

The Danish Army 1932-1941 - The Cyclist Regiment

Introduction

By the Army Regulations of 1937, the 6th Regiment (Odense) with the 4th and 5th Infantry Battalions was transformed into a bicycle regiment. The regiment's other units - the 16th Infantry Battalion and the 26th Reinforcement Battalion - apparently continued in their former functions, while the 6th Regiment's gun company was transferred to the Reinforcements.

Before the war, the new system was not fully implemented and the regiment was unlikely to function as a unified cyclist regiment. The 4th Battalion trained the 5th Battalion's cyclists, but whether the 5th Battalion actually came to function as a cycling battalion is not known (Source 4). The 4th Battalion distinguished itself in the fighting in Southern Jutland on 9 April 1940 and benefited greatly from both the cyclist companies and the motorcyclist company.

The cyclist regiment

The cyclist regiment consists of:

- Chief with staff, staff company and train (212) 2
- cyclist battalions (á 788).

All the regiment's vehicles are motor vehicles (cars, light trucks and motorcycles).

The Cyclist Regiment's combat strength is approx. 1,800 men.

The Cyclist Regiment's tree

1 communication material vehicle (liaison division) 1 passenger vehicle (doctor's) 2 anti-aircraft vehicles (with 4 anti-aircraft machine guns) 3 workshop and gasoline vehicles 1 kitchen vehicle (regimental staff and ammunition column) 1 kitchen vehicle (other) 1 luggage vehicle (archives and luggage) 4 reserve vehicles (empty)

Ammunition column

4 ammunition wagons (8 mm) 2 ammunition wagons (20 mm) 2 gas mask and bicycle wagons with trailers 2 gunsmith wagons with trailers 2 spare wagons (empty)

The ammunition column can be divided into two identical half-columns.



Ready to advance.

One of the 4th Battalion's cyclist companies during exercise, 1938.

From Source 3.

The Cyclist Battalion

The cycling battalion consists of:

- Chief with staff, liaison division, anti-aircraft division and sanitary personnel (118) 3 cyclist
- companies (á 186) 1 motorcyclist company (112).
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The cyclist battalion's military strength is 788 men.

The connection sharing

Signal Platoon

1 platoon leader
1 second in command
3 telephone teams (1 team leader and 4 men)
2 signal teams
(1 team leader and 5 men) 1 reserve team 1)
4 bicycle orderlies
4 engine orderlies

Train platoon

1 signal wagon (with 2 signallers and 2 ciphers)
1 kitchen cart
2 luggage carts
4 solo motorcycles (motor prescriptions) A number of solo and sidecar motorcycles
Also, wagon and motorcycle drivers.

Regiments and battalions are standardized with roughly the same signal equipment as other infantry regiments and battalions.



Motor ordinances (on Harley Davidson motorcycles).

From Source 5.

Before the Nimbus motorcycle became standard in the army, Harley Davidson was the brand of choice; however, it was somewhat heavier (1,200 cm³) than the Nimbus (750 cm³), which is why the choice ultimately fell in favor of it Danish brand.

When the emergency force was set up in 1939, a large number of motorbikes of various brands were called up, e.g. also Harley Davidson.

However, uniform equipment was aimed for.

The Air Defense Division

The division is assumed to be equivalent to the anti-aircraft division in the *Infantry Battalion*.

1 motorcycle with
sidecar 2 anti-aircraft
vehicles

The sanitary personnel

The sanitary personnel are assumed to be equivalent to the sanitary personnel in the *Infantry Battalion*.

1 passenger car (doctor's) 1
medical car



Bicycle M.1903/30 2). From Source 5.

The cycling companies

The cycling company consists of:

- Chief, second-in-command, command officer and command group 4 platoons
- on platoons and 4 recoilless rifle groups.

The recoil rifle groups in the 4th platoon are equipped with recoil rifle feet and are called *tripod groups*.

The cyclist company's military strength is approx. 186 men.

Command group and train

Command group

1 group leader
 3 bicycle ordinances
 1 spare horn blower
 2 company observers 3 engine orderlies
 1 bicycle mechanic
 1 weaponsmaker

Train group

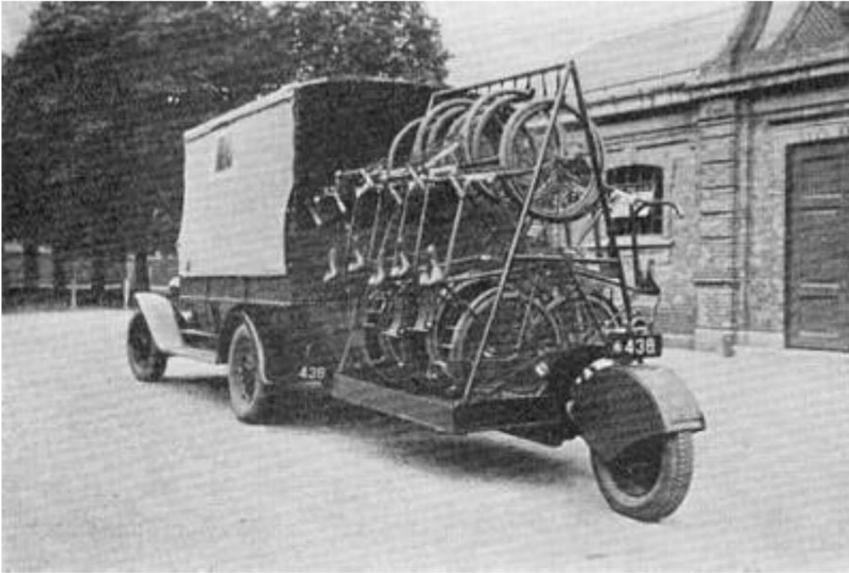
1 passenger car (company commander)
 1 motorcycle with sidecar (second in command)
 3 solo motorcycles (motor ordinances)
 2 fencing carts (I and II)
 1 workshop trailer, with trailer (10 spare bikes)
 Also drivers of motor vehicles and motorcycles.

On fencing cart I, i.a.

8 recoilless rifles (until delivery to the recoilless rifle shooters) 48 10-magazine pouches 64 magazine pouches of 5 magazines 10 explosives with incendiaries

On fencing wagon II, i.a.

8 recoilless rifles (until delivery to the recoilless rifle shooters) 40 10-magazine bags 80 magazine bags of 5 magazines 1 box of 48 hand grenades and 8 magazine bags



Workshop van with trailer and spare bikes, approx. 1940.
From Source 10.

There are thus a total of 16,000 units on each wagon. 8 mm cartridges.

On the cyclist company's workshop van, e.g. repair and spare parts for bicycles.

10 spare bicycles are carried on the trailer.

The recoil value divisions (1st - 3rd division)

Platoon troop

4 recoil rifle groups, each with

1 platoon leader
1 second-in-command 3 bicycle ordinances
1 caretaker

1 group leader and 7 men:
1 recoilless rifle shooter
1 helper
5 feeders (1 - 5)

Ammunition

Each man carries 1 cartridge bag of 40 cartridges, but the helpers only 10 cartridges. 20 of the group leaders' cartridges are armor cartridges.

The recoilless rifle shooter carries 1 2-magazine pouch, in the waist belt.

Trefods divisions (4. division)

Platoon troop

4 tripod groups, each with

1 platoon leader
1 second-in-command 3 bicycle ordinances
1 caretaker

1 group leader and 7 men:
1 tripod shooter
1 helper
5 providers (provider 5 is tripod carrier, assisted by provider 4)

Ammunition

Each man carries 1 cartridge bag of 40 cartridges, but the helpers only 10 cartridges. 20 of the group leaders' cartridges are armor cartridges.

The recoilless rifle shooter carries 1 2-magazine pouch, in the waist belt.

Ready for battle

The groups include...

The following from the bikes/fencing carts...

Recoil Rifle Shooter Recoil Rifle

Assistant 1 1 interchangeable barrel (with holster) and 1 10-mag pouch

Provide 1 10-mag pouch

Provide 2 10-mag pouch

Provide 3 10-mag pouch

Provide 4 10-magazine bag In the tripod group: with special cartridges

Provide 5 10-mag pouch In the tripod group: recoil-host tripod

Due to the workload of the cyclists, delivery from the fencing wagons takes place as late as possible and often partially.

Thus, e.g. recoil pad feet and ammunition in 5-mag pouches are supplied as required.

The tactical use of the cyclist company

Cyclists and motorcyclists are infantry and when solving their tasks use the same formations and principles that apply to other infantry units. However, special consideration must be given to vehicles (bicycles, motorcycles and motor vehicles), which must be placed and secured in such a way that they can be used again.

In general

Team 1 Squad leader, recoilless gunner, helper and supply 1

A group of cyclists is divided into two teams:

Team 2 Supplies 2-5



Detached cyclists from the Guard Hussar Regiment, approx. 1935 [3](#)).

Before fencing, people sit down and the bikes are put together or placed irregularly in road ditches, along fences or the like.

In all cases, they must be carefully hidden from view from the air.

Although the requirement for aircraft shelters has been relaxed, the principle is clear.

After the strength has worn off, you can move on to fencing with movable or non-movable handcycles.

Unless otherwise ordered, the 2nd team remains at the bicycles, under the command of supply 2, i.e. with movable handcycles.

In the platoon framework, the platoon remains at the 2nd teams, all under the command of the platoon's deputy commander. The handcycles can be moved either on foot or by driving a handcycle. If the division is deployed with non-movable handcycles, they are secured by 2 bicycle ordinances.

Intelligence and patrol service

The main difference between the cyclists and the motorcyclists is their greater mobility, which makes them suitable for long-distance patrol and reconnaissance tasks.



Observation service [4](#)). [__](#)

The cyclists are able to get to a target silently, while the motorcyclists, due to the engine noise, make them less useful in the actual investigation service, just as, for reasons of driving safety, they cannot

hears or sees particularly well from the motorcycles.

The cyclists can observe from the roads or, secluded and with the bikes hidden, from overview points in the terrain.



Patrol duty. From Source 11.

An independent bicycle patrol approaching a forest or village that the enemy may have occupied is dismounted in time - that is, before the patrol is within effective firing range of the forest or village.

At a suitable distance from the location, the squad leader prepares for battle, and then - with attached bayonet and in scattered order - moves forward with Team 2, covered by Team 1.

If the group is a forward patrol, it must, on the other hand, drive forward more boldly, as it can get help from the vanguard (cyclist division) in the event of shelling.

Match

The great mobility of the cyclist forces in connection with their relatively large combat power makes them particularly suitable for being sent ahead of the other troops, either to slow down an advancing opponent or to maintain a certain terrain until own troops arrive.

The cycling force must retain its freedom of action for as long as possible and will therefore often only deploy its 1st teams. The fire positions must therefore be chosen with care, so that the automatic weapons can work against the enemy at medium or long distances, without the cyclist force being forced into close combat that will impede freedom of movement



Tripod group in position. From Source 9.

By virtue of its tasks, the cycling force will more often be grouped in width than in depth. As far as possible, a suitable reserve on bicycle must therefore be kept, which can be deployed according to the conditions - either to reinforce the positions or for support when the match has to be interrupted.

Cyclist and motorcyclist forces will only exceptionally be used in a decisive attack as ordinary infantry, but due to their mobility will usually be used to attack the enemy in the flank or rear, alternatively as a mobile reserve.

During the ensuing battle, platoons and groups move back in stages so that they can mutually help each other back from capture positions.



Motorcyclist force on the march 5).

The motorcyclist company

The motorcycle company is organized as follows:

Chief, Deputy commander, command officer and command group 1 motorcycle platoon (platoon platoon and 4 groups) 1 motorcycle gun platoon (platoon platoon, 4 motorcycle gun groups)
Train (fencing and baggage training).

The motorcycle company's military strength is approx. 112 men.

The soldiers are wearing overalls M.1938 and engine hood M.1938.

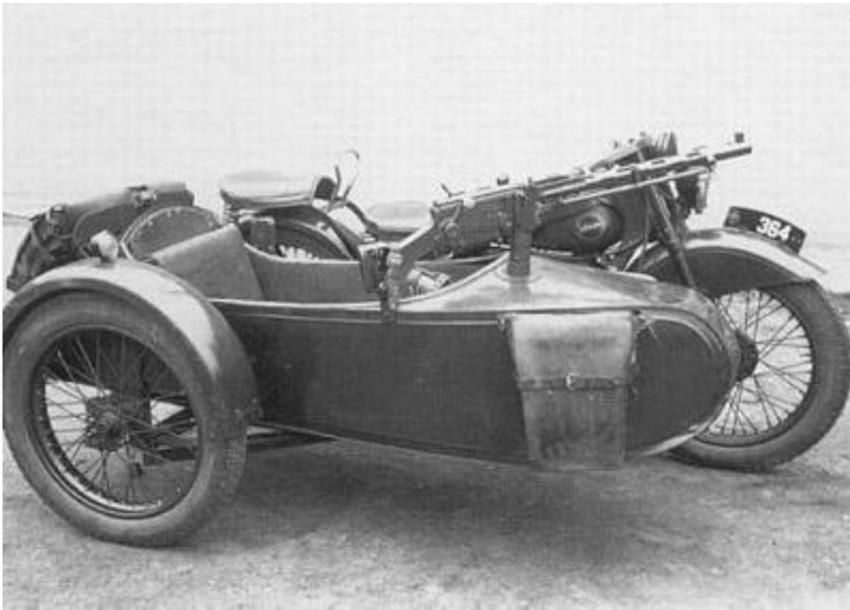
The command group

1 command officiant (leader of the command group)
1 reserve horn blower
1 driver for wagons
1 weapon mechanic

train

1 workshop trolley
1 kitchen trolley
1 luggage trolley
1 ammunition wagon

Also drivers of motor vehicles and motorcycles.



Nimbus motorcycle with machine gun M.1929. From Source 5.

Probably, the commander and second-in-command, by analogy with the cyclist companies, have a passenger car or a motorcycle with a sidecar at their disposal.

It is also conceivable that the commanding officer, by analogy with the cavalry's motorcycle squadrons, had a motorcycle with a sidecar.

In addition, a number of motor ordinances have been entered into in the command group.

Although the motorcycle company was equipped with recoilless rifles, the photo is included to show the transport position of a recoilless rifle/machine gun. During the march, where combat is not expected, the flask is attached with a strap to a hanger on the sidecar.

The motorcyclist division

Platoon	1 platoon leader 1 ranger 1 motorcycle driver	1 motorcycle with sidecar (share driver's machine)
	1 second-in-command 1 foot orderly 1 motorcycle driver	1 motorcycle with sidecar
	2 division ordinances (No. 1 and No. 2)	2 solo motorcycles
4 groups	1 group driver 1 tripod carrier (supplies 3) 1 motorcycle driver	1 motorcycle with sidecar (group leader machine)

1 tripod shooter
1 motorcycle rider

1 motorcycle with sidecar
(shooting machine)

1 supplies 1
1 motorcycle driver

1 motorcycle with sidecar (supply
machine)

1 helper 1
supply 2 1
orderly (motorcycle driver)

1 motorcycle with sidecar (order
machine)



New Nimbus motorcycles ready for delivery. From Source 5.

Ammunition

The groups each entail:

- 14 pcs. 10-magazine bags = 2,800 cartridges on 4 motorcycle sidecars 4 pcs. 2
- magazine pouches = 160 cartridges on tripod shooter and 3 feeders

A total of 2,960 cartridges, of which 800 special cartridges (= armor cartridges).



Nimbus motorcycle, with recoil rifle M. 1924 in air target pivot.

From the cutting sheet Denmark's Army and Navy.

If the drawing is compared with photographs of Nimbus motorcycles, it is a very good reproduction.

The draftsman has nicely included the transport bracket for the recoilless rifle, but has hastily equipped the sidecar with a door, which seems to have no basis in reality.



Standing installation position - shooting at aerial targets. From Source 12.

Air defense could be one of the motorcycle platoon's tasks, either alone or in cooperation with the battalion's anti-aircraft vehicles, but probably rather detached and with the recoilless rifle set up in the tripod.

The motorcycle gun division

Platoon 1 platoon leader 1 ranger
1 motorcycle
driver

1 motorcycle with sidecar (the
driver's car)

1 second-in-command 1
orderly 1 motorcycle driver

1 motorcycle with sidecar

2 suppliers (ammunition drivers) 2 motorbikes with ammunition sidecars 2 motorbike
drivers

4 groups 1 group driver
1 supply 3 1
motorcycle driver

1 motorcycle with sidecar
(group leader machine)

1 gunner 1
helper (motorcycle driver)

1 cannon motorcycle
(cannon machine)

1 supplies 1 1
supplies 2 (motorcycle rider)

1 ammunition motorcycle
(ammunition machine)

Ammunition The groups each carry:

- 60 rounds on the cannon machine 180
- rounds on the ammunition machine

A total of 240 cartridges per group.

On the ammunition drivers' ammunition sidecars:

- 12 magazines of 15 cartridges = 180 cartridges, or 90 per group.



20 mm maskinkanon Model 1938.
From Source 5.



*Ammunition motorcycle, with
the transport wheel of the field lavette.*
From Source 6.

20 mm maskinkanon M.1938

For a more detailed description of the machine gun, refer to the *Infantry Battalion - The Rifle Company, Part 4*.



20 mm machine gun, set up to fire from the transport wheels. (Danish Industry Syndicate).
From Source 10 [6](#).



20 mm machine gun, mounted for firing on the ground. (Danish Industry Syndicate).
From Source 10.

See also On Danish Cavalry 1932-1940, Supplement to Part 2 for a picture of a machine gun set up to fire from the sidecar.

Tactical use

The motorcyclist company is the armored protection of the cyclist battalion and is rarely deployed as a unified unit. Instead, work is done in halves consisting of a motorcyclist group and a gun group. The four halves are deployed together with the cyclist companies or parts thereof.

The motorcyclist company usually fights on foot, like the cyclist companies, but, unlike these, can fight from the machines - especially in sudden attacks on the march, where the machine guns fight tanks or armored vehicles; the recoilless rifles can also fire from the sidecar at suddenly appearing targets. However, if the enemy has first moved into position, the motorcycles are too vulnerable a target, which is why they must be abandoned or placed in cover, and the battle is fought on foot.

During the advance, the biker forces are useful to secure given points until the bikers arrive, and similarly during the ensuing battle.

The 4th Battalion's battle in South Jutland on 9 April 1940 demonstrates the tactics and cooperation with the cyclists in practice, see e.g. the description of the force at Hokkerup in The Danish Army on April 9th, 1940, Supplement to Part 1.

Sources

1. *Provisional exercise regulations for infantry cyclist companies*, Ministry of War, Copenhagen 1938.
2. *Field service and fencing for cyclist and motorcyclist forces*, supplement to the Textbook for Army Privates, 11. Part, for the infantry, Ministry of War, Copenhagen 1940.
3. *Stuck in need - Funen Life Regiment 1614-1964* by Hans Henrik Jacobsen, Odense 1964.
4. *Zealand Life Regiment through 350 years (1614-1964)* by FH Hartvig, Slagelse 1964.
5. *The automobile in the army 1908-1983* by Frank Pedersen, 1983.
6. *Gardehusarkasernen on 29 August 1943* by Anders D. Henriksen, Forlaget Devantier, Næstved 1993, ISBN 87-984530-0-9.
7. *Field equipment for Individuals*, Ministry of War, Copenhagen 1936, with correction sheets up to august 1941.
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9. *The Defense Book* by Colonel T. Andersen, Gyldendal, Copenhagen 1941.
10. *The automatic precision and unity weapon of the modern battlefield - Madsen Machine guns and infantry cannon system Madsen IX* af Colonel Halvor Jessen, Dansk Industri Syndikat, København 1938.
11. *Textbook for Infantry Corporal Schools - Field Service*, Ministry of War, Copenhagen 1940.
12. *Textbook for Infantry Corporal Schools - Shooting*, Ministry of War, Copenhagen 1938.

Postscript - condition in case of defect

One of the things I wondered myself when I started reading about cyclist forces was how one behaves when e.g. a bicycle punctures. The answer is in and of itself quite simple and is given in Source 1:



Soldiers from one of the 4th Battalion's cyclist companies who took part in the skirmish at Bredevad, photographed at Hellevad on 9 April 1940 7). —

If a cyclist cannot continue driving due to a fault with the bike, he immediately turns out of the column, if possible to the right, and investigates the cause of the accident.

If the cyclist can correct the error himself, this is done, and he then follows the unit in front of him when he is ready to ride again. If the cyclist cannot remedy the damage himself, he waits for the workshop van to arrive, as the waiting time is used to prepare the bicycle for delivery.

When the cyclist is ready to drive again, he continues at normal speed, staying in front of the workshop van as far as possible. In the event of temporary stops in the column, personnel who have thus had to step out search for their place in the column.

A picture of some of the cyclists who were in combat on 9 April 1940 must be a fitting end to the description of the Cyclist Regiment.

Per Finsted

To note:

- 1) The reserve team consists of: 2 observers, 3 reserve people, 1 reserve horn blower and 1 caretaker.
- 2) In contrast to the cavalry's bicycle squadrons, the bicycles in the bicycle companies are only equipped with a rear ammunition carrier (Source 8). The bike shown here is equipped with a rifle mount for the recoil rifle - the "cord" from the rifle mount to the bar looks somewhat improvised, but it may be

the authorized mode of operation.

3) From the Guards *Hussar Regiment 1912-1937* by Colonel Alf Giersing, The Hoffenberg Establishment, Copenhagen 1937.

4) From *Spring training and cooperation between engineers and infantry*, Folk & Værn, no. 5 (May/June) 1942.

5) From Folk and Værn, No. 9 (December) 1942.

6) The images come from the Danish Industry Syndikat's advertising material. The gunner is wearing a uniform etc. in the style of the army, but he is an employee at the factory, not a military person.

7) From the booklet *9 April in pictures*, Poul Branners Forlag, Copenhagen 1940.