

English Mounted Infantry, Supplement

Introduction

In my article English mounted infantry it is mentioned that the illustration of the mounted infantryman of the Royal Irish Rifles was used as a motif on a postcard in Gale & Polden's *History and Tradition* postcard series. I have just acquired the mentioned postcard as well as another one with this special unit as a motif.

Postcard



Mounted Infantry, ca. 1910.

Reproduced from a contemporary postcard.

The text on the postcard reads as follows:

"There are no regular regiments of Mounted Infantry in the British Army, but companies from each battalion serving at home are sent to the Mounted Infantry School at Longmoor [near Aldershot] for special training, which lasts four months.

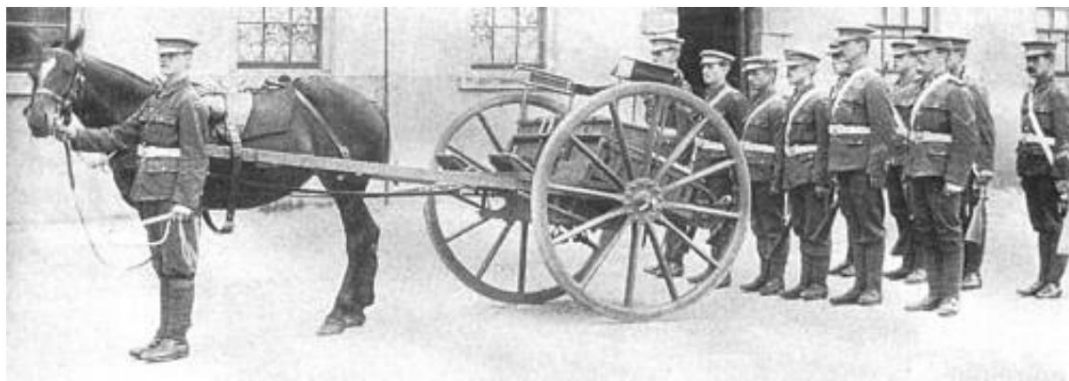
Only fully trained non-commissioned officers and men are selected for training and must be good shots, active, energetic, of good physique and medically fit for ready service, in addition to being thoroughly efficient and well-executed soldiers. After training, they rejoin their regiments. In case an expedition is sent on active service, battalions of mounted infantry consist of four companies, each company from a different regiment, forming part of each division, mounted brigade, and army troop.

Battalions of mounted infantry are constantly maintained in South Africa. In recent campaigns in Egypt, Mashonaland, and elsewhere, battalions have formed part of the expeditionary force, and have invariably distinguished themselves by their bravery and discipline. During the South African War several battalions of mounted infantry were raised, and some of the most gallant deeds during the campaign were performed by officers and men of this branch of the service."

Organisation

Although organizational considerations may be rather theoretical, *the ABC of the Army* (Source 1) mentions

however, a different organization than the above, as it is stated here that a mounted infantry battalion on field footing consists of 3 companies and a machine gun division (*section*). Two such battalions constitute a mounted brigade. The company is organized into a staff division and 4 infantry divisions (*sections*). Each division consists of teams (*groups*) of 4 men, of which 1 is the team leader.



Machine Gun Group, 2nd Bn. King's Regiment, 1902-1904.
From Source 3.

History does not report anything about how the machine guns of the mounted infantry were transported. It may have been on pack horses or on a cart like this one.

See also my article Uniform Plancher - Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars, 1897-1915 for alternative transport options.



English mounted infantryman, corporal,

from 4th Bn. Manchester Regiment, c. 1905.

Reproduced from a contemporaneous postcard, sent 22 July 1907.

The postcard itself is quite whimsical, as the horse and rider are inserted on top of the background. During the reproduction process, the map is then coloured, not in all details but so that the large lines appear in colour. A closer inspection thus reveals that the soldier's shoulder band (*shoulder title*) is not colored. It will presumably have been red, with white writing 1).

4th Bn. Manchester Regiment

The battalion was established on 24 February 1900 in Aldershot. From 1901 to 1905 the battalion was stationed in Cork, Ireland, after which it was disbanded as a regular infantry battalion in 1906.



Fra *The British Army of 1914* at R.
Money Barnes, Seeley
Service & Co. Ltd., London
1968.

Subsequently, it became part of the regular army's reserve units (*Extra Reserve*), which during the First World War functioned as a personnel replacement unit.

Closing

The mounted infantry was disbanded in 1912. The horses and duties were taken over by the cavalry - 15th (The King's) Hussars and 19th (Queen Alexandra's Own Royal) Hussars - and the later cycled infantry companies 2).

The type of weapon was continued in i.a. Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, from which many units came to make a major contribution during the First World War.

It has not been possible to trace under what circumstances the mark shown on the paper's first postcard was possibly used. In accordance with the other postcards in the History & Tradition series, it should have been a department badge, but as the soldiers were commissioned from their respective battalions, and wore their markings, an independent department badge does not seem to have been in use - perhaps there was a kind of badge of service.

Sources

1. *ABC of the Army* by Captain J. Atkinson (ed.), Gale & Polden, Aldershot, 1910.
2. *Old Military Postcards* at Thomas McGuirl, Military Modelling, marts 1987.
3. *The King's Regiment 1685-1994* The magazine Regiment Nr. 3, August/September 1994.

Also see the Mounted Infantry section on the Land Forces of website

Britain, the Empire Commonwealth as well as Mounted Infantry on

LoveToKnow's 1911 Online Encyclopedia. Per Finsted

To note:

1) See e.g. my article The English Field Uniform Model 1902 for a reproduction of such a shoulder badge.

2) See e.g. my articles On British Cyclist Units in the First World War, Part 1 and Part 2.