



TROOPING THE COLOR. One of the most spectacular, most colorful London events is the Trooping The Color Ceremony. Troops from the Household Division in brilliant scarlet, blue or gold and wearing black bearskins or gleaming brass headgear on Household Cavalry horses are reviewed by the Queen, seen here in a horse-drawn carriage. The event marks the sovereign's official birthday—a custom which began in 1805.

Hoof Moisture A Concern With Road Horses

In downtown London, 13 British Army farriers keep 200 horses well shod for ceremonial parade duty.

By Frank Lessiter, Editor/Publisher

YOU WOULDN'T EXPECT to see downtown London traffic grind to a halt, but it happens several times each day as a British Army mounted regiment pulls out onto the streets for ceremonial activities, parades and a variety of

special historical performances.

The British institution known as the Household Cavalry keeps 210 horses in London, 30 at Windsor Castle and 20 head pastured on grass at Bodney Camp in Norfolk, England.

At the vast multi-story Hyde Park Household Cavalry Mounted

Regiment barracks in downtown London, 141 members of the Life Guards and 142 members of the Blues and Royals mounted regiments handle a wide variety of ceremonial duties. In addition, a Headquarters Squadron includes farriers, cooks, drivers, saddlers, equestrian instructors, medics and



HORSES HITTING THE ROAD. It's a daily routine to see horses leaving the high rise complex in downtown London that holds the Household Cavalry and its more than 200 horses and nearly 300 Army personnel.

the Regimental Veterinary Officer.

The mounted regiment provides the Queen's Life Guard which leaves the barracks each day at 10:30 a.m. to arrive at Horse Guards promptly at 11:00 a.m. Before leaving, the horses and men are inspected to make sure they meet the highest standards. This attention to detail is applied to all Household Cavalry activities which requires hours of cleaning, polishing, grooming and other essential preparations.

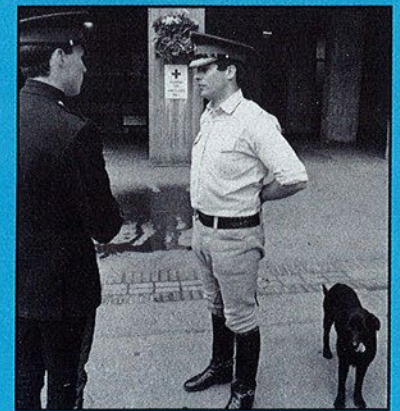
There are 13 Army farriers in

the Household Cavalry, including nine men stationed in downtown London and three shoers at Windsor Castle. Eight farriers serve as apprentices along with five fully qualified Army shoers.

Farrier Work Rules

The farriers are expected to shoe 10 horses a day, 5 days a week.

"We also do other work such as stand guard daily, get horses ready for officers to ride, help exercise the horses each day, tend to minor equine ailments and rasp teeth,"



MILITARY HORSES ARE VERY SPECIAL

These road horses are brought along slowly, says Major Tom Ogilvie-Graham, the Household Cavalry Regimental Veterinary Officer. After initial training, horses are sent to London for 8 weeks of street training.

Many ceremonial horses are Irish and draft horse crossbred animals. There are also some German and Hungarian bloodlines.

"We also have Thoroughbred lines, but they tend to give us problems," says Ogilvie-Graham. "Most of our horses are big heavy chargers who do all kinds of work—including band, parade, schooling, dressage, eventing, jumping and serving as show horses.

"Ideally, we need a horse 15.3 to 16 hands tall with very, very thick bones. We buy the bulk of our horses in Ireland, but it is getting much tougher to find the black horses we need."

Grey horses are often ridden by trumpeters to distinguish them from the other troops.

With the right horse, the hoof becomes very, very strong and the animal can work on the streets of London for more than 20 years.

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BALANCING HOOVES. British Army farrier apprentices are taught to balance feet from the metacarpal and to use a T-square on the front feet. They prefer this method because it allows them to get shoes to wear evenly and they balance the feet rather than simply leveling them.

says Sgt. Ivon Bell, a farrier and member of the airborne gunners who served in the Falkland Islands war.

"The daily ceremonies always come first and our farrier work has to be done around this.

"Most horses get routine exercise starting at 7 a.m. They leave in batches of 50 horses for exercise on the streets of downtown London. Army personnel normally ride one horse and lead another, so a batch of 50 horses going out needs 25 riders, often including farriers

who must take their turn."

The Household Cavalry is probably the only operation in the world where emphasis is placed 100% on road shoeing. All ceremonial parade work and exercising is carried out on the streets of downtown London.

3 To 4 Week Shoeing

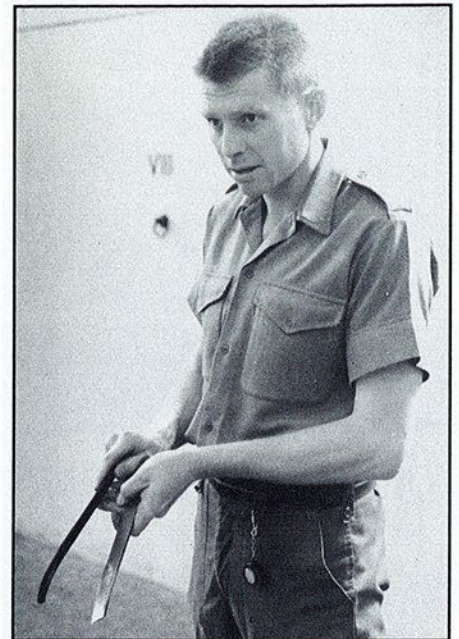
Since shoes wear fast on the streets, horses are routinely shod every 3 or 4 weeks. They wear extremely heavy shoes as light shoes don't last long under London street conditions. About 75% of the shoes are keg shoes.

"A big problem with lots of heavy road work is the needed moisture does not get into the hooves," says Bell. "Consequently, the frogs become very, very hard because of the beating the feet continually take on the pavement..."

"Nobody else in the world is doing what we do with these Household Cavalry horses for ceremonies, parades, etc."

These farriers rarely use pads. "The disadvantage is pads get very dry since there is a lack of moisture in the hoof with these road horses," says Bell. "We use wide webbed shoes, so we normally don't need pads.

"The hoof can become excessively brittle and dry, even though it is hard. Plus, the ceremonial



TOEING KNIFE. Made from old Army bayonets, these are used to trim tough, hard hooves. From all of the street work, hooves become very, very strong.

"We use toeing knives instead of nippers to trim hard hooves," explains the Household Cavalry's Sgt. Ivon Bell. "The sole is often hard and there is a lot of it because of the concussion on the pavement. You can't cut this hard sole with a normal hoof knife."

horses get scrubbed all the time which doesn't help the hoof.

"We use lots of egg bar shoes for low, weak heels and the soft feet on horses arriving from Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire where

"We really have to watch the amount of heat we expose a hoof to..."

the Army School of Farriery is based. Horses are also shod with rocker bar shoes to treat degenerative bone disease."

All horses are hot shod which creates even more moisture concerns. "With the big, thick shoes we use, there is a considerable amount of heat," Bell says. "This

IDENTIFYING HORSES

Each British Army horse has a regimental number engraved on one hind hoof and the initials of the regiment on the other hind hoof.

In the old days of battle, farriers rode behind the charging troops with their axes at the ready to dispatch wounded horses with a swift blow. They would cut off the hooves so a British Army officer could exchange a pair of dead hind feet for a new horse.

This was how the Army knew how many horses died in battle.



BUSY PREP TIME. It takes 2 hours to prepare and harness the Clydesdale horses which carry the heavy sets of drums in the daily downtown London parades.

6 YEARS TRAINING

Members of the British Army spend at least 2 years working with Army horses before being considered as potential Army farrier candidates.

"We want students who know their way around horses," explains Sgt. Ivon Bell of the Household Cavalry. "They spend 3 weeks here in the forge so we can look them over and see if we think they can do the job. They then go to the 12 week introductory course at the Army School of Farriery."

During the 6-year course which combines in-depth schooling, practical training and a London apprenticeship, the students qualify for various levels of British Army farriery expertise.

SHOEING SCHEDULING. Farrier checks are made of the horses each Friday morning. "We break up into two teams and go through all 200 horses while they are still in their stalls after morning exercise," says Sgt. Ivon Bell. "From these examinations, we make up a shoeing list for the next week."

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takes additional moisture out of the hoof and the white line can disintegrate.

"Some of our apprentices may heat a shoe five times to get it to fit right. So we have to really watch the amount of heat we expose a hoof to."

Bell says lameness is no more of a problem with road horses than for horses used in other ways. While some people think road work causes corns, Bell finds this isn't true.

"We usually don't get laminitis problems in the Army horses as we really watch our forages and what the horses are fed," says Bell.

No Traction For Road Work

"We don't use calks," says Bell. "We never raise anything above the shoe. A little tungsten plug is all that's needed to give a real good grip on the London streets. We normally put one plug in each heel so they don't wear out as quickly. We also use tungsten tipped nails on the hind feet to give a better grip."