

British Cavalry Equipments 1800-1941



Text and colour plates by
MIKE CHAPPELL

MEN-AT-ARMS SERIES

EDITOR: MARTIN WINDROW

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Equipments
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Introduction

Cavalry equipment, as far as the scope of this book is concerned, may be defined as follows:

1. Everything that was put on a troop horse of line cavalry.
2. The accoutrements worn by its rider.
3. Weapons special to the mounted soldier.

In the pages that follow uniforms, ceremonial trappings and officers' equipment may be illustrated or referred to, but only when supplementary to the main theme, which is the equipment of the Other Ranks of British line cavalry regiments as worn on active service from the start of the 19th century to the dismounting of the last cavalry units in 1941. The equipment of the Household Cavalry, Yeomanry and Mounted Infantry units is a separate study not covered in this work.

A glossary is included at the end of the text as is a chronology of the phasing in and out of the service of saddlery, weapons and equipment.

Horses

The horse is no longer part of everyday life. It can be seen daily on our television screens, but only those of us connected with the sports and leisure pursuits which involve horses will ever experience the animals at first hand. Working horses are nowadays rare enough to attract considerable interest, while knowledge of the management of horses in draught is fast becoming the privilege of the well-to-do instead of the stock-in-trade of the coachman and the carter.

And yet it was only a short time ago that horses still had a part to play in commercial life. As recently as the 1930s and '40s horses towed barges on our canals, pulled freight wagons for the railways, hauled deliveries of milk and coal to our doors, and were indispensable to both the farmer and the brewer. In those days contact with horses

and knowledge of their management was common. Most families had some member who 'knew' horses and was familiar with the language of the tack-room, farrier and vet.

The disappearance of the working horse was abrupt. After a close association with man going back thousands of years, the horse has been supplanted by the internal combustion engine in the lifespan of one generation. Abrupt too has been the loss of knowledge of horses—not only the terminology associated with them, but also the appreciation of their nature. Generations accustomed to seeing horses only on the screen or the racing pages have begun to endow them with qualities they never had, nor ever will.

Of course, all misconceptions are rapidly dispelled by first-hand contact with horses, to be replaced with an appreciation of their virtues and



Light Cavalry, 1812. This C. Hamilton Smith print shows well the equipment of the light cavalryman of the early 19th century. Note particularly the 1812 pattern bridle, the 'Paget' carbine strapped to the saddle with its lock wrapped in cloth, and the pouch/carbine belt. (Parks of Canada)



HEAVY AND LIGHT CAVALRY, 1792-1800

vices. Nevertheless, as the horse is nowadays the privilege of a few, the majority must remain content to be spectators. It is for the majority and not the experts, therefore, that this book is set out. Nothing is assumed except that the reader has little or no knowledge of the physiology of the horse or the construction of saddlery. By starting from this premise it is hoped to keep a complicated subject simple.

Although by no means a proficient horseman, the writer confesses to a passing interest in horses. Starting many years ago in the Berlin Garrison Saddle Club he has ridden often enough to pluck up the courage to write this book on cavalry—quite an undertaking for an infantryman! This slight experience of horses is important from another point of view, for it has enabled much more to be extracted from research than might otherwise have been possible. It is hoped that this is apparent in the following chapters.

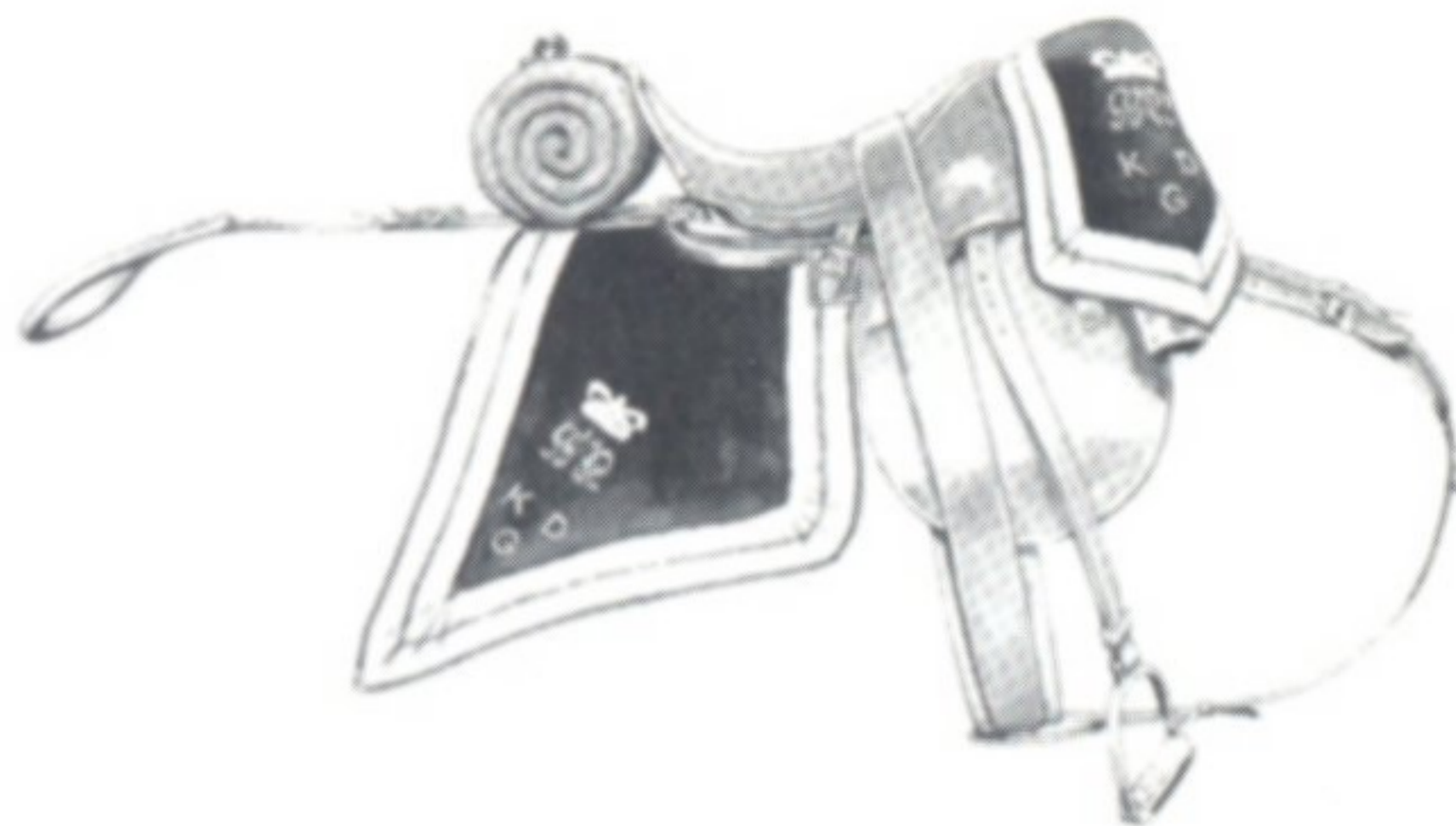
The End of the Horse in Military Service

Mention has already been made of the role of the horse in the 1930s. At that time the British Army, like the armies of some other nations, was making the painful transition from animal transport (AT) to mechanical transport (MT). The procedure was then known as 'Mechanisation'. In the ten years immediately prior to the Second World War the British Army underwent the change from a service almost totally dependent on the horse for battlefield mobility to one totally committed to mechanical transport. Thus the accumulated skills and knowledge of hundreds of years of military horse management were made redundant as the Army moved into the machine age.

Gunners, sappers and infantrymen, supply, ordnance, signals and staff, all gave up the horses which were to most only a means of transport. But for one branch of the Army the passing of the horse threatened their very existence: for without horses where was the justification for retaining regiments of Hussars, Lancers or Dragoon Guards?

To the very last the cavalry, despite the lessons

Heavy and Light Cavalry, 1812. Note the bridle and the stirrups, holsters, carbine boot, corn sack and picketing rope showing beneath the cloak of the heavy dragoon in the foreground. The voluminous cavalry cloaks, capes and headdress foul-weather covers are also shown to advantage. (Parks of Canada)



Heavy Cavalry review order saddlery, 1812. The saddle is the 1796 Heavy Cavalry pattern of the 1st (King's) Dragoon Guards. Housings and holster caps are dark blue with yellow lace and red and yellow badging and 'train'. The rolled cloak is strapped behind the cantle and a leather surcingle encircles the complete saddle and girth. Note the crupper and breastplate.

of the recent war, believed that the horse was more than just an aid to mobility. It was also, they considered, a platform from which to fight, and they argued with passion the need for its retention in the service. For this reason, ludicrous though it now seems, swords and lances survived a war that saw the introduction of machine gun battalions, poison gas and the tank; and the charge, with all its associated romantic images of glory, was still considered, 30 or more years into the 20th century, a viable operation of war.

The half-understood myths which gathered around the annihilation of the Polish cavalry in 1939 would finally have the beneficial effect of dramatising the passing of mounted men from the modern battlefield; but this was all in the future. In Britain the end of the soldier on horseback came soon enough to ensure that no British cavalry regiment would ever suffer the fate of the unfortunate Poles. Despite a powerful pro-cavalry lobby the order was given to dismount all the Regular cavalry except for a few regiments stationed abroad. There remained only the problem of the employment of the horseless cavalry.

With their rejection of the role of dragoon the British cavalry had long ceased to regard themselves as infantry who rode into battle. Centuries of looking down, literally and metaphorically, at the soldier on foot, coupled with their leaders' attitude to the horse as a mark of social status, had left cavalrymen with a strong aversion to dis-

mounted action. The act of swapping their horses for trucks would simply convert them to lorried infantry—an unthinkable development. It was, therefore, to the armoured fighting vehicle (a branch of the service with which they had had no previous connections) that the cavalry turned for a role to justify their continued existence.

Thus, although a small mounted force was maintained in Palestine until 1941, the cavalry regiments of the British Army handed in their horses and merged with the Royal Tanks to form the Royal Armoured Corps. The age of the British soldier on horseback in any but a ceremonial role was at an end. In the war which was about to break out the now-mechanised cavalry regiments of the British Army would once more find glory in full measure, but under very different circumstances.

As the horses went back to the remount depots for disposal so did the special equipment needed by the cavalry. Saddlery, cavalry weapons, items of clothing and personal equipment peculiar to the mounted soldier, all were returned to Ordnance to be stored and eventually disposed of. In the 40 to 50 years that have elapsed since then expert knowledge of cavalry equipment has dwindled, as the old soldiers who knew it 'fade away'. To trace the story of this fascinating aspect of British military history we must leap back 140 years in time, from the demise of the military horse to the dawning of the 19th century.

1800 to 1815

(Plates A and B)

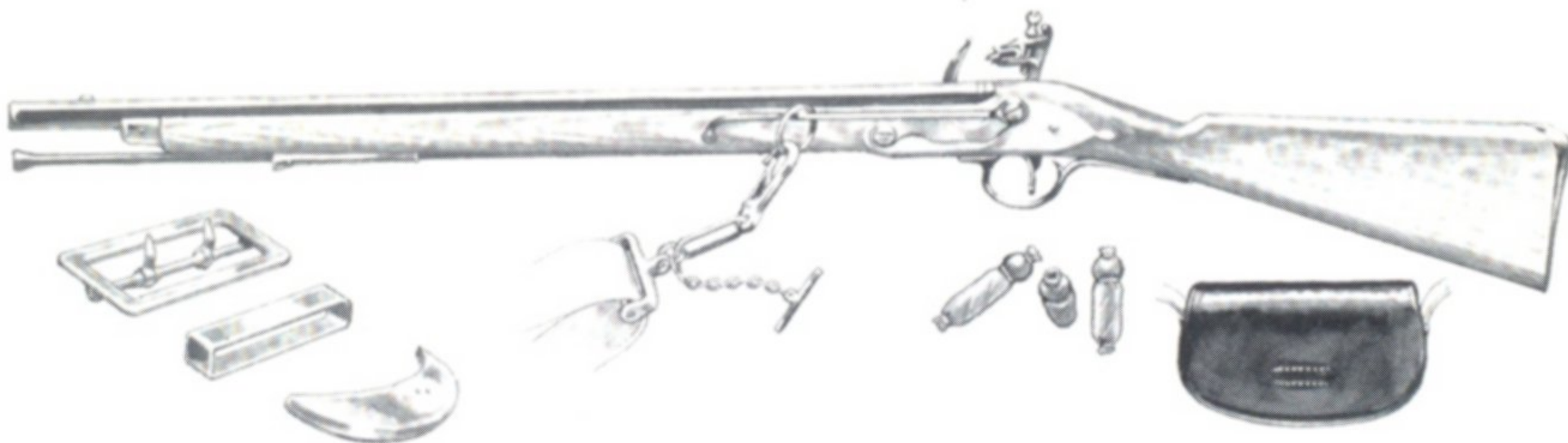
In choosing a point in time from which to start a study of British cavalry equipment, the opening years of the 19th century recommend themselves. For although there is hardly a wealth of information available from this period, that surviving from the 18th century is scant indeed. The early 1800s also saw the first moves towards standardisation, and the beginning of the demise of the system which allowed the colonels of regiments so much say in the equipping of their troops. Horse Guards—the Ministry of Defence of its day—began to issue specifications of equipment, examples of which were stamped with a wax seal of approval as the



A Heavy Cavalry bridle, 1815. In the period 1800 to 1860 the heavy cavalry followed the trend set by the light cavalry regarding bridles until the adoption of a universal pattern. Thus, the example illustrated is very much of the late 18th century when web or leather halters and curb and T-bar snaffle bits of the types shown were in use. The 'heavies' gradually adopted the 1812 pattern bridle of the light cavalry in the years after Waterloo.

standard pattern for future manufacture; and the survival of these 'sealed patterns' either in the form of written specifications and drawings, or—in rare cases—the items themselves, are of great value to the historian.

The wars with Napoleon brought the deficiencies of the British military supply system sharply into focus. Quite simply, the scheme for the financing, contracting, manufacture and supply of all types of military equipment was prone to corruption, impossibly slow and absolutely inadequate to cope with the expansion forced on the British Army by the wars with France. In a field as vital as the supply of arms the government exercised direct control, collecting together the work subcontracted to the makers of parts and assembling



The Dragoon Carbine, 1796 pattern. The carbine is shown from the left hand side. Note the method of attachment of the pouch belt. Also shown are the pouch belt buckle, slide and tip. At right is the pouch and three of the thirty cartridges it contained.

them to make finished weapons in the armouries from which they were subsequently issued. Despite this degree of centralisation the system, geared to back-street manufacture, barely worked. However, if the supply of arms was bad the supply of other equipment was worse. The complicated system of purchase and cash allowances then current meant that the colonel of a regiment ran his outfit rather like a business, buying equipment when obliged to by putting the contract for its supply out to tender. He then arranged terms with the manufacturer to suit himself financially, while indulging his personal preferences to a considerable degree. In practical terms this meant that no two regiments would be equipped in a similar manner, and that the regiment of a parsimonious colonel would be equipped with cheap and shoddy gear. Conversely, a colonel with money to burn would lavish it on his men, dressing them as dandies and equipping them with the finest that money could buy. Some colonels even went so far as to scorn the weapons issued from Government armouries, and armed their regiments instead with weapons bought from fashionable gunmakers. This sometimes corrupt and always inefficient system was tolerated because it had been the accepted practice for a long time. Events elsewhere were to force a change.

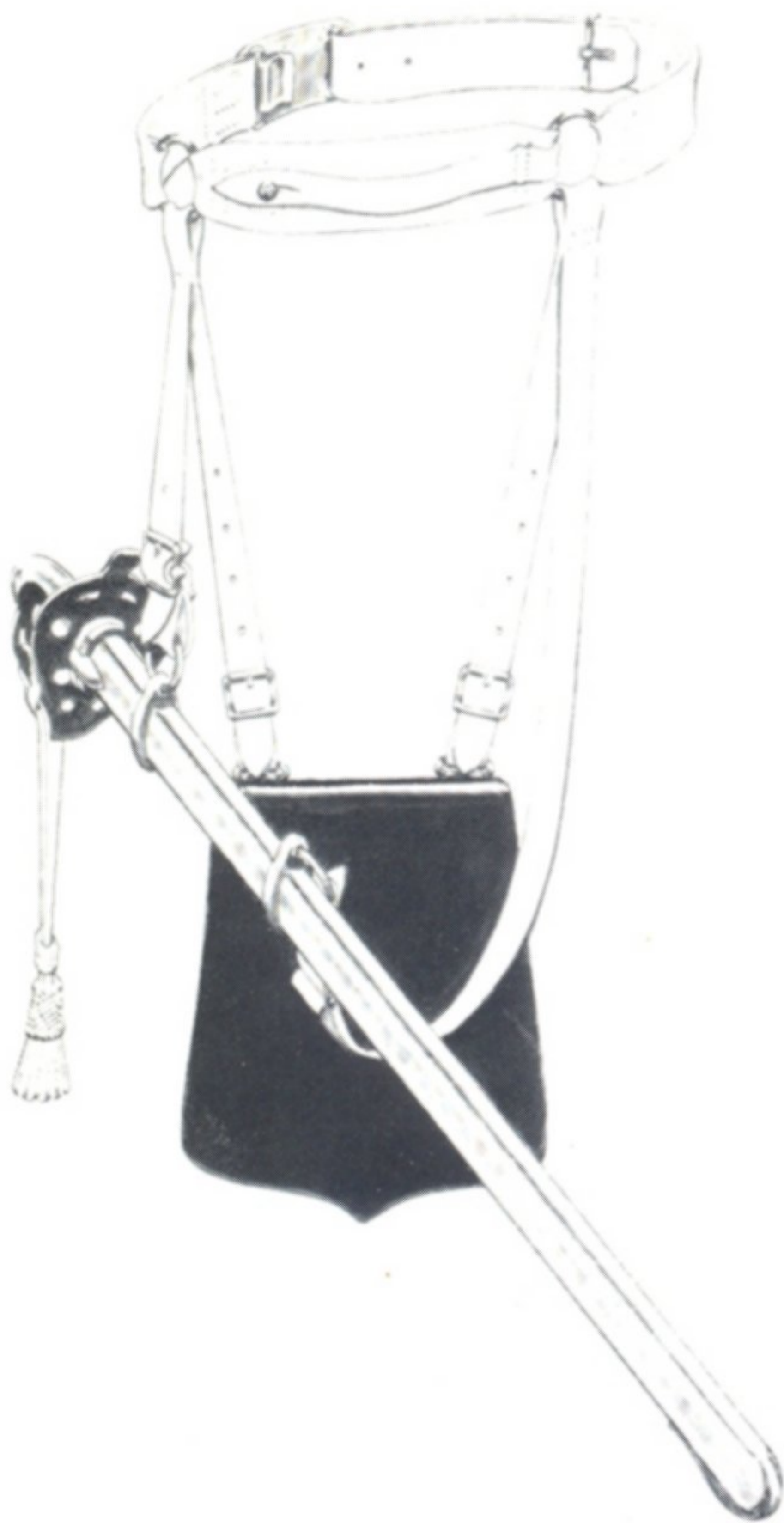
Across the channel Napoleon had set up factories for the production of the materiel needed to clothe, arm and equip his huge armies. His example could not be ignored. The British authorities needed to standardise equipment, approve its manufacture by firms big enough to

produce it quickly and in quantity, and then direct that purchases be made only from their approved contractors. The range of choice that had formerly been the prerogative of cavalry colonels now began to narrow as Horse Guards began to introduce swords, firearms, saddlery, harness and accoutrements to standard patterns for the Light and the Heavy Dragoons.

First in the field, as far as light cavalry was concerned, was the sword or sabre. The Royal Warrant of November 1796 laid down the specifications for the new light cavalry weapon, and decreed that it should be 3ins. shorter than the 1788 light cavalry sabre it would replace, but have the same amount of 'bend', i.e. 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ ins. from a line drawn between point and hilt. Thus the new sabre was more curved than its predecessor; a slashing weapon, it inspires argument to this day, with one lobby claiming it to be the best sword ever, and another pointing out its limitations.

As with all items of weaponry and equipment, much time would elapse from the issue of the Royal Warrant before the new sabre could be said to have replaced the old. Thus, in the early years of the 19th century both the 1788 and 1796 pattern sabres could be found in use by the light cavalry.

The other weapons in the armoury of the light dragoon, or the newly-converted hussar, were the carbine and pistol. Pistols could be of any of a variety of patterns, with a move in the early years of the century to convert them to swivel ramrods, which could not be lost when reloading on horseback. The 'Paget' Light Cavalry carbine also incorporated this feature. Introduced in 1800, it gradually replaced all other forms of carbine for light cavalry (except when colonels furnished their men with alternative arms). The 'Paget'



Heavy Cavalry troopers sword belt, 1815. Note the rectangular plate buckle and the horizontal strap and stud between the belt rings. This was to secure the sword when on foot, when the sabretasche would also be hitched up.



carbine served on well into the middle of the 19th century, even surviving the conversion from flint to percussion lock.

To carry his sabre and carbine the light cavalry trooper had sword and pouch belts. The sword-belt was constructed from thin strips of whitened buff leather with a brass 'snake-clasp' buckle and furniture. Two sets of slings hung from the belt to support the sabre and the sabretasche, which—for troopers—was of plain black leather for active service. More elaborate patterns, bearing regimental devices, etc., were sported by officers and by the troopers of some regiments with rich colonels. The pouch belt, also made of buff leather, had two purposes. It supported a pouch containing ammunition for the pistols and carbine, and it also acted as a sling for the carbine, enabling it to be fired from horseback. A slide and swivel clipped to a ring and bar on the carbine allowed it to be suspended from the pouch belt. Thus, even if the carbine were dropped or temporarily put aside after firing while the sword was drawn, it remained hanging muzzle down below the rider's right thigh.

A trooper's personal field equipment was completed with a haversack and a canteen. These items were common to all types of troops, and were worn by cavalry on shortened straps to prevent them bouncing about at the trot or a faster pace.

Moving from the man to his mount: a special universal saddle for light cavalry was approved in 1805—the 'Light Cavalry Universal Saddle, Pattern 1805', also known as the 'Hungarian' or the 'Hussar' saddle. As in the case of the sabre and certain uniforms, head-dress and equipment, fashion played a great part; the style set originally by Hungarian light horse in Austrian service, and copied by French light cavalry, was much in vogue. (Many light cavalry regiments began to style themselves as 'Hussars' from 1806 onwards.) The Hungarian saddle was of a complicated construction, and was difficult to set up on a horse or to adjust once in place. Unlike a modern saddle it had no padding beneath the sideboards, and needed many thicknesses of blanket (at times 16!)

Shabraque of the 13th Light Dragoons, 1812. Dark blue cloth edged with yellow lace, with gold, silver and red embroidery. This trooper's shabraque went over the saddle and was itself partially covered by a white sheepskin.

to prevent the mount developing a sore back. The 'Hussar' fashion of shabraque and sheepskin with their retaining surcingle and straps added to the complications of saddling up. However, the shabraque was usually dispensed with on active service. The saddle was kept in position on the horse by means of a girth, a 'breastplate' and crupper straps. On the front arch were carried the holstered pistols, the rolled cloak and a 'boot', or leather tube, for the muzzle of the carbine. (This weapon was usually strapped in a near-vertical position when not required, by attaching it also to the front arch.)

On the pillion of the saddle was a tubular valise, while any of the following could also be attached—usually on the offside—to the rear of the saddle: nosebag, cornsack, forage net, reaping hook and spade. A light cavalryman of the period rode 'twenty stone' (280lbs.) in his Hungarian saddle, and needed to sit it correctly if he were not to give his horse a sore back. Records of the time recommended a long stirrup and an upright back, as anything else would result in the horse having to be led.

In 1812 a special bridle was adopted for the light cavalry, who had formerly used, as in the case of saddles, a regimental pattern. The new light cavalry bridle, like the new saddle, had a strong Hungarian 'flavour' about it, while retaining all that was British, and best, regarding bits. In the latter respect the curb and snaffle of the previous bridle were retained, while elaborate face-pieces and rosettes were incorporated into the leatherwork of the new bridle.

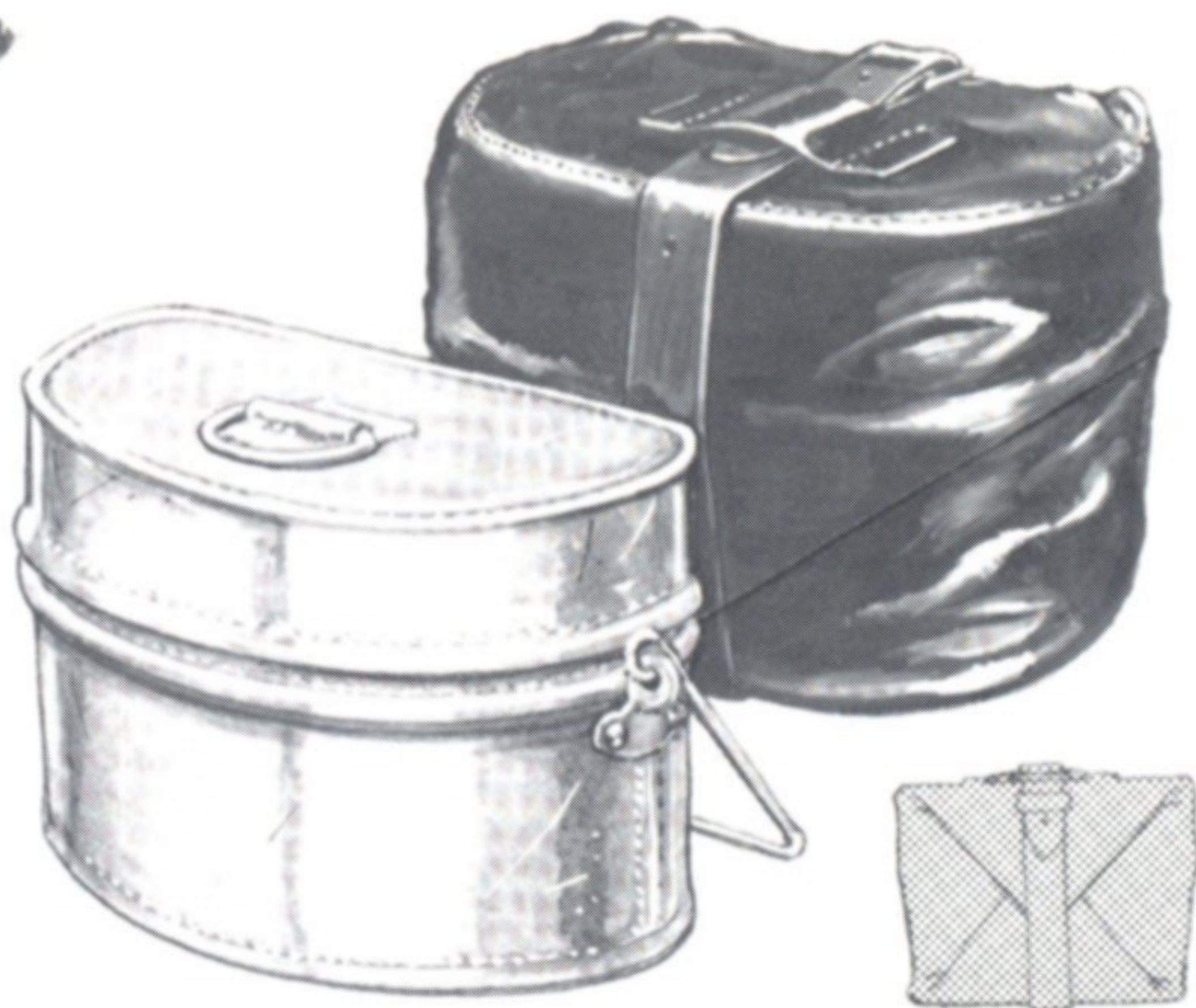
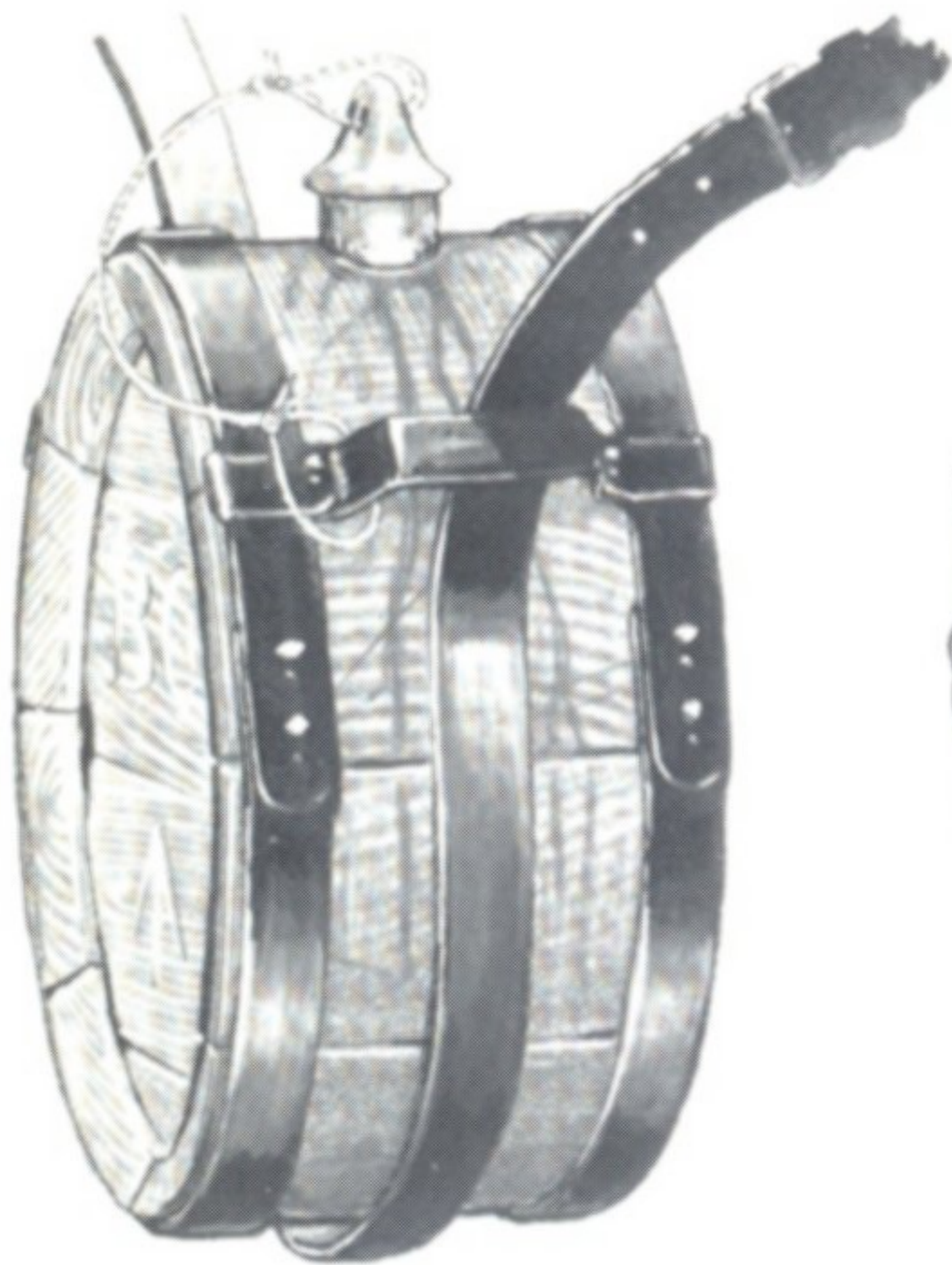
All the equipment discussed so far has been that of the troopers or other ranks. Broadly speaking, officers' equipment followed the same pattern as that of their men but was of better quality and manufacture—and much more ornate! At this time, and for many years to come, officers purchased their own clothing, equipment, weapons and mounts. While elaborate instructions governed what an officer might or might not wear in barracks, or on ceremonial occasions, more discretion was allowed in the field. There is ample evidence that this discretion was taken advantage of to the full during the period in question.

1800 to 1815 saw the light cavalry undergoing many changes as regards uniforms, titles, weapons



Light Cavalry bridle, 1812. With its crossed face-pieces and fancy rosettes, the 1812 bridle was a copy of the Hungarian hussar style. It featured a rather plain curb bit and a snaffle bit that buckled straight on to the cheekpieces. Halter straps were either bound around the halter, as shown, or fastened back to the saddle. The jowl ornament hanging from the throat-lash was purely decorative.

and equipment. The adulation of the Hungarian hussar, then current throughout Europe, is difficult to comprehend today. These horsemen were first hired as mercenaries and then, when the supply of genuine Hungarians ran out, replaced by native regiments dressed, armed and mounted in stylised imitation of the original. The hussars set a military fashion which even the conservative British—who had no connection with Hungary whatsoever—slavishly copied. The 'reaping-hook' broadsword, cossack-style saddle and, eventually,



the outlandish costume of the hussar was wished on a substantial part of the British light cavalry with little evaluation as to their suitability.¹

By contrast, British heavy cavalry managed to retain their traditional red-coated appearance although they too were not above copying the best in European equipment.² It was from Germany that they took the idea for a new saddle in the 1790s. This, the first universal pattern saddle for British heavy cavalry, was 'sealed' by the Board of Ordnance in 1796, the design being based on a modification of the Prussian cuirassier saddle brought to England by the Duke of York. With the acceptance of the 'Heavy Cavalry Universal Saddle, pattern 1796' the personal preference that had been the prerogative of colonels ceased, and from this point all new saddles purchased from contractors had to conform to the design of the sealed pattern. Thus, by the end of the period under study, most regiments would have re-equipped with the 1796 saddle. Even so, saddlery had a long life and the parsimony of a careful colonel could make it longer, with worn and broken items being carefully repaired by the saddler. It is likely, therefore, that some regimental-pattern saddles of the pre-1796 era may still have been in use in 1815.

Canteen, messtin and cover. At left is the circular 'Italian' canteen (waterbottle) of the Napoleonic period. Made of wood with iron hoops and a brown leather strap, it held three pints. It was painted light blue and marked on one side with the Board of Ordnance cypher (BO and a broad arrow), and usually had the markings of regiment, troop and individual number on the reverse face. The tinned sheet iron messtin was introduced in about 1814. It comprised body and lid with an inner tray, and was held in an oilskin cover. Inset sketch shows how the cover was folded, envelope-fashion, on the flat, rear surface. Messtins were carried in the valise or strapped to it.

The 1796 pattern saddle was built over a conventional wooden tree comprising sideboards with front and rear arches. The front arch had two points which continued down below the sideboards to give lateral stability. These points terminated in slots to which the breastplate straps were fastened. Officers' pattern saddles had sideboards with 'fans' which projected to the rear of the saddle to form a platform for the valise, etc., but this feature was not incorporated in the saddles of the troopers. The pillion kit of the men, therefore, rode squarely on their horses' backs. All saddles of this pattern had a brass beading guard on the cantle to prevent wear, and this formed the main distinguishing feature of the type. Numerous 'Ds' and loops were incorporated for the attachment of equipment, which usually comprised a tubular valise behind the cantle and a pair of holsters on the front arch. Strapped above the holsters was

¹, ²See MAA 126, *Wellington's Light Cavalry*, and MAA 130, *Wellington's Heavy Cavalry*.

the rolled cloak.

A leather guard or flounce to prevent chafing from the reins encircled the cloak above the peak of the front arch, and the carbine boot was attached to the front offside. Other items visible on the saddle, in full marching order, might be the messtin (sometimes called the canteen), corn sacks, forage nets, a variety of tools and the water-deck (this last item was a piece of canvas, four feet by four feet, painted in the regimental colours. Its purpose was to cover the saddle when off the horse's back. It was usually folded and wrapped around the valise when not in use.) A folded blanket went between the saddle and the horse, and a girth, surcingle, breastplate and crupper kept the saddle in place. Decorative ' housings ' and holster covers were worn by the heavy cavalry in review order, but rarely in the field.

The heavy cavalry bridle of the period featured the fairly recent innovation of a double bit, curb and snaffle. The curb bit with its curved side-bars had a brass boss usually ornamented with regimental devices. The snaffle or ' bridoon ' bit was sometimes fitted by means of a quick-release bar, which shows up in contemporary paintings as a steel rod running through one of the cheek pieces. Halters or head collars could be of webbing or leather, with the strap passed to the nearside of the saddle or bound around the halter neck-strap.

As with the light cavalry, officers' saddles and bridles followed the same pattern as the troopers'



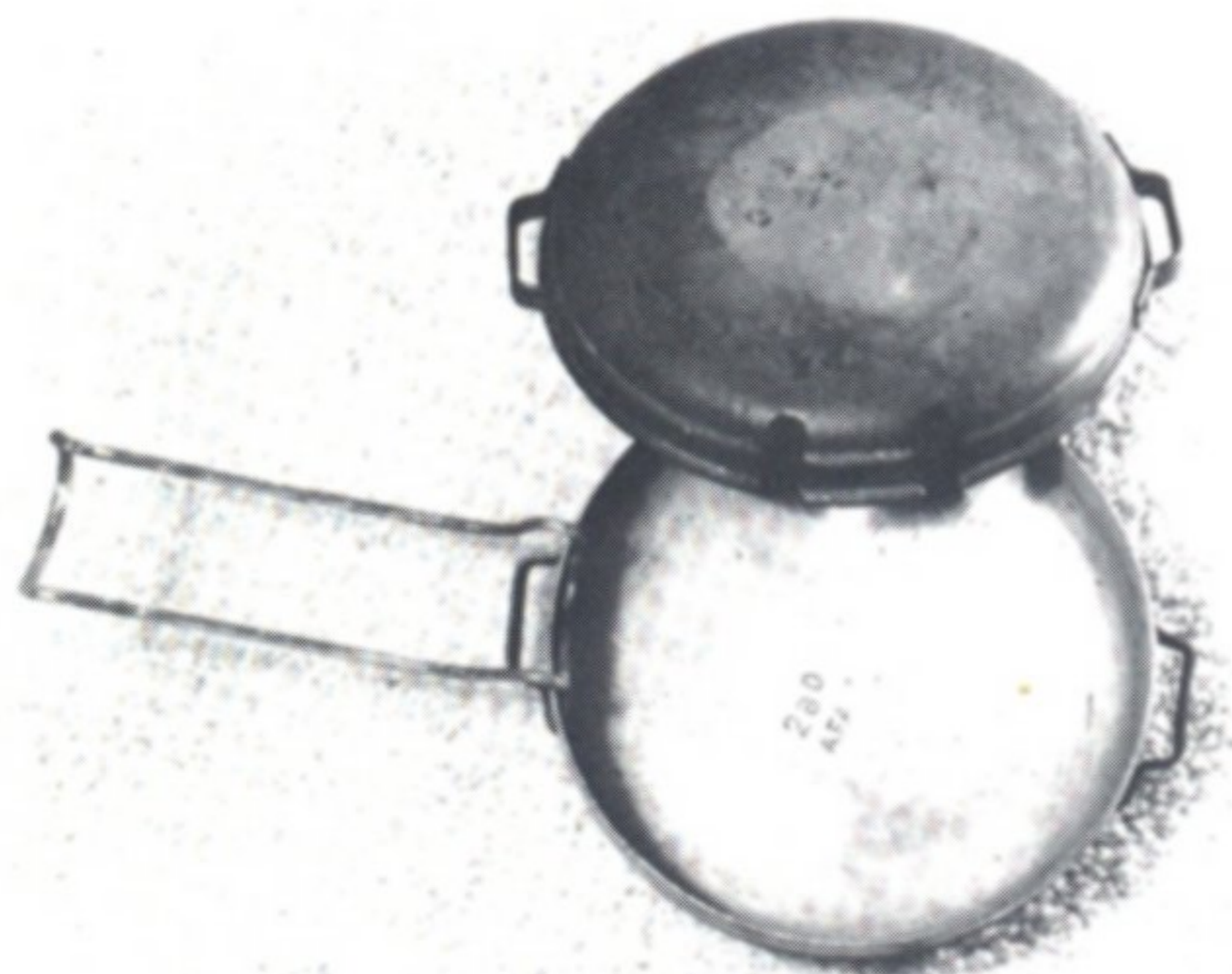
Cavalry messtin, assembled. Introduced in about 1870, this item endured until the end of the horse in military service. Its dimensions were such that it could fit into the valise, which was 6½ins. in diameter. (Collection of Alan Simpson)

but were generally of better quality and could be much more ornate. Many regiments went in for special ' full-dress ' bridles, breastplates, cruppers, stirrups and leathers for their officers and sometimes for the men. It is sufficient to say that these items were not used in the field, but were kept only for the great occasions when cavalry showed off in all their splendour.

The arms of the heavy cavalryman included sword and pistol for all, and carbines for the troopers. The sword was the straight-bladed, hatchet-tipped 1796 pattern. With a 35in. blade it was heavy and difficult to handle, but records of the execution wrought with it give an indication of how skilful in its use troopers became through drill and training. The cutting force that could be exerted from the back of a horse was considerable, as was the sword's reach and pointing ability.

The carbine and pistol on issue to the heavy cavalryman at this time originated—like the sword—from the year 1796 and were both of musket calibre (.75in.). Called the ' Dragoon Carbine, pattern 1796 ', the carbine was three and a half feet in length and weighed eight pounds. The 1796 pattern Dragoon pistol underwent modification in 1801 when a steel ramrod was fitted below the barrel.

On his person the heavy cavalry trooper wore canteen, haversack, sword, belt, sabretasche and pouch belt. The first two items were universal to all arms and were issued by the Board of Ordnance as campaign stores. The sabretasche and pouch belt were similar items to those worn by the light cavalryman; but the sword belt was an item



Cavalry messtin, open, showing the handle extended and the loops for the messtin strap. (Collection of Alan Simpson)

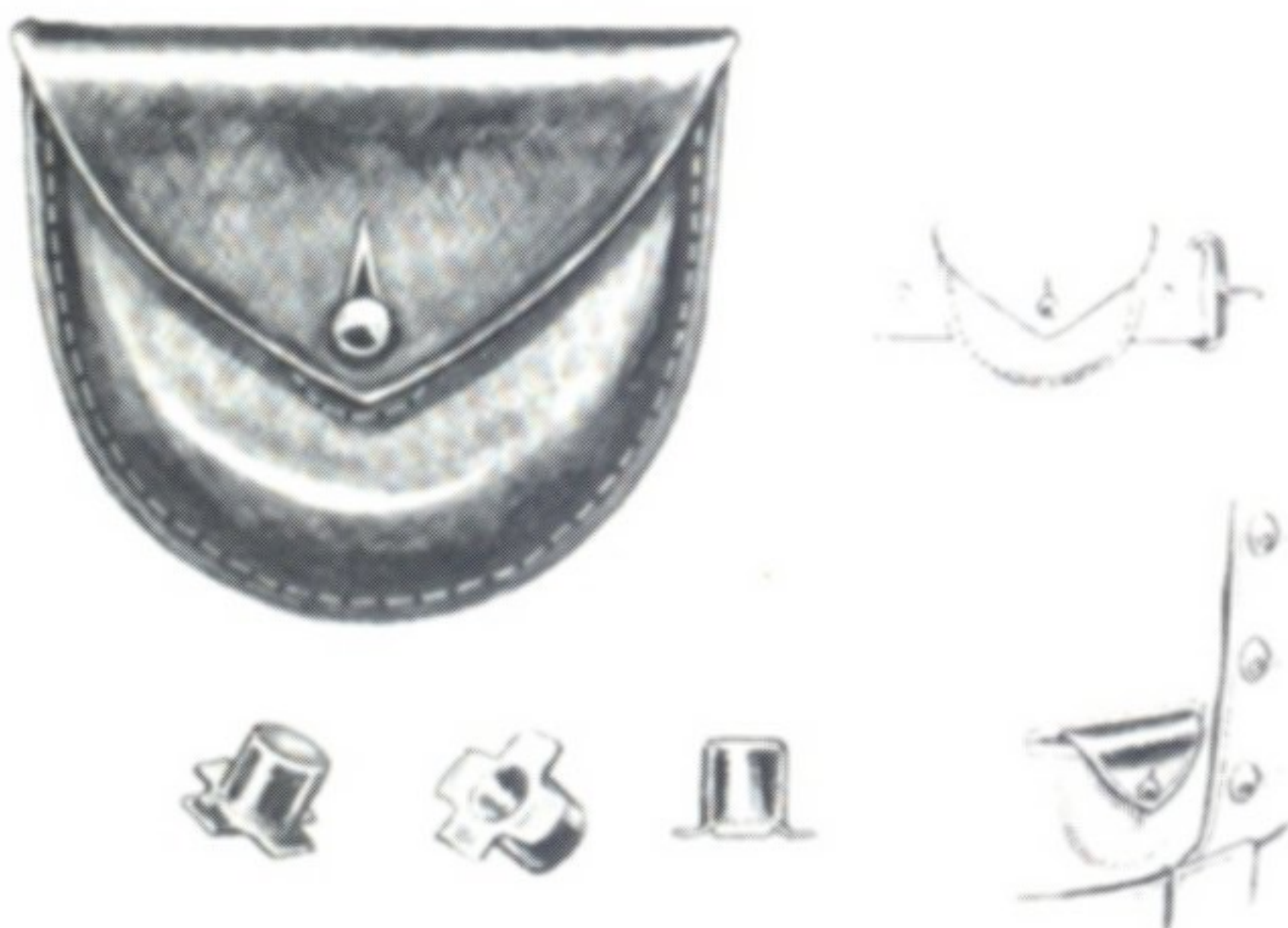
exclusive to the heavy cavalry, being much broader than the light cavalry pattern and with a rectangular plate buckle for all regiments except Life Guards and Horse Guards, who had ornate snake-clasp fastenings.

The British cavalryman of the early 19th century could expect to ride to battle with the following equipment:

Full 'regimentals'—i.e. full dress uniform, except that overalls replaced breeches; cloak; saddle, complete with girth, stirrups, breastplate and crupper; surcingle; baggage straps (set of three for securing the valise); holsters with straps, and a set of three cloak straps; shoe case; carbine bucket; a valise containing stable clothes, forage cap, toilet gear, spare shirt and underclothes, and grooming articles for the horse; messtin or canteen; bridle and head collar complete; blankets for trooper and horse; flounce; sheepskin and shabraque for a Light Dragoon; waterdeck, nose-bag and cornsack; forage net, picketing peg, tools; haversack and waterbottle; pouch belt, and pouch containing 30 rounds of ammunition; sword, scabbard, belt and sabretasche; pistols and carbine; rations for horse and man.

The most significant occurrence regarding British cavalry equipment in the years 1800–1815 was the progress made towards uniformity. It would be many years before the purchase of saddlery, etc., would be taken out of the hands of colonels, but the precedent of universal patterns of equipment was established at this time.

Caps and cap pouches. In the cavalry, pouches for percussion caps were worn on the sword belt, tucked into the tunic or—as in the infantry—fastened to the pouch belt.



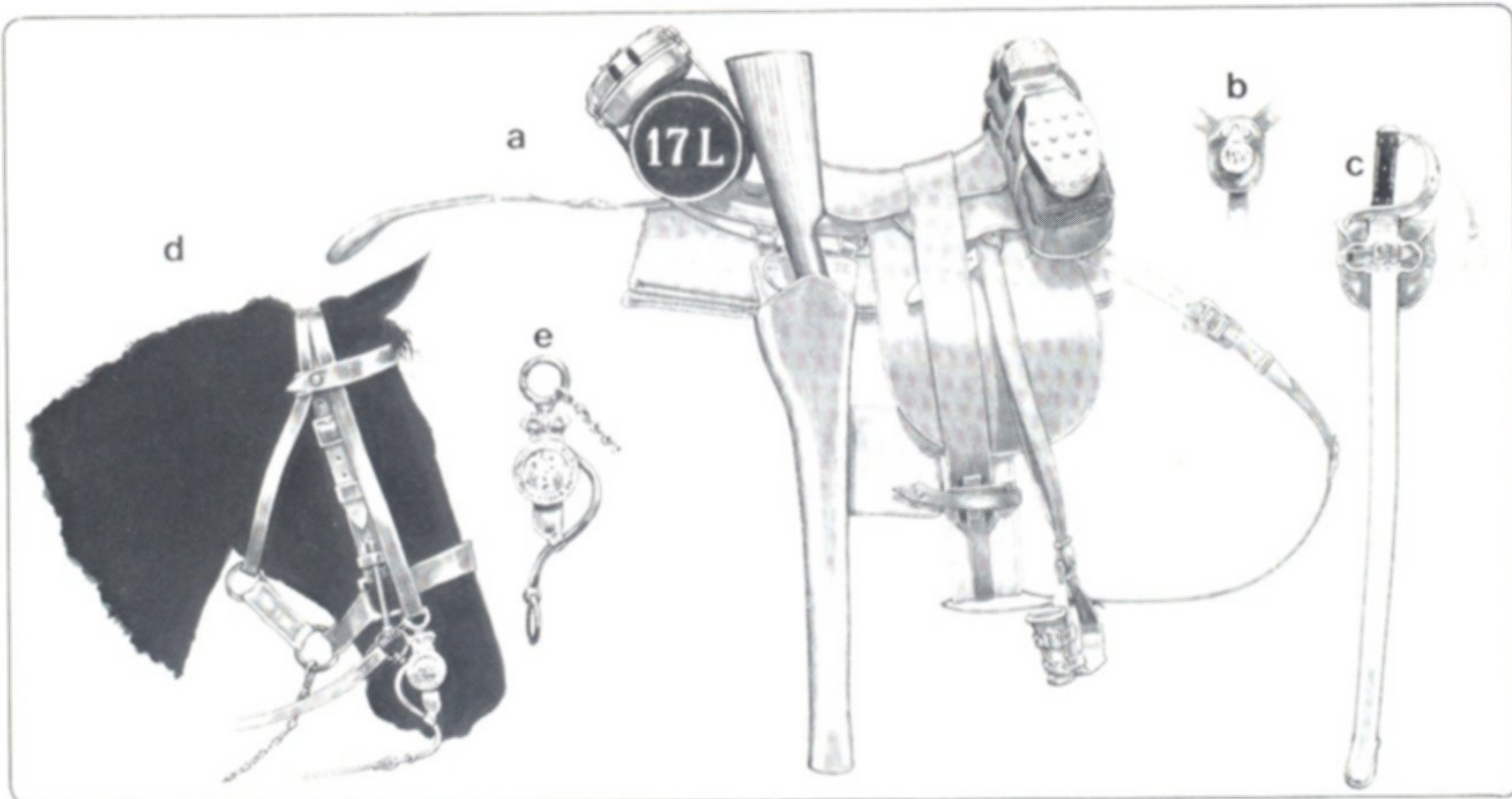
1815 to 1890

(Plates C and D)

The year 1815 ushered in a period of almost 40 years of peacetime soldiering for the British Army at home. The campaigns of the previous 22 years had given Britain one of the most efficient armies in Europe; but, with Napoleon defeated, it was reduced in strength and allowed to lapse into what was virtually a state of suspended animation. Complacency on the part of the men who had led it to its spectacular victories, and the British public's customary regard for its army in peacetime combined to produce a situation where little new in the way of doctrine or equipment was even considered. The British Army that arrived in the Crimea in 1853 differed little from that which had fought under Wellington at Waterloo except in lacking his decisive style of command; and it was the near-disaster which befell the British in Russia that led to the wave of military reforms so long overdue.

There had been a few ardent critics prior to the Crimean fiasco, but they were ignored by the general public and regarded with suspicion or even contempt by their fellow-officers. Notable among these voices crying in the wilderness was Captain Lewis E. Nolan, probably best remembered as the bearer of the fateful message which led to the tragic charge of the Light Brigade and, incidentally, his own death. Nolan was one of the school of young officers who had seen active service abroad, and was harshly critical of the organisation, training, equipment and weapons of the British cavalry establishment at home. He was also talented enough to get his criticism into print in his book *Cavalry, Its History and Tactics*, which was published—ironically—in the year of his death. Whether or not his book influenced the reformers in the years that followed the Crimea is hard to tell; but, in the field of saddlery and weapons alone, most of the ideas that Nolan put forward were eventually incorporated into the designs accepted for service. (His name lived on in the first truly universal pattern saddle introduced in 1856, which was generally referred to as 'Nolan's Saddle'.)

From 1815 to 1853 there was little in the way of



innovation in the field of British cavalry equipment. Saddlery and bridles for light and heavy cavalry were only modifications, if that, of the patterns of the Napoleonic period. Firearms underwent conversion from flint to percussion lock, thereby eliminating the need for new designs, but the same was not the case for the sword and the newly-introduced lance. Both the light and heavy cavalry swords of 1796 were replaced, and in 1853 it was decreed that a single universal pattern of sword would be issued to all cavalry. This, in turn, was superseded by the 1864 and 1885 patterns of cavalry trooper's sword in the period under study. In the end there were eight separate patterns of sword in 75 years, a remarkable occurrence serving to illustrate that, while they were resistant to change in almost every other respect, the British cavalry could get quite excited about their 'arme blanche'.

The salutary experience of coming into contact with Napoleon's lancers led to the conversion of several regiments of light cavalry to lancers from 1816 onwards. Here, as with the sword, much experiment and discussion ensued before the British lance evolved into a nine-foot weapon with an ash or bamboo pole supporting several varieties of head and shoe. The hundred-year British involvement with the lance led to much controversy regarding its usefulness. (As might

Universal cavalry equipment in the 1870s and 1880s (a) Universal Wood Arch saddle of 1856 rigged for marching order, c.1879. Note the cloak and spare boots strapped to the wallets, the lance-bucket on the stirrup, the Martini-Henry carbine in its boot and the messtin strapped to the valise. (b) Regimental breastplate badge. (c) 1885 pattern sword strapped to the shoecase. (d) Universal bridle of 1860. Assembled around a halter, the 1860 pattern bridle set a style that would only be modified in later patterns. Note the T-bar snaffle bit. (e) Curb bit with regimental badge.

be expected, Nolan, always a man of extreme opinions, was opposed to the lance and gave what now appear to be valid reasons for his point of view.) Whatever the arguments for and against, the British cavalry hierarchy, having decided to have lancers on their establishment, went the whole hog, and, as with hussars in previous years, dressed and equipped the new additions in a style that aped the originators of the trend. Thus the Polish lance-cap now joined the Hungarian hussar busby and the French crested helmet on the sweating heads of British troopers!

The introduction of the lance led to some discussion as regards the firearms to be carried by a lancer. Carbine butts interfered with the free use of the lance; pistols were the main firearm of lancer regiments, with a few carbines being kept for piquet duties, etc., but the establishment of pistols and carbines varied. At a time when pistols were falling out of favour with the rest of the cavalry, a new design of percussion-lock, single-shot pistol was introduced for lancers in 1842. This

pistol served on for other ranks until replaced by the Enfield revolver in 1880, by which time only a few troopers, such as trumpeters, etc., were thus armed. By this time the gradual introduction of more efficient breech-loading carbines had resolved the problems associated with muzzle-loading on horseback, and most troopers were carbine-armed. Starting with the Westley Richards 'Monkey-tail' carbine, introduced in 1861, the cavalry breech-loaders of the period were the Snider and eventually the Martini-Henry carbines. The demise of the muzzle-loading swivel carbine saw an end to the items of personal equipment associated with it, i.e. cap pouches and carbine sling-belts. Henceforth the trooper wore a simple pouch belt to contain the cartridges for his breech-loading carbine. New, too, in the field of personal equipment was the 'Oliver' waterbottle introduced in the 1870s, and the circular cavalry mess tin. But all these innovations came after the Crimean débâcle.

It was while the Crimean War was still at its height that the first moves were made to introduce a standard saddle for the cavalry, and these led to the adoption of the 'Universal Wood Arch Saddle' of 1856. This, the first pattern of saddle for both light and heavy cavalry, was a sound design which served on for many years, surviving the efforts of newer designs to supplant it. Indeed, some 1856-pattern saddles were still in use at the end of the century in the South African War. In 1860 a universal pattern of bridle was accepted for general use also, thus replacing the previous light and heavy cavalry patterns and ensuring that from this date on all troopers of British cavalry rode horses with a standard pattern of saddle and bridle. Gradually the distinctions between light and heavy cavalry began to be eroded, so that by the time cavalry went into decline in the 20th century the difference was in name only.

At least one personal account of life in the ranks of a cavalry regiment in the 1870s records the clothing and equipment issued to a lancer recruit. The writer starts by expressing his astonishment at the complexity of his kit and then goes on to itemise it. From his list it is clear that little had changed since the early years of the century. The valise was still on issue, as was the 1842 pattern pistol, pouch and cap-case—all these in 1877.

Another consequence of the post-Crimea reforms was the supplanting of the Board of Ordnance as the agency responsible for the production of cavalry equipment and its replacement by successive Boards of Cavalry Officers. The lively argument and differing opinion that ensued from these august bodies did not always produce the answer to problems that had dogged the cavalry for years, particularly that of the load carried by the cavalry mount; but it led to standardisation and a realistic system of supply, as well as gradual improvements in the design of cavalry equipment. Overseas, particularly in India, a great deal of obsolete or local equipment remained in use for years after it had been phased out at home. As the 19th century drew to a close the cavalry arm of the British Army moved towards the last great contest in which it would play a decisive part—the South African War.

1890 to 1914

(Plate E)

Despite the experience gained in the succession of minor wars that preceded it, the outbreak of the South African War in 1899 found the British Army ill-prepared for the way in which the contest would be fought. If there were visionaries abroad at the time capable of predicting that a handful of citizen-soldiers on ponies could tie down a modern European army to a campaign that would last for almost three years, it is certain they went unheeded. The fact that the war, as it developed, would require more and more mounted men was also unappreciated, and the subsequent call for large quantities of cavalry equipment found the Ordnance services unable to meet demands.

In this crisis a variety of saddlery and other cavalry equipment was pressed into service, with contractors stretched to fill rush orders and even foreign equipment being bought up. To answer the call for mounted men, Yeomanry and Colonial volunteer units were hastily formed and sent off to the war and, to the horror of the Regular cavalryman, infantry were horsed in the manner of the dragoons of old to form Mounted Infantry units. Eventually the extra mobility necessary to defeat the Boers in the vast expanses of the Veldt was



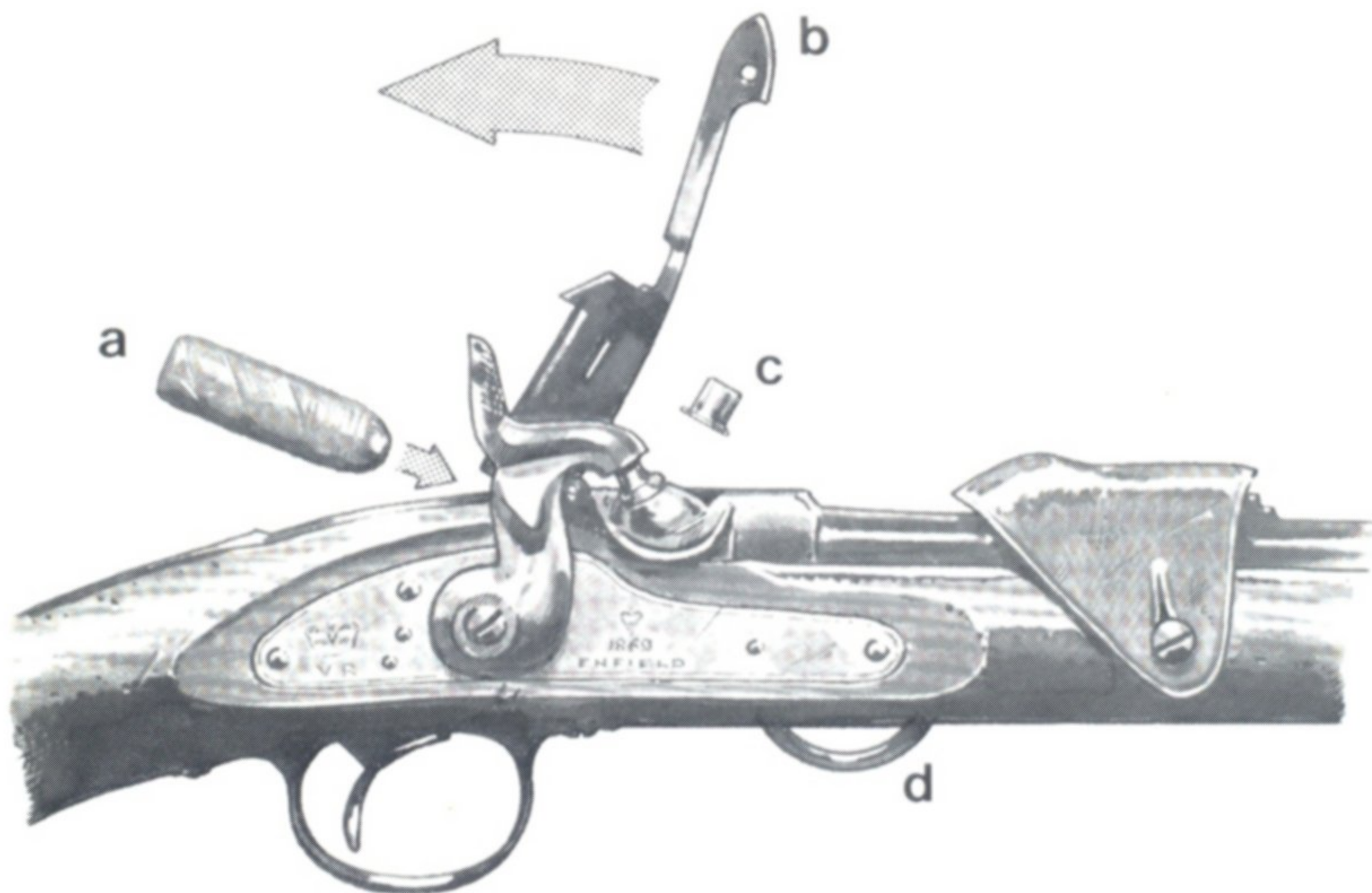
achieved, and the last great campaign in which a British mounted arm played the major part was enacted. The story of the equipment used by all mounted troops in the South African War of 1899–1902 is a long and complex one, however, and attention will be paid here only to the equipment of the British Regular cavalry units.

The regulation saddle of the time was the universal pattern of 1890. This had evolved from a series of saddles designed to replace the Universal Wood Arch Saddle of 1856, all of which had proved, in one way or another, inferior to 'Nolan's Saddle'. However, experience gained with these designs led to the development of a saddle incorporating wooden sideboards and steel arches with a one-piece seat. Various improvements on the original design resulted in the 1898 modification and this, the regulation saddle at the outbreak of the South African War, was termed the 'Steel Arch Universal Pattern Saddle, 1890 pattern, Mark III'. The Mark III featured an adjustable

Although this photograph shows gunners of the 1890s, it typifies the back-breaking work forever associated with the military horse. The welfare of the horse always came before that of the man, and there was no army where the care of horses could equal the standards of the British service. (Aldershot Military Historical Trust)

'V' attachment for the girth, an improved method for the attachment of the stirrup leathers, 'Numnah' pads for the sideboards, and a range of four saddle sizes to suit the backs of all military mounts.

The Universal Pattern Bridle of 1860 had been supplanted by a modified design in 1885 which dispensed with the sidebar on the snaffle bit and replaced it with a chain attachment. Breastplates no longer fastened directly to the saddle but fitted like a collar with two tabs to join them to the sideboards. Cruppers, always of dubious value, were discarded. Wallets, shoecases and carbine buckets were of the patterns used previously; but the valise was no longer a campaign item, being relegated, with shabraques and the like, to the category of



Breech mechanism, the Westley-Richards cavalry carbine. The first cavalry breech-loader, the Westley-Richards was a 'capping' carbine. The cartridge (a) was inserted into the breech once the breech-lever (b) had been raised. (This action led to the troopers giving the weapon an unprintable nickname!) With the breech-lever closed the percussion-cap (c) was placed on the breech-nipple and the weapon could be fired. Note the leather backsight cover, and the ring (d) for the carbine belt swivel. Weight 7lbs.; length 3ft. 4ins.; calibre .476in.

ceremonial trappings.

With the introduction of the Lee-Metford magazine carbine in 1894 the pouch belt too became a full-dress ceremonial item. Its place was taken by the bandolier, the first pattern of which held 50 rounds of .303in. ammunition. Bandoliers were carried 'on the man' as were the waterbottle and haversack. Troopers armed with revolvers had for many years carried these weapons in a pistol case secured to a waist belt. Swords, on campaign, were still strapped to the shoecase, as they had been for many years.

The problem of what should or should not be carried upon the saddle continued to cause argument. Experience against the lightly-equipped Boers led to the abandonment of all but absolute essentials, but even so the cavalry horse

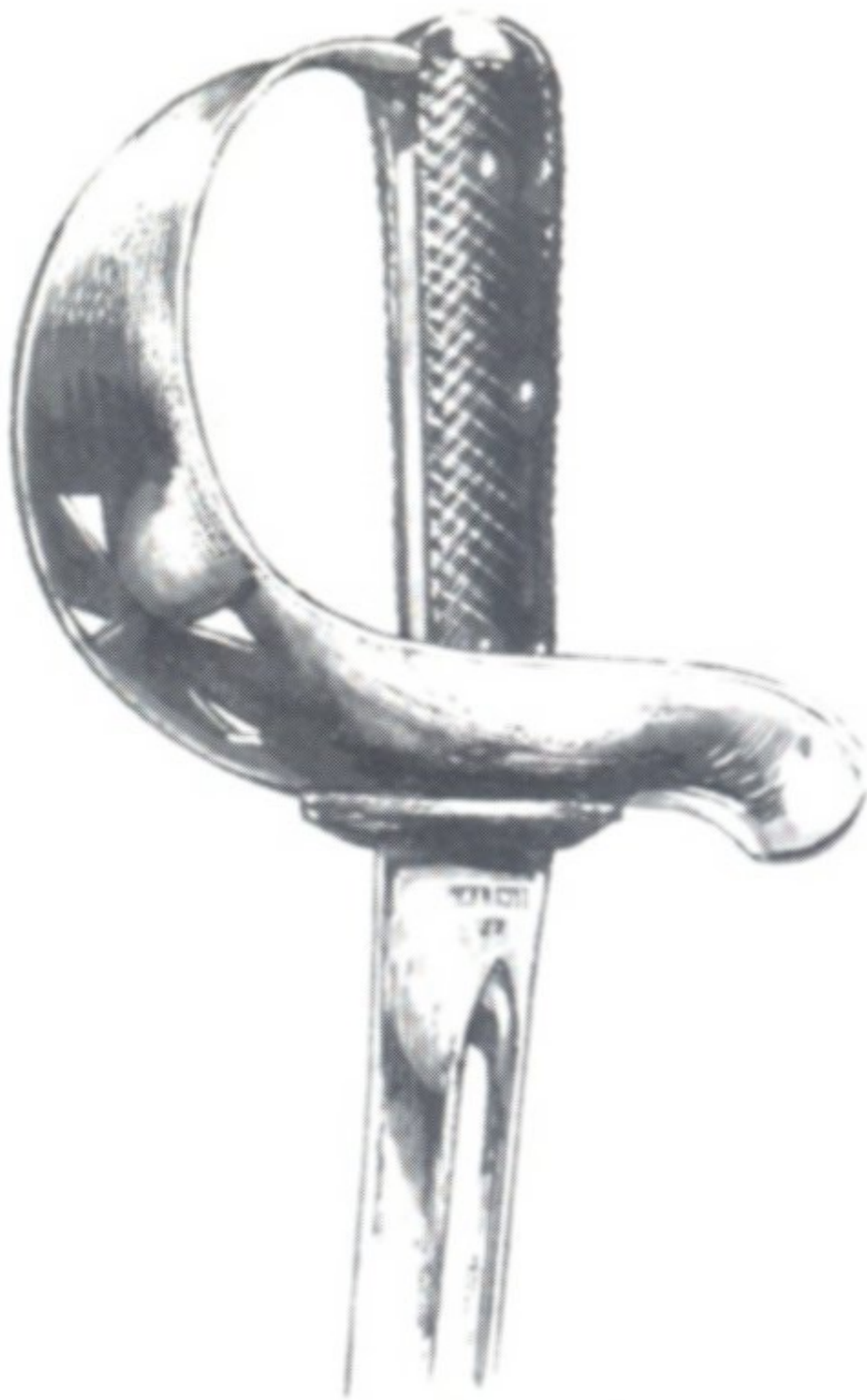
was still carrying a considerable weight. Lance, carbine and sword with 150 rounds of ammunition accounted for two stone (28lbs.) and rations for horse and man a further stone. The Mounted Infantry, unencumbered with lance and sword and dispensing with all but the barest essentials rode lighter—but not much. A newspaper report of 1901 lists the following as the field equipment of a cavalry trooper in South Africa:

Saddle, wallets and carbine bucket; bridle complete; spare horseshoes and nails in shoecase; lance, carbine and sword; 150 rounds of ammunition; bandolier, messin and waterbottle; rations for man and horse; greatcoat, blanket, numnah; forage net, cornsack etc. All the kit listed was weighed, giving a total of 115lbs.; with the average weight of the rider reckoned at 166lbs., the total load for the horse was 281lbs. or just over twenty stone.

Officers now rode a saddle of a design more akin to a hunting saddle than that of the troopers. This marked a departure from previous practice where officers' saddles were similar to the men's, the difference being mainly that of superior manu-

1914 to 1941

(Plates F, G and H)



Hilt, 1864 pattern sword. This was simply the first universal pattern sword of 1853 with a sheet-steel bowl guard to replace the three-bar knuckle-bow.

facture and quality.

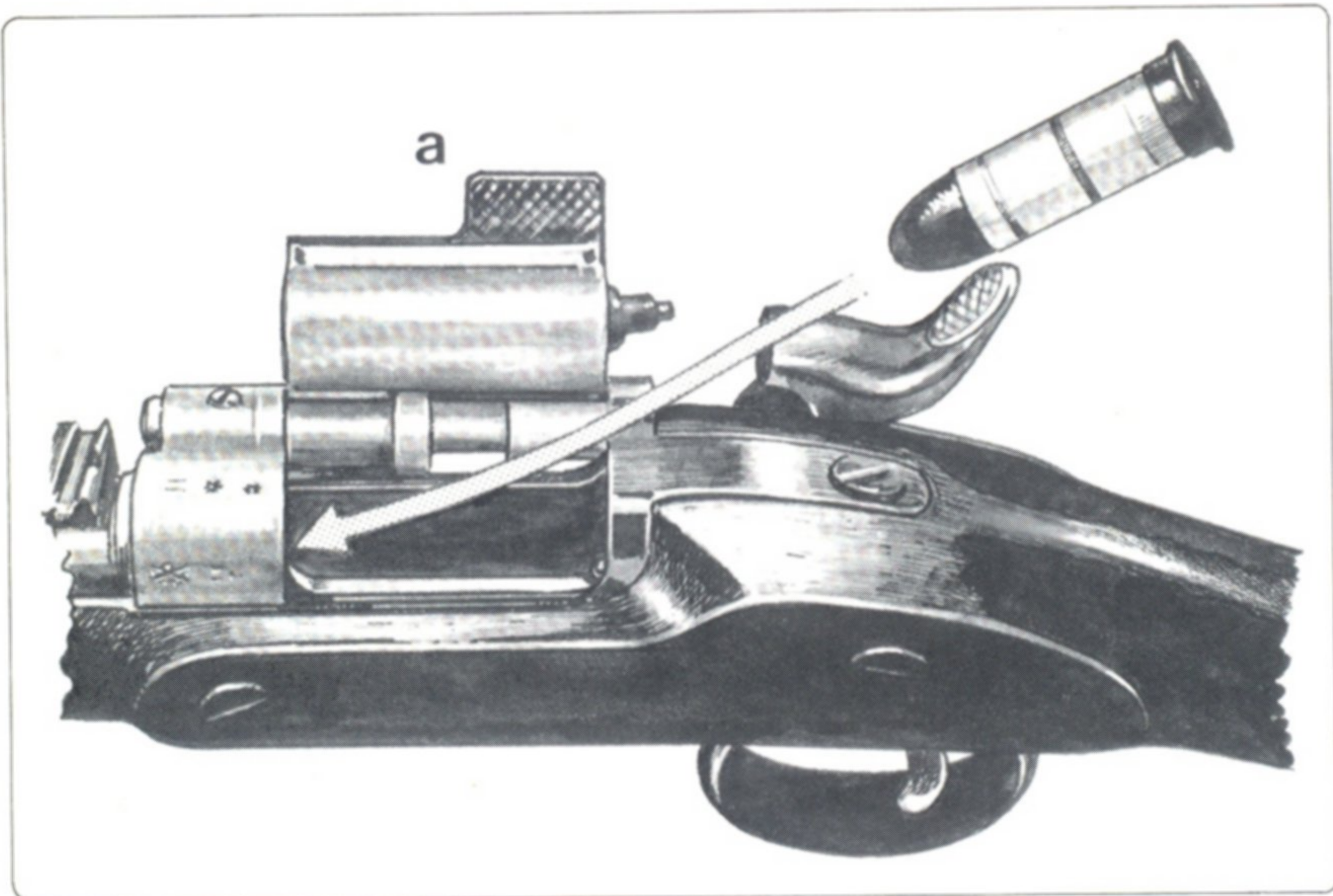
As regards dress, the South African War saw the relegation of full dress to the function of ceremonial wear only. The Khaki Service Dress of drill, cord or serge material in which the British Army fought the war became the prototype for the universal pattern Service dress introduced in 1902 for wear at home and abroad. The scarlet and gold of yore had only twelve years to run.

The lessons learned in the campaigns against the Boers were put to good use by the British Military establishment in the years 1902 to 1914. Organisation, weapons, equipment and training were all reviewed in the light of the recent war, and the reform that followed brought the Army to a peak of efficiency which has probably never been equalled, before or since. The cavalry, too, was brought to a state of excellence as the time ticked away towards the Great War. Led by cavalry generals who had won their reputations and their promotions in the war of horse mobility across the plains and mountains of South Africa, the British cavalry faced the coming war determined to play the decisive role it saw as its duty and right.

By now, the story of the British cavalry divisions serving on the Western Front in the First World War has passed into legend. Their first nightmare encounters with machine guns, their ever-increasing use as stop-gap infantry; the spectacle of masses of men and horses waiting to exploit breakthroughs that never happened—all are themes that have been so well recorded that few students of military history can be unaware of the inglorious fate suffered by the British cavalry in the mud of France and Flanders. Not so well publicised is the part played by cavalry in the Middle East, where the mobility of the mounted columns helped to bring about eventual victory over the Turks. But the years of war from 1914 to 1918 were dominated by infantry and artillery. The unprecedented expansion of the armies of Britain and her Empire (84 British, Australian, Canadian and New Zealand infantry divisions alone, not counting the contribution of the Indian Army) called for only three divisions of British cavalry on the Western Front and two in the Middle East. Although most of the Regular regiments of cavalry remained in a horsed role throughout the war, the fate suffered by the majority of the Yeomanry was ignominious. Few regiments survived as cavalry, most being eventually 'absorbed' as infantry after conversion as cyclists, or years of waiting to fight in a role that gradually became redundant. Thus only three regiments of Regular cavalry and seven of Yeomanry served in the Middle East in a mounted role, the greater part of the mounted force in that theatre being found from the armies of Australia, New Zealand and India.

It follows, therefore, that while the demand for arms, equipment, clothing and horses may have been great, particularly in the opening years of the war, little of the materiel and few of the mounts were required by the cavalry. Alone of all the arms of the service, they actually suffered what would ultimately prove to be a reduction from their 1914 establishment. The war brought about only modifications of the basic cavalry equipment of 1914, most of which was fairly new and well-designed.

The standard saddle of the time is a good



Snider breech mechanism. The first cavalry cartridge breech-loader. The breech-block (a) was swung open and the cartridge inserted. The block was then closed, and the weapon could be fired.

illustration. Approved two years before the outbreak of war, it had only begun to replace the 1902 modification of the 1890 pattern Universal saddle by 1914. The 1912 Universal Pattern was to be the final pattern of saddle for the British Army, and remains in service to this day. Its main feature is the jointing of its steel arches to allow the automatic adjustment of the sideboards to suit the back of any mount. This means that the saddle, unlike its predecessors, comes in one size only, a great advantage. Another feature of the 1912 UP saddle is the webbing woven between the front and rear arches to support the leather of the seat. Otherwise, in outward appearance, the saddle is similar to that which it replaced. This, of course, makes it difficult to identify the 1912 from the 1902 in photographs, except where a direct comparison can be made—in this case the slightly lower rear arch and longer seat of the later pattern is apparent. Modifications to the 1912 UP saddle

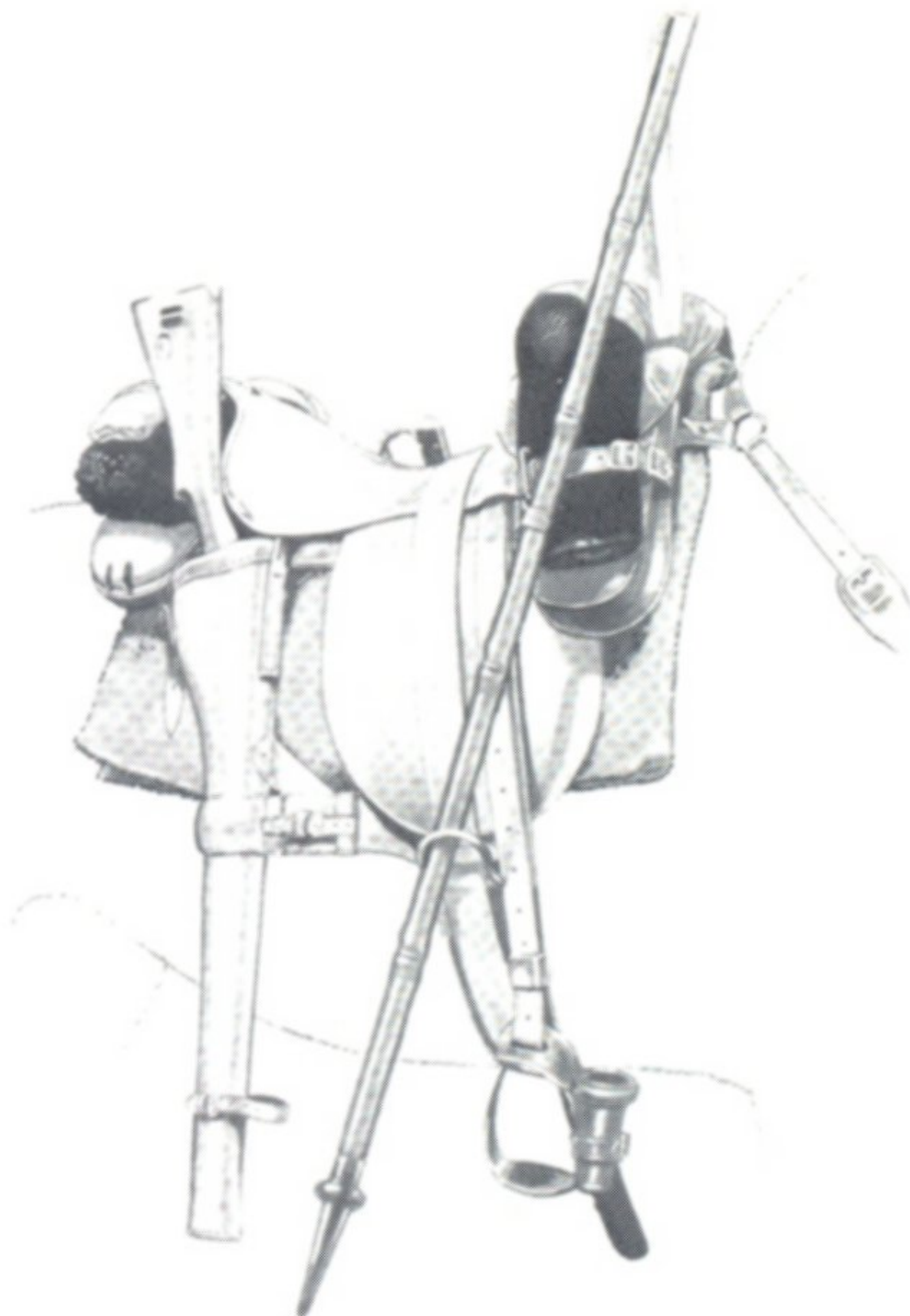
involved only what was, or was not, strapped to it. These will be dealt with later.

Unlike the saddle the Universal Pattern Bridle had been in service for many years prior to the outbreak of war. It was, in fact, a modification of the 1885 pattern UP Bridle and had appeared shortly after the South African War. As in the case of the 1912 UP saddle, this last pattern of bridle was a first-class design and survives, unmodified, to this day. The main feature is the bit. This is a single item which performs the function of both the curb and snaffle in previous designs. Known as the 'portmouth' or 'elbow' bit, it incorporates attachment points for the reins at the bar of the bit (to act as a snaffle) and at either of two places on the cheek-pieces (for varying leverage) to act through the fulcrum of the curb-chain. The 1902 Universal Pattern Bit is attached to the headstall, which is the basis of the bridle, by means of a single strap which loops through the brow-band. The bit, cheek-strap and reins can be removed simply by unfastening two studs, thus leaving the mount free to drink or feed under the restraint of the halter chain or rope.

Turning to the weapons of the 1914–18 cavalry, we are confronted not only with the traditional combination of lance and sword, but also with the range of more deadly weapons devised in the early years of this century. The cavalry may have ridden to war with swords strapped to their saddles, but they finished it with the machine gun and the bomb.

It is perhaps ironic that after centuries of argument as to what constituted the best design for a cavalry sword, perfection was found after the weapon had ceased to have a battlefield application. This perfection of design is now said to apply to the 1908 pattern cavalry sword. With its slim, tapering blade and its pistol-grip hilt, it is a thrusting weapon, originating more from the experiences of the gymnasium and drill-square than those of the battlefield. It replaced a thoroughly bad sword, the 1899 pattern; it is doubtful if a new design would have been considered had the previous model not proved so unsatisfactory and drawn such scathing criticism in the South African War. Nevertheless both swords were in service at the outbreak of war and it was some time before the earlier pattern was replaced.

If, in retrospect, the importance attached to the design of swords in 1908 is surprising, the controversy then current over the employment of the lance gives reason to doubt the professional competence of the 'lance lobby' of the time. In the wake of the South African War there followed a series of reforms that combined to make the British Army one of the best armed, equipped and trained in the world. Much of the reform stemmed from experience gained in the late war, and, in 1903, the decision was taken to relegate the lance to the category of ceremonial item. Six years later an order was given that once more reclassified the lance as a weapon of war, and as such it was carried until it was finally reclassified a ceremonial item in 1927. The arguments in favour of the retention of the lance indicated poor appreciation of the way future wars would be fought. However, the 'lance lobby' was powerful, well-connected and not an exclusively British institution. Both French and German cavalrymen rode the fields and highways of France and Flanders with their useless, steel-tipped cattle-prods.



The 1890 UP saddle rigged for marching order, c.1896. Note the arrangement for securing the lance to the saddle when the rider dismounted: cf Plate E5. Note also the Lee-Metford carbine boot with the straps for securing the picket-post.

If the value of the sword and lance had declined the reverse was the case for the cavalryman's firearm, by now the rifle. (With dismounted action as his fate he soon had the addition of a bayonet, the better to play the part of foot-soldier.) Here, once again, the lessons of the South African War pointed up the limited value of the cavalry carbine when compared to the rifle of the mounted infantry. A compromise was reached by lopping 5ins. off the barrel of the Lee-Enfield Rifle Mark I to produce the Short Rifle, Magazine, Lee-Enfield, a weapon considered as suitable for infantry, mounted infantry or cavalry. Although this was an undoubted improvement over the Lee-Metford and Lee-Enfield Cavalry Carbines the reduction in length of the Lee-Enfield rifle resulted in a reduction in its weight from $9\frac{1}{4}$ to between 8 and $8\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. This loss of recoil-absorbing weight may not have been critical at the time of the

introduction of the short Lee-Enfield (1902), as the muzzle velocity of the ammunition in service at that time was just over 2,000 feet per second. But the subsequent introduction of Mark VII ammunition, with a muzzle velocity of 2,440 feet per second, resulted in the lighter rifle developing a quite unpleasant kick, a characteristic presumably unforeseen at the time of the compromise and one which anyone who has fired Mk VII ammunition from a SMLE rifle will bear out.

Millions of infantrymen were now landed with a rifle that was unpleasant to shoot, all in the cause of the standardisation of weapons between them and a comparative handful of cavalrymen! This situation persisted until after the demise of horse cavalry, when the introduction of the Number 4 rifle—with a weight of over 9lbs.—made Mk VII ammunition more acceptable to shoot. However, the long-serving cavalrymen of the Great War considered the kick of their short Lee-Enfields a mere pat in comparison to that of the 7½lb. Lee carbines of the Boer War.

Every British cavalry regiment went to war in 1914 with a detachment of Maxim machine guns, the standard British machine gun of the time. These, like the guns of the infantry, were at first brigaded and then withdrawn to form the Machine Gun Corps. In order to maintain integral machine gun support, infantry battalions were issued with the Lewis machine gun; but the cavalry decided that the Lewis was not for them. They looked around for something more suitable to the rough-and-tumble of pack transportation, and found what they considered to be the best available gun in the Benét-Mercié machine rifle of 1909. After purchase of the manufacturing rights from the parent company of Hotchkiss, the weapon was made in Britain to accept the standard British .303in. service ammunition and was classified as the Hotchkiss Machine Gun Mark I. As such it came into service with the British cavalry regiments from 1916 onwards. It continued in service with them, with few modifications except that of conversion from bipod to tripod mounting, until the last cavalry units were dismounted. Even then it remained a reserve weapon until declared obsolete in 1946, by which time its antiquated design contrasted starkly with the prototypes of the assault-rifle age.

Although it was chosen for its supposed handiness the Hotchkiss was never a one-man weapon, being operated by a detachment and being transported with its ammunition and spares on pack-saddles. This involved the use of a complicated system of containers and straps, with the constant danger of a horse carrying something vital being killed or bolting. Most vulnerable were the metal feed strips, which needed robust packaging to keep damage, and stoppages, to a minimum. Feed strip boxes were made of wood, steel and leather or all leather depending on whether they were made to carry 14-round or 30-round strips. A bandolier was issued to carry the smallest, nine-round strips. The distinctive shape of the Hotchkiss bandolier, with its large rectangular pockets, was the distinguishing mark of a cavalry machine gunner. So also was the Webley pistol, by 1915 developed to its final configuration, the Mark VI.

Pistols were also carried by sergeant-majors and trumpeters, who had been so armed for many years. The first Webley revolvers had begun to replace the Enfields in 1887 and had proved themselves to be robust and reliable. By far the most numerous of all the Webleys was the Mark VI, of which over 300,000 were made. (It being the official service weapon meant that most, but by no means all, cavalry officers bought the Webley revolver.)

The weapons described were carried in a variety of containers, mostly attached to the saddle. Lances were still carried with their butts lodged in 'buckets' which were strapped to the stirrup. Swords were still strapped to horseshoe cases on the nearside of saddles, with rifles being carried in larger 'buckets' on the opposite side. (Troopers carrying lances switched sides for sword and rifle so as to prevent the butt of the rifle interfering with the free use of the lance.) Small arms ammunition was carried in pouches and bandoliers worn on the body of the trooper or around his horse's neck. Extra ammunition and grenades could be carried in the wallets on the front arch of the saddle.

As the war progressed more and more items of equipment were wished on horse and rider. The need to carry more ammunition resulted in the waist belt and pouches of the 1903 infantry equipment being issued to cavalry, followed by the 'horse collar' bandolier. The bayonet was first



Caton Woodville's splendid study of a cavalry trumpeter of the Boer War. The detail is unusually accurate. Note that trumpeters carried both trumpet and bugle by now. Note also the chain-mail epaulettes, pistol, looped-up sword-slings, spare boots strapped to the wallets, cloak and picket-

post behind saddle, sword and corn-sack strapped to saddle; and 1885 pattern bridle, which differed from the previous pattern only in that the snaffle-bit attached to the halter with a chain instead of a T-bar.

worn attached to the bandolier and then to the waist belt in the normal manner.

Respirators appeared in 1915, helmets became a universal issue in 1916, and the 'small box' respirator replaced the earlier pattern the following year. Gas—of course—struck at both rider and horse; although the anti-gas instructions of the time suggested that horses were less affected, the lie is given by sickening photographs of the eyes and hooves of horses subjected to mustard gas which can still be seen at the headquarters of the Royal Army Veterinary Corps. In time respirators for horses were developed, although they were crude contraptions by comparison with those designed for humans. Anti-gas precautions for horses included washing down parts of the animal affected by mustard gas, binding up their eyes, strapping on an empty nosebag to prevent it drinking or cropping at contaminated pools or grass, and the use of a nose-bag full of wet hay as a crude respirator. Very sophisticated respirators, eyeshields and protective 'garments' were developed for horses in the years following the First World War, but these were never put to the test.

The typical active service equipment of a cavalry trooper in the later years of the Great War included:

On the man in addition to his clothing—helmet, waterbottle, haversack, respirator, bandolier with 90 rounds of small arms ammunition, belt with bayonet and 50 rounds of small arms ammunition. On the horse—saddle complete, bridle complete, wallets, shoecase, rifle and lance buckets, 'horse collar' bandolier with 90 rounds of small arms ammunition, lance, sword and scabbard, rifle, two blankets, messtin, canvas bucket, cornsack, haynet, picketing peg, great-coat, rations for man and horse, groundsheet, 'small kit', any extra ammunition ordered to be carried, and two grenades.

The weight now being carried by a troop horse was greater than it had ever been in the history of the British cavalry service. This was of little consequence on the Western Front, where movement was limited for most of the war, but was an enormous problem in the Middle East, where distances covered were great and conditions of climate and terrain cruel. However, with only two Regular regiments in the Mesopotamian theatre,

the problems of the Middle East were not broadly experienced by the British Regular cavalry.

With the Armistice British cavalry moved into a 20-year period that saw reduction by disbandment and amalgamations from 31 to 22 regiments, followed by a period of conversion to an armoured role in the programme of mechanisation. The first two regiments (11th Hussars and 12th Royal Lancers) became armoured car units in 1929; and ten years later there were only three Regular regiments still with horses and available for the formation of a cavalry division in the Middle East. The remainder were Yeomanry, and it was this 1st Cavalry Division that constituted the last wartime British cavalry formation. After service in Palestine and Transjordan it was disbanded in 1941. (It should be noted that, although the cavalymen moved on to perform a role more suited to modern war, their horses continued to serve as pack transport animals throughout the Second World War and for many years afterwards.) The horsed units of the present-day British Army perform a role that is primarily ceremonial.

The equipment of the British cavalry in its twilight years was that with which it had fought its last war. With the cavalry arm in decline after the Armistice it would have been surprising indeed if new designs of equipment had been accepted to supersede the saddlery thrown up as surplus by reductions and amalgamations. And yet a set of personal equipment in webbing, special to cavalry troopers, was designed by the Mills equipment company in the 1930s and saw limited use.

The load borne by the cavalry horse in the inter-war years was progressively reduced to 16 stone by the relegation of certain items of equipment to unit transport, and the abandonment of others. By these expedients the troop horse was at last carrying what had been considered for many years to be the optimum weight. With the load right, equipment design near perfection, the accumulated knowledge of centuries and living experience of two great wars, the Regular regiments of British cavalry served out their last years with horses with a degree of professional competence unequalled in their history.

Glossary

Arch The bridge—made either of wood, reinforced with metal, or metal alone—joining together the wooden ‘sideboards’ of a saddle-tree. The front arch forms the ‘pommel’ of the saddle and the rear arch the ‘cantle’.

Bar That part of a bit which passes through a horse’s mouth. Another name for a saddle-tree sideboard.

Bit A metal device, bearing on the jaws of a horse, by means of which control of the animal may be exercised through the medium of reins.

Boot A small leather tube used to secure the muzzle of a carbine.

Bridoon The term for a snaffle bit when used with a curb bit to form ‘bit and bridoon’.

Breastplate a ‘Y’-shaped harness, fastening to the saddle above and the girth below to prevent the saddle slipping backwards.

Bridle A set of straps for a horse’s head with which the bit or bits are held in place.

Bucket A leather device to carry a rifle, carbine or lance butt. A canvas article for watering a horse.

Burs The continuation of the saddle-tree sideboards beyond the front arch.

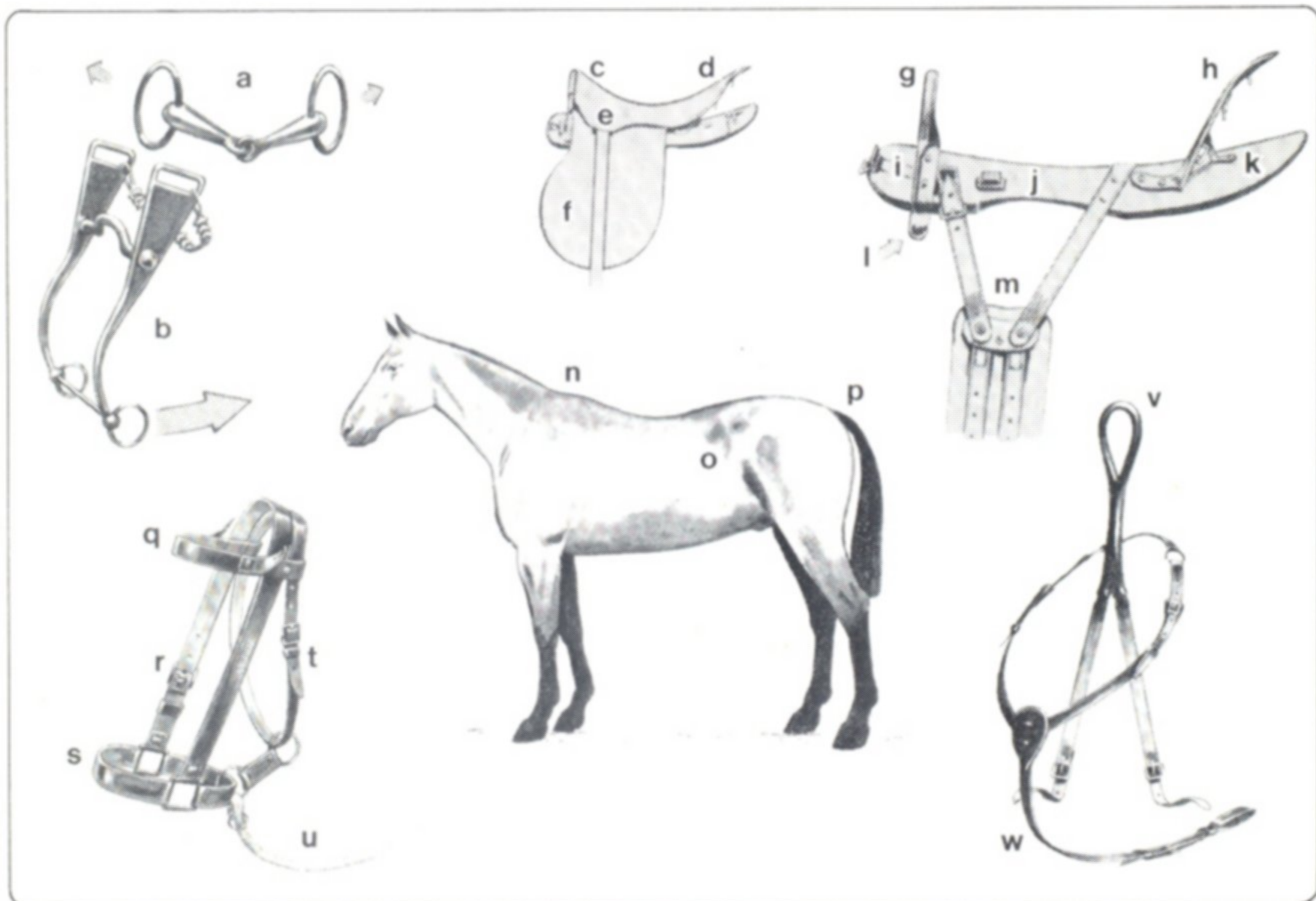
Canteen A waterbottle. The term is sometimes used, rather confusingly, to indicate what would now be termed a messtin.

Cantle The edge of the rear arch of a saddle-tree.

Cheeks The side parts of a bridle or bit.

Cloak A large, voluminous garment with a separate cape issued to cavalry as protection against cold and wet weather. When strapped to

(a) *Snaffle bit*. Usually jointed as shown with the reins applying pressure in the direction of the arrows. (b) *Curb bit*. The arrow indicates the direction of rein leverage. The fulcrum in this case is the curb chain. *Saddle parts* (c) pommel (d) cantle (e) skirt (f) flap (g) front arch (h) rear arch (i) bur (j) sideboard (k) fan (l) point (m) girth. *Parts of horse* (n) withers—great care had to be taken when saddling-up to ensure that no part of the equipment bore on this part of the horse; (o) flanks (p) dock. *A bridle/halter* consisting of (q) brow band (r) cheek piece (s) nose band (t) throat lash (u) halter rope. (v) *A crupper* (w) *A breastplate*.





4th Hussars, full dress, early 1900s. The 1902 pattern bridles and saddles are well shown, as are the 1908 pattern swords. The condition of the horses is magnificent. Note the regimental cypher stencilled on the saddle-blanket of the nearest trooper (centre), a hark-back to the days of the shabraque. (Aldershot Military Historical Trust)

the front arch it was rolled to the length of a sword before being attached.

Crupper A strap running from the rear of the saddle and under the horse's dock. Meant to prevent the saddle slipping forward.

Curb bit A bit with a curb-chain and lever-like cheeks.

Dock The upper, bony part of a horse's tail.

Draught Horses harnessed to pull a vehicle.

Dragoons In their original (early 18th century) form, soldiers who rode to the battle to dismount and fight as infantry.

Fan The continuation of the saddle-tree side-board rearward beyond the rear arch.

Flap The leather pieces hanging downwards from the sideboards of a saddle against which the rider's knees bear.

Flounce A leather guard to prevent the reins from chafing the cloak when rolled and strapped above the holsters or wallets.

Girth A band of leather, webbing or canvas encircling the body of the horse to hold the saddle in place.

Gullets The metal reinforcing plates securing wooden arches to the sideboards on a saddle-tree.

Halter A head-harness of leather, webbing or

rope for tying up a horse, usually by means of a rope, chain or rein attached.

Holster A tubular, leather case for holding a pistol. Usually made in pairs and strapped across the pommel of a saddle. (Not to be confused with the pistol case carried on a belt.)

Holster Caps Originally flaps to protect pistols in holsters, they developed into highly decorative items bearing lace and regimental crests, etc. On campaign the rolled cloak, etc., did away with the need for them, so that they had become, by the early 19th century, ceremonial trappings only.

Housings A cloth meant to cover the horse's flanks. Its original practical purpose is obscure and, by the early 19th century, it had developed into a very ornate piece of equipment, displaying regimental devices, etc. The prerogative of heavy cavalry, it was rarely seen on campaign, where a plain saddle blanket took its place.

Messtin A metal dish, lid and body, in which the cavalryman cooked his rations, and from which he ate them. At first the cavalry used the standard issue 'D'-sectioned tin, but were eventually issued with a small, circular tin which fitted the valise end exactly.

Nearside The left side of a horse.

Nosebag A canvas, bucket-shaped item into which feed for a horse is put, after which it is clipped to the halter to allow the animal to feed.

Noseband That part of a bridle passing around the horse's head above the mouth.

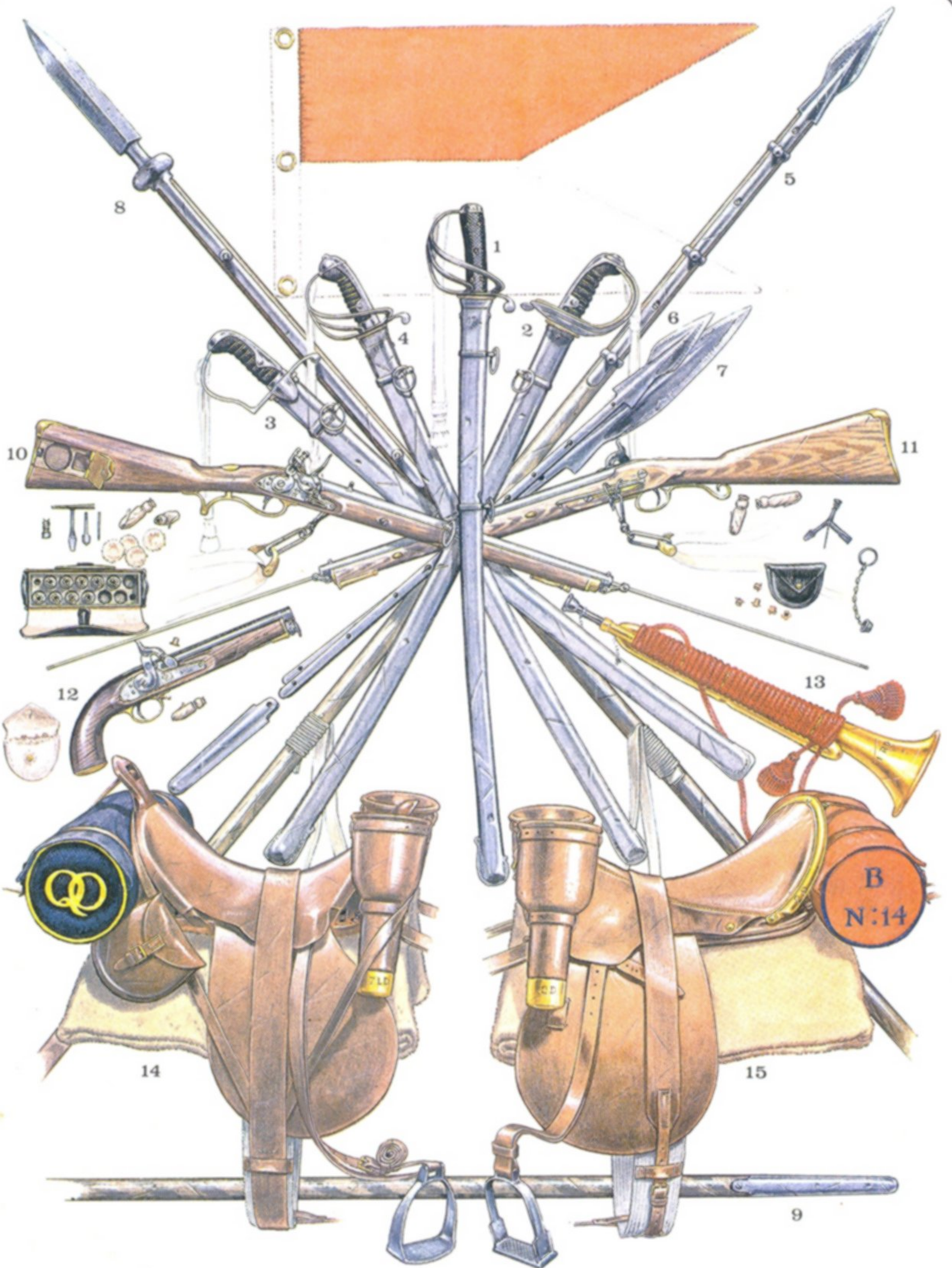
Numnah A piece of thick felt, usually yellowish



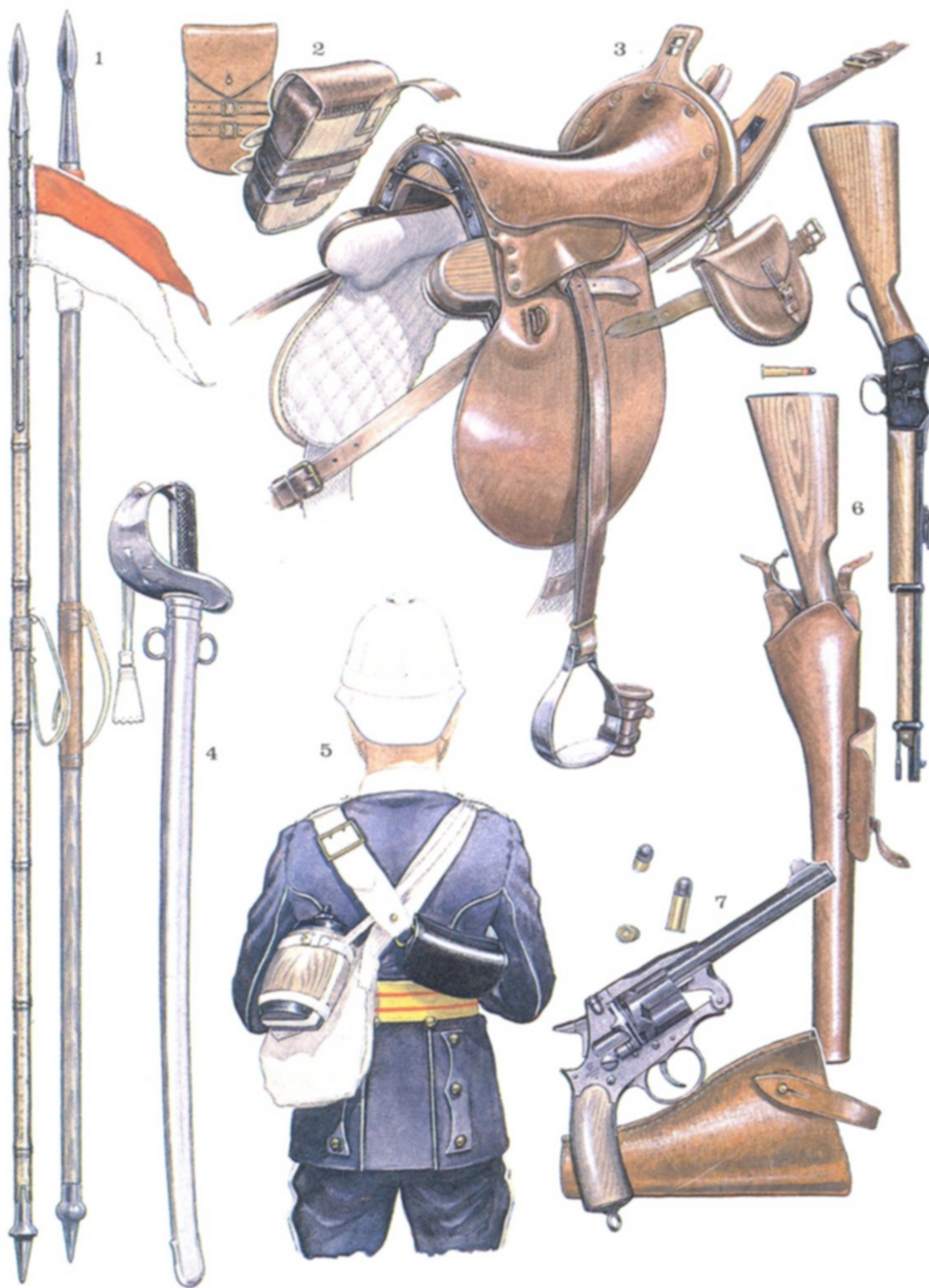
Light Cavalry, 1800-1815
 For keys to this and all other
 plates, see commentary in text



Heavy Cavalry, 1800-1815



Weapons and Saddles, 1815-1855



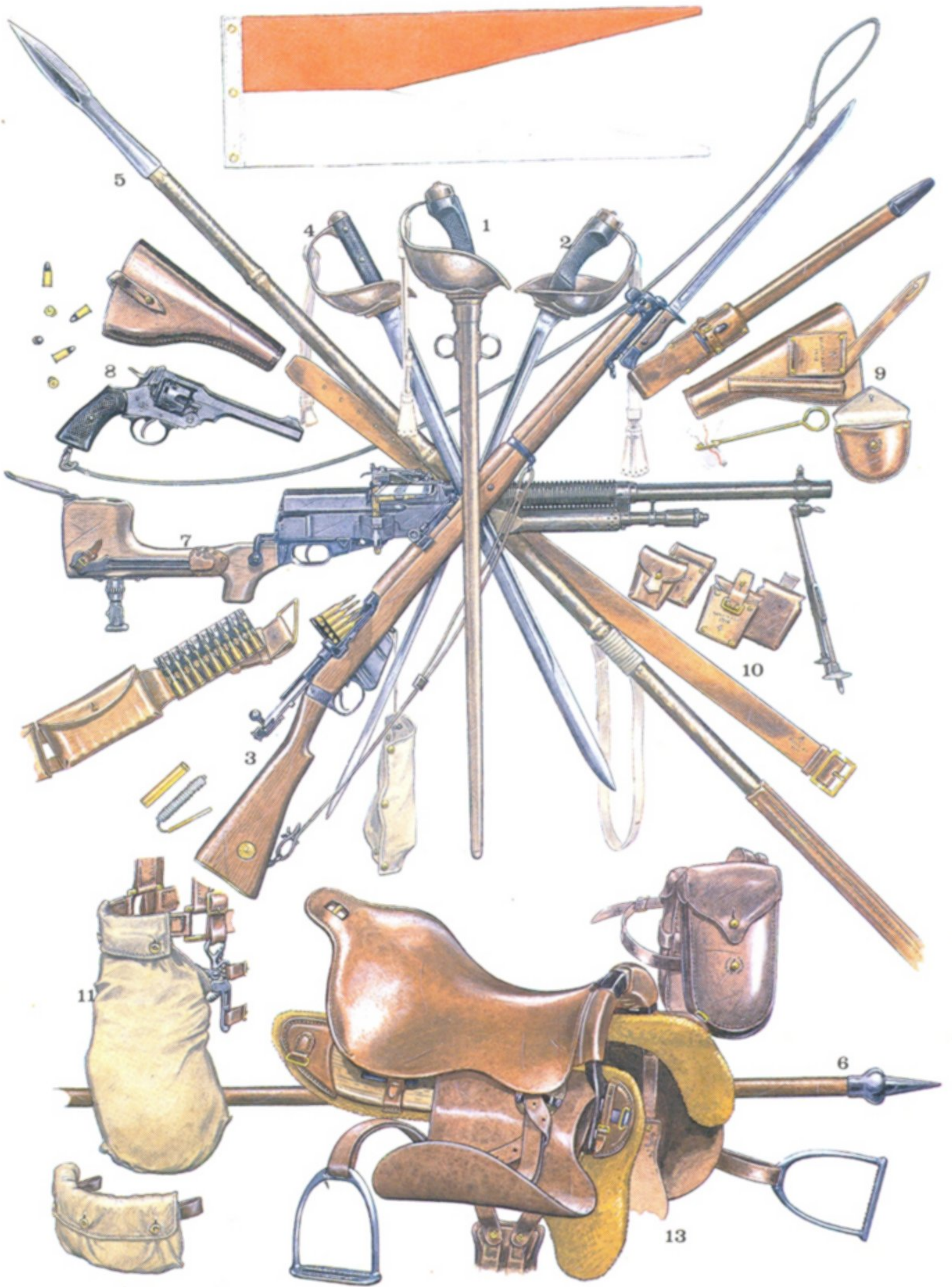
Weapons and Equipment, 1855-1890



Weapons and Equipment, 1890-1902



Weapons and Equipment, 1914-1918



Weapons, Equipment and Saddle, 1914-1941



Corporal, Regular cavalry, India, 1927

in colour, used as padding between the sideboard of a saddle and the saddle blanket. Sometimes used in place of a saddle blanket.

Offside The right side of a horse.

Picketing Peg A wood and metal post which was driven into the ground to tie up a horse.

Points The extensions of the front arch below the sideboards of a saddle-tree.

Pommel Another term for the front arch of a saddle.

Portsmouth bit A bit, the bar of which has a 'U'-shaped centre.

Reins Leather straps connecting the bits with the rider's hands and through which control of the horse may be exercised in conjunction with the rider's knees, body position and spurs. Cavalrymen did not use whips, needing to keep at least one hand free for the use of weapons.

Remount The term applied to a horse when bought-in to military service.

Sabretasche The leather pocket attached by two (at one time three) straps to the sword-belt. Relegated to the category of ceremonial trapping after the Crimean War, it disappeared in the 1890s.

Saddle-tree A framework of wood and metal used as the 'skeleton' of a saddle. Found in all military saddles studied in this book. Each cavalry regiment had a 'saddle-tree maker' and staff on establishment as well as saddlers.

Shabraque A cloth cover which went over the saddle, to cover it front and rear, and the flanks of the horse. Lined with leather and extensively embroidered with regimental lace and devices, it was a heavy item, and was used in conjunction with a sheepskin and surcingle and shabraque straps. Rarely seen on active service after the early years of the 19th century; it was a light cavalry item but was also used by heavy cavalry in the 19th century.

Sheepskin Precisely that. A black or white skin edged and backed with decorative cloth and fastening over the saddle and, if used, the shabraque. At first a light cavalry item mainly associated with the 1805 Hussar saddle, it disappeared, except for ceremonial, when the saddle was replaced.

Sideboards The pieces of a saddle-tree joining the arches and transmitting the weight of the rider

to the back of the horse.

Skirt The small flaps of a saddle which cover the attachment points of the stirrup leathers.

Snaffle A bit, usually jointed in the middle with a ring at either end for the rein and attachment to the harness.

Spoon The projection at the highest point of the cantle of a saddle. Usually with a slot or 'D' for the attachment of the valise, etc.

Stirrups The harness to support the rider's feet, consisting of stirrup irons for the feet and stirrup leathers for attachment to the saddle.

Stone The unit of weight in use during the period covered in this book and in which the load borne by a troop horse was calculated. A stone was 14lbs. or 6.35 kilograms.

Surcingle A leather strap which goes over the saddle, etc., and around the body of the horse.

Valise A tubular container of cloth and leather strapped behind the saddle, usually bearing regimental devices on the circular ends. Valises were usually 'hollowed' in the centre to prevent pressure on the horse's back. Discarded completely in the 1890s.

Wallets Items replacing holsters about 1840 and strapped across the front arch of the saddle.

Chronology

(It should always be borne in mind that the dates given below were those of the authorisation of the piece of equipment for general issue. The completion of an issue usually took many years.)

1796	A saddle, sword, pistol and carbine for heavy cavalry and a sabre for light cavalry.
c.1800	Considered to be the year of the introduction of the 'Paget' carbine for light cavalry.
1805	The 'Hussar' saddle for light cavalry.
c.1808-1810	Extensive conversion of cavalry weapons to swivel rammers.
1812	A standard bridle for light cavalry.
1816	Lance introduced to British cavalry service.
1820	New pattern of stirrup-hilted sword for light cavalry. New pattern lance.
1829	New pattern of three-bar hilted

	sword for light cavalry.		many years, were discarded.
1830	New pattern of bowl-hilted sword for heavy cavalry.	1894	Lee-Metford magazine carbine introduced.
1838	Pistols withdrawn from service except for lancers, trumpeters and sergeant-majors.	1896	Lee-Enfield magazine carbine introduced.
1840	New pattern lance. Wallets replace holsters.	1899	New pattern sword.
1842	New (percussion) pistol for lancers.	1902	New UP Steel Arch Saddle. New UP Bridle. First pattern of Short Lee-Enfield rifle approved as a universal weapon for cavalry, infantry, etc.
1846	New pattern lance.		
1853	New sword for all troopers of cavalry.	1908	Final pattern sword.
1856	First universal saddle, 'Nolan's'.	1912	Final pattern of UP Steel Arch Saddle. (Breastplates had by this time been discarded, their main use for many years having been as a means of displaying a regimental crest on ceremonial occasions.)
1860	First universal bridle. New pattern lance.		
1861	First cavalry breech-loader, the Westley Richards.	1914-1941	Few changes in the basic equipment of the cavalryman except as noted in the body of the text.
1864	New pattern sword (1853 pattern with bowl hilt).		
1867	Snider conversion of 1862 pattern carbine.		
1868	New pattern lance.		
c.1870	'Oliver' waterbottle replaces the 'Italian' canteen. New cavalry mess-tin.		
1871	Third and final single-shot breech-loader, the Martini-Henry.		
1872	First of the three 'trial-and-error' saddles intended to replace the 1856 pattern, the UP Flat Iron Arch.		
1878	Second 'trial-and-error' saddle. The UP Angle Iron Arch.		
1880	Enfield revolver authorised to replace the 1842 pattern pistol.		
1882	Two new pattern swords authorised: the 1882 Cavalry Sword, Long, and the 1882 Cavalry Sword, Short.		
1884	Third 'trial-and-error' saddle, another UP Angle Iron Arch.		
1885	New universal bridle. New pattern sword.		
1887	First pattern Webley revolver to replace the Enfield.		
1890	New UP Steel Arch Saddle. New pattern sword (blade thicker and heavier than the previous pattern). Cruppers discarded. Between this date and 1900 valises and sabretasches, ceremonial items for		

The Plates

A: Light Cavalry, 1800-1815

(1) The short cavalry carbine of the period. Always referred to as the 'Paget' carbine, it was only 2ft. 7ins. long and weighed 5lbs. With a calibre of .65ins., it featured a swivel ramrod permanently connected to the muzzle by a swinging link; sights; a safety catch on the cock; and a waterproof pan. Above the butt is a 'picker and brush', essential for reaming-out the touchhole and brushing loose powder off after priming. Shown below the barrel is a cartridge and a loose bullet.

(2) The New Land Service pistol of the period. It was of the same calibre as the carbine and also featured a swivel ramrod. A pair of these pistols weighed as much as the carbine.

(3) An exploded view of the main components of a

The kit of a hussar, c.1904. Visible among the many items of clothing and equipment are: waterbottle and haversack; bandolier; sword, belt and slings; mess-tin strapped to greatcoat, all hung on the pegs above the bed. Below them is the muzzle of the lance-corporal's Long Lee-Enfield, indicating that the cavalry had rejected the carbine pending the issue of the SMLE. Personal equipment also shows that the 1903 bandolier equipment had not reached the 13th Hussars by 1904. (Aldershot Military Historical Trust)





Bandoliers from the 1903 equipment. The first pattern—below—accommodated 50 rounds, but these were modified for the cavalry by the addition of four extra pouches, to take 90 rounds. From 1915 to 1927 an additional 90-round bandolier was carried around the neck of the horse in field service marching order. (Collection of Alan Simpson)

trooper's light cavalry or 'Hungarian' saddle of 1814. The sideboards and arches of the saddle carcass were made of beech wood and were joined with iron gullets. The seat and saddle flaps, made of pigskin, were attached to the carcass with nails and rawhide thongs and a quilted leather 'pilch' was strung like a hammock between the 'spoons' of the pommel and cantle. The stirrup leathers passed through slots in the carcass and a webbing girth fastened to straps between the flaps and the sideboards. A pair of holsters (only one shown) buckled to the front arch, and the valise (12th Light Dragoons shown) buckled to the rear arch. A 'Y'-shaped strap fastened to 'D'-rings at the rear of the saddle to secure the crupper, and the breastplate straps looped through iron brackets in the front. All leather on the saddle was natural brown. Bridles, cruppers, breastplates and surcingle straps could be either black or brown according to regimental practice.

- (4) Valise device of the 10th Light Dragoons.
- (5) A trooper's 1796-pattern light cavalry sabre.
- (6) A trooper's saddle of the 15th Light Dragoons in marching order, 1814. The shabraque is not used. The cloak is rolled and strapped above the holsters on the front arch. A sheepskin—edged in the regimental facing colour—is thrown over the

saddle and secured with a surcingle from which straps pass around the front and rear saddle arches. A carbine 'boot' is suspended from the offside front arch to take the carbine muzzle when not in use, and the valise is strapped behind the rear arch or pillion. One or two blankets, folded as shown, were placed under the saddle and forced well up between the sideboards to permit a passage of air to the horse's spine. Note the arrangement of the straps comprising the 'breastplate' which prevented the saddle slipping backwards.

- (7) Forage net and nosebag. In the field these were secured to the off-side rear of the saddle.

(8) A trooper of the 12th Light Dragoons, 1815. His light dragoon shako is covered with an oilskin which has a 'fall' to protect the neck in foul weather. Overalls and ankle boots are worn in place of full dress breeches and hussar boots. The haversack and 'Italian' canteen are worn hitched well up into the armpit to prevent excessive bouncing when riding, and details of the pouch belt, pouch, buckle and tip, carbine slide and swivel are clearly shown. The double slings for the sabretasche and sabre can be seen below the skirt of the jacket.

B: Heavy Cavalry, 1800–1815

(1) The Dragoon pistol, pattern 1796, with its holster and ramrod shown below. Above the butt can be seen a cartridge and a loose bullet. The ramrod was a separate item in the early models, and was carried in the holster. The pistol had a calibre of .75ins. and weighed 2lbs. 9ozs.

(2) The Heavy Cavalry Universal Saddle, pattern 1796. Note the attachment of the crupper straps to the 'D' at the rear of the saddle just below the end of the brass cantle guard. Note also the three cloak straps looped through the peak of the pommel and the flaps of the saddle. The straps of the breastplate attach to the slots in the 'points', which project below the sideboards. With its webbing girth and distinctive stirrups the saddle looks very up-to-date, although its origins lie in the 18th century.

(3) Valise-end markings of 1st (Royal) Dragoons and 5th Dragoon Guards.

(4) Horseshoe case containing spare shoes and nails, strapped to offside rear of saddle.

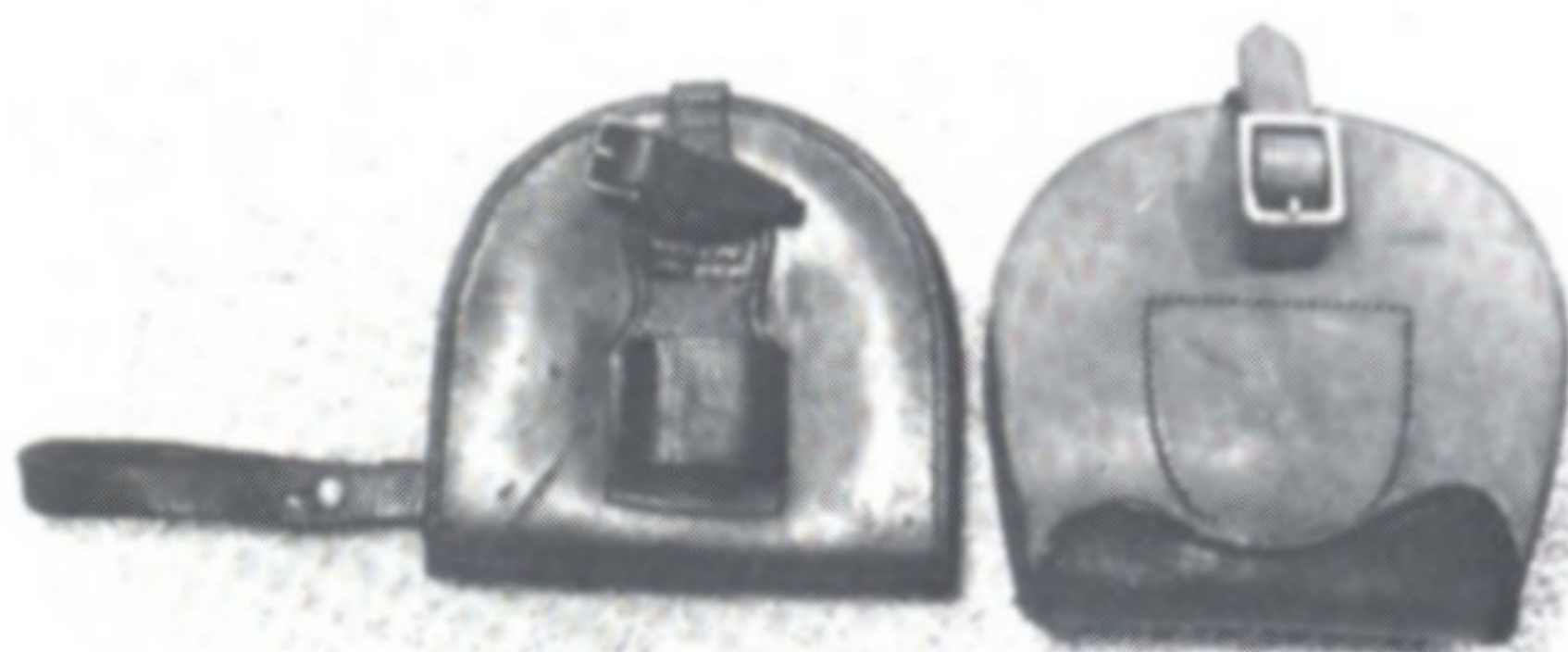
(5) Detail of the stirrup iron of the 1796 pattern Heavy Dragoon saddle.

(6) Detail of the hilt of the 1796 pattern Heavy Cavalry sword. The guard was made of pierced sheet steel and the sword took its name of 'disc hilt' from the distinctive appearance this created. A sword knot of white buff leather with a cord tassel and slider was attached to a slot at the top of the knuckle-bow as shown, and a further piece of the same material fitted next to the disc hilt to protect gloves or gauntlets on ceremonial occasions. A leather throatpiece was fitted to the top of the blade.

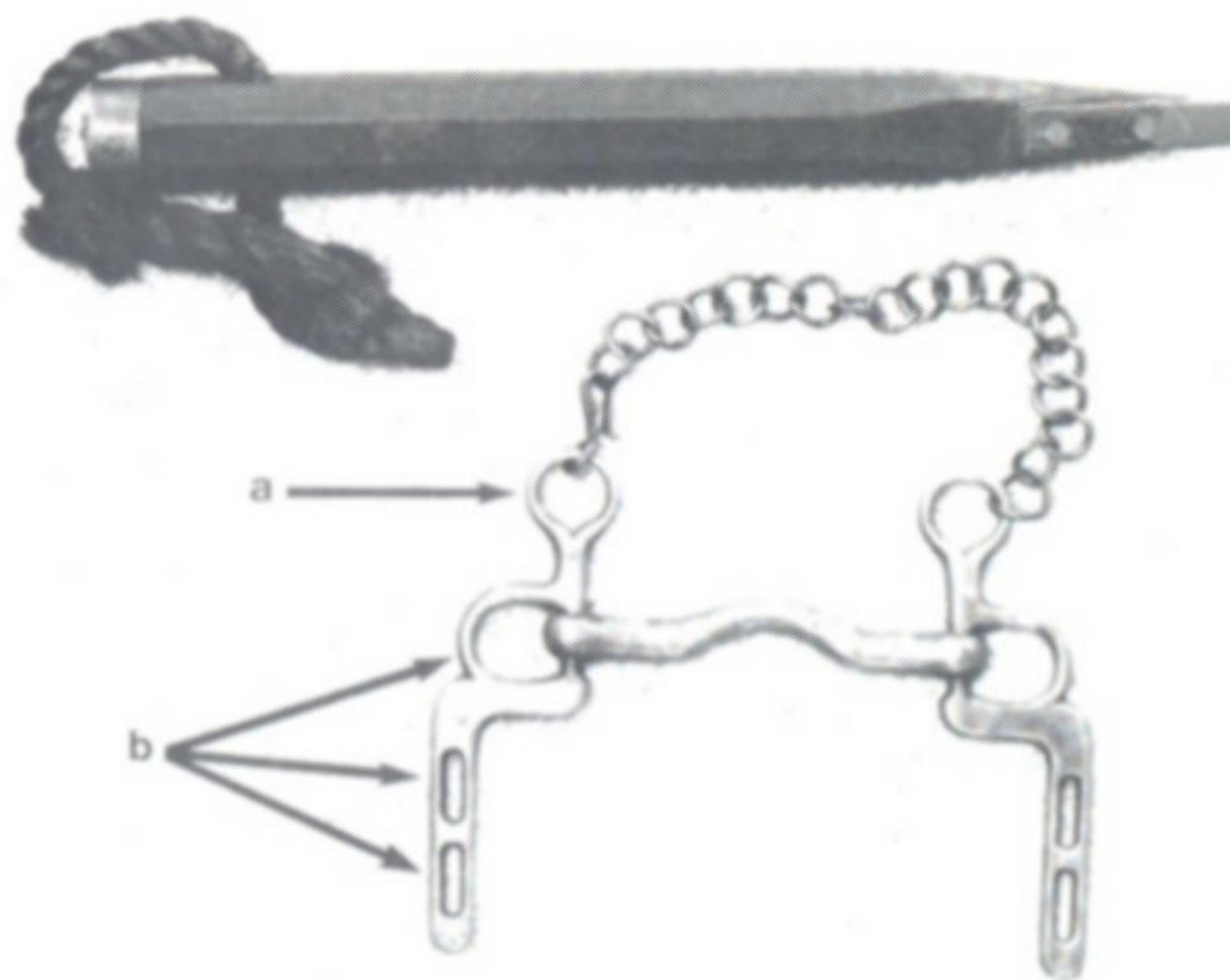
(7) A trooper of the 2nd (Royal North British) Dragoons (later the Scots Greys) cuts down at a French infantryman, 18 June 1815. The Scot wears a foul-weather cover of oilskin over his bearskin cap; canteen and haversack hang below his left arm, and details of his pouch belt, pouch, carbine slide and swivel are clearly visible. Note the water-deck, folded up and wrapped around the valise; the two forage sacks tied behind the cantle of the saddle; the carbine in its boot strapped to the rolled cloak on the front arch of the saddle, and the rolled forage net above it. The kidney-shaped messtin in its oilskin cover is strapped above the valise/waterdeck.

C: 1815-1855

The main changes in cavalry equipment in the years between Waterloo and Sevastopol were



Horseshoe cases. Two 20th century examples shown from the front (left, with sword frog) and rear. (Collection of Alan Simpson)



Picketing post and 1902 pattern bit. The bridle fastened to the bit at point (a). The curb-chain was then passed around the horse's lower jaw. The reins fastened to the upper and one of the lower points (b), to exert pressure on the horse's mouth through the bar. (Collection of Alan Simpson)

concerned with weaponry, and this plate reflects those changes.

Upright, in the centre of the 'stand of arms', is the 1853 pattern cavalry sword (1), the first universal trooper's sword and the replacement for the light cavalry and the heavy cavalry patterns that preceded it. Its 35½ in. blade was not formed into a tang at the hilt end, but was left flat and straight with leather sidepieces riveted to it—a practice that would be continued in many patterns of sword to come. To the right of the 1853 pattern is the heavy cavalry trooper's swords of 1830 (2) and to the left are the two earlier patterns of light cavalry trooper's swords: the 1820 pattern with the single-bar hilt (3) and the 1829 pattern with the three-bar hilt (4). The 1853-pattern sword took many years to replace the previous swords, and was barely in service before it was modified by having its three-bar guard replaced by a sheet-steel bowl shell. The converted sword was called thereafter the pattern 1864 Cavalry Trooper's Sword.

Behind the swords are the first four patterns of lance with the head of the 1816 pattern to the right (5), with those of the 1840 (small) and 1846 (broad) patterns below it (6, 7), and that of the 1820 pattern to the left (8). The pennon common to both earlier patterns is at top centre, and fitted over the studs visible on the bars or langets of the

lance-head. It was kept in place by a metal locking bar. A leather sling was bound to the centre of the pole, shaft or staff, which was made of ash. The shoe or butt common to both patterns of lance is shown horizontally at the bottom of the display (9).

Crossed in the centre of the display are two unusual carbines of the period, the Baker cavalry rifle (10) and the 1833 pattern Manton carbine (11). (The main firearms of the period continued to be the flintlock carbines and pistols of the pre-1815 period, with the conversion of some to percussion lock not taking place until well into the 1830s.) The Baker short rifle equipped the 10th Light Dragoons (later Royal Hussars) for most of the first part of the 19th century. Starting with an initial order of 40 in 1803 Baker, the manufacturer, supplied a further 500 in 1813, which he was still modifying and restocking in 1827. With a 20-in. barrel with seven grooves of rifling that made only a quarter of a turn in the barrel's length, the Baker shot a .62in. bullet. The rifle weighed 6lbs. and had a bolt on the cocks of the earlier models. Shown below the rifle are cartridges, patches for sealing the bullet into the barrel, and the combination tool with jag and worm. The patches and tools were kept in the recesses shown in the butt, which was normally covered by a brass flap. A pouch to contain 12 rounds of ammunition is shown below the Baker's tools and ammunition.

The Manton carbine of 1833 began life as a flintlock weapon; only 1,000 were made, of which about 600 were issued for service. It was the first cavalry carbine to undergo trials with regiments after conversion from flint to percussion lock. Shown below the butt are cartridges, a combination tool, 'snap-cap' and chain, and percussion caps with their pouch. Both the Baker and the Manton weapons are shown with their ramrods withdrawn and the slides and swivels of the pouch belt attached.

Pistols, recommended for abolition in 1828, were finally withdrawn in 1838 with the exception of 13 pistols per regiment for sergeant-majors and trumpeters, and one per lancer. These were replaced from 1842 onwards by the 1842 Lancer pistol (12); weighing 3lbs. 4ozs. and shooting a bullet of .753in. calibre, this weapon was robust but difficult to operate. It served on for nearly 40

years until replaced by the Enfield revolver.

Communication in battle was still principally achieved by trumpet calls in the 19th century. Shown at right (13) is the standard trumpet of the time, with the cords and stamp of the 1st (Royal) Dragoons.

At the bottom of the display are a light cavalry saddle of 1850 (14) and a heavy cavalry saddle of 1816 (15). The light cavalry saddle carries the valise of the 7th (Queen's Own) Light Dragoons (Hussars), and differs from the 1805 model in that a conventional seat has replaced the 'loose pilch' of the earlier model. The saddle of the 2nd (Royal North British) Dragoons displays the valise end showing troop identification. Whereas the other (offside) end showed the initials of the regiment, RNBD, a letter and number was displayed on the nearside; this peculiarity shows quite clearly on the well-known Dighton painting of Sgt. Ewart, a picture rich in detail and well worth careful study.

D: 1855-1890

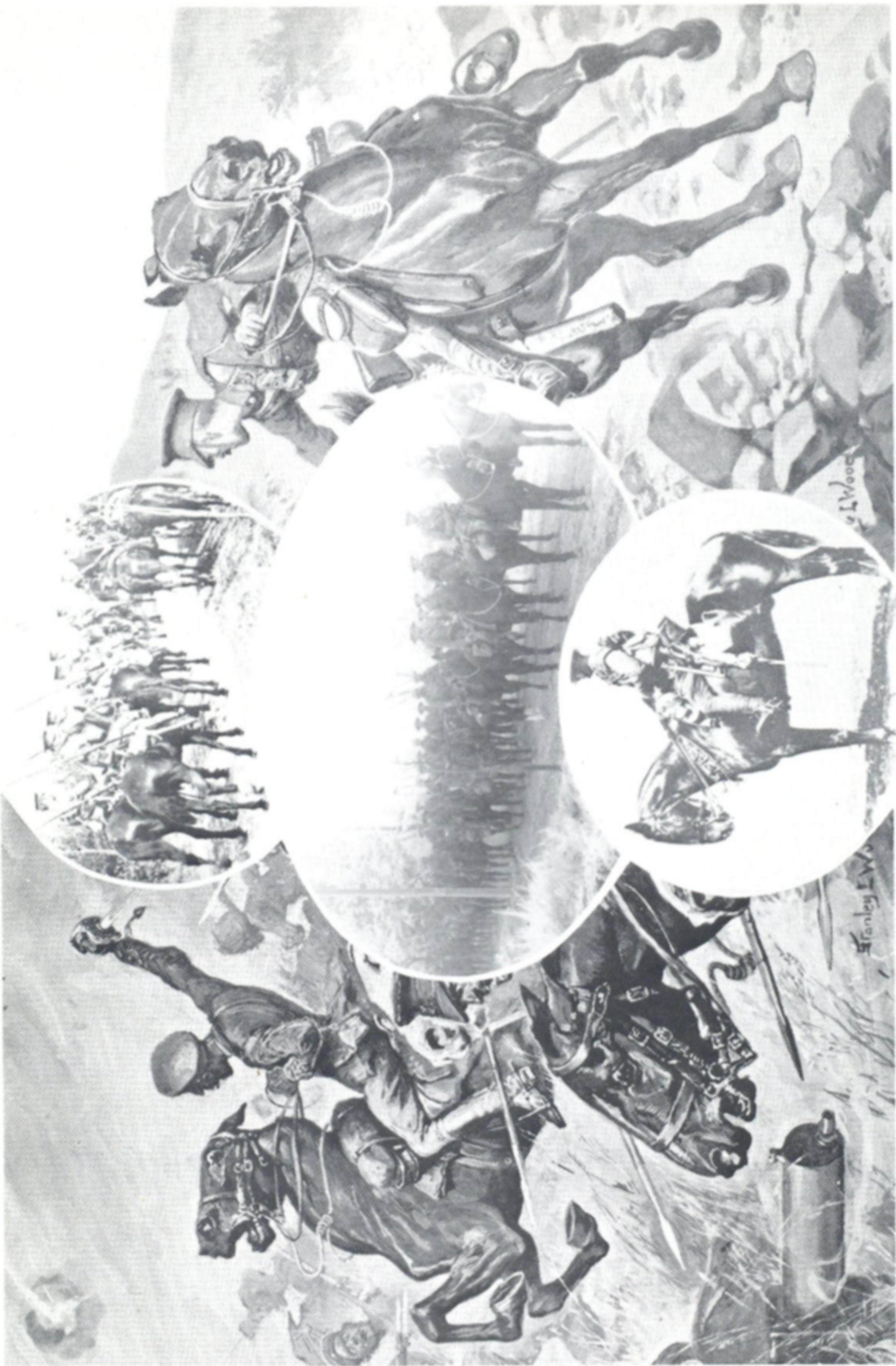
(1) Lances. The 1860 pattern is shown at left and the 1868 pattern (as modified in 1883) at right. Shafts could be either bamboo or ash, with the latter being superseded by bamboo from 1868 to the re-introduction of ash in 1885. In practice both materials were used as available, patterns of lance being distinguished by heads, shoes and the configuration of slings, handguards and protectors, etc. Pennons, usually attached by thongs in the manner shown, were furled in action.

(2) Wallets. These were introduced in 1840 and gradually replaced holsters. Strapped in pairs above the front arch, they were usually concealed by the cloak, etc., strapped above them.

(3) The Universal Wood Arch Saddle of 1856, sometimes erroneously called 'Nolan's Saddle'. Constructed on a wooden tree reinforced with metal, the saddle was padded underneath with panels of serge stuffed with horsehair. The seat was secured to the arches with rivets and screws, while the stirrup leathers featured a brass 'roller' to replace the leather runner formerly used. The

Full dress, 1914. This 12th Lancer displays the 1902 bridle, 1912 saddle, 1908 sword and final pattern of lance. (Collection of Sid Horton)





horseshoe case was attached to the nearside rear of the saddle and now had a strap to secure the sword. Lance-buckets were attached to both stirrup irons. The crupper and breastplate were retained.

(4) The 1885 pattern cavalry trooper's sword. After unsuccessful attempts to modify the 1864 modification of the 1853 pattern cavalry trooper's sword (which resulted in the 1882 pattern cavalry trooper's sword, long and the 1882 pattern cavalry trooper's sword, short) the muddle was sorted out with the introduction of the 1885 pattern. This was the 1853 pattern with a blade standardised at 34½ins. in length; the lapped guard of the 1882 pattern; a hand-stop between the grip and the guard, and a scabbard with fixed rings and a wooden liner. The scabbard rings were positioned for attachment to the saddle and the sword never attached comfortably to a belt.

(5) Rear view of a trooper of the 17th Lancers, 1879. The configuration of the cavalryman's personal equipment had changed little since Waterloo except that the Oliver waterbottle had replaced the Italian canteen, and that the pouch belt was now a pouch belt only, and not also a carbine-sling as formerly.

(6) The carbine and carbine bucket of the 1880s. The Martini-Henry cavalry carbine was the last and the longest serving of the breechloading single-shot carbines, remaining in service for nearly 20 years. Firing a special .450in. bullet through a 21½in. barrel, the carbine was so light, at 7lbs., that it needed a reduced charge in its cartridge to make its recoil acceptable. The bucket attached to the saddle by means of the straps at the top and the flap-and-stud arrangement at the side.

(7) The Enfield .476in. Service Revolver. Coming into service in 1880 this weapon replaced the single-shot percussion pistol. Shown here with its

case and ammunition, this powerful but complicated weapon had the distinction of being the first issue revolver. Officers, of course, had purchased and used revolvers since their introduction.

E: 1890-1902

(1) The Lee-Enfield magazine carbine. Forty inches in length and weighing barely 7½lbs., the carbine shot the standard .303in. round. Magazine capacity was six rounds, and the bolt was designed to lie flat in order to fit the carbine boot better. Developed from the Lee-Metford, the Lee-Enfield had a brief service career before being replaced by the Short Lee-Enfield rifle from 1902 onwards. Shown around the carbine are the pull-through and oilbottle used for cleaning the weapon and kept in the butt-trap (the lid of which is open and projects at right angles from the butt-plate); a round of ammunition; and the leather backsight cover.

(2) The 1890 pattern Universal Steel Arch Saddle. The tree of the Mark III version is shown, with its seat and flaps in the background. Note the pads of 'Numnah', or thick felt, attached to the sideboards, and the adjustable 'V' attachments for the girth. Stirrup leathers fastened to a brass 'D' on the sideboard after passing through the slots in the flaps. Slots and 'D's were incorporated in the saddle-tree to take the many items strapped to the saddle.

(3) The 1890 pattern Cavalry sword. This differed from the previous pattern only in that it had a more robust blade than formerly. Painted drab on service, swords were now fitted with frogs sewn to the horseshoe case. These were strapped to the nearside of the saddle, with a stay going forward to attach to the girth.

(4) Nearside wallet of a pair.

(5) Detail of the kit of metal and leather parts issued to modify a lance and saddlery so that the lance could be attached to the saddle after the rider had dismounted.

(6) A chain mail shoulderstrap. A short-lived return to the days of body armour, meant to protect shoulders from swordcuts; they were found to be much more efficient as burnishers!

(7) Detail of stirrup leather, iron and lance-bucket.

Opposite: 1914 to 1918—fact and fantasy. The drawings to the right and left show the image of the war created by the illustrators of the popular press. Although far removed from actuality, these pictures do show the obsolete equipment that was pressed into service in the opening months of the war—in this case, the 1885 pattern bridle. The central photographs show the reality of France and Flanders with, top, Lancers in 1914; centre, Lancers in 1918; and below, a cavalry trooper in field service marching order. Note the bandolier about the horse's neck.



Saddlers, 1917. Although of poor quality, this snapshot of the saddlers of the 3rd Reserve Cavalry Regt. shows two at work on items clamped into sewing lasts, and two 1912 saddles in the foreground. (Aldershot Military Historical Trust)

(8) Detail of the cavalry bandolier of the period. Holding ten rounds of ammunition, five such pockets were looped on a belt and worn over the left shoulder.

(9) A trooper of Regular cavalry, 1902. His lance, thrust into the ground by his side, has a leather sleeve to protect it from the chafing of the carbine butt, as well as the 'D' with which the lance could be fastened to the saddle. Field service uniform was by now khaki for all troops overseas.

Note the chain mail shoulder-straps, bandolier and haversack. The circular metal waterbottle is of interest. Issued only to troops proceeding overseas, it replaced the 'Oliver' but was itself replaced by the rectangular metal bottle issued with the bandolier equipment of 1903.

F: 1914-1918

(1) Surcingle.

(2) Waterbottle, haversack and respirator, 1918. The haversack was the standard item from the

7th Hussars, field service marching order, 1932. By this time the wallets and greatcoat were carried in unit transport. The extra bandolier previously carried around the horse's neck had also disappeared. (Aldershot Military Historical Trust)





3rd Carabiniers marching past in the 1930s. With mechanisation a reality, drill and ceremonial on horseback was maintained to the bitter end. (Aldershot Military Historical Trust)



The 1912 UP saddle in use today. A photograph taken in the stables of the Royal Military Police mounted unit in Aldershot.

1908 Mills equipment set (see MAA 108, *British Infantry Equipments 1908-80*) and the waterbottle came from the 1903 bandolier equipment (see MAA 107, *British Infantry Equipments 1808-1908*). Respirator haversacks had to be modified for cavalry by having the sling and tab repositioned as shown. In this way the respirator could be carried on the back in the manner demonstrated by figures 5 and 7, but could quickly be positioned on the chest for use, as shown by figure 6. This eliminated the need to carry the respirator on the chest at all times, which could cause a rider, at paces faster than a walk, annoyance or even injury as the respirator bounced up and down.

(3) Short Lee-Enfield rifle in its boot, as carried on the rear offside of the saddle. The messtin was nearly always strapped to the boot in the manner shown.

(4) Equipment strapped to the nearside of the saddle: the 1908 sword in its scabbard, secured in a frog attached to the horseshoe case, which in turn was attached to the saddle and girth; fastened to the sword scabbard are a canvas bucket for watering and a post for picketing the horse.

(5) Corporal, 8th Hussars, 1st Cavalry Division, 1918. Note the regimental colours worn on the shoulderstraps, the spur badge of the assistant riding instructor or 'rough rider', and the red and blue overseas service chevrons. Note also the belt, pouches and modified bandolier of the 1903 equipment set.

(6) Trooper, 3rd Hussars, 2nd Cavalry Division, 1918. Note the regimental 'flash'—a white running horse on blue—worn on both arms. Our subject wears his respirator and carries his sword drawn

for mounted action.

(7) Trooper, Fort Garry Horse, 1st Cavalry Division, 1918. By 1918 the Canadian cavalry brigade had been absorbed into the Regular 1st Cavalry Division. Our subject is typical of the troopers of this formation as they went about their business in their infantry role. Note the blue and yellow regimental 'flash' of the Fort Garry Horse worn on sleeves and helmet; rifle marksman's badge, good conduct chevron and wound stripe on the left cuff; messtin strapped to waterbottle; and groundsheet under the flap of the haversack.

G: 1914-1941

A collection of cavalry equipment in use from 1914 to the end of the horsed cavalry era.

Vertically, in the centre of the 'stand of arms', is the 1908 cavalry trooper's sword (1) in its scabbard with another, drawn and viewed from the opposite side, to its right (2). (3) is the short rifle, Magazine, Lee-Enfield, Mark III. The bayonet is fixed, having its scabbard and frog by its side, and the bolt is open with a charger of five rounds of ammunition in the loading position. Above the butt is displayed the oilbottle and coiled pullthrough, while hanging from the loop in front of the magazine is the breechcover so necessary in the Flanders mud.

To the left of the 1908 pattern sword is an example of the much-criticised 1899 pattern cavalry trooper's sword (4) and the final pattern lance (5), the butt of which is shown across the bottom of the plate (6).

Horizontally in the centre is the Hotchkiss Machine Gun Mark I, in its original version with bipod and adjustable monopod in the butt (7). Note the barrel wrench strapped to the butt, the strip of cartridges in the feed tray, and the bandolier and nine-round feed strip pictured below the butt.

Above the Hotchkiss are, to the left, a Webley Mark VI revolver with lanyard, ammunition and case (8), and, to the right, a rear view of the pistol case showing the loops for the belt and cleaning rod, a cleaning rod and ammunition case (9).

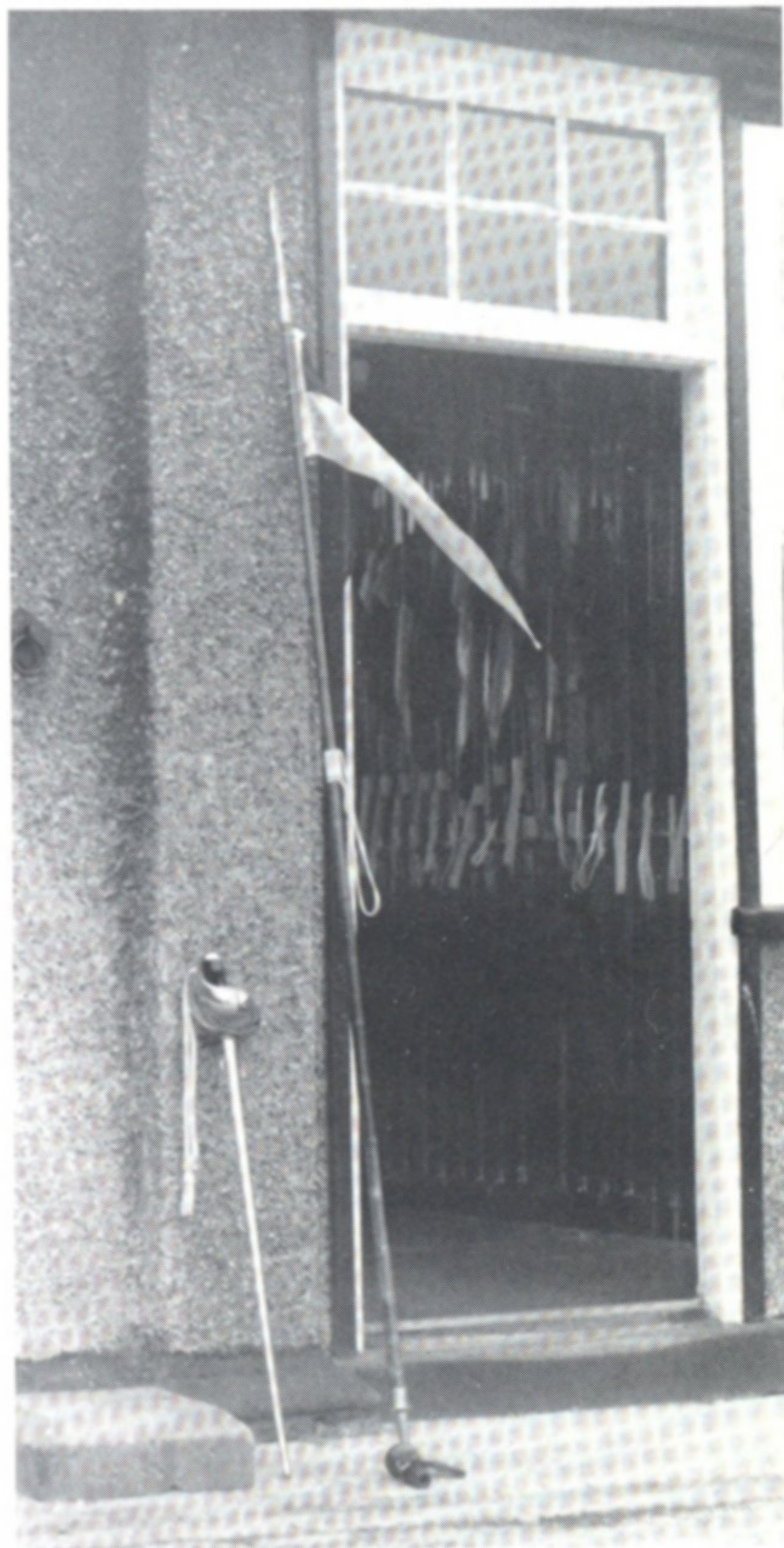
Below the barrel of the Hotchkiss are displayed a waist belt and pouches of the 1903 equipment set (10).

At top centre of the plate is the final pattern of pennon. Attached to the lance with laces, it was

used only on ceremonial occasions.

At the bottom left of the plate the first pattern of horse respirator (11) is shown attached to a 1902 pattern bridle, and stowed in its haversack (12). In use it covered the nostrils and upper jaw of the horse. Stowed in its haversack it was fastened, in the manner of a noseband, between the cheek-

The sword and lance in use today. The last patterns of cavalry sword and lance are still in use with the RMP mounted unit for ceremonial escorts, displays and mounted skill-at-arms competitions; the weapons are kept in fine condition as this picture shows.





straps of the bridle.

Centrally at the bottom of the plate is a 1912 pattern Universal Steel Arch Saddle and its wallets (13).

H: The Final Years

The active service experienced by the cavalry in the years between the two World Wars was all in the East. For the final plate, therefore, India in the year 1927 has been chosen as a setting for our junior NCO of Regular cavalry.

His topce is of the India pattern and quite different from the 'coal-scuttle' variety worn elsewhere. Another interesting feature is the old 'grey-back' flannel shirt. In the east the lower sleeves were cut off by the 'dhurzi' or tailor and used to make breast pockets, shoulder straps, and—in some cases—collars. Puttees continued to be worn wound from knee to ankle and with the tape blancoed and fastened as shown. (Some regiments also blancoed the buckskin kneepads on the inside

The military horse today. Ceremonial apart, few units still with horses can claim as useful a function as the Royal Military Police at Aldershot. Their mounted patrols are an everyday sight in the town and camp. Through them the last of the cavalry equipment of the British Army continues to have a useful life.

of breeches!)

Equipment is exactly as during the First World War, except that halter ropes had been re-introduced to replace halter chains. Note the final pattern bridle with the 1902 UP Portsmouth bit, the second 90-round bandolier worn around the horse's neck, and the arrangement of kit on the saddle. Above the wallets on the front arch is a folded groundsheet, while the greatcoat is strapped to the rear of the saddle. Rifle and sword are attached to the saddle as before, and forage is carried in feed bags as shown.

As for personal equipment, the bayonet had been discarded by this date, as had the infantry pouches carried on the waist belt; otherwise the

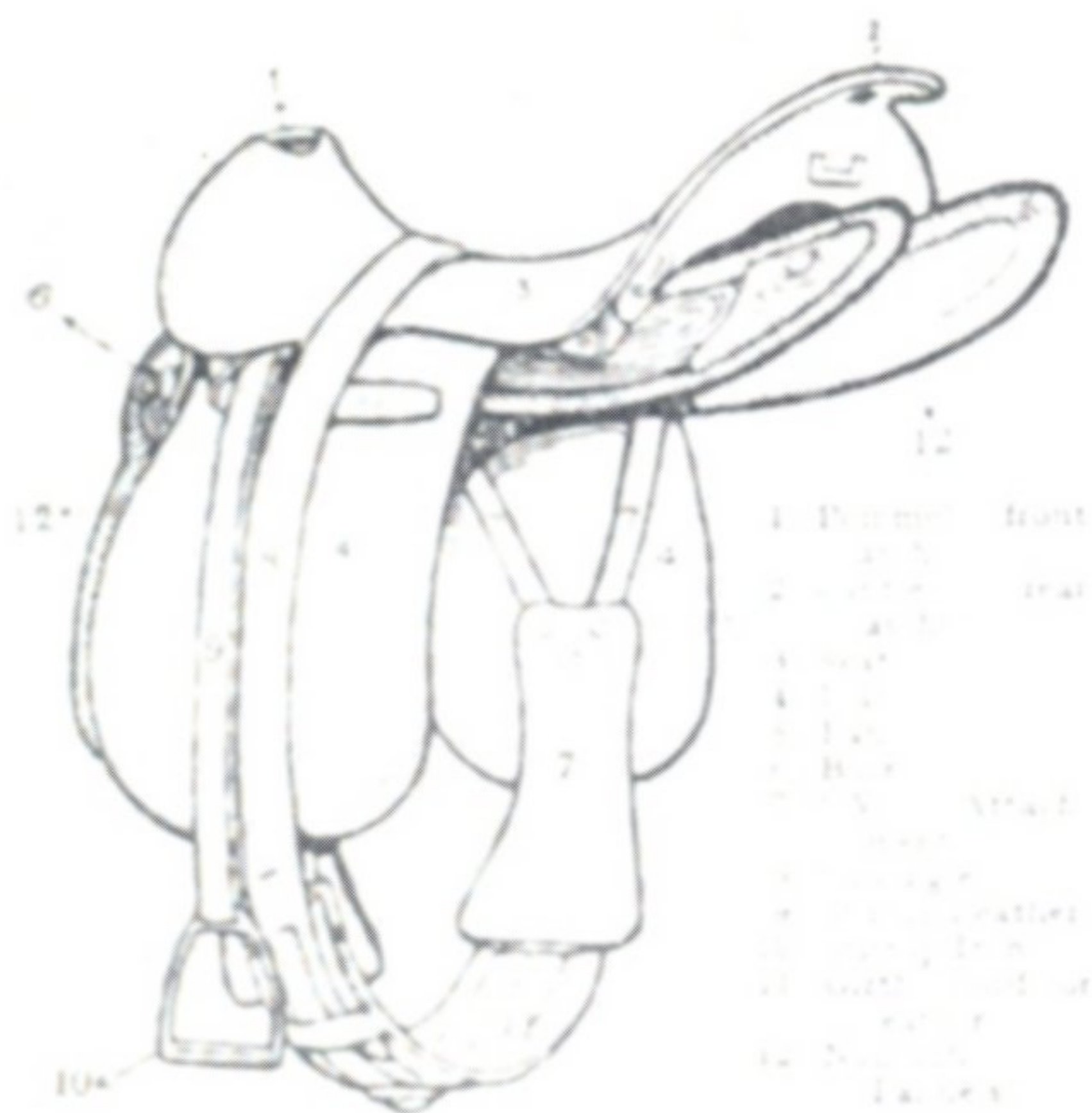


FIG. 9 - Saddle showing "V" attachment

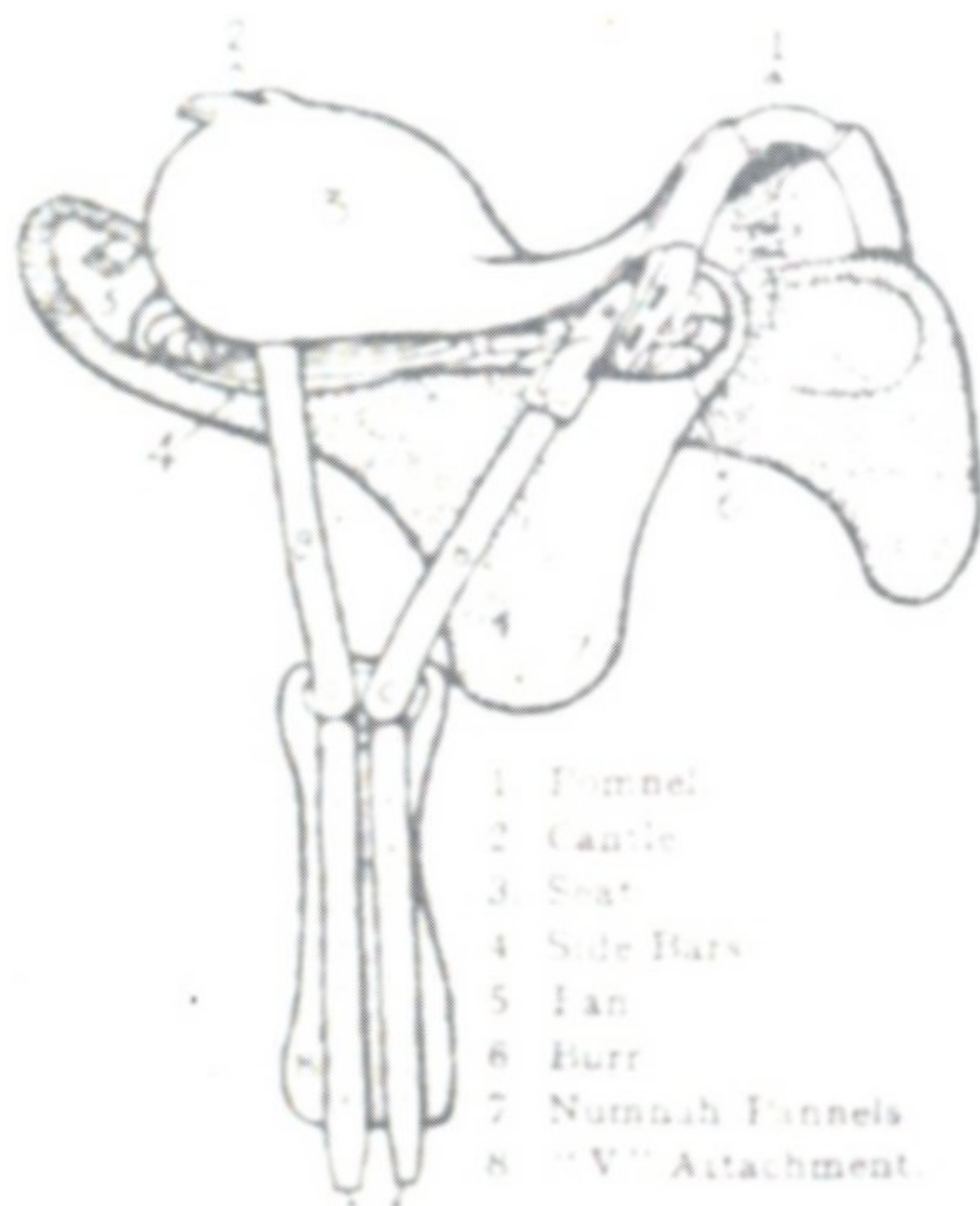


FIG. 9 - Saddle showing "V" attachment

configuration was as before. Eventually wallets, greatcoats and all but one day's feed were relegated to unit transport to reduce the load to 16 stone, but not until much later than the year depicted.

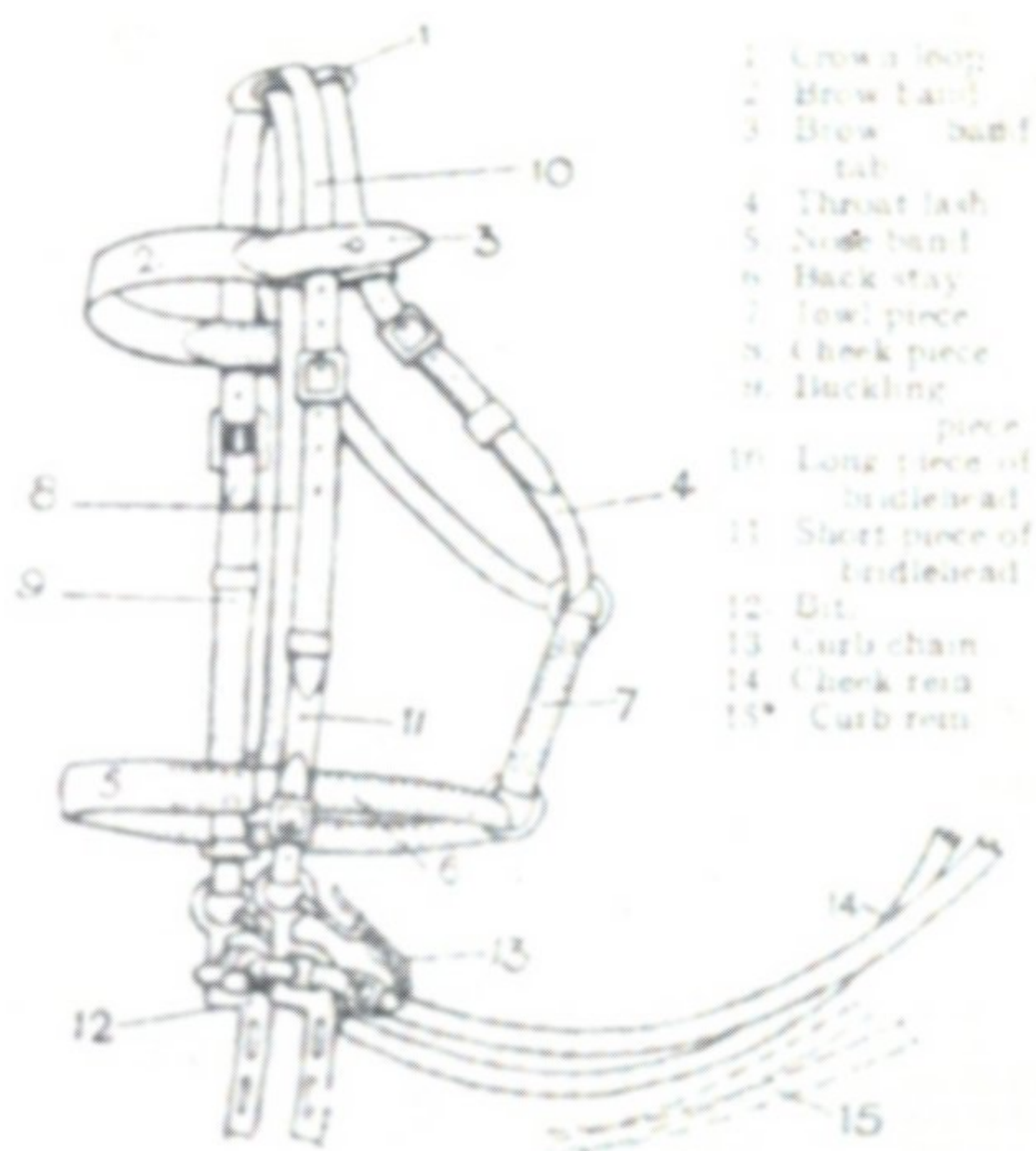


FIG. 10 - Head collar with bit and bridlehead

Illustrations from the *Manual of Horsemanship, Equitation and Animal Transport*, 1937, showing the names of parts of the 1912 saddle and the 1902 bridle.

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Weapons of the British Soldier, Colonel H. C. B. Rogers; Seeley, Service & Co. Ltd., London, 1960

Regimental histories of most of the regular cavalry regiments.
List of changes in British war material (period 1860 to 1920).

Notes sur les planches en couleurs

A1 Carabine Paget, nécessaire de nettoyage, munitions. **A2** Pistolet New Land Service. **A3** Selle 'Hongroise', 1814 – détails de construction. **A4** Inscriptions de sac: 10th Light Dragoons. **A5** Sabre de cavalerie, 1796. **A6** Selle de dragon, 15th Light Dragoons, 1814, paré en ordre de marche; la bordure de la peau de mouton porte la couleur du régiment. **A7** Filet à forage et sac à museau attaché à la selle. **A8** Dragon, 12th Light Dragoons, 1815, en uniforme de campagne.

B1 Pistolet de dragon, 1796; étui, tige pour charger, munitions. **B2** Selle de cavalerie lourde, 1797; les sangles à l'avant servaient à attacher la capote roulée. **B3** Inscriptions du sac, 1st Royal Dragoons et 5th Dragoon Guards. **B4** Etui, fer à cheval, attaché à la selle, sur le côté droit, arrière. **B5** Détails étrier de la selle M1796. **B6** Détails de la garde de sabre de cavalerie lourde, M1796. **B7** Dragon, 2nd (Royal North British) Dragoons—les 'Scots Greys'—en uniforme de bataille, 1815.

C1 Sabre de cavalerie M1853, tant pour la cavalerie lourde que pour la cavalerie légère. **C2** Sabre de cavalerie lourde M1830. **C3** Sabre de cavalerie légère M1820. **C4** Sabre de cavalerie légère M1829. **C5** Lance M1816. **C6** Lance M1840. **C7** Lance M1846. **C8** Lance M1820. **C9** Crosse ou virole de lance. **C10** Fusil de cavalerie Baker, utilisé par le 10th Light Dragoons à partir de 1803. **C11** Carabine Manton M1833. **C12** Pistolet de lancier M1842. **C13** Trompette de cavalerie. **C14** Selle de cavalerie légère M1850. **C15** Selle de cavalerie lourde M1816.

D1 Lances M1860 (à gauche) et M1883 (à droite). **D2** Les sacoches remplaçaient les étuis à partir de 1840. **D3** Selle universelle M1856 'Nolan'. **D4** Sabre de cavalerie M1885. **D5** Lancier, 17th Lancers, 1879. **D6** Carabine Martini-Henry des années 1880. **D7** Révolver Enfield M1880, première arme de poing à répétition distribuée.

E1 Carabine Lee-Enfield, utilisée brièvement avant 1902. **E2** Selle universelle M1890. **E3** Sabre de cavalerie M1890. **E4** Sacoche, gauche d'une paire. **E5** Jeu de pièces destinées à modifier la lance et la selle de façon que la lance puisse être passée sur la selle. **E6** Epaulette à mailles destinée à protéger contre les coups de sabre mais, en fait, souvent utilisée pour polir l'équipement métallique. **E7** Détails, étrier et support de lance. **E8** Détails, cartouchière de cavalerie—cinq pochettes de dix cartouches chacune. **E9** Cavalier, 1902, en tenue de service tropicale.

F1 Sous-ventrière. **F2** Bidon à eau, havresac et masque à gaz, 1918. **F3** Fusil SMLE dans sa gaine de la selle, à laquelle est attachée une gamelle. **F4** Équipement sur le côté gauche de la selle. **F5** Caporal, 8th Hussars, 1st Cavalry Div., 1918, dans l'équipement personnel M1903. Bande aux couleurs du régiment, à l'épaule; badge à éperon de l'instructeur d'équitation; rayures rouge et bleue des services outremer. **F6** Cavalier, 3rd Hussars, 2nd Cavalry Div., 1918. Insigne régimental de cheval blanc sur fond bleu, portée sur les deux épaules. **F7** Cavalier (Canadien), Fort Garry Horse, 1st Cavalry Div., 1918, équipé pour le service d'infanterie; noter ici aussi l'insigne régimentale sur la manche et le casque.

G1, G2 Sabre de cavalerie M1908. **G3** Fusil SMLE, Mk III. **G4** Sabre de cavalerie M1899. **G5, G6** Modèle final de lance. **G7** Mitrailleur Hotchkiss Mk. I. **G8** Révolver Webley Mk V et gaine, et **G9** Vue arrière de la gaine. **G10** Ceinture M1903 et pochettes. **G11** Masque à gaz pour cheval, et **G12** Le sac destiné à le recevoir. **G13** Selle universelle M1912.

H Caporal de cavalerie, Inde 1927. L'ensemble final d'équipement de cavalerie.

Farbtafeln

A1 Paget Karabiner, Putzzeug, Munition. **A2** New Land Service Pistol **A3** 'Ungarischer' Sattel, 1814—Einzelheiten der Zusammensetzung. **A4** Tornistermarkierungen, 10th Light Dragoons. **A5** Säbel der Leichten Kavallerie, 1796. **A6** Kavalleristsattel, 15th Light Dragoons, 1814, voll Marschausrüstung; die Einfassung des Lammfelles ist in den Regimentsfarbe. **A7** Futternetz und Futterbeutel. **A8** Kavallerist, 12th Light Dragoons, 1815 in Felduniform.

B1 Dragonerpistole, 1796; Pistolenhalter; Ladestock; Munition. **B2** Sattel der Schwere Kavallerie, 1796; die Riemen vorne nahmen den zusammen gerollten Umhang auf. **B3** Tornistermarkierungen, 1st Royal Dragoons und 5th Dragoon Guards. **B4** Hufeisentasche, an den Sattel geschnallt, hinten der rechten Seite. **B5** Steigbügel-einzelheiten des M1796 Sattels. **B6** Griffe einzelheiten M17196 Schwert der Schwere Kavallerie. **B7** Kavallerist, 2 (Royal North British) Dragoons—die 'schottischen Grauen'—in Kam uniform, 1815.

C1 Kavallerieschwert M1853, für beide Schwere- und Leichte Kavallerie. **C2** Schwert der Schwere Kavallerie M1830. **C3** Schwert der Leichten Kavallerie M1820. **C4** Schwert der Leichten Kavallerie M1829. **C5** Lanze M1816. **C6** Lanze M1840. **C7** Lanze M1846. **C8** Lanze M1820. **C9** Stücker oder Zwinge von Lanzen. **C10** Baker Kavalleriegewehr, von den 10th Light Dragoons von 18103 benutzt. **C11** Manton Karabiner M1833. **C12** Ulan pistole M1842. **C13** Kavallerietrompete. **C14** Sattel der Leichten Kavallerie M1850. **C15** Sattel der Schwere Kavallerie M1816.

D1 Lanzen M1860 (links) und M1883 (rechts). **D2** Taschen ersetzten Pistolenhalter von 1840. **D3** Einheitssattel M1856 'Nolan'. **D4** Kavallerieschwert M1885. **D5** Kavallerist, 17th Lancers, 1879. **D6** Martini-Henry Karabiner der 1880er. **D7** Enfield Revolver M1880, die erste mehrschuss Pistole, ausgegeben wurde.

E1 Lee-Enfield Karabiner, kurze Zeit vor 1902 benutzt. **E2** Einheitssattel M1890. **E3** Kavallerieschwert M1890. **E4** Tasche—die linke von einer Paire. **E5** Ersatzteilensatz um Lanze und Sattel zu modifizieren, so dass die Lanze den Sattel gehängt werden konnte. **E6** Kettenrüstungsschulterriemen um Schwertwunden zu schützen, jedoch oft als Metallputzzeug benutzt! Einzelheiten, Steigbügel und 'Lanzen-Eimer'. **E8** Einzelheiten, Kavallerie patronengürt—je fünf Taschen von zehn Patronen. **E9** Kavallerist, Kavallerie 1902, für den tropischen Dienst gekleidet.

F1 Deckenbefestigungsriemen. **F2** Feldflasche, Tornister und Gasmasken 1918. **F3** SMLE Gewehr in seinem Sattel 'Stiefel' mit beigefügten Feldgeschütz. **F4** Ausrüstung an der linken Sattelseite. **F5** Gefreiter, 8th Hussars, 1st Cavalry Div., 1918, im M1903 persönlicher Ausrüstung. Regimentalfarbener 'Erkennungsmal' an der Schulter; Sporenabzeichen des Reitlehrers; rot und blau Überseedienststreifen. **F6** Kavallerist, 3rd Hussard, 2nd Cavalry Div., 1918; Regimentals 'Erkennungsmal' eines weissen Pferdes auf blauen Grund beider Schulter getragen. **F7** Kavallerist (kanadisch), Fort Garry Horse, Cavalry Div., 1918, ausgestattet für Infanteriedienst; bemerke wiederum regimentale 'Erkennungsmal' auf Ärmel und Helm.

G1, G2 Kavallerieschwert M1908. **G3** SMLE Gewehr, Serie III. **G4** Kavallerieschwert M1899. **G5, G6** Letztes Lanzenmuster. **G7** Hotchkiss Maschinengewehr Serie I. **G8** Webley Serie VI Revolver und Pistolenhalter, und Rückansicht des Pistolenhalters. **G10** M1903 Gürtel und Beutel. **G11** Pferddegasmaske, und **G12** dessen Tragetasche. **G13** M1912 Einheitssattel.

H Gefreite der Kavallerie, Indien, 1927. Der letzte Satz von der Kavallerieausrüstung.

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