavalry. But now that the cavalry had been mechanised and the converse was possible, and equally as plausible, the RTC were not so forthcoming. Once more giving credence to French's argument that the debate was as much about regimental identity as it was about military efficiency. It was unfortunate for the cavalry that much of the aforementioned positive energy and commitment was to be undermined by a debacle that arose in 1937 over the

¹⁷¹ Field Marshal Viscount Alanbrooke, 'Notes on my Life' Vol. II The Inter-War Years 1919-35, p. 87, LHCMA Alanbrooke 5/2/14.

¹⁷² Ibid, p. 88.

¹⁷³ Ibid, pp. 88-9.

¹⁷⁴ WO33/1509 Report by a Committee assembled to consider the organization of the mechanized Cavalry and the Royal Tank Corps.

potential mechanisation of the Scots Greys. The system applied by the War Office for selecting cavalry regiments for mechanisation was based upon the least senior regiment, labelled 'juniority' by the WO. This system was a continuation of the one applied when selecting regiments for amalgamation in the early 1920s. However, the principles of this system meant that those regiments of the line that had previously been selected for amalgamation or conversion were not eligible for selection until other unaffected regiments had been selected; in effect a queuing system.

Consequently, it became apparent to the two senior regiments of the line, the Royals and the Scots Greys, that whilst there were other junior regiments who had yet to be mechanised, these were the amalgamated regiments such as the 17th /21st Lancers.¹⁷⁵ Thus, when the next regiments were to be selected for mechanisation the Royals and the Scots Greys were the next in line. In 1936, this issue had been raised by some in Scotland who argued that the only Scottish cavalry regiment would disappear and that this would potentially cause some nationalistic resentment in Scotland.¹⁷⁶ In March 1937, the War Office received a further petition via the Secretary of State for Scotland, Walter Elliot, from the Lord Provosts of Edinburgh, Perth, Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen outlining their concerns that the Greys' mechanisation would cause 'strong feeling' in Scotland.¹⁷⁷ However, at this point in time the situation regarding further cavalry mechanisation was unclear, as there was still insufficient equipment and a further decision on other regiments would only make this shortfall worse.

The problem arose in earnest from September 1937 when Hore-Belisha received a letter from a former Colonel of the 19th Hussars, Lieutenant-Colonel H. M. A. Warde, who warned him that 'if you allow the mechanisation of the Scots Greys to go

¹⁷⁵ This principle was reiterated in a précis for an informal Army Council. Item 21A. Informal Army Council Précis No. 3, 'Selection of Two Cavalry Regiments of the Line to Remain horsed, and of Further Regiments for Mechanization.', WO32/4633, Appeal against the proposed mechanisation resulting in the retention of the Royal Scots Greys and the Royal Dragoons as horsed regiments.

¹⁷⁶ Item 1A, Letters from Lt.-Col. G. F. A. Pigot-Moodie, to War Office dated 22/10/1936 and from Walter Elliot, M. P. to the War Office, dated 31/10/1936, WO32/4633, Appeal against the proposed mechanisation resulting in the retention of the Royal Scots Greys and the Royal Dragoons as horsed regiments.

¹⁷⁷ Items 7A and 7B, Letters from Walter Elliot, M. P. to War Office dated 15/3/1937 and from the Lords Provosts, to Walter Elliot, M. P., dated 11/3/1937, , WO32/4633, Appeal against the proposed mechanisation resulting in the retention of the Royal Scots Greys and the Royal Dragoons as horsed regiments.

through it will be the greatest mistake that any man could make.' Despite the severity of Warde's warning, he did not elaborate in his letter as to why the Scots Greys' mechanisation would be such an error in judgement.¹⁷⁸ An article also appeared in *The Scotsman* raising concerns over the rumours of the potential mechanisation of the Scots Greys.¹⁷⁹ The article acknowledged that the reasons for its retention were sentimental but warned that

The Scots Greys occupy a special place in the esteem of the Scottish people, and the War Office would do well to take this fact into cognisance before a decision on the future of the regiment is made.¹⁸⁰

This nationalistic fervour was to reach its zenith in October, 1937. The instigator of this was the CO of the Scots Greys, Lieutenant Colonel Gaisford St. Laurence, who sent a circular letter to every Scottish constituency MP. In this letter, he advised that he had learnt that a decision had been made for only three cavalry regiments to be retained on horses and set out an emotive case for the Scots Greys to be retained as a mounted regiment; he implored the honourable Members to petition the government on this matter and insisted that there was 'little time to lose.'¹⁸¹ The Colonel of the Greys at this time, Chetwode, wrote a letter to the AG which branded St. Laurence 'an idiot' and told the AG that he had told him 'his only chance was to grovel' and he hoped St. Laurence had done so.¹⁸² However, as the regimental history states, the reaction to his agitation was 'immediate and violent and for a few days the press gave much prominence to the subject.'¹⁸³ The passion engendered by this fear was remarkable. The War Office received a plethora of letters petitioning for the retention of the Scots Greys as a horsed regiment. These letters came from a wide

¹⁷⁸ Item 11A, Letter to Hore-Belisha from Lt.-Col. H. M. A. Warde, 14/9/1937, WO32/4633, Appeal against the proposed mechanisation resulting in the retention of the Royal Scots Greys and the Royal Dragoons as horsed regiments.

¹⁷⁹ 'Threat to the Scots Greys', *The Scotsman*, 15/9/1937, p. 10.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Item 28E, Copy of Circular letter from Lt. Col. C. G. St. Laurence, 14/10/1937, WO32/4633, Appeal against the proposed mechanisation resulting in the retention of the Royal Scots Greys and the Royal Dragoons as horsed regiments.

¹⁸² Letter from Chetwode to AG, 2/11/1937, WO32/4633, Appeal against the proposed mechanisation resulting in the retention of the Royal Scots Greys and the Royal Dragoons as horsed regiments.

¹⁸³ Lt. Col. R. M. P. Carver, *Second to None: The Royal Scots Greys – 1919-1945*, (Doncaster: D. P. & G., 1998), p. 30.

range of people and groups such as The Association of Lowland Scots, a round-robin letter from the Scottish Unionist MPs; the Duke of Sutherland; separate letters from both the Duke and Duchess of Atholl; Captain Archibald Ramsey MP; Sir Murdoch MacDonald MP; Dr. Russell V. Steele, who was a member of the Society for Army Historical Research; Sir Archibald Sinclair MP; the Glasgow & District Scottish Horse Regimental Club; the Duke of Buccleuch and the Marquess of Willingdon.¹⁸⁴ There are many other letters on the War Office file. All of these letters were highly emotive on the subject and written with staunch nationalism. *The Scotsman* ran many articles calling upon Scotsmen to support its only cavalry regiment and warned the War Office that 'Scottish opinion will be deeply offended if the Greys are sacrificed to the policy of mechanisation while some English cavalry regiments remain unchanged.'¹⁸⁵

When an informal Army Council met to discuss the matter of further mechanisation, Hore-Belisha commented that there had never been a proposal to mechanise the Scots Greys.¹⁸⁶ This would seem to be true, as the précis prepared prior to the meeting clearly indicated that although under the 'juniority' system the Royals and the Scots Greys were next in line, the next tranche of regiments selected was likely to be the last, so it was now a question of which two regiments were to remain permanently mounted along with the Household Cavalry. It clearly stipulated that all the Council

¹⁸⁴ Item 1A, Letter from The Association of Lowland Scots to Hore-Belisha, 13/10/1937. Item 26C, Letter from Thomas Moore MP to Hore-Belisha, 27/10/1937. Item 27A, Sutherland to Hore-Belisha, 19/10/1937. Item 27D, Duchess of Atholl to Hore-Belisha, 20/10/1937. Item 27G, Letter from Ramsey to Hore-Belisha, 22/10/1937. Item 27K, Letter from MacDonald to Hore-Belisha, 23/10/1937. Item 27N, Letter from Steele to Hore-Belisha, 28/10/1937. Item 27T, letter from Sinclair to Hore-Belisha, 19/10/1937. Item 28B, Letter from the Glasgow Horse Club to Elliot, 19/10/1937. Item 30D, letter from the War Office to Buccleuch, 5/11/1937. Item 30E, letter from the War Office to Willingdon, 5/11/1937. WO32/4633, Appeal against the proposed mechanisation resulting in the retention of the Royal Scots Greys and the Royal Dragoons as horsed regiments. Ramsey was later held in prison between 1940-4 under Defence Regulation 18B for his overt anti-Semitism, which may have added to his enthusiasm in petitioning Hore-Belisha. For a clear indication of Ramsey's anti-Semitic views see Archibald Maule Ramsay, *The Nameless War*, (London: Britons Publishing, 1952), www.iamthewitness.com/books/Archibald.Maule.Ramsay/The.Nameless.War.pdf, accessed 7/10/2010. Obituary, Dr. Russell V. Steele, *British Medical Journal*, 14 Mar. 1959, pp. 724-5.

¹⁸⁵ 'The Scots Greys', *The Scotsman*, 15/10/1937, p. 10. Other impassioned articles were 'The Scots Greys', *The Scotsman*, 14/10/1937, p. 13, 'Royal Scots Greys', *The Scotsman*, 21/10/1937, p. 10, 'Future of Scots Greys', *The Scotsman*, 25/10/1937, p. 8, and 'The Scots Greys', *The Scotsman*, 29/10/1937, p. 11.

¹⁸⁶ Minute 22, Extract of Minutes of IAC, WO32/4633, Appeal against the proposed mechanisation resulting in the retention of the Royal Scots Greys and the Royal Dragoons as horsed regiments.

members, other than the QMG, believed that the two oldest regiments should retain their horses.¹⁸⁷ It is unclear whether the lobbying had swayed any in this matter, although when the cavalry had been under review in the 1920s, Churchill had stated that the Scots Greys should remain unaltered by amalgamation as it was the only Scottish regiment and should be considered as the Household Cavalry of Scotland.¹⁸⁸ Thus, it is not implausible that the War Office was thinking along similar lines. It is clear from the minutes of the meeting that Hore-Belisha was extremely annoyed with St. Laurence whom he believed was totally responsible for the agitation that had arisen around the Scots Greys and inquired what action could be taken against him, subject to receiving an explanation for his actions. The AG pointed out that he could either be tried by Court Martial, removed from his command or be severely reprimanded by the Army Council.¹⁸⁹ The debate in the House of Commons confirmed that St. Laurence's future career was under scrutiny; Hore-Belisha stated that the facts of the case regarding the source of agitation were with the Army Council for consideration 'and Military Law and practice will be followed.' One MP, Anstruther-Gray, Unionist member for North Lanarkshire, appealed for leniency stating that 'some officers put the good of their regiment even before their chances of military promotion.'¹⁹⁰ In the end, St. Laurence was only officially reprimanded and retained command of the Scots Greys.¹⁹¹ However, he did not command them when war broke out having been promoted and put in charge of the Lydda district in Palestine: undoubtedly, a sideways promotion.¹⁹²

The reality was that the debate on mechanising the Scots Greys was something of a storm in a teacup. But, it served to bring the mechanisation of the British cavalry to the media and public's attention. Unsurprisingly, *The Scotsman* printed two pieces that were glowingly patriotic in its perceived victory. One article evoked Lady

¹⁸⁷ Item 21A, Informal Army Council Précis No. 3, 'Selection of Two Cavalry Regiments of the Line to Remain horsed, and of Further Regiments for Mechanization.', WO32/4633, Appeal against the proposed mechanisation resulting in the retention of the Royal Scots Greys and the Royal Dragoons as horsed regiments.

¹⁸⁸ Item 13A, Letter from Churchill to Worthington-Evans, 27/10/1927, WO32/2846, Reduction of expenditure on Cavalry 1927.

¹⁸⁹ Minute 22, Extract of Minutes of IAC, WO32/4633, Appeal against the proposed mechanisation resulting in the retention of the Royal Scots Greys and the Royal Dragoons as horsed regiments.

¹⁹⁰ Hansard Commons, 2 Nov. 1937, vol. 328, cc723-4.

¹⁹¹ Item 33B, Letter from Hore-Belisha to the King's Private Secretary, 9/11/1937, WO32/4633, Appeal against the proposed mechanisation resulting in the retention of the Royal Scots Greys and the Royal Dragoons as horsed regiments.

¹⁹² Carver, *Second to None*, p. 35.

Butler's famous painting of the Battle of Waterloo with the title 'Scotland For Ever' and accompanied by a modern photograph of the Scots Greys in traditional uniform charging on horseback.¹⁹³ There was a British Pathé newsreel announcing 'SCOTS GREYS NOT TO BE MECHANISED' and showed the regiment parading through Hounslow.¹⁹⁴

The issue gave the press a chance to poke fun at the British army. David Low used his Colonel Blimp character in one cartoon and *Punch* satirised the image of George and the dragoon with an image of a Scots Grey slaying a tank.¹⁹⁵ This debacle overshadowed the fact that those regiments that had been ordered to dismount under this final round of pre-war mechanisation accepted the decision without any fuss. The Colonel of the 15th/19th Hussars wrote that 'no destructive criticism will emanate from us [15th/19th Hussars].'¹⁹⁶ This was supported by the CO of the regiment who wrote even more positively, that having spoken to all the Messes, whilst there was some sadness, they were all very much aware 'that the fighting efficiency of the Regiment requires us to adapt ourselves to new conditions...[and] we will do so both with energy and good will.' He even requested that they be placed in light tanks.¹⁹⁷ The Colonel of the 4th/7th Royal Dragoon Guards repeated the same notion of regret but with a determination 'to make a great success of it.'¹⁹⁸ Even the other regiment that was to remain mounted, the Royals, did so with the minimum of fuss. The Colonel of the regiment, Sir Ernest Makins, who was also Conservative MP for Knutsford, commented that whilst his regiment was very happy to remain mounted, it had not resorted to lobbying to do so, and acknowledged that there were also

¹⁹³ 'Scots Greys Decision', *The Scotsman*, 3/11/1937, p. 10 and 'Scotland For Ever', *The Scotsman*, 3/11/1937, p. 16.

¹⁹⁴ www.britishpathe.com/record.php?id=7721, accessed 7th October 2010..

¹⁹⁵ For the Colonel Blimp cartoon, *The Evening Standard*, 6th November 1937, p.7. Also in Bryant, Ed., *The Complete Colonel Blimp*, p.129. For the *Punch* cartoon see Carver, *Second to None*, facing p. 30.

¹⁹⁶ Letter from Courage to AG, 3/11/1937, WO32/4633, Appeal against the proposed mechanisation resulting in the retention of the Royal Scots Greys and the Royal Dragoons as horsed regiments.

¹⁹⁷ Letter from Creagh to Courage, 12/11/1937, WO32/4633, Appeal against the proposed mechanisation resulting in the retention of the Royal Scots Greys and the Royal Dragoons as horsed regiments.

¹⁹⁸ Letter from Solly-Flood to AG, 3/12/1937, WO32/4633, Appeal against the proposed mechanisation resulting in the retention of the Royal Scots Greys and the Royal Dragoons as horsed regiments.

advantages to being mechanised.¹⁹⁹ Hore-Belisha bemoaned the fact that the agitation by the Scots Greys had given the wrong impression of the army, 'that modern developments...are not being loyally accepted.'²⁰⁰

The Scots Greys debate was to sadly besmirch the cavalry's reputation. In reality, from the commencement of experimentation with the 3rd Hussars in 1934, it had taken a short period for the cavalry to be mechanised, in mind if not in body. As Duff Cooper stated in the House of Commons when talking about the mechanisation programme, '[w]e are doing in two or three years the work of 15 years.'²⁰¹ In a separate speech, he further commented that he had heard of a tale of a staunch cavalryman who within a year of being mechanised had become an authority on motor vehicles: 'That is an illustration of the spirit [of the cavalry]...the right spirit.'²⁰² The cavalry did embrace mechanisation and saw it as the future, with very few who resisted the transition. However, it would be unfair to claim that the mechanised cavalry was an efficient fighting force. It had insufficient vehicles, and many of the vehicles it did have were out-of-date, so training opportunities were severely limited. Four months after war had been declared, the 16th/5th Lancers had only a very basic training on armoured vehicles and no regimental vehicles.²⁰³ As one former Life Guardsman of the period pointed out, the British army

entered the war with two armoured car regiments (one of them in Egypt), the few battalions of the Royal Tank Corps and a wreck of untrained, unequipped ex-cavalry regiments... It is popular to blame out-dated generals with a vested interest in the horse, but most of them were dead and all retired, while within the regiments were a majority with minds modern enough to see into the near future.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁹ Letter from Makins to AG, 2/11/1937, WO32/4633, Appeal against the proposed mechanisation resulting in the retention of the Royal Scots Greys and the Royal Dragoons as horsed regiments.

²⁰⁰ 'Scots Greys Decision', *The Scotsman*, 3/11/1937, p.10.

²⁰¹ Hansard, 1937, Vol. 321, Col. 1889.

²⁰² Hansard, 1936, Vol. 309, Col. 2352.

²⁰³ Barclay, *the 16th /5th The Queen's Royal Lancers*, p. 57.

²⁰⁴ R. J. T. Hills, *The Life Guards*, (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 1971), p. 108. Hills had over thirty years service with the Life Guards and was to reach the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

This is undoubtedly a little simplistic but in essence it does cut to the heart of the real issues. Sadly for the cavalry, the performance of the 1st Armoured Division in France in 1940 was perceived as unacceptable. To further damn the image of the cavalry, the division had been put under the command of a cavalry officer after Alanbrooke had moved on, Major-General Roger Evans. When Evans returned home after the Battle of France he was made a scapegoat and was retired. But the cavalry's performance should be reassessed and a measure of credit given for its performance. Aside from the quality of both equipment and training, Evans' division was shed of its infantry and was initially given conflicting and contradictory orders, as three Generals sought the assistance of his division. He was eventually placed under the command of the French, who, in his opinion, had lost control and were just throwing men haphazardly at the advancing Germans.²⁰⁵ Consequently, he was ordered to undertake actions he knew his division was ill-suited for and though he tried to challenge these orders it was to no avail. It was perhaps a venture doomed to fail but not through the recalcitrance of bungling cavalry officers unwilling to move into the twentieth century. Thus, 1940 and the Battle of France was to mark the end of the old cavalry. For the twenty years between the two world wars the British cavalry and the British army had tried to envisage and understand how mobility could be returned to the battlefield. The cavalry, though hampered by financial constraints, had sought to try and re-invent itself, but as with all theories, they could never be 100% sure until proven in conflict. The cavalry had understood the need for change and 1940 showed that mechanisation was the right course; it had merely started too late. The Scots Greys were to finally mechanise in August 1941, for which all the men, predominantly former horsemen, were grateful as now the pride of Scotland 'would at last [be] allow[ed]...to take a more active part in the war.'²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ Thompson, *Dunkirk*, pp. 274-291.

²⁰⁶ Carver, *Second to None*, p. 47.

Conclusion

The historiographical focus on the British army of the inter-war period has been predominantly upon mechanisation. The focus upon this transition from the man on the battlefield, to a man and his machine is rightly seen as one of the most important transitions in warfare of the twentieth century. This focus has inevitably led to a fixation upon armoured units. But, to reiterate Bond, this has led to a shortage of scholarly work on other aspects of the British army for this period. This remains the case; there are still no major published monographs on the infantry, artillery, and cavalry; nor upon the ancillary, support services such as the RE, or the medical or veterinary corps.¹ This thesis has been written to address some of this oversight by looking at the British cavalry between 1920 and 1940.

The historiography surrounding the British cavalry has been set out in more detail in the introduction to this thesis.² Its central tenet states that the events of the First World War marked the beginning of the end for the man on horse in war. There had been challenges to this effect prior to 1914 but as Badsey's work has shown the cavalry had always managed to evolve and maintain its position.³ The criticism of the British army, and especially the British cavalry, for not realising this, was often written post-1945 and so undertaken with the benefit of hindsight. It is a methodological error that historians must endeavour to avoid. The nature of combat inevitably provides winners and losers and so it is easy to be drawn into similar conclusions that the winners were right, the losers wrong. This thesis clearly shows that this is far too simplistic. It has looked at social, political, economic and cultural issues, as well as other aspects such as geography and international influences. By looking at the British cavalry in this broader way, it shows that the criticism of the cavalry for not understanding the nature of future warfare is both unfair, and, in most cases, unfounded. Furthermore, the criticism is based upon this naive, idealistic premise that there was a correct course for the British army to follow and that it chose an alternative, incorrect one. This thesis shows that the complex realities of the situation meant there was never any place for such blind idealism.

¹ Bond, *British Military Policy*, p.127.

² See Introduction, p. 1.

³ Badsey, 'Fire and the Sword' and Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*.

In the military journal, *The Army Quarterly*, there was a section entitled 'From a Student's Scrapbook' which consisted of various snippets of information from miscellaneous sources, such as quotes and extracts from books. These extracts were designed to provoke students of war into thinking about the topic. In the July 1921 edition, there appeared in this section the following extract

It was one of the most inspiring sights of the war. On they (two French cavalry regiments) came at a slow trot, their blue steel helmets flashing in the sun. Like a triumphal parade, each man in a new blue uniform, with button, bit and spurs burnished bright, rode proudly across that wheat covered plateau as though in review before the whole world. Apparently heedless of the German shells from the heights beyond, they swept across the newly won ground. Through the artillery, through the infantry supports they went, and as they passed the rearmost line of infantry, the colonel turned in his saddle and shouted the word of command. Every trooper drew sabre, as the column spread out fanwise into line of battle. Raising his sabre the colonel signalled the charge. The lethargy of the trot vanished. Each trooper jabbed his spurs into the horse's flank, and the line sprang forward at the charge. On they went towards the Allied infantry outpost line, and then, of a sudden, there sounded the sickening tattoo of hundreds of German machine guns. The charging cavalry was literally cut to pieces. The handful still mounted tried vainly to reform, but it was evident that not until every machine gun was taken, could cavalry hope to get through.⁴

It is a passage that is both tragic and romantic in its narrative. The message for the 'student' readers could not have been more explicit; modern warfare was no place for the cavalry. For the British cavalry, this passage was unfair. The British cavalry had all but forsaken such romantic notions. It had already tried to adjust its approach prior to 1914 for the burgeoning aspects of modern warfare, but at the time of this

⁴ 'A Cavalry Charge, the 18th of July, 1918' from *The History of the A.E.F.* by Captain Shipley Thomas, pp. 154-5, quoted in 'From a Student's Scrapbook', *The Army Quarterly*, July 1921, pp. 409-10.

publication in 1921, the cavalry was trying to understand its role with the arrival of the AFV.⁵ In the 1920s, there were many senior cavalry officers who knew that the end for the horse in warfare was approaching. These men had seen the realities of modern warfare for themselves. The problem for these men was that they were unconvinced that the current level of technology met the level of expectation.⁶ After all, the tank had been designed as a solution to the stagnation of trench warfare. It was designed to win a specific war and not designed change the nature of combat; to use the language of modern military historians, it was not a Revolution in Military Affairs.⁷ In this respect, when he was CIGS, Montgomery-Massingberd's cry for 'evolution not revolution' was not misplaced.⁸ There were those who saw that it had the potential to be developed for a more effective combat role. These included many cavalrymen. One such example was 'Rollie' Charrington, who had written his informed pamphlet on *Where Cavalry Stands Today* in 1926 and as the CO of the 12th Lancers, oversaw the early mechanisation of his regiment. Despite having retired from the army in 1932, his views and abilities on commanding armoured units were sufficient for him to be recalled at the age of 54 to take command of the 1st Armoured Brigade in the Middle-East and in Greece during the Second World War: a command that was to see him admitted to the DSO.⁹

This acceptance of modernisation and mechanisation of the cavalry was also recognised outside of the cavalry. The British General Staff when reorganising after the First World War knew that the cavalry requirement needed restructuring. When reconstituting the Yeomanry cavalry in the period under the stewardship of Sir Henry Wilson, significant proposals were made for its restructure as part of the overall

⁵ For defences of the British Cavalry before and during the First World War see Stephen Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform*, David Kenyon, *British Cavalry on the Western Front, 1916-1918*, (Unpublished PhD. thesis, Cranfield University, 2008) and Stephen Badsey, 'Cavalry and the Development of Breakthrough Doctrine', in Paddy Griffith (ed.), *British Fighting Methods of the Great War*, (London: Frank Cass, 1996).

⁶ See chapter The British Cavalry 1920-1933, p. 26.

⁷ For a summation on the debate surrounding RMAs, see Laurent Henninger, 'Military Revolutions and Military History' in Matthew Hughes and William J. Philpott, (Eds.), *Modern Military History*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), pp. 8-22. For a more detailed analysis, see MacGregor Knox and Williamson Murray (Eds.), *The Dynamics of Military Revolution, 1300-2050*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2001).

⁸ See Chapter The British Cavalry 1934-1940, p. 265.

⁹ Charrington had to surrender this command owing to ill-health, but was retained by the CIGS, Alanbrooke, as his personal assistant: a measure of his merits. Obituary, 'Brig. H. V. S. Charrington', *The Times*, Saturday, Jun 19, 1965, p. 10, Issue 56352, col. E.

cavalry element within the British army. By the end of 1921, the Army Council had proposed to remove forty-nine cavalry regiments: four regular regiments of the line and forty-five Territorial Yeomanry regiments. The underlying aspect of these proposals was economic and this was to be a continuing motif throughout the inter-war period.

However, it would be wrong to assert that finance was the only reason. Lord Scarbrough, as DGTF, was quite clear when talking to the Yeomanry COs and representatives, that money did not feature and that it was the large number of men on horseback that were not required. The Army Council's proposal was not to disband these regiments which would have been a more frugal approach. The army sought to convert them to other types of regiments, predominantly artillery. Of course, the argument was never that simplistic. Wilson would have happily disbanded the whole Territorial army and used the funds this would have realised to create a more effective modern army. This is a clear indication that there was a commitment towards modernisation within the army. Field Marshal Sir George Milne was adamant in 1927 that '[u]ltimately, the cavalry arm must give way to a mechanized arm...It may be [in] 5 years, it may be 10 years.'¹⁰ Montgomery-Massingberd, Milne's replacement as CIGS, commenced the process of mechanising the cavalry. As one Secretary of State for War, Worthington-Evans, pointed out in a letter to Baldwin, then Prime Minister, '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 little else.'¹¹ This does not mean that they were thinking in such grandiose, all-encompassing armoured terms as Fuller and Liddell Hart, but it shows an acknowledgement of the potential changes wrought by mechanised vehicles. It is fair to say that no one really could know quite how a mechanised army would function; Fuller's and Liddell Hart's theories were not completely valid under actual combat conditions.

¹⁰ Minute 14, WO32/2846, Reduction of expenditure on Cavalry 1927.

¹¹ Item 5A, Letter to Baldwin from Worthington-Evans, 1/7/1927, WO32/2846, Reduction of expenditure on Cavalry 1927.

The problem for the army was that whilst it was committed to modernisation, it never possessed sufficient financial means to undertake any such programme. It is clear from Wilson's attitude towards the Territorial army, that the Army Council would have rather created a smaller, professional, well-equipped force. However, as the dalliances of Churchill in the evolution of the Yeomanry of this period proved, the use of a cheaper, part-time force as a potential stop-gap in the event of significant hostilities was certainly in the mind of the politicians. The negative impact of financial stringency imposed by successive governments during this period on the process of mechanisation throughout the army has now become the orthodoxy for modern historians.¹² In recent years, Christopher Price has challenged the standard view that the British government was unable to fund a comprehensive rearmament programme. He goes so far as to state simply that 'Chamberlain's government did not rearm because it did not want to.'¹³ However, whatever the economic argument surrounding the validity of these parsimonious policies, the reality was that the British army received very little funding to progress its technological *materiel*. Under Milne's stewardship, a paper was written for the Cabinet outlining actual and proposed reorganisations for the cavalry. In the second section of this paper, the Army Council outlined the fundamental difficulties facing the army in mechanising the cavalry. Each of the eight points given in this section had the common link of the lack of finance. Whilst the document was written in 1927, its arguments remained pertinent for the entire period under review in this thesis. As a consequence, it is tempting to quote in detail, but for brevity, its central tenets were; it argued that no money existed for sufficient research. As a consequence no real suitable vehicle existed that could perform sufficiently across open country and therefore undertake cavalry duties. There was insufficient money to buy spare parts and consequently, many vehicles were non-operational. This was exacerbated by insufficiently trained mechanics and a shortage of workshops. The resulting lack of suitable operational vehicles meant there were insufficient skilled personnel at the operational level of armoured warfare.¹⁴

¹² For example, see French, 'The mechanization of the British Cavalry', pp. 296-320.

¹³ Christopher Price, *Rearmament*, p. xiii.

¹⁴ 'Memorandum on the Reorganisation of Cavalry', WO32/2846, Reduction of expenditure on Cavalry 1927.

Frequently, the concept of mechanisation was bound to the future of the cavalry, but this was viewing the matter incorrectly. As the Army Council were only too aware, '[t]he particular case of the cavalry cannot be considered without reference to mechanisation in general.'¹⁵ Churchill tried to split the two issues arguing that '[t]he question of converting...cavalry regiments into armoured car or other modern equipped units is separate [to reductions in the cavalry].' His argument was that to look at the two issues combined was a complication.¹⁶ He was right to assert that the matter was complicated, but to extract the two issues of finance and mechanisation was merely a political ploy; a financial divide and rule. The army was wise not to separate the issues and agree to financial cuts without any firm commitment of reinvestment elsewhere.

The issue was never about the cavalry holding up mechanisation. As the memorandum showed, the army was struggling to keep the RTC mechanised, it simply could not mechanise the cavalry until there was sufficient political economic will. This is supported by the fact that the two cavalry regiments that were mechanised in 1928 inherited their vehicles from armoured car companies of the RTC, and thus no significant new expenditure was committed to mechanisation.

It would be easy to criticise the army for not being sufficiently proactive towards mechanisation and pushing the government harder on this matter. Especially during the 1920s, when there was more support amongst senior cavalrymen than was perhaps realised. The army had to juggle its responsibilities towards both the home nation and the Empire upon a shoestring budget. The army was not so ignorant as to not realise this and repeatedly advised politicians that mechanisation and economic savings were not part of the same argument. They advised that mechanisation would cost money and that the delays in mechanisation were because of insufficient funding. If the government wanted to make financial savings, these could be

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Item 13A, Letter from Churchill to Worthington-Evans, 27/10/1927, WO32/2846, Reduction of expenditure on Cavalry 1927.

undertaken, but it would expose weaknesses in the British army in its global obligations.¹⁷

However, the War Office could have made a more strident case for the mechanisation of the cavalry. Its arguments for mechanisation were always piecemeal and focussed upon what armoured vehicles could not do in a cavalry role, rather than what they could do. The restrictive financial policies of the government bred a defensive attitude at the War Office to protect what funding it had. This attitude was still prevalent when the DRC had been created in 1934. The civilian members of this committee were surprised at the caution exhibited by the COS when preparing their proposals. Bond states this was an attitude 'well-grounded in bitter experience.'¹⁸ This may be true, but it always gave the Treasury the upper hand. John Ferris has argued that it was possible to use the Ten Year Rule to the Armed Forces' advantage.¹⁹ He is right. A long-term, ten year structured, strategic plan could have been presented to the government. This could have outlined the research requirements to progress AFVs and made proposals on a phased mechanisation, ensuring that there were sufficient personnel to meet the military obligations of the cavalry. This overview could then have taken into account the requirements of the Indian government which refused to accept mechanised cavalry units until the late 1930s; a constant thorn in the army's side. This plan could have been drawn up with the input of the cavalry giving them a sense of ownership that was obvious in the French, German and American cavalry. Such a proposal would have been in-keeping with Milne's assertion that the cavalry arm would be mechanised in 5-10 years, but in a more formal manner, rather than the somewhat random 'this year, next year, sometime' approach. Whether the plan would have been approved by the government is impossible to say. However, it would have had the following positive effects. Firstly, it would have given an indication to all that the army and the cavalry held a positive view on mechanisation. Secondly, it would have forced the politicians, in particular, the Treasury, to make a decision. Whatever that decision may have been, it passed responsibility to the people who had been elected to take

¹⁷ 'Memorandum on the Reorganisation of Cavalry', WO32/2846, Reduction of expenditure on Cavalry 1927.

¹⁸ Brian Bond, *British Military Policy*, p.196.

¹⁹ Ferris, 'Treasury Control, the Ten Year Rule', pp. 859-883.

that responsibility, not allowing them to avoid the issue. If the answer had been negative or scaled down, it would have led to the Treasury having to explain to Parliament why the army was not being mechanised rather than repeatedly beleaguered Secretaries of State for War. Finally, it also meant that if and when sufficient funds were available, there was an existing plan to refer to, even if it had to be updated. To use a somewhat overused modern expression, it was a proactive approach rather than a reactive one. This is not using the advantage of hindsight. To suggest such an approach is not advocating something that was out of character with the era. It was surely this type of mentality that Fisher and Vansittart, the two aforementioned civilian members of the DRC, were advocating when they encouraged the COS to be less penny-wise and highlight that there was little point in promoting any increased expenditure unless it conformed to a defined strategic purpose.²⁰

Against this, the army believed it did what it could. It had considerably reduced its cavalry contingent, regular and auxiliary; it had equipped two cavalry regiments as armoured car units; it had eventually disposed of the lance, a weapon only suited to the charge; and it had created an experimental armoured force. For the cavalry, it kept itself abreast of developments around the world. From these observations, it believed that it was far in advance of other nations in embracing the concept of combined horse and vehicle operations. However, much of this self-belief stemmed from foreign observers asserting this to be the case rather than any strong analyses from the British cavalry itself. The French had created its DLMs early in the 1920s and these were to perform far better than other French units in 1940. The Germans, who were hampered in the 1920s by the constraints of the Treaty of Versailles, had begun to think about the use of armoured vehicles. This was to materialise into mechanised cavalry during the 1930s when it was unshackled by the Nazi government who ignored these constraints. Even in the U.S.A., where there was a strong conservative anti-mechanisation lobby in the cavalry, there had been created a far more progressive approach to mechanised cavalry. Thus, much like its RTC

²⁰ Brian Bond, *British Military Policy*, p.197. Sir Warren Fisher was the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury and Sir Robert Vansittart was the Permanent Secretary to the Foreign Office.

counterparts, by the 1930s the British cavalry had lost its edge in conceptualising modern, mechanised warfare.

Against this background the cavalry had to try and train for modern warfare within the confines of a mounted regiment. Whilst they remained mounted, it would seem logical that they had to train in mounted warfare in some form. As they had no other equipment to train with, it would have taken a major feat of imagination to instigate some form of training for armoured warfare. It was also reliant upon the experience of the regimental officers in armoured tactics, which for many was minimal. For those who had fought in the war, the old tanks had long gone and for the newer officers, Sandhurst had taught them very little.²¹ Even at the Staff College there was very little instruction; one RTC officer animatedly recalled that even as late as 1935-6, there was 'bloody little [armoured training]...armoured teaching was disgraceful.' Owing to this lack of training he offered to give a lecture on the topic but his offer was declined.²² To compound these difficulties, the RTC itself had yet to formulate any solid notion of armoured doctrine. Consequently, when the cavalry did operate in conjunction with armoured vehicles in divisional exercises, it was perhaps unsurprising that their performance was 'still behind the other arms in their conception of war, in professional leadership and in the thoroughness of their training.'²³ The reality was that there was little point in berating the cavalry for an anachronistic outlook or a lack of professionalism. What was required was a coherent military policy. French has pointed out that whilst the British army did review its doctrine during the inter-war period it left its implementation to the interpretation of senior officers.²⁴ Whether this policy supported the cavalry mounted, dismounted, in tanks or in armoured cars was irrelevant as long as it had given clearly defined roles. In this respect a measure of cohesion could be applied to training. This was clearly displayed with the mechanisation of the 11th Hussars and the 12th Lancers in 1928. When given a clear remit, both regiments, after the initial surprise, applied themselves to the task of conversion with vigour, applied new and original training techniques, essentially writing a new training manual, which led

²¹ IWMSA. Accession No. 968-1, Douglas Scott.

²² IWMSA. Accession 829-2, Nigel William Duncan.

²³ Larson, *The British Army*, p. 19. Winton, *To Change An Army*, p. 152.

²⁴ David French, 'Doctrine and Organization', pp. 514-5.

them to be the most professional units of the Second World War in the estimation of their contemporaries, including RTC officers.²⁵ Furthermore, the officers in both of these two regiments continued their equestrian pursuits. Thus, whilst it is impossible to refute the notion of the social attitudes of the cavalry, it does not totally square with the die-hard tank advocates' assertions of an inability to grasp the intricacies of armoured warfare.

However, once experiments with armoured vehicles in cavalry regiments had begun in 1934, the British cavalry regained its lead over its international counterparts. It must not be forgotten that the 3rd Hussars volunteered to undertake experiments with vehicles, even if this was with some reticence initially. Quite literally, the British cavalry drove mechanisation forward in the second half of the 1930s despite having a huge shortage of vehicles. The regimental COs should receive some acknowledgement for this even if it was tinged with a personal sadness at the loss of their horses. At the outbreak of war in 1939, no other cavalry was as committed to mechanisation as the British.

Up until this point, this thesis has provided a defence for the cavalry and the army on its modernisation during the inter-war period. However, did the British army, and more specifically, the British cavalry, do all that it could towards modernisation and mechanisation? In much of their literature, Liddell Hart and Fuller lambasted the British army for its recalcitrance towards armoured warfare and allude to the existence of a strong anti-tank cavalry lobby. As this thesis has shown, this is remarkably overstated. As with any organisational change, there will be a conservative element that will try to resist developments. Fuller and Liddell Hart referred to this as a 'cavalry ring' or 'cavalry school.' Fuller and Liddell Hart's attack did have a grain of truth but the focus was misplaced. What there was within the army was a cult of the horse. Most officers could see the reality of mechanisation for war but believed that pastoral equine pursuits were compatible with military training. Many asserted that there was no better way to train a future

²⁵ IWMSA. Accession No. 862-4, Henry Maughn 'Bill' Liardet.

military commander. This assertion was preposterous. Duff Cooper, when Secretary of State for War, realised this in his critique of Montgomery-Massingberd. In the cavalry, the frequent subservience of military training and military education to the pursuit of horse racing, polo, fox hunting, pig-sticking etc. was unprofessional. The social demographic of the cavalry has shown that it retained a larger proportion of gentry than the rest of the army and it would be easy to correlate this with the above pastoral recreations. However, these pastimes were just as popular with the middle classes. Furthermore, the cavalry never failed to recruit its officer cadre whether mechanised or mounted; mechanisation was never an issue for officer recruitment. However, whilst there was never any anti-mechanisation lobby, there was never any pro-mechanisation lobby. The cavalry may have realised that mechanisation was inevitable but their approach was far too *laissez faire*. It was the attraction of being in the cavalry and its way of life that was more important than how it was likely to fight in another conflict.

This was unfortunate. Once these officers had been mechanised, they did it with the utmost zeal. But, the lack of visible professionalism enabled the RTC and its advocates to promote the idea that only the RTC could produce soldiers capable of understanding the intricacies of armoured warfare. This again, was preposterous. In this respect the RTC was equally guilty of delaying mechanisation as ever the cavalry were. The regimental system inherent in the British army is designed to engender positive competition. But it has positive and negative aspects. When the cavalry were ordered to mechanise, each cavalry regiment sought to 'out-mechanise' the other. However, the inter-service rivalry can also create tensions and non-co-operation. The cavalry frequently spoke about horses working alongside tanks, whereas the RTC frequently viewed it in terms of cavalry versus tanks. As World War Two was to prove, the conceptualisation of horses and tanks working alongside one another was ultimately flawed, but it could have been used as a building block towards conversion.

The cultural legacy of World War One was of the 'Cavalry General' and the ending of that war marked the passing of such. This was not true. From the cohorts of

cavalrymen who served during the inter-war period, there arose some twenty-two men who were to attain the rank of General (Major-General or above), with a further thirteen who were Brigadiers.²⁶ Of this thirteen, three were promoted to the rank of general after the war. Undoubtedly, some were more successful than others, but in this they were no different to other generals and senior officers from other service arms. From this group, it is worth identifying two: Major-General Sir Evelyn Dalrymple Fanshawe and Field Marshal Sir Richard Amyatt Hull. Fanshawe had been commissioned into the Queen's Bays in 1914, and although seconded to the RFC from 1915, he returned to his regiment in 1919. From 1942-45, he was in command of the RAC training establishment.²⁷ Thus, for the last three years of the war, the man responsible for the training of all armoured units' personnel was a cavalryman. Hull, who was commissioned into the 17th/21st Lancers in 1928, also held several armoured unit commands during World War Two. In 1961, Hull was promoted to the senior post in the British army, the CIGS, and as such, was to be the last CIGS as the post was abolished in 1964. Consequently, he was also to be the first CGS, the post created to replace the CIGS. In 1965, he was made CDS, the ultimate head of all the British armed forces.²⁸ The assertion that cavalrymen could not be assimilated to modern warfare would seem to be a false one.

In one regimental history of the 16th/5th Lancers, the author, Major-General James Lunt, who had served during the war as an infantryman, wrote that 'far too much time and energy was wasted in the futile controversy of horse versus tank.' At the time, he was following the standard historiography and was incredulous that officers could have held such foolish notions as to the continuing validity of the horse on the battlefield.²⁹ Liddell Hart had passed away only three years earlier but his influence remained.

To summarise, this thesis has shown that this perception is wrong. However, to use Lunt's word, the deliberation over mechanisation was futile. The futility lay in the

²⁶ See table at the end of this conclusion.

²⁷ www.kcl.ac.uk/lhcma/locreg/FANSHAW2.shtml, accessed 31st December 2010.

²⁸ <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/lhcma/locreg/HULL2.shtml>, accessed 31st December 2010.

²⁹ James Lunt, *16th/5th Lancers The Queen's Royal Lancers*, (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 1973), p. 62.

mismanagement of change at every level. The politicians viewed the cavalry as an easy money saving scheme. It was a potential quick fix. But this offered no real strategic policy for the army during this period. The Ten Year Rule effectively meant that the politicians abrogated responsibility for strategic military policy for the 1920s. This left the army unsure what to do and thus very little happened to the cavalry during this period. When this rule was finally abandoned in 1932, successive governments, to quote Bond, 'allowed wishful thinking to blind them to strategic reality.'³⁰ Thus, there was never a wholesale commitment to rearmament during the 1930s and as a consequence, the cavalry was mechanised in name only.

The War Office adopted a defensive approach to strategic planning. It was perhaps understandable that it adopted a beleaguered, siege mentality. It was given a vague remit from government that was, in essence, a catch-all policy. This was compounded by limited funding to implement such a nebulous approach. However, attack is sometimes the best form of defence. The army failed to adopt this approach during this period. If one compares the CIGS of the period with the CAS, there is a marked difference. For much of the period, the CAS was Hugh Trenchard, who fought vigorously on behalf of the RAF. Sometimes he was wildly optimistic in his assertions of the capabilities of the RAF, but he was successful in creating a broader role for this arm. It is unfair to make absolute comparisons between the army and the RAF during this period, as political and public attitudes were different towards the two. But, the War Office was frequently timid in its approach; Trenchard's robust stance should have set an example. For ten of the twenty years covered in this thesis, two CIGS were in control: Milne and Montgomery-Massingberd. Neither was successful in pushing the army forward sufficiently. The War Office knew that mechanisation was going to happen and to not create a longer-term plan for its implementation was a failing. It had the opportunity to harness the experiences of many senior cavalry officers, all of whom also realised the inevitability of mechanisation. Instead, it allowed the short-term approach of the government to filter into its own approach, which left the cavalry in a position of uncertainty.

³⁰ Brian Bond, *British Military Policy*, p.338.

Lieutenant-General Sir Brian Horrocks wrote of both the British government and the War Office that

I have always realized that the military philosophy of British governments...has been...inept and unimaginative, but I now realize that the infantry got off comparatively lightly as compared with the cavalry.³¹

A direct result of an inert policy is inertia and no fundamental changes were to occur in the cavalry until this attitude was overcome by the steady worsening of international relations in the 1930s.

The cavalry for its part was not blameless. One officer of the period, Ffrench Blake, said that '[i]n the cavalry, regimental officers waited for mechanisation to come, knowing that it was inevitable.'³² If this was the case, then their inaction of the period was inexcusable. Very few officers sought to promote mechanisation. The cavalry turned in upon itself and carried on with a lifestyle that had not changed for a hundred years. However, this does dispense with the repeated notion that the cavalry retarded mechanisation. It did not. For much of the period it simply waited, as stated by Ffrench-Blake above. The myth of the cavalry stems from the tank advocates who strove to discredit the cavalry in an attempt to further establish the RTC in the British army. It is with sad irony that the result of this negative propaganda was to harm the mechanisation process. To the cavalry's credit, when the order to mechanise was eventually given, it applied itself vigorously under very difficult circumstances. With poor equipment and very little training, it was thrown into the firing line. In the early part of the war, cavalry regiments were involved in both Northern France and North Africa and in the context of the previous twenty years, their performance as mechanised units should be praised.

³¹ Lt.-General Sir Brian Horrocks, 'A Special Introduction' in R. L. V. Ffrench Blake, *The 17th/21st Lancers*, p. 7.

³² R. L. V. Ffrench Blake, *The 17th/21st Lancers*, p. 114.

Cavalry Generals of World War Two³³

	Name	First Commission
1	Major-General J. A. Aizlewood	4th/7th Dragoon Guards
2	Major-General J. Blakiston-Houston	11th Hussars
3	Lieutenant-General G. M. B. Burrows	5th Dragoon Guards
4	Lieutenant-General A. Carton de Wiart	4th Dragoons
5	Lieutenant-General J. G. W. Clark	16th Lancers
6	Major-General M. o'M. Creagh	7th Hussars
7	Major-General R. Evans	7th Hussars
8	Major-General Sir E. D. Fanshawe	2 nd Dragoon Guards
9	General Sir C. H. Gairdner ³⁴	10 th Hussars
10	Major-General Sir M. W. A. P. Graham	2nd Life Guards
11	Major-General Sir C. A. Heydeman	2nd Dragoon Guards
12	Major-General F. E. Hotblack	Royal Dragoons
13	Major-General Sir R. G. H. Howard-Vyse	Royal Horse Guards
14	Field Marshal R. A. Hull	17th/21st Lancers
15	Lieutenant-General Sir B. O. Hutchison	7th Hussars
16	General Sir C. F. Keightley	5th Dragoon Guards
17	Major-General Sir R. E. Laycock	Royal Horse Guards
18	Lieutenant-General H. Lumsden	12th Lancers
19	General Sir R. L. McCreery	12th Lancers
20	Major-General C. H. Miller	18th Hussars
21	Major-General C. W. Norman	9th Lancers
22	Lieutenant-General C. W. M. Norrie	11th Hussars

³³ Nick Smart, *Biographical Dictionary of British Generals of the Second World War*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2005). There are some anomalies of Generals who served during World War Two. Howard-Vyse fulfilled a diplomatic role.

³⁴ Gairdner was originally commissioned into the RA, but transferred to the 10th Hussars in 1918 and remained with them until 1940, until promoted. On this basis, he has been included in this list.

Cavalry Brigadiers of World War Two³⁵

	Name	Regiment of first Commission
1	Brigadier P. E. Bowden-Smith	16th/5th Lancers
2	Brigadier H. V. S. Charrington	12th Lancers
3	Major-General J. F. B. Combe*	11th Hussars
4	General Sir J. W. Hackett*	8th Hussars
5	Brigadier C. B. C. Harvey	10th Hussars
6	Major-General Sir W. R. M. Hinde*	15th/19th Hussars
7	Brigadier J. J. Kingstone	9th Lancers
8	Brigadier L. E. Misa	4th/7th Dragoon Guards
9	Brigadier C. Nicholson	16 th /5 th Lancers
10	Brigadier Sir C. H. M. Peto	9th Lancers
11	Brigadier Sir O. L. Prior-Palmer	9th Lancers
12	Brigadier G. H. N. Todd	Royal Scots Greys
13	Brigadier W. P. Wyatt	17 th /21 st Lancers

³⁵ There is no definitive source for obtaining Cavalry Brigadiers for World War Two. This list has utilised the search facility of the following website: <http://generals.dk/>. However, whilst it would seem the resources for this website are generally correct, its true provenance is unknown to the author. Consequentially, only those officers that could be ratified by a further valid source have been referenced. On this basis, the author is aware of one potential officer having been omitted, Brigadier Frank Thornton. The supporting sources for the above are all obituaries found in *The Times* with the exceptions of Brigadiers Todd and Wyatt, who were validated in Carver's and Barclay's regimental histories of the Royal Scots Greys and the 16th/5th Lancers. Generals Combe, Hackett and Hinde were promoted to the rank of General after the World War Two and so have not been included in the list for Cavalry generals.

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Kirke Papers

Liddell Hart Papers

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Pyman Papers

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537 92/1/1 A. C. Collins

15520 07/13/1 L. Flanakin

13169 05/21/1 T. C. Howes

6751 78/15/1 R F G Jayne

455 90/26/1 B. R. Thomas

9478 Misc 15 (331) Notes on the Mechanisation of the 12th Royal Lancers 1928

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12667 P. H. Alcock

878 D. J. H. Allenby

13390 J. T. Barnes

868 R. F. K. Belchem

17498 T. G. Boardman

13653 C. G. Brain

787 R. H. Bright

15748 J. B. Clarkson

788 K. C. Cooper

4917 J. Cotton

6714 D. F. Cowie

10340 D. De Crespigny Smiley

16849 R. W. Cryer

893 G. W. Draffen

4926	J. Dring
985	T. B. A. Evans-Lombe
946	R. L. V. French Blake
919	D. Forster
832	H. G. Freeman
961	T. Frost
1736	J. V. Glassbrook
858	F. W. Gordon-Hall
4527	J. W. Hackett
834	R. Harding-Newman
19898	F. Hunn
857	P. R. C. Hobart
905	A. M. Horsbrugh-Porter
895	T. J. Hutton
892	G. J. Kidston-Montgomerie
22115	J. R. Lanes
862	H. M. Liardet
915	M. J. Lindsay
914	D. McCorquodale
949	J. S. V. Marling et al
49	F. O. Mason
15326	W. L. Mather
867	E. F. Offord
962	T. W. Nickalls
866	G. W. Richards
933	K. E. Savill
10607	E. Scattergood
968	D. Scott
21050	J. D. Semken
9332	E. R. Sword
4436	R. H. Taylor
11084	B. R. Thomas
15255	C. V. Tinson
918	P. M. Wiggin
12736	H. M. Williams
20337	J. Wiseman
14139	C. Wrigglesworth
913	R. Younger

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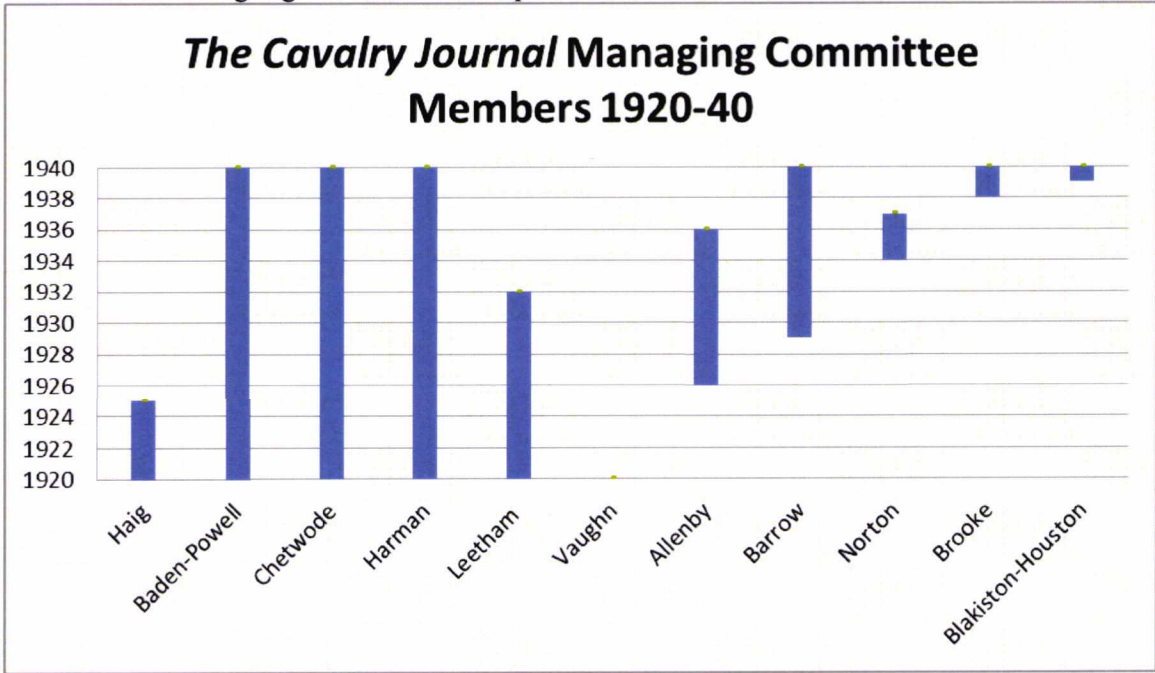
Appendix

Details of the Managing committee and editor of *The Cavalry Journal* 1920-40

During this period the following officers all sat upon the Managing Committee of *The Cavalry Journal*:

- Field Marshal Earl Haig
- Lieutenant-General Sir R. S. S. Baden-Powell
- Field Marshal Sir P. Chetwode
- Lieutenant-General A. E. W. Harman
- Lieutenant-Colonel Sir A. Leetham
- Major-General J. Vaughn
- Field Marshal The Viscount Allenby
- General George de S. Barrow
- Brigadier E. F. Norton
- Lieutenant-General A. F. Brooke
- Major-General J. Blakiston-Houston

The chart below highlights each officers' period on the committee.



The above shows that three officers – Baden-Powell, Chetwode and Harman – sat on the journal's committee for the entire period under review.

The other main office was that of Managing Editor. There were only two officers in this post during this time:

- Major-General N. M. Smyth (1920 - 23)
- Major-General T. T. Pitman (1924 – 40)