Here Come the Cavalry!
From Waterloo to World War One: Records of Household Cavalry Servicemen Go Online

EMBARGOED UNTIL Thursday 12 June 2014, London, 00:01 GMT – Today The National Archives is making the surviving records of service for over 12,000 servicemen from the Household Cavalry spanning 200 years from 1799-1920 available online to view and download.

The records contain details of servicemen (non-commissioned officers and other ranks) who were part of the Household Cavalry (file series ref: WO 400) during the Battle of Waterloo, the Boer War and the First World War. They include their original handwritten enrolment form, a statement of names and addresses for next of kin and in some cases, a conduct sheet and casualty sheet, providing details of servicemen who fought in some of the British Empire’s biggest battles and wars.

William Spencer, author and principal military records specialist at The National Archives said: “People across the globe can now find personal details about troopers in the Household Cavalry such as their age when they joined, length of service, height, profession, pension and even any distinguishing marks they may have had. These details provide fascinating insights into the men that served in the Household Cavalry over the course of 200 years and are a fantastic resource for military and family historians to find out more about soldiers on horseback.”

Love letters from the Front
In rare cases, a record may contain personal correspondence and details of personal effects. This was the case for William Crawford (WO 400/289/2867) a 24 year old man from Inverkip, Scotland. He joined the Household Battalion and left Southampton for France on 23 October 1917 to fight in the First World War. He went into the field on 7 November 1917 and spent only a couple of months before he was wounded on 29 January 2018. He died of his wounds a few days later on 5 February 1918. His record lists only his uncle as next of kin and includes a letter from his uncle describing how at the age of 5 or 6, William was deserted by his father and his mother had died some time prior to that event. In the letter William’s uncle states that he “was the only father and friend he [William] really ever had” and asked for his medals and awards, along with his personal effects, to be presented to the King in memory of him. William’s personal effects were sent to the War Office and included correspondence from a woman named Hetty who had sent William a number of letters and a birthday card (images available here and podcast: Voices of the Armistice: with love from Hetty).

Other examples from the Household Cavalry Records:
• WO 400/77/7 - Sergeant Major Thomas Playford. Joined 2nd Lifeguards in 1810 age of 18. He served in Spain (Battle of Vitoria), France and in the Battle of Waterloo for a total of 25 years. Received a pension on discharge from service in 1834.
• **WO 400/77/31 – Noah Phipps.** Joined 1st Life Guards in 1814. Served in Spain and at Battle of Waterloo. Discharged in 1841 “being completely worn out”. It is noted that he was an excellent soldier and received a pension on discharge from service.

• **WO 400/74/960 – George Mawson.** Cloth Draper, Wakefield. Applied to join the 2nd Life Guards on 28 January 1847 age 19. Rejected by the surgeon for “loss of teeth and diseased gums.”

• **WO 400/74/655 – Philip Milbourne.** Labourer from Newcastle upon Tyne (born in Carlisle). Joined 2nd Life Guards in 1839 at the age of 20 and served 5 years. During his service, he was punished with 40 days imprisonment with hard labour for breaking out of the barracks on Christmas Eve 1841 and returning at 10pm in a “state of intoxication”.

The Household Cavalry file series is divided into sub-series for the following regiments:

- 1st Life Guards series one, 1801-1856
- 1st Life Guards series two, 1859-1920
- 2nd Life Guards series one, 1799-1856
- 2nd Life Guards series two, 1856-1919

Royal Horse Guards series one, 1805-1856
Royal Horse Guards series two, 1856-1886
Royal Horse Guards series three, 1886-1919

Household Battalion, 1916-1919

Timeline of Major Battles involving the Household Cavalry from 1799-1920:

- **1815** The Life Guards, Royal Horse Guards and Royal Dragoons all distinguish themselves at the Battle of Waterloo. The Royal Dragoons capture the eagle Standard of Napoleon’s 105th Regiment, which today forms part of the Blues & Royals badge.

- **1885** In the Nile Expedition, in the Sudan, which attempted to raise the siege of Khartoum, the Household Cavalry provided detachments of the Heavy Camel Corps. They were engaged in the Battle of Abu Klea on 17th January, 1885 and included desperate hand-to-hand fighting. The battle was described by Winston Churchill as ‘the most savage and bloody action ever fought in the Sudan by British troops’.

- **1899-1902** The Boer War marks the culmination of massed cavalry tactics. Battles are waged at Rensburg, Kimberly, Paarderberg, Pretoria and Diamond Hill.

- **1914-1918** Mounted regiments deployed in First World War. They served in the trenches and formed part of the Guards Machine Gun Battalions.

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Notes to Editors: Spokespeople available:

**William Spencer** is Principal Military Specialist at The National Archives where he has worked since 1993. He served in the Royal Navy, including operational service in the Falklands in 1982, and holds an MA in War Studies from the prestigious Department of War Studies at King's College London. William is also the author of the bestselling books Medals: the Researcher's Guide, First World War Army Service Records, Air Force Records and Family History in the Wars.

**First World War 100 - The National Archives First World War Centenary Programme**

*First World War 100* - a new digital platform - has been created to guide people through the vast collection of historic records, letters, wills, maps, photographs, illustrations and artworks held by The National Archives. Adding content throughout the five year programme, *First World War 100* will be the central hub for the public to search and view official First World War records.

About The National Archives:
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