

**The British Regular Mounted Infantry 1880 – 1913**

**Cavalry of Poverty or Victorian Paradigm?**

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## **Abstract**

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The British Army's regular Mounted Infantry was arguably one of the most important innovations of the late Victorian and Edwardian armies. This thesis explores the regular Mounted Infantry model from its origins in extemporised infantry detachments overseas to its formal organisation as non-cavalry mounted troops before the First World War and juxtaposes its organisation and changing roles with its fractious relationship with the cavalry. Using four campaigns as case studies, the thesis provides a comparative assessment of the Mounted Infantry's military effectiveness that culminated in it becoming the successful archetype for the British soldier in South Africa in the years 1901- 02. The Mounted Infantry's uniqueness compared to other nations' armies is considered and the thesis identifies how other armies satisfied the requirement for mobile firepower. The Mounted Infantry was abolished in 1913 prior to the First World War. The reasons influencing this decision are analysed and indicate that the Mounted Infantry's abolition owed more to politics than lack of military utility. The thesis concludes that rather than an impecunious alternative to an inadequate cavalry, the Mounted Infantry paradigm satisfied a particular need borne out of colonial campaigning.

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## Declaration

I hereby declare that my thesis entitled '**The British Regular Mounted Infantry 1880 – 1913: Cavalry of Poverty or Victorian Paradigm?**' is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text, and is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Buckingham or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my thesis has already been submitted, or is concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma, or other qualification at the University of Buckingham or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

A modest yet fitting epitaph for the military innovation that was the British Army regular Mounted Infantry acknowledged that ‘for forty years the Mounted Infantry played a not inconsiderable part in many small wars and a major role in our one large conflict’.<sup>1</sup> Indeed the role of the Mounted Infantry in the aforementioned ‘one large conflict’, that of the South African Anglo-Boer War of 1899 – 1902,<sup>2</sup> has been considered to represent the apogee of the British Army regular Mounted Infantry model.<sup>3</sup> This appears to be a surprising if not counterintuitive assertion as this particular conflict is recognised to have exposed the weaknesses of the mounted branches of the British Army, particularly the British cavalry and its officers.<sup>4</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>1</sup> G. Tylden, ‘Mounted Infantry’, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 72, 1943 – 4, pp. 176-79; Colonel C.E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (London: HMSO, 1906), p.21, recognised the imprecision of the phrase ‘small wars’ but in turn, offered the definition of all campaigns other than where both the opposing sides consisted of regular troops, by implication often campaigns against indigenous tribes, and to include the suppression of rebellion and insurgency. The use of the descriptive word ‘small’, as noted by Callwell, did not necessarily reflect the numerical size of either combatant’s forces.

<sup>2</sup> John Laband, *The Transvaal Rebellion: the First Boer War 1880 -1881* (Harlow: Pearson, 2005), p.4, (hereafter referred to as the ‘Boer War’), Laband argues for the revised appellation of ‘South African War’ for this conflict to indicate that this not only reflects the involvement of the Boers and British but that large numbers of non-white people and native Africans participated or were caught up in the war. However, to avoid confusion or unnecessary repetitive explanation, the well-recognised term ‘Boer War’ will be retained, particularly to ensure clarity from the earlier Anglo-Transvaal Rebellion or War of 1880 – 81.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Robinson, ‘The search for mobility during the Second Boer War’, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 86, 2008, pp. 140 -57.

<sup>4</sup> E.M. Spiers, ‘The British Cavalry 1902 – 14’, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 57, 1979, pp. 71-79; Anthony Clayton, *The British Officer* (London: Pearson, 2006), p.120.

considering the contemporaneous enthusiasm for Mounted Infantry in the British Army at the end of the Boer War and its popularity with senior army commanders, particularly Field Marshal Roberts and Field Marshal Wolseley, the Mounted Infantry's subsequent precipitous decline until its abolition immediately before the First World War appears remarkable. Equally, it is surprising that so little attention has been paid to the Mounted Infantry by historians.<sup>5</sup> With longevity of just over thirty years, the Mounted Infantry movement remains something of an enigma and a historical review of the Mounted Infantry is long overdue.

The history and details of the regular army Mounted Infantry are poorly documented.<sup>6</sup> As the Mounted Infantry was only ever a temporary entity, configured in crisis, or latterly for peacetime manoeuvres, this state of organisational impermanence has contributed to its historical obscurity. Thus there are no formal unit histories of the Mounted Infantry, unlike other regiments, and the Mounted Infantry did not feature in the peacetime *Army Lists*. Only the multi-volume history of the King's Royal Rifle Corps (KRRC) devotes any sizeable number of pages to the Mounted Infantry in a single

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<sup>5</sup> E.M. Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868 – 1902* (Manchester: University Press, 1992); Marquess of Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry 1816-1919*, 4, 1899 – 1913 (London: Leo Cooper, 1986), refer to the regular Mounted Infantry in twelve out of 333 pages and eleven out of 502 pages respectively; Richard Holmes, *Soldiers* (London: Harper Press, 2011) and Allan Mallinson, *The Making of the British Army* (London: Bantam, 2009), both recent general histories of the British Army, do not refer to the Mounted Infantry specifically; Frederick Myatt, *The Soldier's Trade: British Military Developments 1660 – 1914* (London: Purnell Book Services Ltd, 1974), an older text charting doctrinal changes in the British Army, refers to the regular Mounted Infantry only on four occasions; Spencer Jones, *From Boer War to World War: tactical reform of the British Army 1902 – 1914* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), redresses the balance to some extent by devoting six out of 258 pages to the Mounted Infantry.

<sup>6</sup> P.A. Talbot, 'The Regular Mounted Infantry', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 82, 2004, pp. 306-24.

volume, in recognition of that regiment's pre-eminent association with the Mounted Infantry both in terms of a numerical contribution of officers and men to its ranks but also the role of the guiding light of Edward Hutton, the doyen of Mounted Infantry, who hailed from the KRRC.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the historiography of the Mounted Infantry appears fragmented, distributed elusively throughout a myriad of regimental histories, campaign chronicles and military texts dealing with the Victorian and Edwardian British Army and without a complete history of the Mounted Infantry movement having been published. Thus the assembling of information and evidence regarding the Mounted Infantry remains challenging. In general, outside of personal memoirs,<sup>8</sup> references to the Mounted Infantry have been primarily as footnotes to the Boer War, in connection with Wolseley's army reforms or peripheral to the cavalry's firepower versus *arme blanche* debate.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, despite having been an important topic of military debate in the late Victorian army in its own right, most discussions about the Mounted Infantry then and now seem inextricably caught up with the arguments over the future of the

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<sup>7</sup> Major General Sir Steuart Hare, *The Annals of the King's Royal Rifle Corps*, IV (London: John Murray, 1929).

<sup>8</sup> E.A.H. Alderson, *With the Mounted Infantry and the Mashonaland Field Force 1896* (London: Methuen & Co., 1898); Anon, *Seventeen Months' Trekking with the Royal Irish Rifles Mounted Infantry*, (Hertford: Henderson & Spalding, 1909); Major F.M. Crum, *With the Mounted Infantry in South Africa: being side-lights on the Boer Campaign 1899 – 1902* (Cambridge: Macmillan & Bowes, 1903); Brevet Major W.J. Ottley, *With Mounted Infantry in Tibet* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1906) are among the more well-known publications of personal memoirs and experiences.

<sup>9</sup> Mallinson, *The Making of the British Army*, p.260; E.M. Spiers, 'The Late Victorian Army 1868 – 1914' *The Oxford Illustrated History of the British Army* (Oxford: University Press, 1994), D. Chandler & I. Beckett (eds.) pp. 189-214; Stephen Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry 1880 – 1918* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008) are well-known examples.



British cavalry.<sup>10</sup> Recently, even in more specialised historical texts dealing with the Victorian Army including those by Edward Spiers, the Marquess of Anglesey and, recently, Stephen Badsey,<sup>11</sup> the Mounted Infantry remains the junior partner to the cavalry in both doctrinal debate and in analysis of colonial campaigns.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the Mounted Infantry still risks being disregarded as an important military organisation even in recent historical scholarship where the Mounted Infantry movement is overlooked almost completely.<sup>13</sup> Thus, in the absence of previous detailed historical analyses, this thesis will redress the fragmentary treatment of the Mounted Infantry from the Victorian and Edwardian army historiography, and, by examining

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<sup>10</sup> Stephen Badsey, *The British Army in Battle and its Image* (London: Continuum, 2009), p.65; Gervase Phillips, 'The Obsolescence of the *Arme Blanche* and Technological Determinism in British Military History', *War in History*, 9 (1), 2002, pp. 39-59; Jones, *From Boer War to World War*, pp.190-96; Nick Evans, 'Sport and Hard Work: Tactics, Reform and Equestrianism in the British Cavalry 1900 – 1914', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 89, 2011, pp.139-58.

<sup>11</sup> Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868 – 1902*; Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, 4; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry* are the texts referred to above.

<sup>12</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p. 3, the term 'doctrine' in this context, adopting the definition expressed by Badsey, is taken to represent a formal expression of military knowledge and thought, accepted by the army and relevant at any particular time. It covers the nature of current warfare and it endeavours to anticipate future conflicts and prepare the army for such conflicts and the methods of engaging in them to achieve success. It is recognised that alternative definitions of army doctrine exist and include the military theorist J.F.C Fuller's definition of doctrine as 'a central idea of an army' and the more recent NATO definition of doctrine as 'principles by which military forces guide their actions in support of objectives. It is authoritative, but requires judgement in application'; Gary Sheffield 'Doctrine and Command in the British Army: An Historical overview' British Army Publication: *Operations* (Shrivenham: DCDC, 2010), E2 – E25, the British Army has tended previously, until 1989, to expound a more informal approach to doctrine. Throughout the Victorian period, this approach relied upon personalisation of command as well as local knowledge passed between successive commanders garrisoning or campaigning in regions across the Empire; Lieutenant Colonel Mike Snook, *Into the Jaws of Death: British Military Blunders 1879 – 1900* (London: Frontline, 2008); Dennis Judd, *Someone Has Blundered: Calamities of the British Army in the Victorian Age* (London: Weidenfeld, 1973, paperback ed. Phoenix, 2007), as further examples of this phenomenon and in particular, when this approach has gone awry.

<sup>13</sup> Stephen Manning, *Soldiers of the Queen* (Stroud: Spellmount, 2009); Byron Farwell, *Mr Kipling's Army* (London: W.W.Norton & Co.,1987), do not mention the Mounted Infantry at all; Timothy Bowman and Mark Connelly, *The Edwardian Army: recruiting, training and deploying the British Army 1902 – 1914* (Oxford: University Press, 2012), merely note the Mounted Infantry Schools of Instruction.

the Mounted Infantry's doctrine, organisational inception, evolution, military experiences and, ultimately, its demise, restore the British Army regular Mounted Infantry to a position of qualified, yet arguably deserved, prominence.

Before the inception and development of the regular Mounted Infantry can be explored, a problem of nomenclature and definition arises. An imprecise and interchangeable use of the terms 'Mounted Infantry' and 'Mounted Rifles' occurs throughout both primary sources and relevant historiography, which can mislead or confuse. The term 'Mounted Infantry' will be used to refer to selected and fully-trained infantrymen, often marksmen, whose mobility was enhanced by mounting on horses, ponies, mules, camels or even carts.<sup>14</sup> Crucially, these soldiers were trained to fight on foot as infantrymen and instructed to consider their mounts merely as means of improved locomotion to and indeed over the battlefield in comparison to their infantry battalion colleagues. Mounted Infantry were not trained to fight mounted as cavalry and therefore they did not receive training in sword or lance nor the shock tactics of a mounted charge.<sup>15</sup> Intended to deliver mobile firepower, the Mounted Infantry, demonstrating exemplary infantry skills with rifle and bayonet, were 'in no sense cavalry'.<sup>16</sup> Thus, although such official documents stressed that the Mounted Infantry was not to be considered a cavalry force,

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<sup>14</sup> British Army Publication, *Operations*, 0724d, 'mobility', in its military context, refers to the speed or rapidity of transfer of a military force to where it is required. Conversely, the term 'manoeuvre', which has 'both spatial and temporal dimensions', relates to the flexibility of planned transfer and subsequent deployment of forces as required by its commander.

<sup>15</sup> *Mounted Infantry Training 1906* (London: HMSO, 1906), p.17.

<sup>16</sup> *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1897* (London: HMSO, 1889), p.36.

other official publications accepted that, whilst only intended to be an adjunct to the cavalry, a lack of cavalry, particularly on colonial campaign, might require the Mounted Infantry to undertake the more cavalry-orientated roles such as reconnaissance, outpost duties, flanking patrols, advanced and rearguards.<sup>17</sup> This nuanced contention would be fundamental to both a misunderstanding and a misrepresentation of the Mounted Infantry as a fighting force that eventually contributed to its downfall.

Conversely, 'Mounted Rifles' were mounted, usually horsed, soldiers expected to undertake the majority of traditional cavalry roles except the sabre-wielding mounted charge. Mounted Rifles were organised generally along the same lines as cavalry, unlike the infantry organisation of Mounted Infantry, and constituted a more 'irregular' and thus frequently volunteer cavalry. Archetypically, Mounted Rifles were colonial in origin, formed from citizen volunteers with pre-existing skills in riding and shooting who, even with prior service in their homeland's militia, generally lacked enough training to be considered by definition, Mounted Infantry or cavalry. Conversely, a natural proficiency in riding and shooting, resulting from a predominantly rural lifestyle, made these part-time soldiers eminently suitable as Mounted Rifles. Reliant on firearm rather than sword, Mounted Rifles adhered to a form of simplified cavalry drill predicated on fighting dismounted like the Mounted Infantry. However, when dismounted, Mounted Rifles fought in the manner of dismounted regular cavalry, eschewing prolonged fire fights. In

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<sup>17</sup>*Regulations and Field Service Manual for Mounted Infantry 1897*, p.52.

the absence of previous infantry training, Mounted Rifles, unlike Mounted Infantry, were not required to master and apply standard infantry tactics.

As Badsey noted in his important work on the renaissance of the British Cavalry between 1880 and 1918,<sup>18</sup> and Jean Bou reflected in his history of the Australian Light Horse,<sup>19</sup> itself an adaptation of the Mounted Rifles model, imprecision in terminology has contributed to confusion and criticism of Mounted Infantry and Mounted Rifles or its derivatives such as the Light Horse.<sup>20</sup> To complicate matters still further, as Badsey has further noted, the actual concept of what constituted Mounted Infantry changed significantly between 1860 and 1899 with a greater formalisation of procurement of men and equipment, organisation, training and an expanding role on the battlefield.<sup>21</sup> Even if the differences between Mounted Infantry and Mounted Rifles were at least theoretically clear, any practical differences between Mounted Infantry, Mounted Rifles and cavalry blurred, if not disintegrated, in the Boer War between 1900 and 1902.<sup>22</sup> The orthodox view indicates that this loss of differentiation was most acutely resented by those in the cavalry although this remains a generalisation with notable exceptions.<sup>23</sup> Clearly, the

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<sup>18</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, pp.14-15.

<sup>19</sup> Jean Bou, *Light Horse* (Cambridge: University Press, 2010), p.3.

<sup>20</sup> Bou, *Light Horse*, *ibid* & p.47.

<sup>21</sup> Stephen Badsey, 'The Boer War (1899 – 1902) and British Cavalry Doctrine: a re-evaluation', *Journal of Military History*, 71 (1), 2007, pp.75-98.

<sup>22</sup> Bou, *Light Horse*, p.x; Robinson, 'The search for mobility during the Second Boer War', p.143; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.14.

<sup>23</sup> Major General John Vaughan, *Cavalry and Sporting Memories* (Bala: Bala Press, 1954), p.103; Stephen Badsey, 'The Boer War (1899 – 1902) and British Cavalry Doctrine', pp. 75-98; John Wilcox, *Fire Across the Veldt* (London: Allison and Busby, 2013), whilst only contemporary historical fiction,

contextual importance of differentiating between these three variants of the mounted arm will be fundamental in ascertaining the Mounted Infantry's importance within the British Army as the concept evolved after 1880.

However, irrespective of strict terminology, clearly the concept of a Mounted Infantryman was not entirely novel and neither was the rationale encouraging the inception of the regular Mounted Infantry as part of the British Army, which was the desire to combine firepower and battlefield mobility to confer tactical advantage. In earlier centuries, this functionality had been the preserve of the 'dragoon' who fought dismounted using a primitive firearm. Whilst conceptually the Mounted Infantry appears to be a Victorian re-invention of the earlier dragoon archetype,<sup>24</sup> the term 'dragoon' by this stage now denoted a 'heavy', often armoured, cavalryman committed to the shock tactics of the regimental charge. However, the battlefield of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was changing. Improving rifle technology conferring greater accuracy and lower ballistic trajectories combined with faster reloading inherent in breech-loading technology, favoured defensive tactics.<sup>25</sup> The resulting greater firepower brought to bear by defenders onto the battlefield created a deeper zone of lethality for the attack to traverse and the extent of the lethal

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the protagonist, commanding a Mounted Infantry company, faces continued hostility from cavalry officers; Stephen Badsey, 'Mounted Combat in the Second Boer War', *Sandhurst Journal of Military Studies*, 2, 1991, pp. 11-27, notes how the increased use of rapid dismounting and maintaining territorial gain using musketry was remarked upon approvingly, but perhaps surprisingly, by Douglas Haig who is generally considered antipathetic to the Mounted Infantry; Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, 4, p.39, recounted how the 18<sup>th</sup> Hussars were considered to be the 'best mounted infantry regiment in the country' during the Boer War despite the regiment's early humiliation in 1899 when much of the regiment and its commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Möller, were captured at the battle of Talana.

<sup>24</sup>Talbot, 'The Regular Mounted Infantry', pp. 306-24.

<sup>25</sup> Myatt, *The Soldier's Trade: British Military Developments*, pp.36-40.

zone necessitated wider flanking movements and geographically more extensive reconnaissance to circumvent defences than in previous centuries.<sup>26</sup> This defensive firepower made direct frontal attacks more costly in terms of casualties as shown by the defeats of the British Army early in the Boer War.<sup>27</sup> These changes to the battlefield accentuated the time-honoured requirement for troops with enough mobility and firepower capability to swiftly and successfully assault an enemy's weakest defensive point in order to secure victory. Until a greater use of machine guns and quick firing artillery occurred, only the infantry with its massed musketry was capable of such firepower on the battlefield. Certainly the cavalry, even in its dismounted role, was unable to match the infantry's firepower, in part reflecting the inferiority of the cavalry's carbine, which when compared to the infantry's rifle, was described as little better than a 'pop-gun'.<sup>28</sup> The numerical disparity between the size of an infantry battalion and a cavalry regiment exacerbated this inequality. Thus the combination of enhanced mobility with the firepower of the infantryman armed with the infantry rifle made the Mounted Infantry, the reincarnation of the traditional dragoon, a possible solution to the problems

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<sup>26</sup> Shelford Bidwell and Dominick Graham, *Fire-Power: British Army Weapons and Theories of War 1904 – 1945* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), pp.1-2; Tim Travers, *The Killing Ground: the British Army, the Western Front and the emergence of Modern Warfare 1900 – 1918* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), pp.37-38; Myatt, *The Soldier's Trade: British Military Developments*, pp.203-13.

<sup>27</sup> Major B.F.S Baden-Powell, *War in Practice: some tactical and other lessons of the campaign in South Africa 1899 – 1902* (London: Isbister & Co. Ltd, 1903), pp.4-41, frontal attacks at Magersfontein and Colenso are two of the better known defeats resulting from frontal attacks during the early months of the Boer War. On his arrival in South Africa, Roberts issued orders that forbade direct frontal attacks in preference to wide flanking attacks and subsequent enfilade.

<sup>28</sup> Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, p.241, carbines were shorter and lighter than the 'long' rifles carried by the infantry. Due to their shorter barrels they fired at a lower muzzle velocity and thus had a shorter range. Initially carbines were single-shot weapons but magazine versions of the Lee-Metford carbine and subsequently the Lee-Enfield carbine were produced in 1894 and 1896 respectively; J.F.C. Fuller, *The Last of the Gentlemen's Wars* (London: Faber, 1936), p.18.

of the modern battlefield. Throughout the thesis, evidence of this application of mobility and firepower to the battlefield will underpin the principal research questions.

As the regular Mounted Infantry model acquired increasing credence in the early 1880s, contrary to the previous pattern of hastily-improvised mounted sections abstracted in crisis from regular infantry battalions stationed overseas, a formal organisation, drill and approach to training was developed, triggering much discussion in military circles.<sup>29</sup> However this evolution did not occur in isolation from the rest of the British Army. Thus the wider implications and the reaction of the rest of the army will be considered in later chapters. The subsequent regular Mounted Infantry model was predicated on a planned abstraction of selected officers and men from their parent infantry battalions for periods of peacetime training. Moreover, as the British Empire expanded, the required number of colonial garrisons increased. This placed an additional burden predominantly on infantry battalions who were most likely to be embarked for imperial duties overseas, when compared to the numerically smaller cavalry establishment, and who would therefore be required to furnish the Mounted Infantry. This ongoing responsibility was exacerbated by a number of additional factors particularly the extensiveness of the imperial borders that needed defending; the ever-present yet uncertain risk of conflict with indigenous peoples that relied on an armed response by the local garrison; the difficult terrain along these borders with correspondingly poor communications and complex logistical demands

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<sup>29</sup> E.T.H. Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry* (London: Harrison & Sons, 1891), includes transcripts of the vigorous, and occasionally acrimonious, debates occurring after each lecture.

of the availability of food, water, forage, locally-sourced remounts,<sup>30</sup> and ammunition; inevitable delays in the arrival of reinforcements from Britain due to the lengthy sea voyage and, importantly, the lack of a formal written army doctrine for use as guidance in the field.

This was particularly pertinent in Africa where, at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the 91<sup>st</sup> Foot formed a Mounted Company whilst stationed in the Cape and the 75<sup>th</sup> Foot re-designated its light company as Mounted Infantry, armed with double-barrelled carbines and cutlasses, during the 6<sup>th</sup> Cape Frontier War of 1834.<sup>31</sup> The forty-strong mounted company of the 24<sup>th</sup> Foot, formed in 1875, was deemed a success by the General Officer Commanding Cape Colony, Sir Arthur Cunynghame, primarily due to the brevity of its training that permitted a rapid expansion in the number of mounted men.<sup>32</sup>

Unfortunately, such pragmatic expediency promoted the assumption that Mounted Infantry could be extemporised easily and quickly, a belief propagated tenaciously by senior army commanders for a number of reasons including a desire to prevent the Mounted Infantry becoming permanently established and consequently threatening the cavalry's mounted role, avoidance of adding to the Treasury's financial pressures and both ease and rapidity of formation during a colonial crisis. The precedence of successful improvisation, even when shown to be a hindrance to the Mounted Infantry, would come to symbolise its organisational impermanence, its apparent cost

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<sup>30</sup> Sir P. Marling VC, *Rifleman and Hussar* (London: John Murray, 1931; reprint Hay-on-Wye: O'Donoghue Books, 2009), pp. 27-28, described the inadequate number of remounts available with previous supplies being exhausted through recent warfare.

<sup>31</sup> Talbot, 'The Regular Mounted Infantry', pp. 306-24.

<sup>32</sup> Tylden, 'Mounted Infantry', pp. 176-79.



effectiveness and its utilitarian nature in the minds of senior army commanders<sup>33</sup> such as Roberts who demanded an immediate expansion of untrained Mounted Infantry when he took command of the army in South Africa in 1900.

Elsewhere in the Empire, similar experiments with the *ad hoc* mounting of British infantry garrisons to confer beneficial mobility to the troops occurred, for example, in New South Wales as early as 1825. As a contemporaneous and parallel development, locally-raised militia units began to form and grew to prominence following the eventual withdrawal of British infantry garrisons. Such colonial militia often evolved into Mounted Rifles units and eventually became the basis of a number of the national mounted forces of the self-governing Dominions such as the Australian Light Horse and the Cape Mounted Rifles, with the latter conceived as a colonial gendarmerie in 1855 before assimilation into the regular army in 1878.<sup>34</sup> With the evolution of embryonic Mounted Infantry and Mounted Rifles across the Empire, the stage was set for the appearance of non-cavalry mounted troops that would cause consequent conflict in the military thinking of the army.

In this thesis, to support an analytical review of the regular Mounted Infantry, six principal research questions will be investigated. Whilst these questions

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<sup>33</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, the collective term 'senior army commanders' refers to those with the rank of colonel or more senior. The exception to this definition will be Edward Hutton whose influential comments, even when ranked junior to colonel, are so fundamental to the history and development of the regular Mounted Infantry that they are noted in the evaluation of the research questions of this thesis.

<sup>34</sup> Jean Bou, '*Modern Cavalry: Mounted Rifles, the Boer War and the Doctrinal Debate*', *The Boer War: Army, Nation and Empire*, (Canberra: Army History Unit, 2000), Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey (eds.), pp.99-114; The Commandant, 'The Cape Mounted Rifles', *Cavalry Journal*, 4, 1909, pp. 283-92.

will be discussed, defined and clarified in more detail presently, in summary the topics are: an examination of the Mounted Infantry's position and role in the prevailing army doctrine, seeking to validate or revoke the espousal of the Mounted Infantry concept by senior army commanders, whilst determining the Mounted Infantry's interface with the cavalry; ascertaining whether the Mounted Infantry developed a specific identity underpinned by *esprit de corps*; analysing whether Mounted Infantry training delivered a 'fit for purpose' force and whether, in addition, service in the Mounted Infantry provided beneficial military experience for officers aspiring to higher command; fourth, investigating the Mounted Infantry's military performance on active service; clarifying whether the Mounted Infantry model translated to other armies in the Empire, Europe and beyond and if not, how these other armies solved the challenge of bringing mobile firepower to the battlefield and finally, evaluating the factors ultimately responsible for the demise of the Mounted Infantry just before the First World War. A wide range of primary and secondary sources will be used to answer these research questions including official British, Imperial and Foreign documents, official army appreciations, drill manuals and handbooks, personal papers, published memoirs (despite their inherent risk of bias),<sup>35</sup> campaign telegrams and reports, contemporaneous articles from military journals, historical texts,

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<sup>35</sup> Charles Kirke, *Red Coat, Green Machine: Continuity in Change in the British Army 1700 – 2000* (London: Continuum, 2009), pp.23-24, acknowledges the risk that memoirs, usually written at a distance in time from the event, may be selective in detail and used to cast the author or events in which the author was involved in a more favourable light, imbuing decisions and opinions with greater knowledge than apparent or possible at the time. However Kirke reminds that it is wrong to dismiss the genre of the military memoir completely. The immediacy of letters may make them more accurate than memoirs but letters are often, though not universally, adversely affected by the writer's lack of awareness of broader issues influencing situations and, if written to friends outside of the military, then may suffer from inadequacy of specific detail.

modern scholarly monographs and collections of essays as well as unpublished research scholarship. Nevertheless, despite such a plethora of source material, references to the regular Mounted Infantry remain fragmented thus arguably contributing to the Mounted Infantry's historical obscurity.

Although the rationale behind the inception of the regular Mounted Infantry has already been noted, its ongoing existence was dogged by persistent debate about the Mounted Infantry's role within the British Army's doctrine and, crucially, how the Mounted Infantry interfaced with the British cavalry. Jay Luvaas, in his work on British Army doctrine,<sup>36</sup> quoted Lieutenant Colonel Charles à Court Repington, a former Rifle Brigade officer and subsequently the military correspondent of *The Times*, who disparagingly called the Mounted Infantry (admittedly towards the end of its existence) the 'cavalry of poverty'. How valid was such barbed criticism coming from this influential commentator on military affairs? Furthermore, irrespective of how caustic these words appear, how accurate was their inference? The phrase suggests competition for the mounted role within the army, seemingly biased towards an inherent inferiority of the Mounted Infantry. Denoting the Mounted Infantry as 'cavalry' reflected both Repington's personal deprecation (rather than perhaps a less well informed commentator's confusion over nomenclature) as well as reflecting the doctrinal ambiguity that had arisen in the years after the Boer War over how the Mounted Infantry should be used on active service. It accuses the Mounted Infantry of being an impecunious

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<sup>36</sup> Jay Luvaas, *The Education of an Army: British Military Thought 1815 – 1940* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 316.

second-rate cavalry substitute whose existence owed more to fiscal constraint than to military innovation. Gervase Phillips, writing in defence of the cavalry, agreed that the inception of the Mounted Infantry owed more to Treasury parsimony than pioneering military innovation.<sup>37</sup> So, even if Repington's acerbic disparagement is redolent of partisanship, vilification and prejudice, was it the truth?

There is no doubt that prejudice existed in the late Victorian army. As David French has explained, a comparative but marked social hierarchy existed amongst regiments that placed the majority of cavalry regiments in the upper echelons.<sup>38</sup> Such a hierarchy, referred to as 'smartness', a concept that will be considered in detail in a subsequent chapter, ensured social exclusivity, class-assured existence, at times career progression through patronage, and was a proxy for influence and wealth.<sup>39</sup> For a new mounted branch of the army, devoid of permanent establishment and therefore without an immediately obvious regimental identity, the Mounted Infantry was perhaps institutionally disadvantaged and even though the Mounted Infantry maintained allegiances to their parent battalions within the regimental structure from which, at least until 1900, they were only temporarily abstracted, the Mounted Infantry's social cachet and politico-military influence fell well below that of its cavalry counterpart. The Mounted

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<sup>37</sup> Gervase Phillips, 'Scapegoat Arm: Twentieth-century Cavalry in Anglophone Historiography', *Journal of Military History*, 71(1), 2007, pp. 37-74.

<sup>38</sup> David French, *Military Identities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008), pp. 5-6.

<sup>39</sup> The future Field Marshal Sir William Robertson and the ultimately tragic figure of Major General Sir Hector Macdonald are the two best known examples of unexpected social mobility in the Victorian Army having both been commissioned from the ranks and eventually attaining senior rank.

Infantry's origins lay firmly in the infantry regiments of the line as the Brigade of Guards did not participate in abstraction for Mounted Infantry duties until 1902, with the exception of its anomalous participation in the Camel Corps of 1884-85. Thus the Mounted Infantry did not aspire to either cavalry panache<sup>40</sup> or Household Brigade glamour and nor did its organisation, training or deployment promote such opportunity or expectation. Therefore, when framing the first research question, does the 'cavalry of poverty' epithet accurately describe the existence of an indifferent force, a cheap 'make-do' cavalry substitute demonstrating professional mediocrity, an extemporised force that was designed to be a financially and organisationally inexpensive or whether, conversely, the Mounted Infantry satisfied a particular need in the late Victorian and Edwardian British Army? Did the Mounted Infantry fill a niche required by the peculiar circumstances of colonial expansion – in other words, was it a Victorian and Edwardian imperial paradigm? How did it fit into the army's thinking and how did the Mounted Infantry interface and work with its mounted arm compatriots in the British cavalry?

Conversely, if the Mounted Infantry was not a Victorian paradigm but merely an indifferent expedient conceived out of fiscal restriction, why did the Mounted Infantry concept receive such fulsome support from senior military officers including Wolseley and Roberts, arguably the era's two pre-eminent

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<sup>40</sup> Erskine Childers, *War and the Arme Blanche* (London: Edward Arnold, 1910), p.99, despite both contemporary and subsequent criticism of the tactics and losses in men and horses, the cavalry charges at Balaclava and Omdurman continued to be considered gallant demonstrations of cavalry élan. In South Africa in February 1900, the cavalry (and, interestingly, Mounted Infantry) action at Klip Drift, which opened the way to the relief of Kimberley, has been portrayed variably as either as a true cavalry charge or, as Childers maintained, merely an advance at speed in open order against a relatively weak Boer defence.

army commanders, as well as younger, aspiring enthusiasts particularly Edward Hutton, Edwin Alderson, and Ian Hamilton?<sup>41</sup> The Mounted Infantry, with its enhanced potential for active service, was not short of supporters or proponents yet the arm was not universally supported.<sup>42</sup> Predictably, the Mounted Infantry's critics were often cavalymen or ex-cavalry officers now serving in the Yeomanry. However it is hardly surprising that a novel force would face opposition from others with opposing vested interests in an institution as traditional as the British Army with its inherent tribalism and innate conservatism. These factors, and their contribution to the development of the Mounted Infantry, will be explored in a later chapter in this thesis. There was surprising polarity between the two groups of opposing protagonists with, for instance, Colonel George Denison of the Canadian militia advocating Mounted Infantry, whilst his colleague, Major General Sir Richard MacDougall, another authority on Canadian military issues, disputing its value.<sup>43</sup> General Sir Edward Hamley, an ex-artillery officer who became Professor of Military History at the Royal Military College Sandhurst, was somewhat more progressive in his views. Hamley urged the development of

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<sup>41</sup> Appendix One: Edward Hutton was a light infantry officer, commissioned in the 60<sup>th</sup> Rifles in 1867, who promoted the concept of Mounted Infantry and commanded the School of Mounted Infantry Instruction at Aldershot between 1888 and 1892; Edwin Alderson transferred into the 97<sup>th</sup> Foot from the Norfolk Artillery militia in 1876 and prior to taking over command of the Mounted Infantry at Aldershot in 1896, he saw active service with the Mounted Infantry; Ian Hamilton, born in 1853, served initially in the Suffolk Regiment before transferring to his father's old regiment, the Gordon Highlanders and would be considered by Field Marshal Lord Roberts to be his most brilliant commander in the field in South Africa where Hamilton commanded the Mounted Infantry during the march to Pretoria.

<sup>42</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, the transcripts indicate the vigour with which protagonists clashed in debate and discussion after the five lectures.

<sup>43</sup> Luvaas, *The Education of an Army*, p.110, MacDougall recognised the need for an urgent evolution in infantry tactics due to increasing battlefield firepower. He predicted a likely demise in traditional cavalry shock tactics because of the same increase in firepower.

a force combining the mobility of cavalry with the firepower of infantry in the manner of Mounted Infantry though Luvaas considered that Hamley's interpretation of German tactics<sup>44</sup> during the Franco-German War of 1870 – 71, which convinced Hamley of the need for Mounted Infantry, did not equate to a wholesale conversion of cavalry to Mounted Infantry.<sup>45</sup> Thus differentiation of mounted roles was compatible with retention of both types of mounted troops. Interestingly, German army doctrine would reject the development of a separate Mounted Infantry arm, at least along strict British lines, preferring to identify alternative solutions to the challenge of identifying mobile firepower.<sup>46</sup>

Returning to the first research question, the Mounted Infantry's doctrinal interface with cavalry remains fundamentally important, not least because a fear, if not paranoia, of the cavalry's potential redundancy through replacement by Mounted Infantry appeared to haunt cavalry commanders before and after the Boer War.<sup>47</sup> Despite the orthodox view of the cavalry's institutional conservatism,<sup>48</sup> Badsey makes a strong case for a proactive

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<sup>44</sup> British Army Publications, *Operations*, 0315, defines the tactical level of battle as the 'level that troops are deployed directly in military activities and the tactical actions that result'; also see this chapter, footnote 70.

<sup>45</sup> Luvaas, *The Education of an Army*, pp.147-48, makes the point that whilst most contemporary proponents of the Mounted Infantry paradigm used the American cavalry during the Civil War as its exemplar, Hamley did not postulate a change to European cavalry but rather envisaged a new corps, separate to the cavalry and infantry, whose tasks would include guarding 'advanced posts, manoeuvre on the flanks of the enemy, and execute distant raids against his communications'.

<sup>46</sup> David R. Dorondo, *Riders of the Apocalypse: German Cavalry and Modern Warfare 1870 – 1945* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2012), p.42.

<sup>47</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.186; Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, p. 257.

<sup>48</sup> G.J. De Groot, *Douglas Haig 1861 – 1928* (London: Unwin Hyam, 1998), p. 22

reformation of the cavalry as a continuum from before the Boer War, accelerating in the early 1900s, and subsequently becoming a critical contributor to the Mounted Infantry's eventual redundancy.<sup>49</sup> Alternatively, both Spiers and Brian Bond have taken a more critical view of the cavalry than Badsey, castigating the cavalry for its failure to reform adequately, for failing to address its shortcomings in reconnaissance and for its outmoded adherence to the shock tactics of the *arme blanche* charge.<sup>50</sup> Comparing the retention of the tactic of the mounted charge to the cavalry's apparent obsession with equestrian sports, particularly polo, Gerald de Groot and Eliza Riedi juxtapose the cavalry's seeming reluctance to modernise and move away from the glory of drawn sabre and couched lance with its tenacious preservation of tradition, excessive promulgation of equestrian sports and a disdain for the professional side of soldiering.<sup>51</sup> The cavalry's predilection for equestrian sport has been considered to be a peculiarly British attitude but risked conflict with its officers' military professionalism.<sup>52</sup> Although in the wake of the early defeats in the Boer War the whole of the British officer corps received criticism, the greatest opprobrium has been

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<sup>49</sup> Badsey, 'The Boer War (1899 – 1902) and British Cavalry Doctrine', pp.75-98.

<sup>50</sup> E. Spiers, 'The British Cavalry 1902 – 14', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 57, 1979, pp. 71-79; B. Bond, 'Doctrine and training in the British Cavalry 1870 – 1914', *The Theory and Practice of War: Essays presented to Captain B.H. Liddell Hart on his Seventieth Birthday* (London: Cassell, 1964), M. Howard (ed.), pp. 97-125; Childers, *War and the Arme Blanche*, pp. 357-65, concluded controversially that the *arme blanche* to be ineffective and anachronistic.

<sup>51</sup> De Groot, *Douglas Haig*, p.22; Eliza Riedi, 'Brains or Polo? Equestrian Sport, Army Reform and the Gentlemanly Officer tradition 1900 – 1914', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 84, 2006, pp. 236-53.

<sup>52</sup> E.S. Turner, *Gallant Gentlemen* (London: Michael Joseph, 1956), p.265; Riedi, 'Brains or Polo', pp. 236-53.



reserved for cavalry officers.<sup>53</sup> The former Mounted Infantry officer and military historian, J.F.C. Fuller apportioned blame similarly, whimsically paraphrasing the apocryphal comment made previously by the Duke of Wellington by writing that if the Battle of Waterloo had been won upon the playing-fields of Eton then in Fuller's opinion, it would not be so very far from the truth to say that the guns of Sannah's Post were captured on the polo-round at Hurlingham; that Magersfontein was lost at Lord's; that Spion Kop was evacuated at Sandown and that the War lingered on for thirty-two months in the Quorn and Pytchley coverts,<sup>54</sup> thus caustically, if unfairly, linking enthusiasm for sport with profound military reverse. In a similar vein, Bond considered that, for the cavalry, the possession of the lance was more than merely an armament or its use a battlefield tactic but represented a state of mind epitomising its way of life.<sup>55</sup> Nick Evans remains less convinced, concurring with Badsey's revisionism by identifying fundamental changes in cavalry tactics, training and attitudes to professionalism even before 1899.<sup>56</sup> Despite Badsey's self-evident assertion that being a privileged cavalry officer was not in itself proof of gross ineptitude, the perception of the idle and incompetent cavalry officer<sup>57</sup>, a notion that persisted long after the

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<sup>53</sup> Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, p. 317; Clayton, *The British Officer*, p.120; Spiers, 'The British Cavalry 1902 – 1914', pp.71-77; Bond, 'Doctrine and training in the British Cavalry', pp. 97-125.

<sup>54</sup> Fuller, *The Last of the Gentlemen's Wars*, pp.7-8, Magersfontein, Sannah's Post, Spion Kop were defeats occurring in 1899 and 1900.

<sup>55</sup> Bond, 'Doctrine and training in the British Cavalry', pp. 97-125.

<sup>56</sup> Evans, 'Sport and Hard Work', pp.139-58.

<sup>57</sup> Light Dragoon, 'The Daily Round', *Cavalry Journal*, 8, 1913, pp.119-22, this letter written under pseudonym provided a detailed examination of a cavalry subaltern's work pattern over a month with the express purpose of proclaiming that 'the Cavalry subaltern ...is not the idle dog they [the public] give him the credit for being'.

First World War,<sup>58</sup> has been both difficult to eradicate and deemed to be an exclusively British phenomenon.<sup>59</sup> The cavalry's remarkable resilience during this time of change has been characterised, in Bond's words, as a 'capacity for survival that bordered on the miraculous'.<sup>60</sup> However, Spencer Jones, in his recent doctoral thesis, partially re-focuses the debate back to the Mounted Infantry, citing its unresolved tactical flaws and structural weaknesses as more of a direct influence on the arm's decline during the post-Boer War years rather than competition solely from the reforming cavalry.<sup>61</sup>

However, whilst the cavalry's doctrinal renaissance was undoubtedly important in determining its own fate and, potentially, that of the Mounted Infantry, the issue of the numerical paucity of cavalry regiments available for both home and overseas duties, which had encouraged the earliest inception of Mounted Infantry as *ad hoc* formations overseas, would also influence military organisational policy throughout the Mounted Infantry's existence. The lengthy duration necessary for a cavalryman to attain full training, which was significantly longer than for the infantry, precluded a rapid expansion in cavalry numbers in crisis unlike the Mounted Infantry. Moreover, in peace,

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<sup>58</sup>Phillips. 'Scapegoat Arm', p 62, cites the eminent historian, Basil Liddell Hart, who, in a manner resembling J.F.C. Fuller, claimed that 'Wellington's reported saying that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton is merely legend, but it is painfully true that the early battles of World War II were lost in the Cavalry Club'.

<sup>59</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p. 9; Badsey, *The British Army in Battle and its Image*, p. 56.

<sup>60</sup> Bond, 'Doctrine and Training in the British Cavalry', pp. 97-125.

<sup>61</sup> Spencer Jones, *The influence of the Boer War (1899 – 1902) on the tactical development of the regular British Army 1902 – 14*, unpublished PhD dissertation, 2009, University of Wolverhampton, p.162.

the only overseas posting that attracted significant numbers of British Army regular cavalry regiments remained India, unlike the myriad of possible garrison postings available to the infantry. Frequently, destinations were unsuitable for cavalry regiments, either because the requirement of the garrison was better delivered by infantry or by virtue of the inhospitable environment being unsuitable for regular cavalry. Only four of the available twenty-three cavalry regiments were stationed in India in 1824.<sup>62</sup> By 1914, the distribution of the twenty-eight cavalry regiments of the line across the Empire consisted of nine cavalry regiments in India, two regiments garrisoning South Africa and another regiment in barracks outside Cairo.<sup>63</sup> The remaining thirteen regiments, together with the three Household Cavalry regiments, were on home service in England and Ireland. In addition, the logistics and cost of dispatching cavalry regiments overseas was complex and expensive. Often cavalry regiments relinquished their mounts prior to embarkation, procuring horses from the departing regiment at its new station. The combination of these factors limited both the availability of cavalry regiments for colonial campaigning and the number posted overseas thus leaving a deficiency of mounted troops along the imperial borders that was filled by Mounted Infantry. In 1880, the dearth of immediately available cavalry was implicated in the peculiar mixture of cavalrymen, infantrymen and other soldiers deemed capable of maintaining their seat in the saddle that formed General Colley's mounted detachment at the outbreak of hostilities in the Transvaal Rebellion and which contributed to the mounted

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<sup>62</sup> Richard Holmes, *Sahib* (London: Harper Collins, 2005), p. 218.

<sup>63</sup> *Army List*, August 1914 (London: HMSO, 1914).

detachment's poor performance when misused as conventional cavalry at Laing's Nek.<sup>64</sup>

If the Mounted Infantry's inception and eventual fate was inextricably linked to the availability and doctrinal predilections of the cavalry arm, this thesis will analyse the shifting nature of the Mounted Infantry's proposed roles with reference to the cavalry that began as all-encompassing mounted work in the absence of any cavalry abroad then as an adjunct to the cavalry and, finally, as a limited replacement for cavalry as so-called divisional cavalry and in Mounted Brigades alongside regular cavalry and horse artillery.

Understandably the shifting nature of its roles caused debate and uncertainty of function in both the Mounted Infantry and the cavalry. However, when considering whether the Mounted Infantry was, in truth, 'cavalry', its organisation into companies and battalions provides a clear statement of its infantry credentials, understood in the context of its evolutionary origin as an *ad hoc* force provided through the mounting of one or more infantry companies.

The Mounted Infantry's extemporised origins cast a long shadow of historical precedence that influenced the Mounted Infantry's training, organisation and doctrine. Therefore, the second research question will extend the investigation of the Mounted Infantry's organisational impermanence to whether this affected the evolution of a specific military identity, a concept that will be explored in more detail in a later chapter. Furthermore, the question of organisational impermanence and any resulting impact on *esprit*

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<sup>64</sup> Laband, *The Transvaal Rebellion*, p.149.

*de corps* and, ultimately, whether these factors influenced the Mounted Infantry's survival, will be sought. As the tactical fighting unit of the regular Mounted Infantry remained the company,<sup>65</sup> the propensity to deploy Mounted Infantry in small size units reflected both the Mounted Infantry's supporting roles in cavalry brigades and infantry divisions and also that its continued method of configuration remained through comparatively piecemeal abstraction that was a process which required enough officers and men to form a viable force but not so many to fatally destabilise the functioning of its residual parent infantry battalion. Nevertheless, with its emphasis on small unit size and the increased likelihood of seeing active service overseas, predicated on configuration only being required in times of conflict, enhanced opportunities for combat experience, command responsibility and even promotion, were recognised by the army's officers.<sup>66</sup> Thus this thesis will consider the impact of service in the Mounted Infantry on future officer promotion. In his retrospective analysis of the regimental origins of senior army officers in 1914, Badsey concluded that a greater number of officers ranked at or above Major General had Mounted Infantry experience compared to those solely with experience in the cavalry, which he interpreted as rejecting the widely-held opinion that in the British Army prior to the First World War cavalrymen held oligarchic sway in the upper echelons of the Army. Previously, Roberts' biographer, W.H. Hannah, had accused cavalry generals of 'moving in at the gallop' to take a disproportionate share of

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<sup>65</sup> *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1897*, p.5.

<sup>66</sup> 'Ikona', 'The Passing of the Old MI', *Cavalry Journal*, 9, 1914, pp. 209 – 213; Tylden, *Mounted Infantry*, pp. 176-79.

command after the Boer War'.<sup>67</sup> Although Badsey's analysis might indicate that experience of command in the Mounted Infantry was useful in terms of future promotion, clearly any interpretation necessitates a degree of caution as a number of variables risk introducing bias. The increased opportunity for service in the Mounted Infantry afforded by the expansion of the Mounted Infantry during the Boer War resulted in a larger number of officers with Mounted Infantry experience compared to those with Mounted Infantry service or training prior to 1899. The post-Boer War Mounted Infantry's popularity with senior army commanders<sup>68</sup> and the personalisation of command prevalent in the late Victorian army, linked with patronage and promotion that was a feature of the British Army in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, all potentially skew the apparent predominance of ex-Mounted Infantry officers in high command.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, the third principal research question seeks evidence whether service with the Mounted Infantry was advantageous for future high command and, more broadly, whether the training of the Mounted Infantry was appropriate for its changing military role in ensuring a 'fit for purpose' military arm. The former will be achieved in part by a prospective, comparative analysis of career progression of junior officers commanding Mounted Infantry units in the Boer War but by using controls matched for regiment, seniority and rank, previous potential biases

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<sup>67</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p. 206; W.H. Hannah, *Bobs, Kipling's General.: the Life of Field Marshal Earl Roberts of Kandahar VC* (London: Leo Cooper, 1972), p. 91.

<sup>68</sup> Whilst a number of senior officers remained pro-Mounted Infantry such as Wolseley, Roberts, Hamilton and Hutton, others were resolutely antagonistic to the model, epitomised by Haig, Scobell and Rimington, all three of whom were, unsurprisingly, cavalrymen.

<sup>69</sup> T.H.E. Travers, 'The Hidden Army: structural problems in the British Officer Corps 1900 – 1918', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 17 (3), 1982, pp. 523-44.

inherent in earlier retrospective analyses will be reduced. The originating point of 1900 for the analysis, whilst diluting the effect of pre-war Mounted Infantry selection, also reduces the impact of the Mounted Infantry's wartime expansion prior to this date. Thus it is anticipated that the true effect of Mounted Infantry command on future promotion prospects can be determined.

Whilst, as indicated previously with regards to military historiography, the Mounted Infantry has been largely overlooked, similarly there has been little work undertaken on the Mounted Infantry's battlefield experiences or its military effectiveness. Military effectiveness can be defined in a number of ways and at different levels ranging from the tactical and operational to the strategic and political.<sup>70</sup> Whilst these issues will be considered in greater detail in a subsequent chapter, it is important to acknowledge that a historical assessment of the military effectiveness of the Mounted Infantry encompasses issues as diverse as the attainment of prior-determined tactical objectives, use of logistics and supplies, sustaining of casualties - both human and animal, contribution to the success or otherwise of battles and campaigns and the Mounted Infantry's response to adversity, particularly environmental in view of the nature of colonial campaigning, or, put another

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<sup>70</sup> Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force* (London: Penguin, 2006), pp.13-14 the strategic level may be defined as the expression of the aim and overall purpose of the conflict, whilst the tactical level determines the nature of the battles and engagements. The operational level links the two, converting strategy into the military actions of the armed force; General Sir Richard Dannatt, *Leading From The Front* (London: Bantam Press, 2010), pp.122-23, describes these terms eloquently in a modern context that retains much relevance to the era contained within this thesis: 'It is at the strategic level where the big thoughts are thought, where the broad ideas are conceived, and it is at the tactical level where the rubber hits the road and bullets fly. However it is the level in between that is so critical, for this is where ideas are turned into practicalities, where a plan is produced that transforms concepts into a series of steps that take you from thought to action. This is the operational level of war'.

way, its resilience to Clausewitz's unexpected 'friction of war'.<sup>71</sup> Thus, the fourth principal research question, once a clear definition of military effectiveness in the late Victorian British Army has been concluded, will seek to answer whether the Mounted Infantry was militarily effective, from the perspectives of Mounted Infantry commanders, senior army commanders as well as with historical hindsight. This will be achieved through a predominantly qualitative assessment of the Mounted Infantry's contribution to a number of major colonial campaigns during the Victorian period, namely: the Transvaal Rebellion 1880 – 81; the Egyptian campaign of 1882; the Nile campaign of 1884 – 85 and the Boer War of 1899 – 1902. These campaigns have been selected specifically to facilitate a comparison of the Mounted Infantry at varying times of its evolution across a spectrum of terrain and climate and against a range of adversaries favouring different tactics from long-distance marksmanship to the shock tactics of the desert warrior.

The historiography of these campaigns is extensive yet again the references to the Mounted Infantry contained within are comparatively sparse. John Laband's history of the Transvaal Rebellion, a recent and arguably the most comprehensive of histories of the campaign, recounts the experiences of the extemporised hybrid mounted detachment of Mounted Infantry and cavalry.<sup>72</sup> This hybrid force was formed as, prior to the outbreak of hostilities, most mounted troops in Natal had embarked for home after the successful

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<sup>71</sup> British Army Publication: *Operations*, 0302a; Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (London: Wordsworth, 1997), pp.66-69, considers the 'friction of war' to represent unexpected adversity that could not have been predicted, nor prepared for, prior to the commencement of hostilities.

<sup>72</sup> Laband, *The Transvaal Rebellion*, p.130.



conclusion of the Zulu War. A small residual number of King's Dragoon Guards (KDG) were still present in Natal plus hastily-horsed Mounted Infantry selected from the 21<sup>st</sup> Foot, 58<sup>th</sup> Foot and 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion of the 60<sup>th</sup> Rifles, most of whom underwent minimal equitation and Mounted Infantry training. Laband considers that one conclusion from this campaign was the need to use mounted forces tactically in roles for which they had been trained or had experience. Laband thus concludes that failure to appreciate this was instrumental in the fiasco of the mounted charge at Laing's Nek.<sup>73</sup> An extrapolation of this, the benefit of prior Mounted Infantry training before deployment, was a pertinent lesson from this battle but it was at variance with contemporary army orthodoxy that was based on brevity of training and extemporised organisation. It was a lesson that would remain contentious with senior army commanders.

Conversely, the Mounted Infantry deployed in the Egyptian campaign had accrued prior Mounted Infantry experience from the preceding African wars. Although the Mounted Infantry was used in a number of roles, particularly screening the British positions at Alexandria and Ramleh, as gendarmerie in Alexandria and on the flank of the advancing British force, William Wright, in his history of the campaign, considers the Mounted Infantry's pre-eminent contribution to the campaign was in protecting Wolseley's desert flank and then eventually contributing to the capture of Cairo through its mobility.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, Spiers suggests that the campaign demonstrated that Mounted

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<sup>73</sup>Laband, *The Transvaal Rebellion*, p.149; Snook, *Into the Jaws of Death*, p.166.

<sup>74</sup> William Wright, *A Tidy Little War: the British Invasion of Egypt 1882* (Stroud: Spellmount, 2009), p.181.

Infantry and cavalry could work well together, belying future animosity between the two mounted arms.<sup>75</sup> If, as Anglesey considered, service in the embryonic regular Mounted Infantry was coveted by army officers for their perceptions of increased preferment and promotion,<sup>76</sup> the plaudits received by the Mounted Infantry following the Egyptian campaign also contributed to its subsequent formalisation as a force within the British Army.

In the decades following the Egyptian campaign, Mounted Infantry organisation, with peacetime abstraction permitting training and development of specific drill,<sup>77</sup> became more structured although its next deployment in a major colonial campaign largely reverted to *ad hoc* extemporisation redolent of earlier years. The 1884 – 85 campaign in the Sudan was notable, from a Mounted Infantry perspective, for both the use of Mounted Infantry in a variety of roles and the novel utilisation of troops other than line infantry as Mounted Infantry in the innovative Camel Corps. In the eastern Sudan littoral, Mounted Infantry fought as both mobile skirmishers advancing before the infantry squares but also as erstwhile cavalry participating in mounted charges, a role not part of contemporary Mounted Infantry training.<sup>78</sup> Whilst the exigencies of campaigning may have necessitated this approach, such military utilitarianism, presaging the Mounted Infantry's experiences on the

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<sup>75</sup> E.M. Spiers, *The Victorian Soldier in Africa* (Manchester: University Press, 2004), p. 82; Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, 3, 1872 – 1898 (London: Leo Cooper 1982), p. 271.

<sup>76</sup> Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, 3, p.273.

<sup>77</sup> *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1897*, p.52.

<sup>78</sup> Badsey, 'The Boer War (1899 – 1902) and British Cavalry Doctrine', pp. 75-98, recounts the Mounted Infantry's adoption of the *arme blanche* charge using rifles with fixed bayonets as substitute lances – a portent of the behaviour of some colonial Mounted Rifles and Mounted Infantry in the Boer War.

veldt fifteen years later, undermined its ongoing search for an identifiable and specific role within army doctrine, permitting frequent re-imagining and arguably contributed to the Mounted Infantry's demise at the end of the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Elsewhere on the Nile, the Camel Corps was formed under Wolseley's orders as the major component of his Desert Column. As Colonel Mike Snook observes, this suggestion was typical of Wolseley's predilection for élite formations of selected men plucked from different regiments and brought together as specialised forces.<sup>79</sup> This process risked cohesion and *esprit de corps*, factors fundamental to the regimental system and believed to confer battlefield resilience in the face of adversity,<sup>80</sup> although at the time the practical benefits of forming a specialised camel-borne force seemed incontrovertible. The Camel Corps comprised four regiments of camel-borne soldiers, all of whom were *de facto* functionally Mounted Infantrymen, expected to fight dismounted due to the tactical limitations of their camel mounts.<sup>81</sup> Only the Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment in the Camel Corps, considered by observers as the cream of the Camel Corps,<sup>82</sup> actually comprised previously-experienced Mounted Infantry.<sup>83</sup> The other camel

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<sup>79</sup> Snook, *Into the Jaws of Death*, p. 260, in this context the term 'élite' is used to describe a chosen group of soldiers selected specifically for either their particular skills or martial attributes and usually trained to a superlative level for a specific strategic or tactical purpose.

<sup>80</sup> British Army Publications, *Operations*, 0216 and 0233.

<sup>81</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.425.

<sup>82</sup> Michael Asher, *Khartoum* (London: Viking, 2005), p.187.

<sup>83</sup> Appendix Two: the detachments comprising the Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment were from the following regiments: South Staffordshire, Black Watch, Gordon Highlanders, King's Royal Rifle Corps,

regiments comprised cavalymen, guardsmen and marines thus unwittingly providing controls against which to assess the Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment's military effectiveness.<sup>84</sup> Such qualitative comparisons within the Camel Corps are complicated though by the uniqueness of the force, its embryonic drill, general logistical deficiencies, overall incompetent camel husbandry and the harshness of terrain.<sup>85</sup> Certainly senior army commanders appeared to overestimate the resilience, endurance and robustness of health of the camels it purchased, compounded by Wolseley's excessively enthusiastic predictions of the Camel Corps' mobility, and, conversely, underestimated the foot infantry battalions' ability to cope with desert conditions.<sup>86</sup> Although the Camel Corps achieved a crossing of the Bayuda Desert, its ultimate goal of uniting with the river-borne column to march on Khartoum and relieve General Gordon was unfulfilled. Although Snook considers that the Camel Corps was both an unnecessary innovation and a logistical failure, there has been no attempt to differentiate between the Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment's effectiveness and that of the other

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Royal West Kent, Sussex, Essex, Duke of Cornwall Light Infantry, Rifle Brigade, Somerset Light Infantry, Connaught Rangers and Royal Scots Fusiliers.

<sup>84</sup> Appendix Three: the *Heavy Camel Regiment* comprised the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Life Guards, Royal Horse Guards, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards, Royal Dragoons, Royal Scots Greys and the 5<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Lancers; *Light Camel Regiment* comprised the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Hussars; *Guards Camel Regiment* comprised detachments from the Brigade of Guards and the Royal Marine Light Infantry.

<sup>85</sup> Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, p. 293; Major General Lord E. Gleichen, *A Guardsman's Memories* (London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1932), p.28; Spencer Jones, 'Scouting for Soldiers: reconnaissance and the British Cavalry 1899 – 1914', *War in History*, 18(4), 2011, pp. 495-513; Marling, *Rifleman and Hussar*, p.126.

<sup>86</sup> Spiers, *The Victorian Soldier in Africa*, p. 116; Snook, *Into the Jaws of Death*, p.325; Lieutenant General Sir Garnet Wolseley, *The Soldier's Pocket-book for Field Service* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1882), pp. 68-69.

camel regiments.<sup>87</sup> This subsidiary research question, contrasting the Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment with the rest of the Desert Corps, will supplement the extant fourth principal research question of the military effectiveness of the Mounted Infantry.

As previously indicated, the so-called 'finest hour' of the regular Mounted Infantry in the history of the British Army, has been considered to have been the Boer War,<sup>88</sup> the fourth major campaign to be examined as a case study in the thesis. This assertion of the Mounted Infantry's military zenith exists contrary to the prevailing criticism of the army's mounted troops during the conflict.<sup>89</sup> Fought over geographically extensive terrain against superlatively mobile Boer commandos, described as the 'beau-ideal' of mounted infantry,<sup>90</sup> the conflict resulted in a predominantly mobile war where mounted troops were at a premium.<sup>91</sup> With Roberts' disembarkation as Commander-in-Chief in early 1900, extra Mounted Infantry units were abstracted urgently in an indiscriminate and peremptory fashion, consequently devoid of adequate training, mounts or equipment, a parlous

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<sup>87</sup> Snook, *Into the Jaws of Death*, p.325.

<sup>88</sup> Robinson, 'The search for mobility during the Second Boer War', p.140.

<sup>89</sup> Clayton, *The British Officer*, p.120; Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, p.317.

<sup>90</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.402; W.L. Churchill, 'Some Impressions of the War in South Africa', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 45, 1901, pp. 102-13, pedantically deprecated this assertion that the Boer was 'the best mounted infantryman in the world', preferring to view the Boer as a Mounted Rifleman – or, in Churchill's own words, 'essentially a dragoon of the past generation'.

<sup>91</sup> Lieutenant Colonel James Moncrieff Grierson, *Scarlet into Khaki* (London: Greenhill, 1988), p.147, previously predicted the need for an expansion in Mounted Infantry but considered that they would be required as an adjunct to the cavalry rather than as a replacement as conceived by Roberts.

situation that would not have been possible with trained cavalry.<sup>92</sup> Roberts jeopardised the Mounted Infantry's pre-war reputation by resorting to such extemporisation, an acceptance of minimal standards of equitation and the illogicality of extreme brevity of training. By promulgating this strategy, Roberts appears to have failed to appreciate the level of equitation needed by Mounted Infantry for terrain and to counter the enemy,<sup>93</sup> a deficit in equitation remarked upon caustically by Douglas Haig,<sup>94</sup> and thus directly contributed to the Boer War's exorbitant equine losses.<sup>95</sup> Yet during the latter phase of the War, when a guerrilla-style insurgency<sup>96</sup> existed, its very nature of chasing elusive bands of Boers across vast distances with policing duties epitomised by searching and destruction of farms, convoy escort and railway protection, suited the Mounted Infantry model and encouraged further numerical expansion, effectively providing a blueprint for army reorganisation. Thus temporarily redundant units such as artillery batteries were reconfigured into Mounted Rifles.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, regular cavalry regiments became, sometimes unwillingly, improvised Mounted Rifles, at least for the duration of hostilities. With the inception of mobile columns, which often

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<sup>92</sup> Tylden, 'Mounted Infantry', pp. 176-79.

<sup>93</sup> David James, *Lord Roberts* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1954), p.282.

<sup>94</sup> Douglas Scott, *The Preparatory Prologue: Douglas Haig, Diaries and Letters 1861 – 1914* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2006), p.147.

<sup>95</sup> Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, 4, pp.319-27, equine losses amounted to 66 per cent of all animals in theatre equating to approximately one-tenth of the cost of the whole Boer War; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.91.

<sup>96</sup> British Army Publication: *Operations*, 0812, defines 'insurgency' as 'organised, violent subversion used to effect or prevent political control as a challenge to established authority'.

<sup>97</sup> Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, 4, p.221.

combined Mounted Infantry, colonial Mounted Rifles, irregular locally-raised horse and traditional cavalry regiments devoid of sabre or lance, the Mounted Infantry concept reached its maturity. Not all Mounted Infantry battalions though were necessarily equitable in skill or performance.<sup>98</sup> Even pre-war trained Mounted Infantry, in Bou's opinion, manifested limited equestrian skills<sup>99</sup> leading to a polarity of opinion over the Mounted Infantry's performance even during the years of insurgency,<sup>100</sup> a phase of the War that Bill Nasson has called evocatively 'the war of running evasion'.<sup>101</sup> Nonetheless, irrespective of initial problems in horsemastership,<sup>102</sup> the Mounted Infantry matured as a mobile fighting force effectively combining mobility and firepower. The utility of the Mounted Infantry in the Boer War was described in verse by Rudyard Kipling in *MI*:

I wish my mother could see me now, with a fence-post under my arm,

And a knife and a spoon in my putties that I found on a Boer farm,

Atop of a sore-backed Argentine, with a thirst that you couldn't buy.

I used to be in the Yorkshires once

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<sup>98</sup> Churchill, 'Some Impressions of the War in South Africa', p.110; Robinson, 'The search for mobility during the Second Boer War', p.150.

<sup>99</sup> Bou, *Light Horse*, p. 9; Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, 4, p.356.

<sup>100</sup> Churchill, 'Some Impressions of the War in South Africa', pp.110-11; James, *Lord Roberts*, p. 348, Roberts appeared to lose confidence in the cavalry after the battle of Poplar Grove in favour of Hamilton's Mounted Infantry; Phillips, 'Scapegoat Arm', pp. 37-74; Hannah, *Bobs, Kipling's General*, p.77; Childers, *War and the Arme Blanche*, p. xv.

<sup>101</sup> Bill Nasson, *The War for South Africa* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2010), p.31.

<sup>102</sup> Horsemastership was an amalgam of horse care, basic equestrianism and folk-lore veterinary skills.

(Sussex, Lincolns, and Rifles once),

Hampshires, Glosters, and Scottish once!

But now I am MI.<sup>103</sup>

This verse paints a less than heroic portrait of the Mounted Infantry, clearly participating in looting and destruction, perhaps reflecting the policy of farm-burning that became symbolic of the measures to limit the insurgency but which had originated, initially sporadically, prior to the fall of Pretoria in mid 1900.<sup>104</sup> The verse indicates the heterogeneity of the origins of the Mounted Infantry with the poem expressly allowing the naming of regiments to be amended *ad libitum* for the relevant audience. This heterogeneity surrenders prior regimental affiliation to a novel allegiance to the Mounted Infantry.

Capturing the Mounted Infantry's utilitarianism, Kipling continued:

That is what we are known as – that is the name you must call

If you want officers' servants, pickets an' 'orseguards an' all –

Details for burin'-parties, company-cooks or supply –

Turn out the chronic Ikonas! Roll up the – MI!<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *The Complete Verse* (London: Kyle Caithie, 2002), p. 370-72, the reference to 'sore-backed Argentine' reflects the broken fate of many of the remounts imported from overseas particularly South America.

<sup>104</sup> Nasson, *The War for South Africa*, p.180, although a 'scorched earth' policy of farm- and crop-burning is most associated with the counterinsurgency phase of the Boer War following Kitchener's appointment as commander at the end of 1900, punitive burning of the homes of Boers on active service had begun during Roberts' period of field command in January 1900.

<sup>105</sup> 'Chronic Ikonas': the term 'chronic' is believed to be a slang term best understood to mean 'inveterate' or 'seasoned' and indicated the lengthy duration of the war for some in the Mounted Infantry. 'Ikonas' is understood to be a nickname of uncertain provenance. Some authorities trace it



Although an advocate of the private soldier, Kipling was not afraid of criticising senior army commanders, remarking in the same poem of the 'red little, dead little Army', perhaps representing a thinly-veiled censure of the outmoded tactics that contributed to the comparatively high casualty rates in the early battles of the war. Another of Kipling's poems, *Stellenbosch*, ridiculed the timidity of senior officers reluctant to pursue action for fear of reprimand and consequent exile home or to the remount depot at Stellenbosch.<sup>106</sup> Clearly, *MI* described a force without tradition or glamour, perhaps unloved by the rest of the army. It is not too fanciful to suggest that, despite Kipling's poem, this lack of clear identity, glamour or tradition has contributed to the historical obscurity suffered by the Mounted Infantry.

Another contingent of mounted troops in South Africa was the Imperial Yeomanry which will be considered briefly only as a comparison to the regular Mounted Infantry. Despite its misleading name, the Imperial Yeomanry was not conceived as an extension of the domestic volunteer cavalry trained in *arme blanche* tactics. Despite initial opposition from a recently constituted War Office committee configuring the new force,<sup>107</sup> the inadequate time available for the Imperial Yeomanry to attain competency with edged weapons and the evident primacy of musketry on the veldt,

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to a local 'manufactured' dialect of Xhosa and Afrikaans indicating a warning against trouble including theft. Others suggest it is a term of denial of possession whilst others suggest that 'Ikona' indicates tacit ownership or an admission of possession ([www.kipling.org.uk/rg\\_mounted1.htm](http://www.kipling.org.uk/rg_mounted1.htm)). Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p. 154, conversely, Badsey considers it to represent the word 'friend'.

<sup>106</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *War Stories and Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp.161-62, this created the pejorative Victorian neologism of '*stellenbosching*', a forerunner of the similar '*degumming*' of officers in the British Army during the First World War.

<sup>107</sup> Anglesey, *A History of British Cavalry*, 4, p.88.

meant that the Imperial Yeomanry was conceived as volunteer Mounted Infantry configured in infantry-style companies.<sup>108</sup> Whilst traditionally-trained yeomen did volunteer to serve in the Imperial Yeomanry, no complete domestic yeomanry regiment formed an Imperial Yeomanry battalion *en masse*<sup>109</sup>. At the time, Wolseley disagreed with the proposal for the formation of the Imperial Yeomanry on grounds that it was a dangerous experiment using civilians without prior inculcation of the rudiments of military discipline although, in rebutting Wolseley, Lord Lansdowne, the Secretary of State for War, considered these risks exaggerated.<sup>110</sup> Unsurprisingly, the foundation of the Imperial Yeomanry was not universally popular with traditional Yeomanry or regular cavalry officers. Douglas Haig was one of the most vociferous, decrying all non-cavalry mounted troops, particularly the Mounted Infantry but also the Imperial Yeomanry, while saving some of his most venomous criticism for irregular colonial Mounted Rifles whom he castigated as being 'only good for looting'.<sup>111</sup> The post-war decade would witness Haig's influence in matters military in the ascendancy, thus the effect of his antipathetic views of the Mounted Infantry on the arm's survival will require clarification. John French, another influential cavalryman, was less antagonistic to non-cavalry mounted troops and in his evidence to the post-

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<sup>108</sup> Colonel J.K. Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army 1899 – 1914* (London: Methuen, 1938), p. 105; Robinson, 'The search for mobility during the Second Boer War', p.146.

<sup>109</sup> Douglas S Russell, *Winston Churchill Soldier* (London: Conway, 2006), p.326.

<sup>110</sup> Halik Kochanski, *Sir Garnet Wolseley: Victorian Hero* (London: Hambledon, 1999), p.251.

<sup>111</sup> Talbot, 'The Regular Mounted Infantry', pp. 306-24.

Boer War Royal Commission on the War in South Africa,<sup>112</sup> French stated that he considered the Mounted Infantry to be very useful in respect of their mobility although he was still critical of their riding skills and discipline.<sup>113</sup>

Thus contextually outside the remit of this thesis, the Imperial Yeomanry and colonial Mounted Rifles will be included in analysis when related to the doctrinal debate domestically or in the imperial development of mobile firepower.

Despite the apparent universality of the Mounted Infantry model immediately after the war and even if, to quote Kipling, 'we are now all MI', the Mounted Infantry would not outlast the decade as an organisation. The Mounted Infantry suffered a fatal decline to abolition, which on initial consideration appears to be both precipitate and, if the Mounted Infantry's contemporary popularity with many senior army commanders is true, inexplicable. Shortly after the Mounted Infantry's abolition, an anonymous article in the *Cavalry Journal*,<sup>114</sup> a professional military publication not renowned for its support of the Mounted Infantry, acknowledged a sense of regret and resignation felt by those who had served in the arm. The article cited the cause of the Mounted Infantry's demise as a combination of increased cavalry numbers, the impact caused by the closure of the Mounted Infantry Schools of Instruction and the relief from the lifting of the burden of losing hand-picked men to form Mounted Infantry companies on mobilisation felt by infantry battalion

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<sup>112</sup> Parliamentary Papers: *Report of His Majesty's commissioners appointed to inquire into the military preparations and other matters connected with the War in South Africa* (hereafter the Elgin Commission), Cd. 1790, II, 1903, evidence from Lieutenant General Sir John French (Q.17214, p.305).

<sup>113</sup> Robinson, 'The search for mobility during the Second Boer War', p. 155.

<sup>114</sup> 'Ikona', 'The Passing of the Old MI', pp. 209-13.

commanders.<sup>115</sup> Nevertheless, the reasons for the Mounted Infantry's demise have remained a topic of debate. Badsey and Spiers conclude that the Mounted Infantry was phased out for want of a political champion during a period of doctrinal competition created by the successful reform of the cavalry.<sup>116</sup> They accuse the Mounted Infantry leaders of institutional negligence, asserting that the decision not to create a permanent Mounted Infantry organisation during peacetime not only reflected fiscal pressures but also the Mounted Infantry leaders' reluctance to support their own arm, preferring to retain their positions within their parent infantry regiments. Peter Robinson rejects this interpretation of events questioning which Mounted Infantry commanders guiltily chose the option of wartime extemporisation over peacetime permanence and organisational stability and, perhaps more importantly, even if this was true, then why?<sup>117</sup> In his exploration of the British Army regimental system, French defines the important benefits of the regiment,<sup>118</sup> an organisational backdrop against which the prior regimental allegiances of Mounted Infantry officers requires understanding. Can the allegation that Mounted Infantry officers refused to relinquish their ties to their parent infantry regiments be substantiated and, moreover, even if true was this causal in the Mounted Infantry's decline? Alternatively, if the

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<sup>115</sup> 'Ikona', 'The Passing of the Old MI', pp. 209-13.

<sup>116</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform of the British Cavalry*, p. 217, the 'hybrid cavalryman' was the term to describe the renaissance of the cavalry in the years leading up to the First World War, predicated on improved dismounted musketry, less of an adherence to the mounted charge and a greater efficacy in the care of their horses, all of which were all lessons arising from the cavalry's experiences on the South African veldt; Spiers, 'The British Cavalry 1902 – 14', pp. 71-79.

<sup>117</sup> Robinson, 'The search for mobility during the Second Boer War', pp. 140-57.

<sup>118</sup> French, *Military Identities*, p.2-3 & p.352.

Mounted Infantry's impermanence was a factor in its demise, why was this fundamental organisational principle supported and sustained?<sup>119</sup> Certainly Roberts and Wolseley were ardent supporters of both the Mounted Infantry and the regimental system but, admittedly, by the mid-1900s their influence was beginning to wane. Spiers considers that Mounted Infantry commanders returning from the Boer War capitulated to the prevailing belief of the cavalry's social and military superiority and thus willingly subjugated the Mounted Infantry to performing limited protective duties rather than retaining more wide-ranging and independent strategic roles as it had on the veldt.<sup>120</sup> Talbot concurs but exculpates the Mounted Infantry commanders for such behaviour as their surrender only occurred in the presence of sustained attack from the cavalry lobby.<sup>121</sup> Bond also blames the Mounted Infantry, considering that its painfully slow development pre-1899 and inadequate training for war, had serious repercussions for its continued existence thereafter, although it is difficult to reconcile his view with the ultimately successful expansion of the Mounted Infantry post-1900 into a largely well-regarded mounted force that eventually helped secure victory in South Africa.<sup>122</sup>

Conversely, both Bond and Spiers have been critical of the cavalry's reform with Spiers emphasising the influence of the cavalry's prevailing fear of its

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<sup>119</sup> Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, p.19.

<sup>120</sup> Spiers, 'The British Cavalry 1902 – 14', pp. 71-79.

<sup>121</sup> Talbot, 'The Regular Mounted Infantry', pp. 306-24.

<sup>122</sup> Bond, 'Doctrine and training in the British Cavalry', pp. 97-125; Robinson, 'The search for mobility during the Second Boer War', p.157.

subordination to the Mounted Infantry if a more firepower-orientated doctrine was adopted at the expense of the *arme blanche*.<sup>123</sup> Badsey concludes differently, considering the cavalry's reformation to be more successful than previously postulated and that it contributed materially to the downfall of the Mounted Infantry by rendering the latter redundant functionally by dually embracing dismounted firepower whilst retaining *arme blanche* capability. It is likely that the cavalry's doctrinal renaissance was indeed an element in the Mounted Infantry's demise at a time when the Mounted Infantry, a force previously used to a multidimensional functionality, became constrained in a more limited role exposing the arm to criticism of being a cavalry-substitute. Besides, Badsey considers that the abolition of the Mounted Infantry was not necessarily a bad thing for future army doctrine, citing Kipling's *MI* as evidence for a need to refresh the concept of mobile firepower without degrading the mounted arm into ubiquitous utilitarianism.<sup>124</sup> Clearly Badsey views this utilitarianism as unwelcome although it is possible that the Mounted Infantry's functional ubiquity may have merely reflected the peculiarity of active service in South Africa and the multifarious tasks allocated to the Mounted Infantry. As previously noted earlier in this chapter, the traditional distinctions previously evident between cavalry, Mounted Infantry and Mounted Rifles blurred towards the end of the campaign.<sup>125</sup> Therefore the fifth of this thesis' principal research questions aims to clarify

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<sup>123</sup> Spiers, 'The British Cavalry 1902 – 1914', pp. 71-77; Bond, 'Doctrine and training in the British Cavalry', pp. 97-125.

<sup>124</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p. 154.

<sup>125</sup> Bou, *Light Horse*, p. x; Robinson, 'The search for mobility during the Second Boer War', p.143.

the various causative factors and their comparative importance in the Mounted Infantry's abolition.

Returning to the initial research question of whether the Mounted Infantry was not, in fact, merely a cheap substitute for a numerically inadequate cavalry but rather reflected the British Army's solution for the application of mobile firepower on the battlefields across the Empire, can this explain the Mounted Infantry's apparent uniqueness?<sup>126</sup> The solutions identified for the development of mobile firepower in other nations' armies will be reviewed with particular reference to the mounted troops of France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia and the United States as well as in the forces of the British Empire, particularly India and the Dominions.<sup>127</sup> Furthermore, the impact of the conflicts fought by these armies on the evolution of their mounted troops will be analysed, illustrated by the campaigns of the American Civil War 1861- 65, Franco-German War of 1870-71, the American Plains Indian Wars of 1865-90 and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, including identifying the lessons drawn from these conflicts by both their respective forces and the British Army. These campaigns have been selected purposefully as they not only cover chronologically the time period of the evolution of the regular Mounted Infantry in a manner analogous to the campaigns chosen as case studies for analysis in the British Army, but they also illustrate comparative

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<sup>126</sup> Jones, *From Boer War to World War*, p.190.

<sup>127</sup> These specific nations' armies have been selected for comparative analysis for a number of reasons, namely: their involvement in major conflicts during the time period encompassed by this thesis; to reflect whether the challenges resulting from these nations' imperial pretensions resulted in similar solutions as in the British Army and whether the Mounted Infantry paradigm transposed into forces also part of the British Empire, perhaps indicating cross-fertilisation of ideas.

changes in cavalry doctrine among these nations with which to contextualise individual solutions to the battlefield application of mobile firepower.

Both Badsey and Phillips have considered the lessons learned from the experiences of the American Civil War and European wars of 1866 and 1870-71.<sup>128</sup> They highlight the ambiguities of the lessons from these wars. In America, the cavalry forces behaved in some respects more like Mounted Infantry than typical European style cavalry by demonstrating a comparatively greater use of dismounted firepower. Yet this is not the whole story as erstwhile *armed blanche* cavalry charges took place including, almost uniquely, using pistol-fire from the saddle. Dennis Showalter considers that this conflict altered the paradigm of the American cavalry model with the Union cavalry, in particular, developing into an independent strike force, presaging the British mobile columns in South Africa in 1901 – 02, predicated on mobile firepower and the retention of modified shock tactics.<sup>129</sup> Thus there remains polarity of opinion whether US cavalry was Mounted Infantry or ‘true’ cavalry but could the apparent absence of Mounted Infantry in the US Army of the period be explained by this changing paradigm of the US cavalry?

By contrast, the mid-19th century European wars demonstrated more traditional cavalry tactics, predicated on shock, but with questionable tactical

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<sup>128</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, pp.42-44; Gervase Phillips, ‘Who Shall Say That the Days of Cavalry Are Over? the Revival of the Mounted Arm in Europe, 1853 – 1914’, *War in History*, 18(1), 2011, pp. 5-32.

<sup>129</sup> Dennis Showalter, ‘The US Cavalry: soldiers of a Nation, policemen of an Empire’, *Army History*, Fall 2011, pp.6-23.



impact on the battlefield.<sup>130</sup> Although such mediocrity may have been due to failures in reconnaissance, the impact of modern weaponry and poor military planning, Phillips argues that it was failure of command in the cavalry rather than from outdated cavalry tactics or faulty army doctrine.<sup>131</sup> Nevertheless, if employment of traditional cavalry was largely ineffective then should these armies have embraced the Mounted Infantry model and if they had, would this have provided an additional resource on the battlefield? Moreover, as British military strategy re-focussed towards the probability of a European conflict after 1905-06, did these doctrines of European armies adversely influence the existence of the regular Mounted Infantry?

Elsewhere in the British Empire, other solutions to the requirement of mobile firepower evolved. As noted previously the mounted troops in Australia, New Zealand and, to a lesser extent Canada, tended to develop into Mounted Rifles rather than either Mounted Infantry or cavalry. Similarly, the Mounted Infantry model does not appear to have migrated wholesale to the Indian Army although abstraction for Mounted Infantry training did occur in Indian Army infantry regiments. Admittedly, Indian cavalry regiments were more plentiful than their British cavalry counterparts but were generally organised differently through the *silladar* system, thus superficially resembling domestic Yeomanry.<sup>132</sup> However, can the apparent lack of Mounted Infantry in India

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<sup>130</sup> Geoffrey Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.290; Geoffrey Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 60-61.

<sup>131</sup> Phillips, 'Who Shall Say That the Days of Cavalry Are Over?' pp. 5-32.

<sup>132</sup> Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, its Officers and Men* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), p.26, succinctly encapsulates the nature of the *Sillidar* system as 'the

be accounted for by the relative numerical abundance of Indian cavalry regiments or does this reflect a more fundamental difference between the two armies? Therefore, the final principal research question will investigate the British Army regular Mounted Infantry's apparent uniqueness, identifying the alternative strategies adopted in other armies to solve the challenge of the applying mobile firepower to the battlefield and answering the question that if the Mounted Infantry model was not a viable solution to be adopted then why not?

In summary, the innovation that was the British regular Mounted Infantry arose from the experiences of British infantry regiments during colonial conflicts, predominantly, though not exclusively, in Africa. The model became increasingly formalised after 1888 with the opening of Mounted Infantry Schools of Instruction reaching its zenith in 1900 – 02 when the Mounted Infantry was a blueprint for the British Army on campaign. Although lauded by many senior army commanders, the Mounted Infantry was destined to be abolished in 1913. Prevailing historical orthodoxy indicates that the Mounted Infantry was only ever intended as an expedient to cover the lack of regular cavalry and a redundant Mounted Infantry was superseded by the reformed 'hybrid' cavalry.<sup>133</sup> Additional influences implicated in its demise, including the vested interests of Mounted Infantry officers, its eventual lack of patronage and the refocusing of strategic army planning, have been

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regiment was a kind of joint-stock company in which the trooper paid for his horse and equipment when he joined and sold them back when he left'.

<sup>133</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p. 218.

considered as integral to the politico-military reality that, by 1913, the Mounted Infantry was redundant.

In a eulogy for the late Mounted Infantry in the *Cavalry Journal*, a sentiment was expressed that the debt owed to the Mounted Infantry for its part in successful colonial campaigns had not been recognised by the nation or the army.<sup>134</sup> It was predicted that the glorious deeds performed by the Mounted Infantry would soon be forgotten by the rest of the army. Sadly, this prophesy was soon realised. Clearly, the industrial magnitude of the warfare of the First World War overshadowed memories of the Mounted Infantry's heyday and the accelerating modernity of mechanised warfare appeared to deride the continued existence of horsed troops particularly cavalry, a conviction still held tenaciously by public opinion and that has resisted the efforts of revisionism.<sup>135</sup> Perhaps more with optimism than with true conviction, the eulogy concluded with the observation that:

To the Mounted Infantry as a whole belongs a very large share of the honour of saving the Empire in its most trying hour, and it is, no doubt, only an oversight that this has never been fully appreciated by the public.<sup>136</sup>

Therefore, this thesis aims to correct this 'oversight' by reviewing the history of the British Army's regular Mounted Infantry, place the Mounted Infantry

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<sup>134</sup> Ikona, 'The Passing of the Old MI', pp. 209 -13.

<sup>135</sup> Badsey, *The British Army in Battle and its Image*, pp.55-105.

<sup>136</sup> Ikona, 'The Passing of the Old MI', *ibid*.

appropriately in context in the historiography of the late Victorian and Edwardian army, consolidate its fragmented history and, by answering six principal research questions, ultimately judge whether the Mounted Infantry was indeed merely the expedient stop-gap measure of Repington's aphorism of the Mounted Infantry as a 'cavalry of poverty' or whether it was a model conceived of its time, an Victorian imperial solution for a Victorian imperial problem, a short-lived but potent military paradigm.

## Chapter Two

### Doctrine and Organisation

During a lecture in 1873,<sup>1</sup> the future Field Marshal Evelyn Wood, then a Lieutenant Colonel in the 90<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry, pronounced presciently that Mounted Riflemen were now essential to every enterprising army. Years later, a précis produced by the Intelligence Department at the War Office, benefitting perhaps from thirty-two years' hindsight, concurred with Wood's prediction, forecasting still that mobilising large numbers of Mounted Infantry bestowed definite military advantages.<sup>2</sup> Yet despite the consistency of such portents over many years, the regular Mounted Infantry developed in an atmosphere of controversy of role, doctrine and organisation to such an extent that the author Erskine Childers questioned rhetorically, despite the experiences of the Boer War, 'in what precise and positive way do Mounted Rifles differ from Yeomanry, Mounted Infantry and Cavalry?'.<sup>3</sup> In asking this question so many years after the regular Mounted Infantry's foundation and unsuspectingly only a mere four years before its formal abolition, Childers echoed the continuing debate within the army's officer corps<sup>4</sup> that

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<sup>1</sup> Evelyn Wood, *Mounted Riflemen: Lecture at the RUSI on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1873* (London; W. Mitchell & Co., 1873), pp.1-25, the title reflects the imprecision in use of nomenclature throughout contemporaneous primary and secondary sources alluded to in the previous chapter. Wood based his opinion on his analysis of events in the Franco-German war of 1870-71.

<sup>2</sup> TNA WO 163 / 10 Minutes of the Army Council, précis 160, 1905.

<sup>3</sup> Childers, *War and the Arme Blanche*, p.5.

<sup>4</sup> Captain C.W. Battine, 'The Use of the Horse Soldier in the Twentieth Century', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 52, 1908, pp. 309-30.

demonstrated uncertainty, if not overt distrust, over the seemingly overlapping roles of the cavalry and Mounted Infantry.<sup>5</sup> That such perplexity could remain in the army despite twenty years of formal Mounted Infantry training is illustrated by an explanatory article appearing in the *Cavalry Journal* in 1906<sup>6</sup> where, despite an attempt at distinguishing between the functions of Mounted Infantry, Mounted Rifles, and cavalry, clear residual ambiguity remained. Edwin Alderson, a senior Mounted Infantry officer, had admitted that ‘to say what is the exact role of Mounted Infantry is impossible; they have done and will do again all sorts of work’.<sup>7</sup> Hubert Gough, a cavalry officer in the 16<sup>th</sup> Lancers but commanding the Composite Regiment of Mounted Infantry during the Boer War, remarked insouciantly that ‘I had just been appointed to the command of three squadrons of Horse or Mounted Infantry, whichever term you may prefer to use’.<sup>8</sup> Time has not dispelled this tendency to ambiguity in both nomenclature and functionality.<sup>9</sup> Thus the on-going existence, role and organisational basis of the Mounted Infantry provided a fundamental challenge to the army’s prevailing thinking that

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<sup>5</sup> Brigadier General A.W. Thorneycroft, ‘Some Notes on Mounted Infantry’, *Cavalry Journal*, 1, 1906, pp.161-66.

<sup>6</sup> Anon, ‘Mounted Rifles and Mounted Infantry’, *Cavalry Journal*, 1, 1906, pp. 29-32.

<sup>7</sup> Alderson, *With the Mounted Infantry and the Mashonaland Field Force 1896*, p.5.

<sup>8</sup> Appendix Five; General Sir Hubert Gough, *Soldiering On* (London: Arthur Barker, 1954), p.71; Talbot, ‘The Regular Mounted Infantry’, pp. 306-24, the Composite Regiment, as its name suggests, included elements from four colonial South African units (Natal Carbineers, Natal Police, Natal Field Artillery, Durban Light Infantry) and three British infantry battalions (Border Regiment, Dublin Fusiliers and the King’s Royal Rifle Corps).

<sup>9</sup> Gary Sheffield, *The Chief: Douglas Haig and the British Army*, (London: Aurum, 2011), p.41, suggests that ‘mounted riflemen’ were improved versions of Mounted Infantry with inherent equestrian skills conferring an ability to perform cavalry duties excluding the *arme blanche*. This overlooks the different origins of the two groups as Mounted Riflemen were not fully-trained infantrymen.

Hutton summarised blandly as ‘the much discussed question of Mounted Infantry’.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore this chapter will consider the thesis’ initial primary research question relating to the doctrine and role of the regular Mounted Infantry. Did the inception of the regular Mounted Infantry satisfy a previously unfilled need within the army or was it merely a stop-gap interim measure of an inferior cavalry substitute that was abolished when no longer required? In other words, was the regular Mounted Infantry a model Victorian paradigm or an unfortunate mediocrity, the ‘cavalry of poverty’?<sup>11</sup> Did the apparently changing functions of the Mounted Infantry over its existence from an extemporised mounting of infantry companies abroad, through its ubiquity in the Boer War, to its formal yet short-lived designation as divisional mounted troops temporarily displacing cavalry from some of its traditional roles,<sup>12</sup> reflect ongoing military needs or merely a response to army politics and vested interests?<sup>13</sup> Was the Mounted Infantry importantly, if only temporarily, the ‘fourth estate of the military hierarchy’ alongside the infantry, cavalry,

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<sup>10</sup> Hutton *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture One, 2 June 1886, pp.1-44, by the time of publication of his lecture series in 1891, Hutton was Lieutenant-Colonel and Deputy Assistant Adjutant General commanding the Mounted Infantry School at Aldershot.

<sup>11</sup> *The Times*, 16 February 1912, ‘The Mounted Troops of the Expeditionary Force’.

<sup>12</sup> Divisional mounted troops or divisional cavalry were available to the Divisional General Officer Commanding tasked with protection of the infantry and artillery from enemy forces, particularly cavalry, and required to undertake additional functions such as communication duties and local reconnaissance.

<sup>13</sup> F. Crum (‘A Rifleman’), *The Question of Mounted Infantry* (London: Hugh Rees, 1909), p.93; ‘Lancer’, ‘The Question of Mounted Infantry: a reply to Rifleman’, *Cavalry Journal*, 5, 1910, pp.228-31; A.B.B., ‘A defence of Mounted Infantry: an answer to ‘Lancer’, *Cavalry Journal*, 5, 1910, pp.398 – 99.

combined engineers and artillery<sup>14</sup> or did it risk constituting, in the words of the 1881 Intelligence Department's précis, becoming a 'fifth wheel on the carriage' of the British Army, indicating an experimental, idiosyncratic and possibly unnecessary solution to the conundrum of how to merge increased mobility with enhanced firepower on the colonial battlefield?<sup>15</sup>

In answering these questions, the relationship between the Mounted Infantry's organisation and its roles will be investigated to determine whether the Mounted Infantry was 'fit for purpose' in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This necessitates an examination of the processes for the Mounted Infantry's configuration and its resource requirements, coloured by the extensive debate around permanence or impermanence, influenced by the vicissitudes of manpower abstraction and underpinned by prevailing financial imperatives. Thus, in the context of military and political opinion, strategic considerations, fiscal constraint and the peculiarities inherent in colonial campaigning, the Mounted Infantry's ability to deliver its roles, largely although not exclusively centred on force protection through its application of mobile firepower, will be investigated.

The presence of another mounted arm alongside the cavalry created an interface at which institutional friction chafed thus a subsidiary research question will clarify the extent to which the Mounted Infantry and cavalry accommodated each others' respective roles or, alternatively, whether the

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<sup>14</sup> H.M. Bengough, 'Combined Tactics', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 36, 1892, pp. 791-808.

<sup>15</sup> TNA WO 33 / 37 Précis on Mounted Infantry 1881.



ambiguity articulated by Childers was both the reality of colonial campaigning and a source of internal army conflict. Moreover, where did this uncertainty place the two mounted arms in the army's thinking and why, given the disquiet occurring between the Mounted Infantry's supporters and its detractors, did the Mounted Infantry garner such high-level support from leading army figures including Wolseley, Wood and Roberts as well as from aspiring younger officers, most notably Hutton, Alderson, Ian Hamilton, Alexander Godley and Beauvoir De Lisle?

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the concept of Mounted Infantry was not new and could be traced back to the dragoons of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Whilst horsed, these soldiers had dismounted to fire their comparatively primitive firearms, seldom firing their weapons from the saddle, and carrying their firearms slung on their backs when on horseback. Much later, the relative merits of whether the modern firearm, either carbine or rifle, should be carried slung on the rider's back or whether it should be attached to the saddle precipitated much debate.<sup>16</sup> As late as 1902, Roberts indicated his view that: 'I consider it essential that the rifle should be slung by all mounted troops when likely to be engaged which on service would practically amount to its being always slung except perhaps on the line of march'.<sup>17</sup> By 1907 the War Office's official cavalry manual, *Cavalry Training 1907*, stipulated

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<sup>16</sup> British Library, (hereafter BL), *Hutton Papers*, Add. 50111, XXXIV, 'The Proposed Mounted Infantry Regiment' 1887, Hutton proposed carriage of a rifle horizontally on a patented saddle; *Western Mail*, 9 February 1888, incorrectly asserted that switching personal carriage from the sword to the slung carbine was symbolic of the transition of mounted soldiers from cavalry to Mounted Infantry.

<sup>17</sup> Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London, (hereafter LHCMA), *Godley Papers*, 3/240, letter from Roberts, 13 January 1902, conversely Godley indicated his reluctance for the rifle to be carried slung by the Mounted Infantry on grounds of comfort for rider and horse.

carriage of the firearm, at least for the cavalry, to be on the saddle, perhaps symbolically denoting the cavalry's relegation of the firearm to a subsidiary role but with the dire warning that 'on no occasion must the rifle be left on the horse'.<sup>18</sup> Those proponents who advocated the rifle carried slung on the soldier's back, whilst acknowledging concerns regarding the extra weight causing fatigue to rider and tunic,<sup>19</sup> considered that this approach would ensure the firearm's availability at all times as otherwise it might be lost and the soldier left defenceless if he became unhorsed. This view was championed by Roberts who described this very predicament when many of the 9<sup>th</sup> Lancers were unhorsed during the battle at Chardeh during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Afghan War of 1878-80.<sup>20</sup> Pragmatically however, the Mounted Infantry generally favoured the rifle slung over the shoulder with the butt supported in a leather bucket.<sup>21</sup>

Dragoons of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries rarely used the tactics of the horsed charge and merely relied on their mounts for greater mobility than could be achieved by the foot infantry.<sup>22</sup> In this alone, the dragoon of history was not only a forerunner of the Victorian Mounted Infantryman but also laid down a basic tenet of the Mounted Infantry that the mount was only to promote

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<sup>18</sup> *Cavalry Training 1907* (London: HMSO, 1907), p.80.

<sup>19</sup> Wood, *Mounted Riflemen: Lecture at the RUSI on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1873*, pp.1-25, although Wood favoured carrying the rifle on the saddle to avoid extra weight on the rider but also that a rider thrown from the saddle was less likely to suffer injury if his rifle was carried on the saddle.

<sup>20</sup> Field Marshal F. Roberts, Earl of Kandahar, *Forty One Years in India* (London: Macmillan, 1908), p.437.

<sup>21</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers*, Add. 50111, XXXIV, 'The Proposed Mounted Infantry Regiment' 1887.

<sup>22</sup> Wood, *Mounted Riflemen: Lecture at the RUSI on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1873*, pp.1-25.

operational and tactical mobility through enhanced locomotion.<sup>23</sup>

Consequently, neither the dragoon nor the Mounted Infantryman needed a well-bred cavalry horse able to provide the speed of shock tactics and any donkey, mule or pony available locally with adequate endurance and strength could be drafted in as a mount. Thus the Mounted Infantry was to be mounted ideally on locally sourced animals most suited to the prevailing environment.<sup>24</sup> Essentially, the dragoon's role would be adopted by the later Mounted Infantry, being used in the advance for securing bridges and vantage points until reinforced by foot infantry and for covering army retirements where they, as erstwhile musketeers, cooperated with the cavalry.<sup>25</sup> However over time, the dragoon metamorphosed into the 'heavy' armoured cavalryman of the 19<sup>th</sup> century whose *métier* was the *arme blanche* charge brandishing edged steel weapons.<sup>26</sup> Although the dragoon concept had temporarily brought added firepower to operations in the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, by the later 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries additional factors of ballistics and tactics revised the balance of firepower on the battlefield with no force capable of combining mobility and firepower except horse artillery.

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<sup>23</sup> *Mounted Infantry Training 1906*, p.1, mounted drill was to ensure that Mounted Infantry shall 'reap the full advantage of the mobility afforded them by their horses'; Captain J.R. Lumley, 'Mounted Riflemen', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 1881 – 82, 25, pp. 638-56; for a definition of 'mobility', see Chapter One, footnote 14; as the Mounted Infantry paradigm matured with its doctrinal roles extending, enhanced manoeuvrability remained an aspiration of senior army commanders and Mounted Infantry proponents that partly came to fruition during the Boer War

<sup>24</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers*, Add. 50111, XXXIV, 'The Proposed Mounted Infantry Regiment' 1887.

<sup>25</sup> W.H. Greenly, 'Cromwell's Cavalry', *Cavalry Journal*, 1, 1906, p.182.

<sup>26</sup> F.N. Maude, *Cavalry: its Past and Future* (London: William Clowes & Sons, 1903), p.45, though by the second year of the English Civil War, dragoons had been witnessed charging like 'light cavalry'.

As evidence of this, during the American War of Independence of 1775-83 the British Army's use of cavalry was minimal resulting from the logistical difficulties of transporting cavalry regiments across the Atlantic causing excessive equine losses, whilst the densely-forested terrain proved inhospitable to cavalry movement. To this must be added the numerical paucity of cavalry regiments within the British Army.<sup>27</sup> At this time, the strength of the cavalry at home, including Household Cavalry, did not exceed 4,000 men of whom several hundred were unavoidably dismounted due to fiscal constraints.<sup>28</sup> The cavalry's low number contributed to the relative infrequency with which cavalry regiments were sent overseas compared to infantry regiments.<sup>29</sup> This persisting numerical disadvantage also ensured that the occasional proposals for Mounted Infantry to be sourced solely from cavalry rather than infantry regiments, an illogical suggestion in view of the cavalry's lack of infantry training that by definition was a pre-requisite for Mounted Infantry service, foundered.<sup>30</sup> The solution for mobility in America was the use of local ponies, procured with comparative ease, with excellent long distance endurance but little in the way of speed, hence suitable for Mounted Infantry but not cavalry. The 63<sup>rd</sup> Foot, deployed as Mounted

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<sup>27</sup> Rev. H. Belcher, 'The Use of Mounted Infantry in America 1778 – 1780', *Cavalry Journal*, 8, 1913, pp. 64-73, 'British cavalry was too scanty to play anything but a very minor part in this war'.

<sup>28</sup> Belcher, 'The Use of Mounted Infantry in America', p. 65.

<sup>29</sup> Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army*, p.27, there were only two cavalry regiments stationed in South Africa in 1899, nine stationed in India and one in Egypt unlike the six infantry battalions in South Africa and fifty-two garrisoning India.

<sup>30</sup> Lieutenant G. Hamilton, 'Mounted Marksmen and the Dismounted Service of Cavalry', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 27, 1883, pp. 261-87, infantry officers commanding Mounted Infantry were criticised for lacking initiative with Mounted Infantry officers derided occasionally by cavalry officers claiming that only they were capable of the tactical élan required of horsed soldiers.

Infantry without prior training and having sourced its own mounts locally, fought in a number of small engagements near Charleston and participated in the British victory at Camden<sup>31</sup>. The experience of successfully forming temporary Mounted Infantry thus contributed to the durable belief held subsequently by senior army officers that Mounted Infantry could be extemporised with ease and required only the briefest of training. With *ad hoc* Mounted Infantry deployed in North America, an awareness of the need for improved musketry combined with mobility to combat the superior marksmanship of the colonial backwoodsman, itself presaging lessons to be re-learned in South Africa in 1899 – 1902, confirmed for senior officers that Mounted Infantry under certain operational circumstances could confer attributes absent in traditional cavalry.<sup>32</sup> Unsurprisingly though, not all officers welcomed the Mounted Infantry concept with the Duke of Wellington reportedly saying later that ‘I never had much idea of the Dragoon while we had him in our own service’.<sup>33</sup>

Although not part of any formal doctrine, the variable use of improvised Mounted Infantry continued at times of local trouble or crisis elsewhere in the Empire. Colonial conflicts exposed the limitations of infantry operations devoid of mounted troops resulting in inadequate mobility, reconnaissance, scouting and pursuit.<sup>34</sup> A temporary Mounted Infantry detachment was

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<sup>31</sup> Belcher, ‘The Use of Mounted Infantry in America’, p.67.

<sup>32</sup> Belcher, ‘The Use of Mounted Infantry in America’, p. 73.

<sup>33</sup> Belcher, ‘The Use of Mounted Infantry in America’, p. 72.

<sup>34</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.401.

formed from the 24<sup>th</sup> Foot stationed in South Africa by Captain, later General, Sir Frederick Carrington, whilst similarly Mounted Infantry saw active service in the Zulu War in 1879 with an *ad hoc* corps formed by Major, later Colonel, Barrow.<sup>35</sup> Elsewhere, in India, Sir Henry Havelock raised a corps of Mounted Infantry from the 10<sup>th</sup> Foot in October 1858 during the Indian Mutiny. Through necessity, his force of forty soldiers trained for only a fortnight before seeing action thus emphasising the contemporary acceptance of brevity of training for mounted work by troops other than cavalry. Earlier that same year, Sir Hugh Rose, eventually Field Marshal and Commander-in-Chief in India, mobilised a temporary and rudimentary (by later standards) Camel Corps from four officers and one hundred men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> KRRC together with two hundred loyal Sikhs. Each man was mounted tandem on a camel behind a native driver.<sup>36</sup> Numerous other similar occurrences are recorded with all these examples pointing to a clear if informal pattern of emergency extemporisation, brevity of instruction and transient existence with timely disbandment when crisis had receded.<sup>37</sup> This contributed to the Mounted Infantry model existing temporarily only on active service. The corollary was its absence in peacetime that had implications for its organisation and training.<sup>38</sup> As colonial garrison duties frequently necessitated timely response in quelling local insurrection without waiting for reinforcements from

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<sup>35</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers*, Add.50111, XXXIV, 'Notes on the evolution of Mounted Infantry in the British Army', 23 May 1907.

<sup>36</sup> TNA WO 33 / 37 Précis on Mounted Infantry 1881, appendix 1.

<sup>37</sup> Talbot, 'The Regular Mounted Infantry', pp. 306-24; Tylden, 'Mounted Infantry', pp. 176-79.

<sup>38</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers*, Add. 50111, XXXIV, 'Notes on the evolution of Mounted Infantry in the British Army', *ibid*.

home, the local infantry garrison largely bore this responsibility alone. Thus the use of locally-mounted infantry companies benefitted from simplicity, rapidity and ease of organisation, familiarity of command and cost-effectiveness compared to the embarkation of cavalry from home, yet it was only suitable against an enemy without traditionally trained cavalry where the latter's possession of edged weapons and prior inculcation of *arme blanche* tactics might nullify any advantages accrued from deployment of *ad hoc* Mounted Infantry. To its detractors, the nascent Mounted Infantry was an indifferent cavalry substitute devoid of a full range of cavalry functionality. However, *ad hoc* Mounted Infantry never aspired to be *bona fide* cavalry but a local mounted force providing protection for its foot infantry colleagues whilst remaining capable of delivering vestigial cavalry duties of reconnaissance, security for lines of communication, flank protection and both advance and rearguards depending on the requirements of the campaign. Despite this doctrinal conundrum, this fundamental misunderstanding between aspiration and necessity would contribute, along with confusion around nomenclature, to the durable antipathy towards the Mounted Infantry exhibited particularly by cavalry officers.<sup>39</sup> Clearly, the implications for extemporising Mounted Infantry were not solely cavalry-focussed as the process of forming Mounted Infantry also impacted on their parent infantry battalions. If by definition the pre-requisite requirement for the

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<sup>39</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Four, 20 April 1891, pp.1-27, in the post-lecture debate Colonel McCalmont of the 4<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards accused the Mounted Infantry of 'doing cavalry work' whilst Hutton complained that it was down to 'confusion in such a hopeless manner lately by the Press and even by military writers, that a great deal of uncalled-for controversy has resulted'.

Mounted Infantryman was to be a fully trained infantry soldier<sup>40</sup> and infantry battalions on overseas duty had to be the source of regular Mounted Infantry, the question of how Mounted Infantry should be formed remained problematic – should it be ‘as required’ or ‘pre-planned’?

*Ad hoc* extemporisation had the inherent benefit of configuring mounted men where and when required. If brevity of training was permissible, then extemporisation removed the problem of men routinely absent from the battalion for mounted training. Numerical expansion of Mounted Infantry was then simple and only limited by the availability of suitable local mounts and personnel. The caveat was that the parent infantry battalion must not be denuded of too many of its officers and men in deference to the mounted detachment, which would otherwise destabilise the battalion and reduce its ability to operate although pragmatically, men could be returned easily to the ranks of the battalion as necessary provided the mounted companies were not deployed geographically too distant. The assumption that brevity of training, in tandem with extemporisation, was satisfactory was questioned in the wake of the Transvaal rebellion of 1880-81,<sup>41</sup> with the Duke of Cambridge, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, objecting to the concept of permanent Mounted Infantry regiments but conceding that there was benefit in maintaining Mounted Infantry companies in a number of

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<sup>40</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Four, 20 April 1891, pp.1-27, ‘Mounted Infantry are infantry soldiers *pur et simple*’.

<sup>41</sup> TNA WO 33 / 37 Précis on Mounted Infantry 1881.



battalions for service when necessary.<sup>42</sup> The need for training prior to deployment weighed against the benefits of impromptu formation but led to the formalisation of peacetime training. The nature of what constituted training during the regular Mounted Infantry's existence will be examined in a subsequent chapter. Opportunity for peacetime training would be achieved by abstraction of officers and men, either selected men or, less frequently volunteers, seconded from their infantry battalions for Mounted Infantry instruction, but who remained an integral part of their parent battalions returning to regimental duty after conclusion of mounted training. Abstraction had its benefits as well as downsides. In addition to facilitating numerical expansion, abstraction could spread the load across many infantry battalions whilst the obvious problem was the loss of officers and men from battalions when most needed at commencement of hostilities.

Irrespective of its potential flaws, abstraction became the foundation for training and formation of Mounted Infantry before and after the Boer War. It had not been the only option considered by army commanders. Evelyn Wood, one of the founding fathers of the regular Mounted Infantry,<sup>43</sup> suggested a process resembling abstraction but limited preferentially to light infantry.<sup>44</sup> The light infantry's independence of action, initiative and self-reliance seemed traits comparable to those desired from Mounted Infantry in

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<sup>42</sup> Sir George Arthur, (ed.) *The Letters of Lord and Lady Wolseley 1870 – 1911* (London: William Heinemann, 1922), p.305.

<sup>43</sup> Colonel E.T.H. Hutton, 'The Military Question of Today or the Facts about the Mounted Infantry', *United Services Magazine*, 7, 1893, pp. 748-58; Scott, *Douglas Haig: The Preparatory Prologue*, p.147.

<sup>44</sup> Wood, *Mounted Riflemen: Lecture at the RUSI on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1873*, pp.1-25.

Wood's somewhat biased opinion (after all he was a Light Infantry lieutenant colonel). Similarly, perhaps to the Mounted Infantry's future detriment, such attributes were within the remit of light cavalry and thus in time, risked institutional friction with the cavalry over the duties of scouting and reconnaissance.<sup>45</sup> As Mounted Infantry would likely deploy as small units some distance away from its parent battalion or the bulk of the army, attributes of intelligence and resilience inculcated by previous training would be particularly useful. Following the Boer War, an updated but superficially similar suggestion for a wholesale re-designation of a number of Rifle regiments to Mounted Infantry also failed to gain credence within the army.<sup>46</sup> If accepted, this would have created immediately at least 4,000 Mounted Infantry from eight Rifle battalions. Its rejection was based on needing to maintain *esprit de corps* in the Rifle regiments that might have been threatened by such a move. Even more controversially, a conversion of four newly-constituted cavalry regiments to Mounted Rifles was suggested by the same author at a time when the Mounted Rifles archetype was prevalent in South Africa.<sup>47</sup> This was not the first time this had been suggested as Wood also had considered the possible conversion of several complete cavalry regiments to the role of Mounted Rifles almost thirty years previously.<sup>48</sup>

Fortunately, considering the longevity of institutional friction between

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<sup>45</sup> LHCMA, *Godley Papers*, 3/56, letter to Byng, 16 February 1905, 'if they [the Mounted Infantry] are part of this [the mixed Mounted brigades], they must bear their share of all its duties i.e. reconnaissance ...Therefore, I say they must be trained in reconnaissance like cavalry.'

<sup>46</sup> W.E Cairnes, *A Common-Sense Army* (London: John Milne, n.d), p.53.

<sup>47</sup> Cairnes, *A Common-Sense Army*, p.83.

<sup>48</sup> Wood, *Mounted Riflemen Lecture at the RUSI on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1873*, pp.1-25.

Mounted Infantry and cavalry officers, the resulting acrimony and organisational chaos ensuing if such conversion had occurred, was avoided. Although for the most part an enthusiast for abstraction, Hutton initially advocated similarly to Wood that two complete pre-existing infantry battalions be converted into permanent Mounted Infantry thus 'sacrificing' two pre-existing regiments. Leaving aside the fraught nature of 're-rolling' regiments, this option would have limited the absolute numbers of Mounted Infantry trained and would have been most likely numerically inadequate for overseas' commitments. In fact it is difficult to see how a numerically finite home-based permanent regiment could match the flexibility of extemporised forces overseas unless the permanent regiment(s) were considered to be a form of Victorian 'rapid reaction force' always ready for prompt dispatch abroad. Despite improvements in maritime technology and the opening of the Suez Canal in November 1869 that shortened the duration of transport of troops to much of the Empire, most journeys remained comparative lengthy, certainly by modern standards, thus diminishing the practicality of 'rapid reaction' with the risk that hostilities might have ceased by the time of its arrival.<sup>49</sup> Hutton further vacillated over the question of permanence or impermanence proposing in 1887 the formation of a permanent Mounted Infantry Regiment, based on a number of schemes predicated on long-term abstraction of men from parent infantry regiments but constituted for a finite period into a permanent regiment.<sup>50</sup> His preferred option was an eight-

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<sup>49</sup> Stephen Manning, *Soldiers of the Queen*, pp.34-55.

<sup>50</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers*, Add.50111, XXXIV, 'The Proposed Mounted Infantry Regiment', 2 September 1887.

company regiment with each company furnished by an individual infantry battalion. The obvious benefit of this permutation was the disruption of fewer infantry battalions than in other schemes comprising section-sized abstractions from a larger number of battalions. Unfortunately abstraction resulting in the temporary loss of men, often the most experienced soldiers, from their parent battalions both during peacetime for training and potentially permanently on mobilisation, would remain unpopular with infantry battalion commanders.<sup>51</sup> Naively perhaps, Hutton took an opposing view, optimistically assuming that the infantry battalion commanders' acceptance of abstraction signified a pride that their own detachment of Mounted Infantry's forthcoming honour would reflect well on the parent battalion.<sup>52</sup> Wood recognised that abstraction would always place stresses on parent infantry battalions and he sought cost-effective alternatives whilst remaining true to the established principle of Mounted Infantry impermanence. His later attempts to proactively over-establish infantry battalions to take abstraction into account, a scheme previously championed in the Press,<sup>53</sup> foundered on fiscal grounds.<sup>54</sup> Despite his suggested permutations for Mounted Infantry formulation, Wood supported abstraction with selection by commanding officers on the basis of having served in the infantry for a set period, learnt infantry drill successfully

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<sup>51</sup> General Sir Alexander Godley, *Life of an Irish Soldier* (London: John Murray, 1939), p.35, Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Lord Methuen (Q.14350, p.128), 'our best officers and men go [for Mounted Infantry abstraction] at the very time we require them'.

<sup>52</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers*, Add. 50111, XXXIV, 'The Proposed Mounted Infantry Regiment', 2 September 1887.

<sup>53</sup> *The Leeds Mercury*, 13 September 1890.

<sup>54</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6829 The Future of Mounted Infantry and Numbers Required, 31 July 1900.

and passed a course in musketry.<sup>55</sup> These criteria would become more stringent over the following years when selection no longer relied on issues such as duration of prior service and a modicum of musketry skill but on good conduct, marksmanship, minimum age and satisfactory health. Importantly, preferential selection on merit, rather than volunteering, rendered an aura of *corps d'élite*, resonating superficially with modern special forces.<sup>56</sup> Thus, in hindsight, Wood proposed many of the foundations of the regular Mounted Infantry and by championing abstraction, he promoted the Mounted Infantry as an impermanent organisation configured only in war, though this would be an arrangement later implicated in the arm's demise.

As the concept of regular Mounted Infantry gained credence,<sup>57</sup> the War Office undertook an analysis of the options for the organisation of future Mounted Infantry.<sup>58</sup> Three options were proposed, namely: the formation of a permanent corps; a continuation of the previous *ad hoc* formations temporarily abstracted from infantry regiments during periods of crisis, and peacetime abstraction for Mounted Infantry training resulting in a cadre of

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<sup>55</sup> Godley, *Life of an Irish Soldier*, p.33 & p.103; W.H. Goodenough, and J.C. Dalton, *The Army Book for the British Empire* (London: HMSO, 1893), p.176.

<sup>56</sup> T. Denman, 'The Future of Mounted Infantry', *Nineteenth Century*, March, 1900, pp. 382-91; Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture One, 2 June 1886, pp.1-44; although modern special forces volunteer prior to undergoing selection – a situation unlike the Mounted Infantry.

<sup>57</sup> *The Times*, 8 September 1881, stated that the 'Mounted Infantry is almost universally admitted to be a necessity portion of future armies'; Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Three, 12 November 1890, pp.1-20, quoting *The Times*, later stated that 'Mounted Infantry is a distinct innovation on accepted and orthodox tactical ideas' and had 'proved the value of mobile infantry in regular warfare'.

<sup>58</sup> TNA WO 33 / 37 Précis on Mounted Infantry 1881.

men within their parent infantry battalions ready for reconstitution and deployment as Mounted Infantry on mobilisation. Only the first option recommended the establishment of a permanent corps yet the debate around permanence versus impermanence persisted throughout the Mounted Infantry's existence. The advantages of permanency included formalised training opportunities, enhanced promotion prospects for officers seeing service in a novel arm, encouraging clarity of role within the army's doctrine and the development of a new regimental identity underpinned by *esprit de corps*. The Intelligence Department's précis of 1881 concluded that 'officers who have had practical experience with Mounted Infantry are opposed to the formation of a permanent corps'<sup>59</sup>, a conclusion of surprising longevity and durability.<sup>60</sup> An important objection to a permanent Mounted Infantry, voiced frequently by senior army officers, was the concern that permanent regular Mounted Infantry would inexorably trend towards being an undertrained 'inferior' cavalry, losing its excellence in infantry skills and preferring to remain mounted without having any expertise in the cavalry's *arme blanche*.<sup>61</sup> Hutton emphasised that, irrespective of the Mounted Infantry's permanence or impermanence, the 'Mounted Infantry must avoid becoming a species of Yeomanry' i.e. change from infantrymen to cavalry or light horsemen which would destroy the *raison d'être* of such a force'.<sup>62</sup> As

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<sup>59</sup> TNA WO 33 / 37 Précis on Mounted Infantry 1881.

<sup>60</sup> Thorneycroft, 'Some Notes on Mounted Infantry', pp.161-66, even voiced his personal concern that the inception of Mounted Infantry schools had risked making the Mounted Infantry into a separate and permanent arm.

<sup>61</sup> TNA WO 33 / 37 Précis on Mounted Infantry 1881.

<sup>62</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture One, 2 June 1886, pp.1-44.

late in the Mounted Infantry's evolution as 1893, the *Army Book*, an army-sanctioned semi-official publication authored by serving officers, still continued to explain the absence of the Mounted Infantry's permanency through the risk of losing its infantry identity and that a permanent corps would spend too much time on equestrian care rather than maintaining its infantry skills.<sup>63</sup> Conversely, Colonel George Henderson, a renowned military theorist at the Royal Military College Sandhurst,<sup>64</sup> in promoting the concept of permanency, disputed this unproven assertion of becoming indifferent cavalry,<sup>65</sup> but identified the possibility of doctrinal co-existence, recognising the potential value from inter-arm cooperation combining the Mounted Infantry's rifle power facilitating the cavalry's operational independence.<sup>66</sup>

As a process, abstraction had inherent flaws including slowness of training predicated on secondment. Despite preceding years of abstraction for training at Mounted Infantry schools since 1888,<sup>67</sup> by 1905 only forty-eight of the seventy-eight home-based infantry battalions had provided men for Mounted Infantry training even though numerical requirements had been

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<sup>63</sup> Goodenough and Dalton, *The Army Book for the British Empire*, p.172.

<sup>64</sup> Luvaas, *The Education of an Army*, pp.216-47.

<sup>65</sup> G.F.R., Henderson, *The Science of War: a collection of essays and lectures 1891 – 1903* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1908), p.55.

<sup>66</sup> Luvaas, *The Education of an Army*, p.230, Henderson predicted the *quid pro quo* for the Mounted Infantry would be enhanced equitation skills.

<sup>67</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers*, Add.50111, XXXIV, 'The Proposed Mounted Infantry Regiment' 2 September 1887; Tylden, 'Mounted Infantry', pp. 176-79, Aldershot was chosen as the inaugural school for its pre-eminence as a depot for the British Army since the post-Crimea years and because of its ample barracks and stables.

revised downwards from company to detachment size, in turn posing problems of integrating so many detachments cohesively into a Mounted Infantry battalion whilst spreading the burden across a larger number of infantry battalions.<sup>68</sup> The amount of trained Mounted Infantry appears disappointingly low in comparison to the rather optimistic predicted annual output of twenty complete battalions from Aldershot's Mounted Infantry School after the Boer War,<sup>69</sup> which reflected the dual problems of reluctance of battalion commanders to release men for Mounted Infantry training and the fact that most home battalions remained under-strength whilst still needing to find drafts for their linked battalions overseas.<sup>70</sup> On balance, senior army officers favoured abstraction and organisational impermanence over a new regimental force although absolute consensus was lacking.<sup>71</sup> Colonel Henry Hallam Parr, commander of the Mounted Infantry during the Egyptian Campaign of 1882, was a vocal supporter of abstraction, extending the principle to a suggested register of trained Mounted Infantry reservists. General Redvers Buller was adamant that there was no need for permanent Mounted Infantry, disagreeing with the concept entirely and suggesting that all first-rate infantry should be taught to ride thus becoming potential 'mobile infantry',<sup>72</sup> a suggestion undermined by its impracticality including

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<sup>68</sup> TNA WO 163 / 10 Army Council Minutes, précis 160, 1905.

<sup>69</sup> A.J. Godley, 'The Development of Mounted Infantry training at home', *Cavalry Journal*, 1, 1906, pp. 52-55.

<sup>70</sup> Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, pp.62-66.

<sup>71</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture One: 2 June 1886, pp.1-44.

<sup>72</sup> Talbot, 'The Regular Mounted Infantry', pp. 306-24.



inadequate resources and time available for training and, of course, cost. It was only in Egypt post-1885 and South Africa following the Boer War where any form of permanence for the Mounted Infantry was attained. In South Africa, infantry battalions arriving for garrison duties relinquished their Mounted Infantry companies permanently until re-embarkation for home. Neither the infantry colonels nor the General Officer Commanding in South Africa liked this arrangement much because of the enforced loss of men and the comparative frequency with which Mounted Infantry companies comprising the force rotated.<sup>73</sup> Remarkably, even the experiences of the Boer War failed to settle the issue of permanence versus impermanence.<sup>74</sup>

During the post-War years, Childers berated Mounted Infantry commanders whom he considered to have betrayed their arm by leaving the force or converting to the cavalry, citing the example of Beauvoir De Lisle, a light infantry officer with Mounted Infantry command experience, who was persuaded by Roberts to switch to the cavalry<sup>75</sup> on the grounds that Roberts wished to 'have at least one cavalry officer who appreciated the importance of firepower as its primary weapon'.<sup>76</sup> Evans indicates that De Lisle was only one of several non-cavalry officers, often staff college graduates, who transferred into the cavalry on recommendation or through a perception that

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<sup>73</sup> TNA WO 163 / 10 Army Council Minutes, précis 160, 1905.

<sup>74</sup> LHCMA, *Godley Papers*, 3/286, letter from Wood to Godley, 29 July 1902, in which Wood rejected Godley's suggestion of re-considering a permanent Mounted Infantry staff cadre, rather still preferring abstraction for reasons of training, discipline and morale; Brigadier General A.W. Thorneycroft, 'Some Notes on Mounted Infantry', *Cavalry Journal*, 1, 1906, pp.161-66.

<sup>75</sup> Talbot, 'The Regular Mounted Infantry', pp. 306-24.

<sup>76</sup> General Sir Beauvoir De Lisle, *Reminiscences of Sport and War* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1939), p.121

service in the cavalry might bestow improved career prospects.<sup>77</sup> There were numerous factors contributing to this perception of enhanced promotion prospects in the cavalry particularly a faster turnover of cavalry officers than in line infantry regiments.<sup>78</sup> Whilst the cost of living and socialising in cavalry officers' messes was more expensive than in county infantry regiments and thus potentially prohibitive to a career in the cavalry<sup>79</sup>, equally the personal and family wealth of cavalry officers often meant greater opportunities for a career outside the army particularly the managing of family estates<sup>80</sup>. This linkage of landed aristocracy, influential positions in local society and preceding service in the cavalry was integral to the association between these ex-cavalry officers and command in county Yeomanry regiments.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, Badsey suggests that the issue of securing career prospects by remaining within the regimental system rather than commanding impermanent Mounted Infantry was a factor in the eventual lack of support

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<sup>77</sup> Evans, 'Sport and Hard Work', pp. 139-58.

<sup>78</sup> TNA WO 163 / 611 Recommendations of Committees on Army Matters 1900 – 20: Deficiency of Officers in the Cavalry 1905, indicated that the causes were: inadequate pecuniary and professional gains for the work undertaken by cavalry officers; uncertainty of career prospects and 'terms and conditions' e.g. amounts of leave, and a loss of prestige for officers serving in the army as a whole – with the blame directed at the contemporary Press.

<sup>79</sup> TNA CSC 3/319 Report of Mr Akers-Douglas' Committee on the Education and Training of Army Officers 1902, such expenses were, in part, related to the costs of a comparatively lavish social and sporting lifestyle and was interlinked with the concept of 'smartness' which is explored in a subsequent chapter – see Chapter Three, foot notes 33 and 34.

<sup>80</sup> H.O. Arnold-Forster, *The Army in 1906: a Policy and a Vindication* (London: John Murray, 1906), p.409, remarked that, particularly in the Cavalry and Brigade of Guards, that there was a large percentage of officers to whom military service was an 'interlude in life rather than a profession', which he considered integral to causing numerical deficiencies in these regiments' officer numbers.

<sup>81</sup> Andrew Gilks, 'Aristocratic Participation in the Volunteer Cavalry', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 86, 2008, pp.204-15; Ian F.W. Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition 1558 – 1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), p. 189.

for the Mounted Infantry.<sup>82</sup> Against the hypothesis is the fact that these officers, despite service in the abstracted Mounted Infantry, always remained foremost officers in their parent regiments. These arguments confer a distorted view of the Mounted Infantry's identity that will be explored fully in due course.

If successful abstraction posed numerous challenges then a scheme was proposed to the Army Council in 1905, superficially resembling Hallam Parr's proposal, that permanent Mounted Infantry battalions should be formed from volunteers completing their time in short service battalions.<sup>83</sup> The proposal was for a voluntary extension of service for another six months at the end of the two years with the Colours prior to becoming reservists. Whilst this would circumvent the problem of losing men from the effective strength of the battalion, it was a considerably more expensive proposal than previously and forecast to cost a substantial £70,000 extra *per annum*. The proposal was predicted to be unpopular with those joining the Reserve through loss of regimental allegiance as well as an anxiety that reservists would no longer be capable of Mounted Infantry duties by the time of mobilisation. Lieutenant General Sir James Murray, Master General of the Ordnance, favoured the proposal on the grounds that it removed the manpower stresses on infantry

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<sup>82</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.217.

<sup>83</sup>TNA WO 163 / 10 Army Council Minutes , précis 160, 1905; Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, pp.9-10, short service enlistment was introduced by the Army Enlistment Act (1870) permitting a variable duration of service (depending on arm) with the colours, usually six years for infantry, before transfer into the Reserve.

battalions while permitting Mounted Infantry expansion through the Reserve but the proposal was shelved on the basis of cost.<sup>84</sup>

Abstraction for service in Wolseley's experimental Camel Corps in 1884 had clarified the risk and the inadvisability of a peremptory selection of favoured troops for Mounted Infantry service by army commanders. Rather than relying solely on line infantry battalions as usual for Mounted Infantry duties, Wolseley requested that cavalry, Guards regiments and the Royal Marines were abstracted to form the Heavy, Light Camel and Guards Camel Regiments respectively, although a Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment was eventually constituted on more traditional lines from line infantry. Whilst Wolseley supported the principle of abstraction, he also favoured hand-picking officers and men from 'smart' regiments<sup>85</sup> as in the Camel Corps.<sup>86</sup> Wolseley's faith in dividing up élite regiments, including the Foot Guards, with no experience of abstraction<sup>87</sup> and his acceptance of brevity of training for those employed as Mounted Infantry (despite the lessons of the Transvaal three years previously) resulted in an experimental Camel Corps where the majority of soldiers were neither trained as Mounted Infantry nor

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<sup>84</sup> TNA WO 163 / 10 Army Council Minutes, précis 160, 1905.

<sup>85</sup> Snook, *Into the Jaws of Death*, p.260, the construct of 'smartness' is explored in more detail in Chapter Three.

<sup>86</sup> Godley, *Life of an Irish Soldier*, p.35, though Godley considered this expedition was 'proof of the soundness of the theory'.

<sup>87</sup> Captain Lord H.A. Montagu-Douglas-Scott, *Twelve diary letters concerning the 1st company Guards Mounted Infantry and the Irish Guards section in particular: South Africa 1901 – 02* (printed for private circulation, 1924), letter 2 October 1901; Godley, *Life of an Irish Soldier*, p.96, the Foot Guards would furnish Mounted Infantry again in the Boer War contributing two composite companies including a detachment from the newly-instituted Irish Guards; Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Five, 5 June 1891, pp.1-30.

experienced as camel-borne troops. In retrospect, this example of extreme abstraction appears, at best, a gamble and, at worst, culpably foolhardy. Nonetheless, pragmatically, the decision for the process of abstraction, supported by impermanence, was indeed the correct one at this stage of the Mounted Infantry's inception as ill-advised permanence would have limited the Mounted Infantry's numerical adequacy, ease and timeliness of deployment and cost effectiveness.<sup>88</sup>

Despite the formalisation of abstraction, the Mounted Infantry still lacked a doctrine, particularly around how and in what way the Mounted Infantry should be deployed in the field, whether in small mobile detachments protecting their own infantry battalions or attached to the cavalry or in larger independent formations, a decision dependent upon which mounted roles were to be delegated to the Mounted Infantry. Clearly this would be important, not only for the Mounted Infantry, but also for other arms, particularly the cavalry. This is hardly surprising in view of the lack of an overarching formal doctrine for the British Army as a whole.<sup>89</sup> The absence of a General Staff until the years after the Boer War meant that there was no single organisation for analysis of combat and campaign, leaving an overall deficiency in the army's ability to identify, understand and promulgate lessons arising from warfare into future army planning and doctrine.<sup>90</sup> Thus

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<sup>88</sup> TNA WO 33 / 37 Précis on Mounted Infantry 1881.

<sup>89</sup> Sheffield, *Doctrine and Command in the British Army*, E2 – 27.

<sup>90</sup> 'The Development of the General Staff', *Army Review*, 1, 1911, pp.15-22, explained that the chief objective of the inception of the General Staff was 'continuity of policy in army administration by basing this policy on the reasoned and well-ordered thought, not of individuals, but of a collective body of experts'.

there were drills and orders but the lack of formal doctrine meant that for commanders at all levels, there was, at best operational flexibility, and at worst, operational weakness through lack of doctrinal guidance.<sup>91</sup> This deficit was exacerbated by the flexibility required by the myriad of military requirements across the Empire. The consequence was a tradition of improvisation, adoption of personalised training and command approaches and, as concluded by Jones, a tolerance of individuality that led to an army manifesting 'subtly different tactics'.<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, for the Mounted Infantry, its contemporaneous, if basic, doctrine was explained as:

The essential fact to be impressed on all is that they [Mounted Infantry] are and are to remain infantry and that the means of locomotion provided by horse, ponies, camels or mechanical contrivances to give them an increased mobility are merely as the means to the end of their more effective service as infantry.<sup>93</sup>

The Intelligence Department's 1881 précis, constituting a briefing paper rather than policy or formal doctrine, asserted that: 'in no case can Mounted Infantry be expected to fight on horseback, for it is insisted upon by all advocates of Mounted Infantry that the horse is merely a means of

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<sup>91</sup> TNA WO 279 / 42 Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College 1911, discussed the reasons for the absence of an official army manual of Applied Tactics as a form of doctrine unlike the situation in Germany. The rationale provided included: the need for adaptability due to the different types of warfare encountered across the Empire; to avoid stereotyping military operations; to avoid restrictive practices arising from a permanent manual; to prevent unthinking adherence to so-called 'rules' of operations and tactics and, surprisingly, the problem of identifying suitable authorship.

<sup>92</sup> Jones, *From Boer War to World War*, pp.50-51.

<sup>93</sup> Goodenough and Dalton, *The Army Book for the British Empire*, p.177.

locomotion'.<sup>94</sup> The subsequent *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1884*, reflecting drill more than doctrine, further endorsed the infantry basis of the regular Mounted Infantry with its singularity of fighting dismounted rather than a quasi-cavalry function.<sup>95</sup> A contemporary paper encapsulated the infantryman spirit of the Mounted Infantry neatly: 'No Mounted Infantryman should ever be allowed to imagine himself, or indeed should wish, to be a cavalryman'.<sup>96</sup> Even the nearest to a contemporary document invoking embryonic doctrine, *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1897*, indicated that 'it cannot be too frequently impressed upon all ranks that they are in no sense cavalry'.<sup>97</sup> The *Regulations* described the Mounted Infantry's tactics as 'depending upon the accuracy and efficiency of its rifle fire',<sup>98</sup> but also indicated an embryonic inter-arm cooperation with cavalry, thus beginning to formulate a linkage between organisation, doctrine, and cooperation between arms.<sup>99</sup> Whilst the *Regulations* and similar manuals did not equate the Mounted Infantry to cavalry, they did emphasise the attributes of working with foot infantry in the role of 'force protection',<sup>100</sup> phrased as being of 'immense use as eyes and ears of the Infantry Division' and thus clarifying

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<sup>94</sup> TNA WO 33 / 37 Précis on Mounted Infantry 1881.

<sup>95</sup> *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1884*, p.17

<sup>96</sup> J.W Hannay, 'Mounted Infantry', *United Services Magazine*, Part 1, 1881, pp.416-24.

<sup>97</sup> *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1897*, p.36.

<sup>98</sup> *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1897*, p.60

<sup>99</sup> *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1897*, p.36

<sup>100</sup> British Army Publication: *Operations*, 0616, defines 'force protection' as maintaining 'operational effectiveness by countering the threats posed by an adversary, as well as natural or human hazards'.

the Mounted Infantry's supportive role of their foot colleagues.<sup>101</sup> Force protection through mobile firepower, whether as an auxiliary to cavalry or protection for infantry, would remain the *sine qua non* of the Mounted Infantry's existence from a doctrinal perspective, forming a functional thread underpinning the Mounted Infantry's utilisation over its extended three decades' existence.

Mobility required appropriate mounting of soldiers, usually on animals sourced locally, whilst firepower would come from being fully-trained with a regulation rifle rather than the cavalry carbine and, later, would also include the machine gun.<sup>102</sup> The question over the inferiority of the cavalry's carbine, a weapon with which many other nations' cavalries were also equipped,<sup>103</sup> was the basis of much discussion among senior infantry, cavalry and Mounted Infantry officers following the Boer War and, despite a defence of the carbine by its protagonists, the improved range and accuracy of the infantry rifle resulted in the carbine's replacement.<sup>104</sup> This outcome of the Boer War meant that the British cavalry, almost alone among European

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<sup>101</sup> Captain F. Johnson, *Instruction for Mounted Infantry* (Cape Town: J.C Juta & Co, 1895), p.1, considered itself, in its Introduction, to be the official drill book for Volunteer Mounted Infantry.

<sup>102</sup> Gervase Phillips, 'The Obsolescence of the *Arme Blanche* and Technological Determinism in British Military History', *War in History*, 9 (1), 2002, pp. 39-59; Nick Evans, 'The British Army and Technology Before 1914', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 90, 2012, pp. 113-22; Anthony Lucking, 'Was the British Army lagging technically in 1914', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 87, 2009, pp. 54-58, both Phillips and Evans make the valid point that it was the cavalry that adopted the machine gun as an offensive weapon earlier than the infantry and Mounted Infantry.

<sup>103</sup> Brigadier General Sir Archibald Home, *The Diary of a World War 1 Cavalry Officer* (Tunbridge Wells: Costello, 1985), p.29, reflected that the French cavalry were ineffective fighting dismounted as they did not know 'how to use their rifles'.

<sup>104</sup> TNA WO 108 / 272 Extracts of Reports by Officers Commanding Units in South Africa 1899 -1901: rifles, carbines, small arms ammunition, sword bayonet.



cavalries, would be armed with the rifle in 1914, considered contributory to the high standard of musketry witnessed in the early battles of the First World War.<sup>105</sup> The numerical disparity in the firing line between cavalry regiments and infantry regiments through different numerical establishments and the requirement for a quarter of men for horse holding duties, a problem also shared by the Mounted Infantry, reduced the cavalry's firepower. The role of horse holders ('Number 3s') in managing mounts, ensuring they were near enough for rapid remounting if retreat was necessary but not so close as to be an easy target for enemy attack, was considered critical to the mobility of the Mounted Infantry.<sup>106</sup> More men could be released to the firing line if more horses' reins were linked together, although such reining practices were more time-consuming.<sup>107</sup> Therefore, until the mid-1900s, the cavalry was unable to apply the same volume of firepower on the battlefield as the infantry and if the carbine's flaws are included, as much as the Mounted Infantry. Thus, for this reason of inadequate firepower, the cavalry was inferior to the Mounted Infantry as a mobile reserve of firepower. Hence, reflecting the principal research question, the Mounted Infantry did not consider itself to be cavalry and the cavalry was unable to functionally compete with the Mounted Infantry in terms of firepower, thus pointing towards separation of roles between the two mounted arms.

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<sup>105</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.247.

<sup>106</sup> TNA WO 27 / 502 Mounted Infantry Inspection, 29 June 1905, where the error of the horses remaining too far from the firing line and, at times, left unattended, marred an otherwise favourable assessment; Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.412.

<sup>107</sup> Denman, 'The Future of Mounted Infantry', pp. 382-91.

However, the wider functionality that could be achieved by the Mounted Infantry's firepower and mobility, including advance and rearguard duties, seizing important objectives such as river crossings and exploiting tactical advances made by cavalry plus protective duties on the line of march especially escorting artillery<sup>108</sup> began to extend the repertoire of Mounted Infantry functionality towards traditional cavalry tasks,<sup>109</sup> a doctrinal drift that would accelerate after 1902. However the consequential prediction that Mounted Infantry, particularly if a permanent organisation, risked degenerating into inferior cavalry would demand rebuttal throughout most of the Mounted Infantry's existence.<sup>110</sup> Whilst there were reports of Mounted Infantry employing traditional *arme blanche* tactics, particularly charging with rifles and bayonets as makeshift lances, such tactics were neither taught nor became official doctrine but were rather examples of local initiative.<sup>111</sup> Although mounted pursuit, especially of tribesmen fleeing from colonial battlefields, was an espousal of the *arme blanche*,<sup>112</sup> Colonel Charles Callwell, a cavalry enthusiast and author of the semi-official manual '*Small Wars*', admitted that the psychological terror induced by a mounted pursuit was not cavalry-specific, indicating that it was not the possession of edged

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<sup>108</sup> Major E.T.H Hutton, 'Mounted Infantry', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 30, 1886-87, pp.695-738

<sup>109</sup> *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1897*, p.52, now including advance / rear guards, outpost duties and reconnaissance – although the arm's distinctiveness from cavalry was stressed.

<sup>110</sup> T. Miller Maguire, 'The Mounted Infantry Controversy', *United Services Magazine*, 28, 1904, pp. 602-05; Major E.T.H. Hutton, 'Mounted Infantry', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 30, 1886- 87, pp. 695-738.

<sup>111</sup> Major J.M. Macartney, 'Mounted Infantry', *United Services Magazine*, 21, 1900, pp. 8-13; Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Haig (Q.19476, p.411).

<sup>112</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.401.

weaponry *per se* that caused panic and rout but being harried by man and horse.<sup>113</sup> Despite recognising the opportunity for decisive rout through pursuit, Mounted Infantry dogma never encouraged such tactics with Hutton warning that 'it is firepower which alone is really effective against savages'.<sup>114</sup> To some extent, the expansion of the Mounted Infantry's roles was opportunistic, reflecting necessity arising from a number of factors such as: the cavalry's numerical inadequacy, Roberts' increasing preference for the Mounted Infantry as mounted troops after 1900,<sup>115</sup> terrain not conducive to regular cavalry work, and fighting adversaries whose tactics negated the benefit of the *arme blanche* as on the South African veldt.<sup>116</sup> Irrespective of the underlying rationale, assumption of tasks previously the remit of the cavalry potentiated institutional animosity. Despite Hutton's previous reassurances that the Mounted Infantry were to 'support the cavalry rather than replace it',<sup>117</sup> during the Boer War, French accused Hutton of attempting to interfere with cavalry duties during the advance to Pretoria in 1900, confiding to his diary that Hutton was seeking permission to replace Mounted Infantry on outpost duty with cavalry.<sup>118</sup> One can only imagine how

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<sup>113</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.423.

<sup>114</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Four, 20 April 1891, pp.1-27.

<sup>115</sup> TNA WO 108 / 410 Home and Overseas Correspondence by Field Marshal Lord Roberts 5<sup>th</sup> June 1900 – 5<sup>th</sup> September 1900, letter to Lord Lansdowne, 29 April 1900.

<sup>116</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.307.

<sup>117</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers*, Add.50111, XXXIV, 'The Proposed Mounted Infantry Regiment', 2 September 1887.

<sup>118</sup> Major the Honourable G. French, *Some War Diaries, Addresses and Correspondence of Field Marshal the Right Hon. the Earl of Ypres* (London: Herbert Jenkins Ltd., 1937), p.15, diary entry, 14 April 1900.

antagonistic this must have seemed, even if a genuine misunderstanding, if the cavalry considered that it was to be compelled to undertake mundane duties rejected by the Mounted Infantry. Such acrimony was promulgated by cavalry officers' misinterpretation of Hutton's previous assertion that Mounted Infantry, after mobilisation and given enough time in the saddle, could attain greater mounted proficiency than expected, perhaps enough to function as Mounted Rifles,<sup>119</sup> which seemed suspiciously close to claiming Mounted Infantry as *bona fide* cavalrymen. Although seized upon by his detractors in the cavalry as evidence of his predatory tendencies, Hutton was merely stating the obvious that experiential mounted training could, as it transpired on the veldt, result in the Mounted Infantry attaining good enough equitation skills to allow them to extend their roles but without attempting to subvert the cavalry's *arme blanche* function. Reassuringly, Hutton declared that the Mounted Infantry would be 'valueless' if expected immediately to perform all cavalry duties.<sup>120</sup> Hutton attributed much of what he called this 'uncalled-for controversy' to the confusion in nomenclature between Mounted Infantry and Mounted Rifles in both the general and the military press.<sup>121</sup> It was suggested later in an article in the *United Services Magazine* that it was not only the trespassing on traditional roles that was the problem but the appellation of being 'mounted' was 'probably at the root of the evil'.<sup>122</sup> If the

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<sup>119</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Three, 12 November 1890, pp.1-20.

<sup>120</sup> Colonel E.T.H. Hutton, 'The Military Question of Today or the facts about Mounted Infantry', *United Services Magazine*, 7, 1893, pp. 748-58.

<sup>121</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Four, 20 April 1891, pp.1-27.

<sup>122</sup> Macartney, 'Mounted Infantry', pp. 8-13.

1889 *Regulations*, exacerbated by the Mounted Infantry's assuming of reconnaissance duties during the 1889 Cavalry Manoeuvres,<sup>123</sup> reportedly caused grave concern in the cavalry for highlighting the Mounted Infantry's capacity to undertake cavalry's most characteristic mounted duties, its other importance remained the perpetuation of the erroneous perception, purportedly held by both regimental and more senior cavalry officers and those in the Yeomanry, that it heralded a forced re-designation of cavalry regiments as mounted detachments of infantry regiments.<sup>124</sup>

As already noted, reflecting the army's contemporary strategic focus on imperial conflict, the regular Mounted Infantry, uniquely within the British Army, only routinely formed and deployed on active service.<sup>125</sup> With regards to a European conflict, the Mounted Infantry, predicted by many commentators likely to be found inadequate against well-trained enemy cavalry through the Mounted Infantry's lack of personal weapons and equitation skills, was also deemed numerically too low in number whereby casualties sustained in combat would have a deleterious effect on operations<sup>126</sup> - particularly as contemporary orthodox predictions within the army high command expected a deployment of massed cavalry on both

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<sup>123</sup> *The Times*, 9 September 1890, 'The Cavalry Manoeuvres'.

<sup>124</sup> *The Times*, 'The Cavalry Manoeuvres', *ibid*; Colonel the Honourable H.G.L. Crichton, 'The Yeomanry and its future', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 35, 1891, pp.661-91; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, pp.186-87.

<sup>125</sup> TNA WO 33 / 37 Précis on Mounted Infantry 1881.

<sup>126</sup> TNA WO 279 / 496 Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College 1910.

sides.<sup>127</sup> As the opening moves of a future European war were envisaged as beginning with a clash of opposing cavalries,<sup>128</sup> the Mounted Infantry was presumed to be at risk of tactical surprise, paralysis then annihilation whilst still mounted. This fear led to the tactical imperative that Mounted Infantry should never be caught out in the open by enemy cavalry.<sup>129</sup> The argument was that the Mounted Infantry's deficit in defensive personal weapons would place it at a major disadvantage in a *mêlée* whilst its rifles, even if fired from the saddle, posed more threat, particularly to the firer's horse, than providing salvation in the face of the enemy.<sup>130</sup> Hutton proposed the additional arming of the Mounted Infantry with personal defensive weapons, either a revolver or a double-barrelled pistol (for greater firepower at close proximity) to reduce the risk from attacking cavalry.<sup>131</sup> Unsympathetically, Wolseley vetoed the provision of side-firearms emphasising that Mounted Infantry should always fight dismounted as infantry and not mounted as cavalry thus preferring the introduction of a sword-bayonet as a personal weapon if necessary - despite Hutton's trenchant objections. The sword-bayonet was clearly impractical to use when mounted and contributed next to nothing in

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<sup>127</sup> TNA WO 163 / 15 Minutes of the Army Council 1910, recorded that 'cavalry leaders are [not] yet sufficiently imbued with the soundest principles as regards their important role they have to play after their troops have, by successful mounted combat, attained a decisive superiority over the enemy's cavalry'.

<sup>128</sup> Phillips, "Who Shall Say That the Days of Cavalry Are Over?" pp.5-32.

<sup>129</sup> *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1897*, p.42.

<sup>130</sup> Major General M.F. Rimington, *Our Cavalry* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1912), p.14

<sup>131</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers*, Add. 50111, XXXIV, Letter from Wolseley, 25 August 1887; Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Three, 12 November 1890, pp.1-20, indicated that the need for a personal weapon was as acute in colonial warfare when ambush and surprise in dense bush were as great a risk to the Mounted Infantryman as being surprised in the open by enemy cavalry on a European battlefield.

terms of personal defence.<sup>132</sup> Conventional advice when attacked by enemy cavalry remained to seek refuge dismounted in broken, wooded or marshy ground where the opposing cavalry's innate advantages of speed and momentum would be neutralised<sup>133</sup> and the Mounted Infantry's superior firepower optimised. However this view of the defencelessness of the Mounted Infantry when opposed by cavalry was later repudiated in Childers' *War and the Arme Blanche*, where he asserted that enemy cavalry should hold no terror for any infantry, mounted or foot, whose expertise with the rifle and bayonet remained paramount, citing how foot infantry was inculcated with the principle that it could defend itself well against cavalry with Childers seeing no reason, despite being horsed, for the Mounted Infantry to differ.<sup>134</sup> None of these arguments considered the possibility of cooperation between Mounted Infantry and friendly cavalry in engaging the enemy whereby symbiotic cooperation (rather than mutually exclusive solo combat) could be a force multiplier. Sadly the debate merely emphasised that the two mounted arms focussed on problems rather than identifying solutions to help cooperation. Yet a successful if embryonic symbiosis had been demonstrated at the Cavalry Manoeuvres of 1890 where three companies of Mounted Infantry, totalling 400 officers and men, were deployed alongside the cavalry, mimicking in rudimentary style, European rather than colonial

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<sup>132</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture One, 2 June 1886, pp.1-44, considered the sword-bayonet to be heavy, cumbersome, difficult to use effectively for both cutting and thrusting in practice and likely to damage the rifle's foresight.

<sup>133</sup> *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1897*, p36 & p.42, it was considered important, additionally, to avoid mingling with enemy cavalry in combat as this would prevent friendly cavalry from charging the flanks of the enemy cavalry if 'friendly fire' casualties were to be avoided.

<sup>134</sup> Childers, *War and the Arme Blanche*, p.4.

conflict.<sup>135</sup> Hutton considered that these Manoeuvres had proved the worth of mobile infantry as a source of firepower to the cavalry whilst legitimising the concept of abstracted Mounted Infantry with brief but formalised peacetime training.<sup>136</sup> *The Times* announced prematurely that the Manoeuvres had resulted in a ‘thoroughly good understanding [being] established between the two arms’<sup>137</sup> and a new dawn of cooperation and tolerance between the two arms heralded – again erroneously claiming that a ‘pleasant result is the burying of the cavalry and Mounted infantry’s war hatchet’.<sup>138</sup> Thus throughout these years, the Mounted Infantry did not seek to function primarily as cavalry but more as a mobile mounted force providing infantry protection for a colonially-focussed army whilst being prepared to undertake extended mounted duties if required by circumstance which argues against it being an impecunious cavalry-substitute. As detailed later, the doctrinal shift post-1902 would however exacerbate any misconceptions as to the differences between Mounted Infantry and cavalry with, perhaps unwisely; the former being allocated traditional cavalry roles.

Contrary to the debates around function, the Mounted Infantry’s organisation remained surprisingly consistent throughout its existence.<sup>139</sup> The basic

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<sup>135</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Four, 20 April 1891, pp.1-27.

<sup>136</sup> *The Times*, 13 November 1890, ‘Mounted Infantry and its action in Modern War’.

<sup>137</sup> *The Times*, 16 September 1890, ‘The Cavalry Manoeuvres’.

<sup>138</sup> *The Times*, 25 September 1890, ‘The Lessons of the Cavalry Manoeuvres’.

<sup>139</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture One, 2 June 1886, pp.1-44, although Hutton reflected that there remained a ‘difference in opinion regarding its mode of organisation’.



military and administrative unit of Mounted Infantry remained the company<sup>140</sup> with four companies constituting a Mounted Infantry battalion.<sup>141</sup> Usually the company was commanded by an infantry major supported by one captain, three subalterns and thirteen non-commissioned officers.<sup>142</sup> Within each company there were four detachments (called sections) of one officer and approximately forty non-commissioned officers and men with the detachment further subdivided into groups of four men who lived and worked together. Although not a unique arrangement, this organisational structure of the Mounted Infantry whereby the officer and his section were from the same infantry battalion contributed to cohesion, discipline<sup>143</sup> and *esprit de corps*,<sup>144</sup> a principle lauded in the Press on grounds of the benefits from retaining shared regimental traditions.<sup>145</sup> Such a decentralised approach to working and discipline<sup>146</sup> was anticipated to be advantageous in the field. Although the Mounted Infantry was resolutely infantry in origin, not all duties

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<sup>140</sup> Cairnes, *A Common-sense Army*, p.67.

<sup>141</sup> *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1897*, p.5; Captain J.R. Lumley, 'Mounted Riflemen', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 1881 – 82, 25, pp. 638-56.

<sup>142</sup> *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1897*, p.44.

<sup>143</sup> *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1897*, p.5.

<sup>144</sup> Alderson, *With the Mounted Infantry and the Mashonaland Field Force 1896*, p.1, the four Mounted Infantry companies that accompanied Alderson in the Mashonaland Field Force, were numbered No.6 Company 'English' (comprising Mounted Infantry sections from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Norfolk, 2<sup>nd</sup> Hampshire, 1<sup>st</sup> South Lancashire and 1<sup>st</sup> Derbyshire); No.7 Company 'Rifles' (with elements from 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> King's Royal Rifle Corps and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Rifle Brigade); No.9 Company 'Highland' (2<sup>nd</sup> Black Watch, 1<sup>st</sup> Seaforths, 2<sup>nd</sup> Gordons, 1<sup>st</sup> Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders) and No.11 Company 'Irish' (comprising 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Irish, 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Dublin Fusiliers, 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Irish Fusiliers and 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Irish Rifles; Colin Baker, *A Fine Chest of Medals: the Life of Jack Archer* (Cardiff: Mpemba Books, 2003), p.27.

<sup>145</sup> *The Graphic*, 29 September 1888.

<sup>146</sup> Alderson, *With the Mounted Infantry and the Mashonaland Field Force 1896*, p.4; Major General Sir Henry Hallam Parr, *Recollections and Correspondence* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1917), Sir Charles Fortescue – Brickdale (ed.), p.167.

in a horsed unit could be performed without cavalry-based knowledge so two farriers, two shoeing smiths and two saddlers, were borrowed from cavalry regiments.<sup>147</sup> This dependence on technical staff from the cavalry would adversely affect the Mounted Infantry during the Boer War, exposing a deficiency in its organisational framework, most marked with its deficiency in farriers and veterinary officers as will be discussed in a later chapter. The company-based structure was predicated on abstraction from four parent infantry battalions brigaded together (or at least from the same military district). Functionally the comparative small size of the company suited the Mounted Infantry's roles well, particularly when distributed widely for scouting, advance or flank guard, dispatch riders, artillery battery protection and armed police duties as indicated in *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1897*.<sup>148</sup> The *Regulations* indicated that:

effective action of Mounted Infantry depends upon the accuracy, rapidity and efficiency of its rifle fire. It should therefore always manoeuvre in small bodies which will be sufficiently large to defend themselves if attacked by cavalry and will also be sufficiently numerous to produce a solid fire effect'.<sup>149</sup>

Despite later protestations by Roberts and Ian Hamilton to the Elgin

Commission that the Mounted Infantry had never had the opportunity for

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<sup>147</sup> Talbot, 'The Regular Mounted Infantry', pp. 306-24, by 1899, the Mounted Infantry company's composition had enlarged with a major or captain in command and four lieutenants plus eleven non-commissioned officers; a farrier sergeant supported by four farriers (from the cavalry reserve); two buglers; nine drivers, one saddler and twelve servants.

<sup>148</sup> *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1897*, p.52.

<sup>149</sup> *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1897*, p.60.

large scale deployment in which to show the arm's worth,<sup>150</sup> such counterinsurgency operations<sup>151</sup> after 1900 suited small sized units. Cairnes' assertion that 'our experiences in the Boer War have taught us, I think, that the battalion is no longer the best fighting unit for infantry',<sup>152</sup> proposed that the infantry company was the ideal numerical size for such small operations whereas more extensive operations needed much larger formations approximating to brigades. If this contention reflected the realities of the changing nature of warfare, at least in South Africa, the mobility and accurate long-range firepower of the decentralised command model of broadly-distributed, company-sized Mounted Infantry became a prototype for other army units, thus transiently functioning as a blueprint for the colonial army on campaign.<sup>153</sup>

If the organisation of Mounted Infantry at its basic level was not contentious, matching organisation with function, how the Mounted Infantry fitted into the wider army organisation at mobilisation was less certain. Although historically extemporised whenever needed, with increased formalisation of the Mounted

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<sup>150</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Lord Roberts (Q.13282, p.68) and Lieutenant General Ian Hamilton (Q.13845, p.104).

<sup>151</sup> British Army Publication, *Operations*, 0813, defines 'counterinsurgency' as 'military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological and civil actions taken by a government or its partners to defeat insurgency.

<sup>152</sup> Cairnes, *A Common-sense Army*, p.67.

<sup>153</sup> Firepower, Royal Artillery Museum, Woolwich Arsenal, (hereafter Firepower), MD 371, Boer War: wastage of personnel; correspondence between Kitchener and the Adjutant General relating to the conversion of Royal Artillery batteries to Mounted Rifles, letter from Kitchener to the Adjutant General, 24 December 1901, artillery batteries deemed temporarily surplus to requirement were converted to Mounted Rifles - again evidence of ambiguity in nomenclature as they were not trained as cavalry without *arme blanche* capability even though they possessed high standards of equitation skills; Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, 4, p.221.

Infantry by 1899, mobilisation plans paired companies and allocated each to a cavalry brigade thus emphasising its adjunctive role in cavalry support.<sup>154</sup> However the exigencies of the campaign in South Africa meant that after its precipitate expansion, twenty-eight regular Mounted Infantry battalions were formed during the War, theoretically configured into a Mounted Infantry Division, but with the overwhelming tendency remaining the scattered distribution of Mounted Infantry companies among mobile columns. This reflected the increasing reliance on the Mounted Infantry archetype by senior army commanders for this particular campaign.<sup>155</sup> Initial mobilisation in 1899 had included the two prior-trained Mounted Infantry battalions comprising eight companies from Aldershot. However the rate at which other infantry regiments released their trained detachments for Mounted Infantry service remained variable, frequently reflecting their commanding officers' unwillingness to support abstraction.<sup>156</sup> Nevertheless, only a minority of the Mounted Infantry subsequently formed in 1899 – 1900 had received prior peacetime training, a deficiency mitigating subsequent failures of the Mounted Infantry during the campaign.<sup>157</sup> Thus the lessons of Laing's Nek in the Transvaal campaign of 1881 and the Nile campaign of 1885, that of the tactical inadequacies of briefly extemporised 'in-theatre' training for Mounted

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<sup>154</sup> Grierson, *Scarlet into Khaki*, p.42.

<sup>155</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6829 'The Future of Mounted Infantry and their numbers required' 1900.

<sup>156</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7869 Formation of Mounted Infantry, 10 January 1900, Mediterranean and India-based battalions were slower to release men with only 2<sup>nd</sup> KRRC and the Gibraltar-based 1<sup>st</sup> Manchester Regiment responding immediately.

<sup>157</sup> Godley, 'The Development of Mounted Infantry training at home', pp. 52-55; *The Times*, 16 February 1912, 'The Mounted Troops of the Expeditionary Force'.

Infantry, were not acknowledged by Roberts or if they were then the exigencies of the campaign in South Africa seemingly out-weighed such considerations. Regardless, the training available failed to match the requirements of terrain and of countering a highly-mobile adversary and was additionally exacerbated by hopelessly unrealistic training schedules advocated by some commentators in the Press<sup>158</sup> that ignored the campaign's pressing manpower requirements. The inability in 1899 to field no more than two trained battalions was a powerful indictment of the pre-war process of abstraction and training after a decade of training at Aldershot when the number of battalions should have exceeded ten if abstraction had functioned smoothly.<sup>159</sup> Despite the Mounted Infantry's eventual ubiquity in South Africa, post-war planning regarding the arm's position in the army's organisation reverted to a modified pre-1899 state. Throughout the following decade, the Mounted Infantry reverted, in part, back to a force protection role as non-cavalry divisional mounted troops providing both a mobile reserve and communications function but for infantry divisions rather than its pre-1899 role as an auxiliary to the cavalry.<sup>160</sup> As divisional mounted troops, six Mounted Infantry battalions were to mobilise with two companies of Mounted Infantry allocated to each Infantry Division.<sup>161</sup> Discussion continued at the

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<sup>158</sup> Denman, 'The Future of Mounted Infantry', pp. 382-91, suggested that Mounted Infantry training could not be achieved in under two years' duration.

<sup>159</sup> Bond, 'Doctrine and training in the British Cavalry', p.106, the warning when only one Mounted Infantry battalion could be reconstituted for the Manoeuvres of 1898 had not been heeded despite a decade of abstraction; Denman, 'The Future of Mounted Infantry', *ibid*.

<sup>160</sup> *Mounted Infantry Training 1906*, pp.56-57.

<sup>161</sup> Thorneycroft, 'Some notes on Mounted Infantry', pp. 161-66.

War Office whether the Imperial Yeomanry or the Mounted Infantry was best suited to this role.<sup>162</sup> Previously, the possibility of converting Yeomanry to Mounted Infantry had been received with dismay by Yeomanry colonels who cited, amongst other reasons, inadequate training opportunities, traditional links with the regular cavalry and a 'general disinclination' of their regiments to convert.<sup>163</sup> In his evidence to the Elgin Commission, Lord Chesham decried the Mounted Infantry precept of the Imperial Yeomanry and although he accepted the necessity of deployment as Mounted Rifles, he expressed his satisfaction that the post-war Yeomanry had returned to its cavalry origins.<sup>164</sup> Nevertheless the specific role of the post-war Imperial Yeomanry at mobilisation remained a topic of debate with the Chief of the General Staff's enthusiasm for the Yeomanry neutralised by the logistical problem of forming the Yeomanry into divisional cavalry within the necessary five day period required at mobilisation.<sup>165</sup> The Committee's agreed, if temporary, solution, advocated by the Adjutant General, was thus the use of Mounted Infantry, mobilised in companies, and with equipment upgrades using Yeomanry kit and additional supplies.<sup>166</sup> However this was not the end of the

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<sup>162</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7094 Mounted Infantry as Divisional Cavalry 1908.

<sup>163</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7237 Conversion of Yeomanry to Mounted Infantry 1881, some Yeomanry colonels rejected the proposed conversion unless the regular cavalry also converted to Mounted Rifles.

<sup>164</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1790, I, evidence submitted by Lord Chesham (Q.6777, p.290).

<sup>165</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7093 Mobilisation of the Imperial Yeomanry for the Field Army 1907, the Adjutant General also questioned the Chief of the General Staff's premise that there would be no additional cost to deploying Yeomanry in this role.

<sup>166</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7093 Mobilisation of the Imperial Yeomanry for the Field Army 1907, decision reached at the 120<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Mobilisation Committee, 9 August 1907. The equipment upgrade per Mounted Infantry company included: 4 pistols, 8 ammunition bags, 15 cavalry lanyards, 148 mess tins, 15 cavalry whistles, 79 canvas buckets, 158 picketing ropes, 158 nose bags and 125 rifle buckets (Mark IV) at a cost of £621 3d per company.

deliberations with a précis presented to the Army Council in 1908 which outlined four possible solutions to the conundrum of providing mounted support to a future expeditionary force.<sup>167</sup> In brief, these options included a form of abstraction from Yeomanry regiments with extra funding for six months' training (although the practicality of the availability of yeomen for such training was questioned by the Adjutant General). Two of the other options were the inception of two Irish Yeomanry regiments as Special Reserve and, alternatively, divisional cavalry formed from cavalry reservists. The fourth option was the continued use of Mounted Infantry as divisional cavalry, a solution that was accepted in the short term.<sup>168</sup> Moreover, the Mounted Infantry was also to be designated a novel role in mixed Mounted Brigades alongside regular cavalry, horse artillery and cyclists. By virtue of this designation, Mounted Infantry overtly and formally crossed over into traditional cavalry work especially reconnaissance,<sup>169</sup> with detractors of this arrangement predicting operational confusion as cavalry and Mounted Infantry trained using separate tactical manuals and adhered to different drill - although one Mounted Infantry enthusiast opined optimistically that the cavalry could now be released solely for its *arme blanche* function of shock tactics,<sup>170</sup> an argument that received qualified support from cavalry

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<sup>167</sup> TNA WO 163 / 13 Minutes of the Proceedings of the Army Council, 1908, précis 378, 'Completion of the Cavalry required for the Expeditionary Force', for a definition of 'expeditionary force', see Chapter Four, footnote 13.

<sup>168</sup> TNA WO 163 / 13 Minutes of the Proceedings of the Army Council, 1908, précis 378, *ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7090 Mounted Infantry battalions, organisation 1906; WO 32 / 7091 Mounted Infantry battalions, mobilisation 1907.

<sup>170</sup> Crum, *The Question of Mounted Infantry*, p. 90.

officers.<sup>171</sup> Unfortunately these designations as divisional mounted troops and in mixed Mounted Brigades propagated the institutional rivalry between the two mounted arms. Furthermore, these new roles, particularly a sharing of the responsibility for reconnaissance, posed new challenges for the Mounted Infantry as these duties would require improved standards of equitation and faster horses resulting in greater costs and problems of procurement.<sup>172</sup> No longer could the Mounted Infantry necessarily be content with locally sourced mounts of varying quality. Advantageously perhaps, the organisation of Mounted Infantry into Mounted Brigades would offer an opportunity of deployment in a larger numerical size,<sup>173</sup> the benefit of which remained optimistically conjectural.<sup>174</sup> Unfortunately any mutual benefit for both mounted arms remained obscured by the friction between the respective officer groups. Godley, now Commandant of the Mounted Infantry School, in claiming that the Mounted Infantry, in its new iteration, could substitute for the cavalry in virtually all of the latter's roles excluding its *arme blanche* function, appeared to have over-stepped the mark even if he was merely stating the obvious.<sup>175</sup> In reality the plan for mixed Mounted Brigades

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<sup>171</sup> Major C.B. Bulkeley Johnson, 'Cavalry Organisation: a suggestion', *Cavalry Journal*, 2, 1907, pp. 338-46.

<sup>172</sup> Badsey, 'Mounted Combat in the Second Boer War', p. 20.

<sup>173</sup> *Mounted Infantry Training 1906*, pp.56-57.

<sup>174</sup> A.J. Godley, 'Mounted Infantry as Divisional Mounted Troops and with the Mounted Brigade', *Cavalry Journal*, 4, 1909, pp. 140-45.

<sup>175</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1790, II, evidence submitted by Colonel Godley (Q.20021, p.434 & Q.20028, p.436); Badsey, 'Mounted Combat in the Second Boer War', p.14.



remained hypothetical and did not materialise<sup>176</sup> despite deployment during the Manoeuvres of 1905.<sup>177</sup> Eventually, the Mounted Infantry would be replaced as divisional mounted troops by cavalry squadrons recently made available by the repatriation of two overseas cavalry regiments, supported by companies of cyclists.<sup>178</sup> Beneficially this enforced redundancy of the Mounted Infantry theoretically diminished the infantry's manpower shortfall through potential Mounted Infantry abstraction. The new configuration restored the cavalry's primacy in ground-based reconnaissance and secured its claim to be the army's horsed arm (excepting horse artillery). It also combined the tactical application of military cycling, which was particularly pertinent as the army's strategic focus turned towards conflict in Europe in the years prior to 1914, as will be discussed in a later chapter. However, that the military cyclist was, in fact, another incarnation of the Mounted Infantryman<sup>179</sup> was not always fully appreciated.<sup>180</sup> Yet despite the Mounted Infantry's redundancy from its duality as divisional mounted troops and in Mounted Brigades in mobilisation plans, it was acknowledged in the Press that Mounted Infantry might still be of future value in colonial campaigning as

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<sup>176</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7090 Mounted Infantry battalions organisation 1906; WO 32 / 7091 Mounted Infantry battalions, mobilisation 1907; Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army*, p. 262.

<sup>177</sup> TNA WO 27 / 504 Mounted Infantry Inspection, 29 June 1905.

<sup>178</sup> TNA WO 163 / 18 Minutes of the Proceedings of the Army Council 1913; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p. 265.

<sup>179</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Five, 5 June 1891, pp.1-30, in the post-lecture discussion, Colonel Savile of the 26<sup>th</sup> Middlesex Regiment Volunteers brought to the audience's attention that 'cyclists are the authorised Mounted Infantry branch of the Volunteer Service'.

<sup>180</sup> Captain A.H. Trapman, 'Cyclists in conjunction with Cavalry', *Cavalry Journal*, 3, 1908, pp. 353-64.

it was in East Africa during the First World War.<sup>181</sup> Thus, in conclusion, apart from its basic unit of configuration, the Mounted Infantry's organisation and doctrinal roles slowly changed over its existence, never satisfactorily identifying a definitive place within the wider army organisation, particularly in terms of its interface with the cavalry where their respective functions became blurred, until comparatively shortly before its abolition when its plurality of mounted function fatally jeopardised its survival through its overt transgression into traditional cavalry roles.

Returning to the first principal research question of whether the Mounted Infantry was a Victorian paradigm or merely a 'cavalry of poverty', the financial implications of its impermanence, being solely an active service organisation, and the process of abstraction need clarification to understand the fiscal influences affecting both the Mounted Infantry's existence and its eventual abolition. In comparison to the costs of a cavalry regiment, an *ad hoc* mounted company cost a modest £1724 18s,<sup>182</sup> with expenditure amounting to little more than locally sourced mounts and rudimentary equipment as evidenced by the discrepant costs between the Mounted Infantry in the eastern Sudan littoral and a four squadron cavalry component based at Suakin in 1885 where the Mounted Infantry cost 45 per cent less

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<sup>181</sup> *The Times*, 16 February 1912, 'The Mounted Troops of the Expeditionary Force'; Sara Wheeler, *Too Close to the Sun: the Life and Times of Denys Finch Hatton* (London: Vintage, 2007), p.82, indeed Mounted Infantry were formed from men of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment; 'Ikona', 'The Passing of the old MI', pp. 209 -13; Crum, *The Question of Mounted Infantry*, p.92.

<sup>182</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Two, 21 March 1889, pp.1-28.

than the cavalry.<sup>183</sup> This extra expense of maintaining cavalry also influenced Hutton's arguments that it would be folly economically to fritter cavalry away on disparate colonial campaigns,<sup>184</sup> not least because of the embarkation and subsistence costs but also the expense of redressing its losses when the lengthy duration of training required by cavalry was also taken into account.<sup>185</sup> Thus financial considerations suggest that the cost-effectiveness of the Mounted Infantry was a positive driver for its continued existence, yet it is far from certain that this was the pre-eminent or sole factor. Clearly costs depended on whether a permanent or an impermanent force was considered. Permanent Mounted Infantry regiments were forecast to cost in 1905 between £390,000 and £472,000 depending on composition, in comparison with continued impermanency, founded on abstraction, which cost between £109,000 and £178,000 and thus was the obvious choice financially with savings identified between 54 per cent and 77 per cent of a permanent force.<sup>186</sup> The other monetary comparison aspect was comparative cost against foot infantry. The extra work required of the Mounted Infantryman in providing equine 'stable' care attracted the higher cavalry rates of pay, identified early by Wood in 1873 as a necessary cost,<sup>187</sup> but without which employment in the Mounted Infantry might be unpopular

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<sup>183</sup> Hutton, 'Mounted Infantry', pp.695-738, the cost of Mounted Infantry of 448 officers and men mounted on locally procured ponies was £12,648 compared to the 448 cavalry that cost £28,000.

<sup>184</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Two, 21 March 1889, pp. 1-28, in 1888, the cavalry only comprised 8.9 per cent of the British Army.

<sup>185</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Two, 21 March 1889, *ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> TNA WO 163 / 10 Army Council Minutes, précis 160, 1905.

<sup>187</sup> Wood, *Mounted Riflemen: Lecture at the RUSI on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1873*, pp.1-25.

with the rank and file.<sup>188</sup> The issue of remuneration for Mounted Infantry officers was more complex and absorbed much administrative time in wrangling over issues of 'top-up' pay and provision of mounts. The crux of the matter was whether Mounted Infantry officers should be provided with horses at Government expense during training and active service or whether, based on the use of these horses for private leisure activities, the cost should be borne by the officers themselves, at least whilst in training. By extrapolation, if mounts were to be provided at taxpayers' cost, should the horses be reserved purely for military purposes?<sup>189</sup> The situation was clouded further by different rules for Mounted Infantry officers stationed in South Africa where private use of mounts was permitted on payment of an annual fee of £10, although the semi-permanence of Mounted Infantry in that country was cited by the Quarter Master General as a valid explanation of this anomaly.<sup>190</sup> Mounted Infantry officers had received cavalry rates of pay during the Boer War, thus providing a precedent for enhanced pay<sup>191</sup> but paying cavalry pay to Mounted Infantry officers during peacetime training was rejected by the War Office on grounds of cost,<sup>192</sup> despite objections that a pay differential would compensate for the Mounted Infantry officers' extra

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<sup>188</sup> J.W. Hannay, 'Mounted Infantry', *United Services Magazine*, 1, 1881, pp. 416-24.

<sup>189</sup> TNA WO 32 / 8762 Provision of Chargers for Mounted Infantry Officers 1903.

<sup>190</sup> TNA WO 32 / 8762 *ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> TNA WO 32 / 8763 Provision of horses for Mounted Infantry Officers 1904.

<sup>192</sup> TNA WO 32 / 8762 Provision of Chargers for Mounted Infantry Officers 1903, the differential daily pay rates between cavalry and infantry officers varied from 1s 2d to 3s 6d depending on rank; TNA WO 32 / 8763 Provision of horses for Mounted Infantry Officers 1904, both Roberts and the Adjutant General took a hard-line decrying a situation where officers and men on training courses received higher rates of pay than when employed normally in their regiments.

responsibilities.<sup>193</sup> Mounted Infantry officers pointed out their increased likelihood of combat due to the Mounted Infantry's active service *raison d'être*, which, without additional financial inducement, might deter future applicants.<sup>194</sup> With both Roberts and the Treasury applying pressure, the matter was dropped and only those who used privately purchased horses for Mounted Infantry work, a situation discouraged by the advent of Governmental provision of mounts, received the pay uplift.<sup>195</sup> Although the cost differential between training a cavalryman and Mounted Infantryman was estimated at no more than two pence a day, thus making this financial aspect of training fairly equitable,<sup>196</sup> restrictions on expenditure rendered the Mounted Infantry dependent on the temporary loan of horses from cavalry regiments, a less than ideal situation due to both the unsuitability of the larger cavalry horses for training and for precipitating a further and potentially avoidable cause of acrimony between senior officers in the two mounted arms.<sup>197</sup> Nevertheless, the costs associated with the Mounted Infantry model would be implicated eventually in its demise with the cavalry's supporters arguing that the removal of the Mounted Infantry from the Mounted Brigades would save money that would be better spent on the cavalry and funding the newly-established Cavalry School.<sup>198</sup> Perhaps if the conclusion that the

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<sup>193</sup> TNA WO 32 / 8762 Provision of Chargers for Mounted Infantry Officers 1903.

<sup>194</sup> TNA WO 32 / 8763 Provision of horses for Mounted Infantry Officers 1904.

<sup>195</sup> TNA WO 32 / 8764 Pay for Mounted Infantry Officers supplied with Government horses 1904.

<sup>196</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Four, 20 April 1891, pp.1-27.

<sup>197</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Three, 12 November 1890, pp.1-20.

<sup>198</sup> *The Times*, 14 June 1913, 'Debate regarding Army Estimates'.

Mounted Infantry was cheaper than the cavalry cannot be ignored, it may be contended that the 'cavalry of poverty' epithet was only tenable if the Mounted Infantry's existence was predicated solely on the rationale of being a cavalry-substitute. Otherwise the risk is of comparing dissimilar forces with confusion around what is meant by being 'cavalry'. However, at no time did the Mounted Infantry cause the disbandment of a cavalry regiment, which not only undermines the notion that the existence of Mounted Infantry was practically an organisational 'death warrant' for the cavalry as a force but also indicates the possibility that both arms could co-exist and cooperate militarily together. Nevertheless, inter-arm cooperation in the British Army appeared a distant aspiration despite calls for improved working together by other arms, most notably, cavalry and horse artillery, even as early as the Cavalry Manoeuvres of 1894.<sup>199</sup> As Bidwell and Graham have concluded, the lack of tactical inter-arm cooperation was long-standing with the three main arms of cavalry, infantry and artillery generally working in isolation from each other.<sup>200</sup> However, in the post-Boer War years, there were indeed advocates of closer cooperation between arms, including cavalry and Mounted Infantry, with Brigadier General Bethune writing that the pre-war competition between the two arms should now, in the light of the experiences in South Africa, be replaced by collaboration whereby the 'Mounted Infantry

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<sup>199</sup> TNA WO 279 / 3 Report of the Cavalry Manoeuvres 1894, (whose author was Captain Douglas Haig).

<sup>200</sup> Bidwell & Graham, *Firepower*, p.3, evocatively quote how the three arms 'as it were, 'dined at different tables''.

should be a source of strength to cavalry' rather than a competitor.<sup>201</sup> This was not an evangelical or esoteric opinion as *Mounted Infantry Training 1906* also recommended that the Mounted Infantry should act tactically in combination with cavalry, horse artillery and machine guns wherever possible to optimise options for manoeuvre and for the application of firepower.<sup>202</sup> The manual even included machine gun and pom-pom sections within a putative Mounted Infantry battalion,<sup>203</sup> although the potential beneficial tactical value of machine guns with both cavalry and Mounted Infantry had been mooted as early as 1884.<sup>204</sup> However, there was no consensus among army officers of either regimental and general rank as to the value and use of machine guns.<sup>205</sup> Thus, cooperation, never mind integration, of arms remained a distant ambition.

In this chapter the organisational and doctrinal interfaces between the cavalry and Mounted Infantry have been considered. When employed colonially as an impromptu mounted force, considering the numerical paucity of cavalry regiments available overseas, little friction between the two

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<sup>201</sup> Brigadier General E.C. Bethune, 'The Uses of Cavalry and Mounted Infantry in Modern Warfare', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 50, 1906, pp. 619-36.

<sup>202</sup> *Mounted Infantry Training 1906*, pp.56-57.

<sup>203</sup> *Mounted Infantry Training 1906*, pp.2; Jones, *From Boer War to World War*, p.231, a 'pom-pom' was an informal name for the 37mm Maxim-Nordenfelt gun, a quick firing cannon.

<sup>204</sup> Captain the Honourable Lord C. Beresford, 'Machine Guns in the Field', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 28, 1884-85, pp.941-63.

<sup>205</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Colonel Plumer (Q.18071, p.340), considered that machine guns were not much use with mounted troops due to their lack of mobility, although they did have a role in defence; Lucking, 'Was the British Army Lagging Technically in 1914?', pp.54-58; Evans, 'The British Army and Technology Before 1914', pp.113-22, for different perspectives on the state of technological awareness.

mounted arms occurred. With the increasing formalisation of the regular Mounted Infantry and in the presence of an evolving if informal operational doctrine within the wider army, the arms' interface became frictional stemming from an uncertainty whether the Mounted Infantry was to be a competitor or an adjunct to the cavalry. Their fundamental tactical differences were described by Alderson of the Mounted Infantry as 'the creed of Mounted Infantry was "stand steady, fire low and no living thing can get near us", whilst that of the cavalry should be "swords out, knee to knee and we can smash anything"'.<sup>206</sup> Here was a recognition of firepower and *arme blanche* being complementary rather than mutually exclusive and emphasised functionality of weaponry and the joint possession of mounted mobility. Nonetheless, this doctrinal uncertainty bred suspicion bordering on overt hostility with one author remarking that the 'Mounted Infantry has, speaking generally, had much to contend with in the service. Cavalrymen have regarded it with, at best, good-natured contempt'.<sup>207</sup> Ostensibly this friction referred to the contest over primacy of weapon although, as will be discussed in a subsequent chapter, what appears as an argument over edged weapons versus firearms was a metaphor for the inherent philosophical differences between the cavalry and infantry. It became extrapolated to be a perceived threat to both their respective tactics and even more fundamentally, as a threat to the way of life of cavalry officers and

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<sup>206</sup> Alderson, *With the Mounted Infantry and the Mashonaland Field Force 1896*, p.6.

<sup>207</sup> Denman, 'The Future of Mounted Infantry', pp. 382-91.



their position in the army and society.<sup>208</sup> But was this institutional friction pre-ordained? Previously Wood had concluded that the cavalry and the Mounted Infantry should remain discrete branches of the mounted arm with a separation of role, a contention with which Wolseley concurred as he considered the two mounted arms doctrinally distinct and unlikely to be able to master each others' tactics with any misguided attempts to merge them tactically resulting in a 'very bad mongrel; a bad dragoon'.<sup>209</sup> Roberts held a similar view although his apparent anti-cavalry prejudices may have contributed to his stance.<sup>210</sup> Conversely, experiences in South Africa persuaded Childers that all mounted troops should become *de facto* Mounted Rifles, forsaking steel weapons but combining enhanced equitation with rifle firepower.<sup>211</sup> Clearly this suggestion was hugely antagonistic to the cavalry<sup>212</sup> and by diminishing pre-requisite infantry skills, found little favour with the Mounted Infantry either with Major Crum, a Mounted Infantry officer and an author of a polemic promoting the arm, considering this proposal excessive.<sup>213</sup> In attempting to advance his agenda in favouring firepower over the *arme blanche* even before the end of hostilities in South Africa, Roberts sought the views of a broad church of army officers on the rearming

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<sup>208</sup> De Groot, *Douglas Haig*, p.22; Riedi, 'Brains or Polo?', pp. 236 -53; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p. 186; Bond, 'Doctrine and training in the British Cavalry', pp. 97-125.

<sup>209</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture One, 2 June 1886, pp.1-44, these were Wolseley's concluding remarks as chair of the meeting and subsequent post-lecture debate.

<sup>210</sup> Phillips, 'Scapegoat Arm', pp. 37-44; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.148.

<sup>211</sup> Childers, *War and the Arme Blanche*, p.356.

<sup>212</sup> Anon, 'War and the Arme Blanche', *Cavalry Journal*, 5, 1910, pp. 283-87.

<sup>213</sup> Crum, *The Question of Mounted Infantry*, p.46.

of the cavalry with the rifle as its carbines had been outranged by the Boers' Mausers<sup>214</sup> and despite some polarity of opinion, there was a majority consensus among respondents that this would be appropriate.<sup>215</sup> Thus a small step towards the Mounted Infantry paradigm was taken.

However, it was not just armaments that functioned as a proxy for doctrinal and social differences but also how the Mounted Infantry was mounted. The horsed nature of the Mounted Infantry contributed to the frictional interface, again ostensibly through predictions of logistical competition<sup>216</sup> although the Mounted Infantry's mounts could by definition include camels, elephants, bicycles and carts. The use of carts for infantry mobility, presaging modern mechanised infantry, was intermittently raised over the years and their introduction would have removed concerns over the Mounted Infantry's equitation and logistical competition with the cavalry whilst clarifying the cavalry's social distinction of being the only horsed arm. Conversely, Godley was staunchly antagonistic to the option of mobilising infantry in carts then calling them 'Mounted Infantry' as he considered wheeled transport would degrade the arm's mobility, manoeuvrability and prevent the Mounted Infantry from working alongside cavalry.<sup>217</sup> Although the capability to

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<sup>214</sup> TNA WO 108 / 184 Notes by Col. J.M Grierson RA on his return from South Africa.

<sup>215</sup> TNA WO 105 / 29 Arming of the Cavalry with a long rifle 1900.

<sup>216</sup> 'Lancer' 'The Question of Mounted Infantry: A reply to Rifleman', pp.228-31; A.B.B. 'A defence of Mounted Infantry: an answer to 'Lancer'', pp.398-99.

<sup>217</sup> Bethune, 'The Uses of Cavalry and Mounted Infantry in Modern Warfare', pp.619 – 36, Godley's comments were made during the post-lecture debate and he defended the Mounted Infantry's need for optimal tactical mobility, ostensibly to support the cavalry, but perhaps equally to prevent a downgrading of the Mounted Infantry at a time of a renaissance in the cavalry's fortunes.

transport comparatively large bodies of troops together in carts was superficially attractive to army commanders, the challenges of sourcing enough horses and carts plus concerns over the latter's limited off-road functionality were fatal disadvantages to the suggestion.<sup>218</sup> The prospect of Mounted Infantry transported in motorised vehicles was not overlooked<sup>219</sup> but the scarcity and mechanical unreliability of Edwardian motor vehicles prevented any early trials and gave rise to a contemporary opinion that it was 'very doubtful if these [motor cars] will ever be generally used as a means of imparting mobility to infantry'.<sup>220</sup> Nevertheless, the almost exclusive equine basis of the Mounted Infantry's mobility associated with persistent, if often unfair, criticism of its equitation remained a proxy measure for the rivalry over role and identity. More recently, Badsey has shown that the doctrinal interface was more nuanced than previously considered with French and Haig prepared to reform the cavalry to accommodate dismounted fire tactics but not at the expense of its *arme blanche* capability,<sup>221</sup> a position grudgingly noted by Hutton who was impressed by Haig despite the latter's ill-concealed dislike of the Mounted Infantry.<sup>222</sup> Conversely, French offered

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<sup>218</sup> Lumley, 'Mounted Riflemen', pp. 638-56.

<sup>219</sup> Captain R.S. Walker, 'Motorised Mounted Infantry: a suggestion for the Territorial Army', *United Services Magazine*, 38, 1908-09, pp.635-43.

<sup>220</sup> Lieutenant T.H.C. Frankland, 'Mounted Infantry Maxims: being notes based on active service experience', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 47, 1903, pp.155-70.

<sup>221</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.176; Riedi, 'Brains or Polo?', pp. 236-53; Evans, 'Sport and Hard Work', pp.139-58; Jean Bou, '*Modern Cavalry: Mounted Rifles, the Boer War and the Doctrinal Debate*', *The Boer War: Army, Nation and Empire* (Canberra: Army History Unit, 2000) Dennis, P. and Grey, J. (eds.), pp.99-114.

<sup>222</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers*, Add. 50086, IX, letter to French, 12 April 1901, indicated that Hutton considered Haig to be 'the best cavalry officer of the rising lot'; Talbot, 'The Regular Mounted Infantry', pp. 306-24; Sheffield, *The Chief*, p.41 & pp.54-56.

qualified support for Mounted Infantry, recognising some of its attributes<sup>223</sup> and facilitating the Mounted Infantry's use of cavalry and artillery mounts in his command at Aldershot for a week of training that uniquely combined training of all four Mounted Infantry battalions at once.<sup>224</sup> This was not evidence of any lessening of his support for the cavalry but recognition and qualified acceptance of the Mounted Infantry's different functionality<sup>225</sup>. In a surprising mitigation of senior cavalry officers' behaviours, Godley considered that much of the cavalry backlash against Mounted Infantry resulted from the Mounted Infantry protagonists' unwise and overenthusiastic pronouncements on the Mounted Infantry's likely replacement of the cavalry,<sup>226</sup> an indictment for which Godley ironically bore much responsibility. Colonel Bengough suggested a similar sentiment, indicating that the Mounted Infantry had, in fact, suffered more from 'misplaced zeal of its friends than from the sneers of its opponents'.<sup>227</sup> Denman claimed that the Mounted Infantry attracted denigration on account of its 'execrable equestrian skills'.<sup>228</sup> In similar vein, Colonel McCalmont, 4<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards,

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<sup>223</sup> Godley, *Life of an Irish Soldier*, p.105.

<sup>224</sup> Godley, *Life of an Irish Soldier*, p.106; Godley 'The Development of Mounted Infantry training at home', pp.52-55, although the large cavalry and artillery horses were manifestly unsuitable for Mounted Infantry training on grounds of their size and the unlikelihood that similar animals would be available for the Mounted infantry on mobilisation; TNA WO 163 / 10 Army Council Minutes, précis 160, 1905.

<sup>225</sup> Field Marshal Earl Roberts, 'The Army – as it was and as it is', *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 57, 1905, pp.1-26; H.O. Arnold-Forster, *The Army in 1906: a Policy and a Vindication* (London: John Murray, 1906), p.120-22; TNA WO 163 / 10 Minutes of the Army Council, précis 160, 1905, Organisation of the Mounted Infantry, French to Plumer, 4 June 1904.

<sup>226</sup> Godley, *Life of an Irish Soldier*, p.105.

<sup>227</sup> Bengough, 'Combined Tactics', pp. 791-808.

<sup>228</sup> Denman, 'The Future of Mounted Infantry', pp. 382 -91.

observed that cavalry officers were not strongly opposed to Mounted Infantry in support<sup>229</sup> but blamed the Mounted Infantry for assuming traditional cavalry work which he considered was the cause of the cavalry receiving an inadequate share of overseas active service which had retarded the cavalry's fortunes<sup>230</sup> Even Roberts, unquestionably pro-Mounted Infantry, considered that few other changes in the British Army had faced so much hostile criticism and active opposition.<sup>231</sup> That such hostility and opposition could persist despite leading opposing protagonists agreeing, even obliquely, on the value of dismounted firepower by mounted troops shows how remarkably difficult it was to dispel the tribal prejudices prevalent in the British Army,<sup>232</sup> even though the Mounted Infantry offered an opportunity in terms of firepower analogous to the benefits realised by the inclusion of horse artillery in a cavalry brigade.<sup>233</sup> Hutton claimed that the debate held wider implications for the whole of the British Army and not just mounted troops stating that 'this question of mobile infantry is one of the greatest importance as I cannot but feel that it bears strongly upon the general efficiency of the

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<sup>229</sup> Grierson, *Scarlet into Khaki*, p.171, 'Mounted Infantry is a highly valued auxiliary of the cavalry'.

<sup>230</sup> Major General R.S.S Baden-Powell, *Sport in War* (London, Heinemann, 1900), p.94; W.S. Churchill, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1898, reprint Wildside, 2006), p.181, although both Baden-Powell and Churchill blamed Treasury parsimony for the lack of use of cavalry regiments on active service in India.

<sup>231</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers*, Add.50111, XXXIV, 'Notes upon the evolution of Mounted Infantry in the British Army'.

<sup>232</sup> Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, p.258, recounts that French had to intervene personally in reassuring the senior cavalry officer, Henry Scobell that forced conversion to Mounted Rifles was neither practical nor likely.

<sup>233</sup> MacAndrew, 'Mounted Infantry', pp. 416-31.

British Army as a fighting machine'.<sup>234</sup> The irretrievably suspicious interface between the cavalry and Mounted Infantry, regardless of mitigation, was likened appropriately to 'asking a huntsman to do game-keeping'.<sup>235</sup> Yet despite such mutual distrust, the Mounted Infantry had garnered a substantial amount of support from senior commanders and younger aspiring officers with Wolseley and Wood as the founding fathers of the Mounted Infantry,<sup>236</sup> and, as will be shown in a later chapter, there is evidence to support the assertion that Roberts should also be considered as a major influence on the development of Mounted Infantry, at least in India.<sup>237</sup>

In conclusion, returning to the principal research question regarding the Mounted Infantry's doctrine and organisation, the evidence presented indicates that the Mounted Infantry, initially conceived to satisfy a particular need during colonial warfare, developed a durable organisation consistent with doctrinal requirements and which evolved over three decades to a complicated duality shortly before its abolition. Despite this drift of military role, the Mounted Infantry's basic organisation was unchanged although its projected deployment was subject to seemingly ceaseless re-definition from cavalry adjunct to mobile infantry reserve and the role of force protection. In

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<sup>234</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Two, 21 March 1889, pp.1-28.

<sup>235</sup> Alderson, *With the Mounted Infantry and the Mashonaland Field Force 1896*, p.6.

<sup>236</sup> Scott, *Douglas Haig: The Preparatory Prologue*, p.147, quoting a letter criticising the Mounted Infantry from Haig to his sister, 26 November 1899, in which Haig cautions against sharing his letter with Wood or Wolseley as they are 'the parents of the Mounted Infantry'.

<sup>237</sup> BL, *Baker Papers*, MSS EUR/D567/178: Letters and private papers of Brigadier General Thomas Baker relating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Afghan War 1879 – 1880, 'Proceedings of a Committee at Sherepore cantonment, Cabul, by order of Lieutenant General Sir F. Roberts for the purpose of considering the establishment and training of Mounted Infantry in the several corps comprising the Cabul Field Force'; NAM, *Roberts Papers*, 7101-23-167(2), 'Memorandum on Mounted Infantry'.

the context of the cavalry's limitations, both numerical and logistical, and with its doctrinal predilection favouring *arme blanche* and retention of the cavalry carbine,<sup>238</sup> the Mounted Infantry fulfilled a role in the late Victorian army that no other arm could satisfy. But in particular, the Mounted Infantry never aspired to be sabre-wielding cavalry. Although fiscal restraint was considered carefully by the War Office and clearly favoured a force cheaper than the cavalry, the doctrinal debate centred much more on functionality than just cost. Indeed in respect of the Mounted Infantry's impermanence, the cost-effectiveness of abstraction was but one favourable attribute with others including ease of numerical expansion and retention of high-class infantry skills. Unfortunately, institutional friction between cavalry and Mounted Infantry officers, largely predicated on the Mounted Infantry being horsed but also involving a perception by cavalry officers of the risk of their forced conversion to mounted companies of Infantry regiments,<sup>239</sup> poisoned the possibility of useful symbiosis. When the Mounted Infantry was finally allocated a discrete doctrinal role post-1902, rather than continuing its wartime utilitarianism, this subsequent trespassing into traditional cavalry work not only confirmed the cavalry's previous suspicions but also exposed the Mounted Infantry to sustained debate as to its suitability for such roles. Rejecting the epithet 'cavalry of poverty', the Mounted Infantry was

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<sup>238</sup> C.S. Goldmann, *With General French and the Cavalry in South Africa* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1902), p.417, even Goldmann, a notable pro-cavalry supporter, recognised the ineffectiveness of the carbine but predicted that the adoption of the rifle would negate any benefit from attaching Mounted Infantry to the cavalry; TNA WO 33 / 37 Committee on Musketry Instruction in the Army 1881, experiments showed that the cavalry's Martini-Henry carbine consistently had a lower muzzle velocity compared to its rival infantry rifle by a factor of 5 – 8 per cent.

<sup>239</sup> Talbot, 'The Regular Mounted Infantry', pp. 306-24.

unequivocally 'infantry mounted and not cavalry disguised',<sup>240</sup> whether considering its infantry company basic organisation or its separate regulations and drill.<sup>241</sup> Excluding the anomaly of the Camel Corps and later in the Boer War, Mounted Infantry was sourced solely by abstraction from infantry battalions, a process that potentially weakened the battalion but conferred benefits through prior infantry training.<sup>242</sup> Although prophecies of future disaster on the lance points of enemy European cavalry remained durable fears, Mounted Infantry supporters predicted its value in participating in a great cavalry screen at the commencement of hostilities because of its mobile firepower.<sup>243</sup> It remains unfortunate that the Mounted Infantry's inception and development was continually overshadowed by controversy when a setting aside of discord could have permitted beneficial cooperation where Hutton, faithful to his conviction that inter-arm cooperation could exceed any solo independent action by either cavalry or Mounted Infantry claimed that: 'the two services are quite distinct'.<sup>244</sup> And, in conclusion, this affirmation neatly encapsulates the troubled doctrine of the Mounted Infantry.

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<sup>240</sup> Lancelot Rolleston, *Yeomanry, Cavalry or Mounted Infantry?* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1901), p.35.

<sup>241</sup> New Training Report, *Army Review*, II (2), 1912, pp. 380-84, listed no fewer than seven extant drill manuals for cavalry, Mounted Infantry and Mounted Rifles in Britain and the Empire.

<sup>242</sup> TNA WO 163 / 10 Army Council Minutes, précis 160, 1905, 'there is no doubt that men who have trained as Mounted Infantry are man for man more useful as infantry soldiers'; Denman, 'The Future of Mounted Infantry', pp. 382-91, claimed that, tactically, Mounted Infantrymen were said to be worth three foot soldiers, presumably in terms of tactical effectiveness; Godley, *Life of an Irish Soldier*, p.33.

<sup>243</sup> Denman, 'The Future of Mounted Infantry', pp. 382-91.

<sup>244</sup> Hutton, 'The Military Question of Today', pp.748-58.



## Chapter Three

### Identity and Training

As already concluded in the preceding chapter, the British regular Mounted Infantry's existence was characterised by three important issues of debate: that of its organisational permanence versus impermanence, the inter-relationship of its informal doctrine with its military role and its doctrinal interface with the cavalry. Contextualising these debates was the Mounted Infantry's transformation from improvised mounted detachments of overseas infantry garrisons to a final institutional incarnation as non-cavalry mounted divisional troops, by way of utilitarian ubiquity during the Boer War. Mirroring this transformation was the evolution of Mounted Infantry training from the misplaced belief in minimalist brevity to formalised training predicated on attendance at the Mounted Infantry Schools, eventually reinforced by peacetime simulation during inspections and manoeuvres. These parallel changes in role and training contribute to the challenge of determining whether the Mounted Infantry developed a specific identity in the late Victorian army, a challenge complicated by the lack of a clearly articulated understanding by the army of what was meant by 'Mounted Infantry', an appreciation that changed radically between 1860 and 1899<sup>1</sup> and continued to change following 1902. It is therefore questionable whether a Mounted

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<sup>1</sup> Badsey, 'The Boer War (1899 – 1902) and British Cavalry Doctrine', pp. 75-98.

Infantry identity or *esprit de corps*<sup>2</sup> was possible due to such confounding factors.

At a time when the regular Mounted Infantry movement was still embryonic, a United States (US) army officer writing in the *United Services Magazine* observed prophetically, that: 'being merely a provisional force, and, having no permanent status, they [Mounted Infantry] will have no *esprit de corps* to urge them on'.<sup>3</sup> He argued that the current organisation of the Mounted Infantry would lead to confusion in role and result in producing an inferior cavalry force. He concluded bleakly that despite being a force of great promise, uncertainty of role and lack of *esprit de corps* would remain problematic for the Mounted Infantry and, in his opinion, had already contributed to the reverses in the recent Transvaal War. A contrary view, expressed in the *Army Book for the British Empire*, supported the Mounted Infantry's impermanence as a means of maintaining its infantry-based identity and expertise rather than perceiving it as an organisational weakness that would prevent the formation of an identity underpinned by *esprit de corps*.<sup>4</sup> Thus a lengthy, vigorous and occasionally acrimonious debate ensued within the army, played out in the Press and military debating circles, that questioned the Mounted Infantry's organisational basis compared to the traditional regimental system, rightly considered the fundamental basis of the

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<sup>2</sup> French, *Military Identities*, pp.1-2, *esprit de corps* may be defined as a loyalty or regard for the honour of the body to which one belongs.

<sup>3</sup> Hannay 'Mounted Infantry', pp. 416-24.

<sup>4</sup> Goodenough and Dalton, *The Army Book for the British Empire*, p.172.

British Army,<sup>5</sup> and, in consequence, whether the Mounted Infantry developed an identity and *esprit de corps*.<sup>6</sup> For if there was no regiment to belong to and no associated traditions and mores as seemingly in the impermanent regular Mounted Infantry, then whence lay its *esprit de corps*? This was a more important question than merely a desire for spectacle, music, uniform, flags and traditions,<sup>7</sup> for both Wolseley<sup>8</sup> and Roberts, among other contemporaries, considered *esprit de corps* fundamental to military culture<sup>9</sup> and integral to army discipline, military efficiency<sup>10</sup> and maintaining the regimental system.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore this chapter seeks to answer the thesis' second main research question, whether the Mounted Infantry's organisational impermanence affected the evolution of an identifiable military identity and whether this impacted adversely on both the development of *esprit de corps* and the

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<sup>5</sup> Farwell, *Mr Kipling's Army*, p.25.

<sup>6</sup> French, *Military Identities*, pp.1-2, contends that bound up with the regimental system are the notions of loyalty, maintenance of tradition, pride in belonging and reputation within the army contributing to *esprit de corps*.

<sup>7</sup> Scott Hughes Myerley, 'The eye must entrap the mind: Army spectacle and paradigm in nineteenth century Britain', *Journal of Social History*, 26 (1), 1992, pp. 105-31; Holmes *Soldiers*, p. 400; Edwin Mole, *The King's Hussar*, (London: Cassell & Co., 1893, reprint; Leonaur Press, 2008), p.25; Gough, *Soldiering On*, p.32, both cite the role of uniform in encouraging enlistment in the Victorian period.

<sup>8</sup> Lieutenant Colonel R.J. Kentish, *The Maxims of the Late Field-Marshal Viscount Wolseley and the addresses on leadership, esprit de corps and morale* (London: Gale and Polden, 1916), pp. 30-32.

<sup>9</sup> French, *Military Identities*, p. 6, defines 'culture' sociologically as being 'a set of rules or standards shared by members of a society, which when acted upon by the members produce behaviour which members consider proper and acceptable'.

<sup>10</sup> E.M. Spiers, *The Army and Society 1815 – 1914* (London: Longman, 1980), p.2.

<sup>11</sup> French, *Military Identities*, pp.1-2; N.S. Nash *Chitral Charlie: the rise and fall of Major General Charles Townshend* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2010), p.28; Earl Dundonald, *My Army Life* (London: Edward Arnold, 1934), p.10.

Mounted Infantry's institutional survival. In other words, did the Mounted Infantry's temporary organisation prevent it from developing a distinctive specific identity within the British Army resulting in its eventual decline to abolition? Furthermore, considering Badsey's indictment of the Mounted Infantry officers' apparently divided loyalties,<sup>12</sup> to what extent did such officers' pre-existing regimental allegiances impact on the Mounted Infantry, its identity, *esprit de corps* and survival? Moreover, if the combination of the Mounted Infantry's organisational impermanence and changing roles potentially influenced its identity and *esprit de corps* then equally, these factors threatened the state and competency of Mounted Infantry training, not least because of the time pressure imposed by cyclical abstraction. Consequentially did the training of Mounted Infantry officers and men suffer?

Although historically brevity of training, often predominantly experiential, was deemed acceptable in the opinions of a number of senior officers,<sup>13</sup> the different experiences in the 1881 Transvaal and 1882 Egyptian campaigns suggested that prior training was preferable to experiential learning on campaign and over the next decades, as the Mounted Infantry's responsibilities expanded, training requirements increased with corresponding pressures on training time. Thus the competing problems of time available through abstraction and the depth and breadth of training demanded by evolving doctrinal role created a tension for the Mounted Infantry. This was exacerbated by the lack of peacetime configuration of the

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<sup>12</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.21.

<sup>13</sup> TNA WO 33 / 37 Précis on Mounted Infantry 1881.

Mounted Infantry, at least until the Manoeuvres of 1898, which prevented rehearsal of the training instructed at the Mounted Infantry Schools. However, a positive corollary of the Mounted Infantry functioning purely as an active service arm was that, for junior officers at least, the Mounted Infantry offered valuable combat, command and leadership experience relatively early in their careers.<sup>14</sup> Badsey, whilst challenging the enduring myth that all senior army officers in 1914 were from the cavalry,<sup>15</sup> concluded that more senior officers in 1914 had Mounted Infantry experience than had cavalry credentials.<sup>16</sup> Whilst an important observation, Badsey's retrospective analysis risks bias from only including those officers already successful in their careers. His analysis neither examines the impact of pre-Boer War training nor, prospectively, the effect of wartime Mounted Infantry command on officers' future promotion opportunities. Therefore the chapter will consider whether Mounted Infantry training matched the roles demanded of the arm and broadly, whether the training of the Mounted Infantry produced a force 'fit for purpose'. Evidence will be sought as to whether Mounted Infantry command provided preferential career progression for future higher command. Did selection for command of Mounted Infantry imply recognition of innate qualities in a junior officer or was Boer War

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<sup>14</sup> 'Ikona', 'The Passing of the Old MI', pp. 209-13; Tylden, 'Mounted Infantry', pp. 176-79; NAM, *Verney Papers*, letter 5 October 1901.

<sup>15</sup> Hannah, *Bobs, Kipling's General*, p.229.

<sup>16</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p. 206, cites 2 Generals, 3 Lieutenant Generals and 19 Major Generals with Mounted Infantry service before 1914, compared to 1 General, 3 Lieutenant Generals and 8 Major Generals from the cavalry but his analysis does not indicate whether this merely reflected the smaller pool of officers available in the cavalry rather than infantry.

experience (when the opportunities for the Mounted Infantry reached its maximum) merely a fortunate coincidence?

Clearly, the training of the Mounted Infantry cannot be assessed in isolation but requires consideration in the context of the British Army's doctrinal development and evolution of training during the late Victorian and Edwardian eras, especially the accelerated reform of the cavalry in the years after the Boer War (particularly dismounted firearm and reconnaissance work), and the evolution of the infantry from volley-firing in close order ranks under direct officer control to an infantry practising 'fire and movement' tactics,<sup>17</sup> predicated on fire discipline, individual marksmanship and personal initiative. Such skills were needed on the dispersed battlefields that had evolved from the interaction of smokeless ammunition, enhanced lethality of modern low trajectory magazine-loaded rifles and breech-loading artillery and where direct officer control was no longer possible.<sup>18</sup> Naturally, these changes affecting the infantry would, by extrapolation, also impact on the Mounted Infantry whose exemplary infantry ability, required before specialist Mounted Infantry training, was *sine qua non* for their selection.<sup>19</sup>

Before the research questions can be explored, the concept of identity requires clarification. Identity implies elements of both 'distinctiveness', marking out the group or individual as a separate entity to those external to

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<sup>17</sup> Major General C.C. Monro, 'Fire and Movement', *Army Review*, I (I), 1911, pp. 91-96.

<sup>18</sup> Matthew Ford, 'Towards a Revolution in Firepower? Logistics, Lethality, and the Lee-Metford', *War in History*, 20(3), 2013, pp.273-99.

<sup>19</sup> *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1897*, p.25, 'picked and highly-trained infantry soldiers'.

the group, and 'sameness' for those members of the group, conferring allegiance and a sense of 'belonging' rather than mere opportune grouping.<sup>20</sup> Clearly such attributes are challenging when applied to the regular Mounted Infantry. While abstraction conferred distinctiveness to the abstracted men by virtue of their selection into this novel force, their transfer into the Mounted Infantry also conferred a 'sameness' with men similarly abstracted from other battalions but who had been imbued previously with different and distinct identities of their own parent regiments. Successful completion of the training programme also cemented these notions of distinctiveness and sameness through the newly acquired skill of equitation, Mounted Infantry drill and its nascent doctrine. Abstraction did not necessarily require nor result in a relinquishing of prior allegiances as it was merely a transient period before returning to the parent regiment. The pre-requisite for generic infantry experience and training before Mounted Infantry abstraction meant that mounted training also risked creating a tension between the Mounted Infantry's identity as fully-fledged infantry and as mounted soldiers.<sup>21</sup> They were no longer solely infantrymen but neither did they consider themselves *bona fide* cavalrymen.

However, the concept of identity is just one part of an organisation's culture<sup>22</sup> and to qualitatively assess this for the Mounted Infantry, a structured

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<sup>20</sup> French, *Military Identities*, p.1 & p.98.

<sup>21</sup> F.H. Maitland, *Hussar of the Line* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1951), p.39, for an eye-witness description of the tensions between foot and mounted soldiers.

<sup>22</sup> Kirke, *Red Coat, Green Machine*, pp.93-102, defines 'organisational culture' as the 'customs, practices and attitudes of people within an organisation'. He acknowledges an alternative and

approach to analysis of organisational culture is essential. Charles Kirke, using the methodology of social anthropology, has proposed a four-domain tool to investigate the organisational culture of the British Army. His construct comprises the following categories, namely: formal command structure, informal command structure arising from key relationships, functional structure derived from participants' attitudes, expectations and roles and, finally, loyalty and identity.<sup>23</sup> Kirke includes the prevailing societal environment as an overarching influence that he terms the 'cultural stripe'.<sup>24</sup> Here a bi-directional reflection of contemporaneous societal values, influencing both the attitudes of public and the military establishment, provides a backdrop to the army's own culture. Clearly Kirke's model is only one such analytical tool as shown by alternative definitions of organisational culture and identity.<sup>25</sup> When considering the 'loyalty / identity' domain, which Kirke abbreviates to 'belonging', this can exist on multiple levels, both formally and informally, at the section or detachment, company and battalion levels through to branch or army as a whole. Conversely, a corollary of identity is 'rivalry', which again functions at many levels and manifests from harmless competitiveness to institutional friction endangering the well-being of the whole, a situation that threatened during the cavalry versus Mounted

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broader approach to organisational culture as the assumptions, expectations and behaviour of all the people within the organisation even when contrary to the official philosophy of the organisation.

<sup>23</sup> Kirke, *Red Coat, Green Machine*, pp.190-92.

<sup>24</sup> Kirke, *Red Coat, Green Machine*, *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> French, *Military Identities*, p.6, see footnote 8.



Infantry debate both in peacetime<sup>26</sup> and in war.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, loyalty to one's own regiment or corps risks promoting prejudice against those perceived external to the group. Whilst this may remain harmless competition, institutional prejudice may induce unnecessary conservatism and stifle change and innovation,<sup>28</sup> this being a pertinent factor when considering the inception of a new arm such as the Mounted Infantry.

Before applying Kirke's model to the Mounted Infantry, the interlocking military and societal *milieu*,<sup>29</sup> Kirke's 'cultural stripe', in which the Mounted Infantry model evolved, must be considered as it had undergone seismic changes in recent history. These changes included the controversial, in the opinions of both junior and senior army officers,<sup>30</sup> Cardwell – Childers

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<sup>26</sup> TNA WO 27 / 506 Aldershot Command Papers 1905-7, Sir John French, at his leaving dinner on relinquishing the Aldershot Command, bitterly criticised those who had 'done their best to dissipate false and misleading ideas [about cavalry regiments]' – a less than thinly disguised criticism of Roberts and Mounted Infantry's champions; NAM, *Roberts Papers*, 7101-23-122, letter to Kitchener, 8 October 1903; De Lisle, *Reminiscences of Sport and War*, p.122, recounted how, at a conference of senior cavalry officers, institutional friction occurred between Roberts and his subordinate, French, who openly opposed his chief over the importance of the *arme blanche*.

<sup>27</sup> French, *Some War Diaries*, p.15, diary entry, 14 April 1900, French accused Hutton of 'playing games' in seeking preferment for the Mounted Infantry over the cavalry in matters of avoiding outpost duties; Hutton, 'Mounted Infantry', pp. 695-738, though Hutton had previously and expressly promoted the Mounted Infantry for outpost duty; NAM, *Fitzgerald papers*, 7912-76, the author, an officer in the 4<sup>th</sup> Mounted Infantry, complained of excessive outpost duty fatiguing the Mounted Infantry and its horses.

<sup>28</sup> T.H.E. Travers, 'Technology, Tactics and Morale: Jean de Bloch, the Boer War and British Military Theory 1900 – 1914', *Journal of Modern History*, 51(2), 1979, pp.264-86.

<sup>29</sup> Gwyn Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p.11, reflected that 'the Victorian Army mirrored in its attitudes, its rituals and its way of life, the culture of an upper-class élite who dominated that society'.

<sup>30</sup> Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, p. 19, the Duke of Cambridge was initially in favour of the reforms but later demonstrated reservations following lobbying by senior officers; Kochanski, *Sir Garnet Wolseley*, p. 113, Queen Victoria was concerned by the replacement of regimental numbers risking loss of tradition; Black Watch Museum, Perth, *Grant Duff Papers*, III, diary entry, 1 November 1890, Grant Duff continued to refer to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> battalions of the Black Watch by their pre-reform numbering almost a decade after the change.

reforms of abolishing officer promotion by purchase; pairing of most infantry battalions into regiments with an overseas battalion and a home battalion and, since the 1872 Localisation Act, the principle of geographical association rooting the battalion in the local community to support recruitment and to foster *esprit de corps* in the ranks to the benefit of the battalion.<sup>31</sup> The fourth significant change was the introduction of short term service, as laid down in the 1870 Army Enlistment Act, which facilitated the development of an Army Reserve<sup>32</sup> and, as hoped by the War Office, improved recruitment and discipline in the Army. In parallel, there was a general increase in interest in matters military in society with increased Press coverage underpinned by improving levels of public literacy, in part due to the Education Act 1870 and enforced compulsory school attendance since 1880.<sup>33</sup> The embarkation and return of the Camel Corps in 1884-85 elicited substantial Press and public interest that was heightened by the inclusion of the Household Cavalry, the Foot Guards and line cavalry regiments.<sup>34</sup> These regiments were considered, in the vernacular of the Victorian age, to be 'smart' by both army officers and the public.<sup>35</sup> This construct is difficult to define but comprises an amalgam of prestige, fashion and glamour on

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<sup>31</sup> Farwell, *Mr Kipling's Army*, p.43; Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, p.20, only the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders escaped linkage remaining the only single-battalion infantry regiment in the army until a second battalion was raised in 1897; L.S. Amery, *The Problem of the Army* (London: Edward Arnold, 1903), p.56.

<sup>32</sup> French, *Military Identities*, p.14.

<sup>33</sup> Spiers, *The Army and Society*, p.211.

<sup>34</sup> *The Times*, 27 September 1884; *Daily News (London)*, 23 January 1885; *The Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 20 February, 1885; *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 1 March 1885; *The Times*, 16 July 1885; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 17 July 1885.

<sup>35</sup> W.E Cairnes, *Social Life in the British Army* (London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1899), p.27.

several levels including distinctiveness of uniform, social class,<sup>36</sup> senior officer and royal patronage, enhanced promotion prospects through influence from patronage, lavishness of officers' lifestyle, individuals' personal wealth<sup>37</sup> and expensive leisure pursuits such as hunting and polo.<sup>38</sup> Even a contemporary military observer noted wryly that: 'opinions differ very much, even in the service itself, as to which regiment can lay claim to be the 'smartest'.<sup>39</sup> Both French and Badsey have compiled rankings of regimental 'smartness' and although methodology and details differ slightly resulting in variation in respective hierarchies, unsurprisingly the overall principle that the Household troops, most cavalry regiments and the rifle regiments of the KRRC and Rifle Brigade topped the list of prestigious 'smart' regiments in which to hold a Commission.<sup>40</sup> However as French has noted, a regiment's 'smartness' was only partly influenced by military reputation<sup>41</sup> and, equally, nor was there automatic correlation between regimental prestige and

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<sup>36</sup> Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, p.96, service in a fashionable regiment could either attribute social acceptance to an aspirant or, alternatively, confirm pre-existing social status.

<sup>37</sup> Cairnes, *Social Life in the British Army*, p.27, asserted that 'Officers have lived in the 10<sup>th</sup> [Hussars] with an allowance of only £500 a year in addition to their pay, but they have rarely lasted long, and the average income of the officers is very much higher'; Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, pp.104-05, cites the requirement of an additional annual private income to be approximately £100 - £150 for infantry officers and £600 - £700 for cavalry officers. Rates of pay in line regiments were 5s 3d per day for 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenants increasing to 17s per day for Lieutenant Colonels, with higher rates for those in the Foot Guards as well as additional payments for those commanding regiments (extra 3s per day); for cavalry officers; those with linguistic proficiency and for those serving overseas in specific campaigns e.g. Egypt and Sudan.

<sup>38</sup> French, *Military Identities*, pp.5-6 & p.164; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.7; Riedi, 'Brains or Polo?' pp. 236-53; Evans, 'Sport and Hard Work', pp.139-58, Evans offers a partial rebuttal of Riedi's criticism of the cavalry officers' ethos and lifestyle.

<sup>39</sup> Cairnes, *Social Life in the British Army*, p.27.

<sup>40</sup> French, *Military Identities*, p.165; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.7.

<sup>41</sup> French, *Military Identities*, p.165.

regimental title.<sup>42</sup> In terms of military identity, the concept of ‘smartness’ ensured a degree of ‘sameness’ within the regimental family permitting the Officers’ Mess to function as self-selecting club,<sup>43</sup> reserving membership for like-minded individuals of similar social standing and wealth,<sup>44</sup> which, as Spiers concludes, were essential ingredients of regimental *esprit de corps*.<sup>45</sup> Therefore the configuration of the Camel Corps, with the notable exception of the Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment derived from line infantry regiments, was ‘smartness’ personified. However the concept of smartness has resonance for the Mounted Infantry. The majority of Mounted Infantry was abstracted from line infantry regiments that were on the whole, not ‘smart’ and this disparity between Mounted Infantry origins and the generally ‘smart’ line cavalry was another ingredient in the mix of the institutional and personal friction persisting between respective officers. The most ‘smart’ regiments of the Household troops rarely contributed to the Mounted Infantry with the contributions to the Camel Corps in 1885 and the Guards Mounted Infantry 1901-02 being anomalies. Conversely, the large contribution to the Mounted Infantry from the KRRC and Rifle Brigade, two of the more ‘smart’ infantry regiments, undermines to a degree the explanation of the Mounted Infantry’s demise arising from socially inferior Mounted Infantry officers losing the war of influence to cavalry officers or indeed abdicating their responsibilities to the Mounted Infantry – a debate that will be dealt with in a later chapter.

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<sup>42</sup> French, *Military Identities*, p.167.

<sup>43</sup> Spiers, *The Army and Society*, p.25.

<sup>44</sup> Cairnes, *Social Life in the British Army*, pp.28-29.

<sup>45</sup> Spiers, *The Army and Society*, p.22.

Thus Kirke's 'cultural stripe', the societal and military *milieu*, combined issues of class distinction, education and military identity associated with the changing nature of the domestic population and its relationship with the army.

Returning to the model of organisational culture and its application to the Mounted Infantry, the first two domains, that of formal and informal command structures, present challenges largely unfamiliar elsewhere in the army. Temporary abstraction, with grouping of detachments from a number of different battalions into a company,<sup>46</sup> with unfamiliar officers and no prior traditions codifying behaviour and discipline, arguably threatened the cohesion of the Mounted Infantry as a unified force. In diminishing this risk, in the context of limited time available for training, a founding principle for the Mounted Infantry was that men should be both trained and commanded by an officer from their parent battalion of origin, conferring the dual benefits of familiarity of command and the tangible link back to the parent regiment to which the abstracted detachment was destined to return.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, at least in principle if not always achievable in practice, Mounted Infantry companies on active service were to be commanded by infantry officers thus maintaining the Mounted Infantry's fundamental attribute of remaining

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<sup>46</sup> *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1897*, p.5, confirms that the company was the basic military and administrative formation of Mounted Infantry; Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.382, considered that company-sized units were optimal tactically for colonial insurgencies in terms of ease of command, type of military operation usually required, and logistical needs.

<sup>47</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture One, 2 June 1886, pp.1-44; *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1897*, p.6; Francis T. Warre Cornish, *Letters and Sketches – Appendix II: the training and equipment of Cavalry and Mounted Infantry* (Eton: Spottiswood and Co., 1902), p.434.

resolutely infantry.<sup>48</sup> Analysis of the Mounted Infantry battalions that formed the Mounted Infantry Division following its re-structuring in late 1900 shows that most Mounted Infantry battalion commanders were infantry line regiment officers, usually of major rank<sup>49</sup> and that very few were from the cavalry.<sup>50</sup> Conversely, anecdotal evidence suggesting ‘reverse tribalism’ exists where senior cavalry officers in South Africa objected to infantry officers leading mixed higher formations such as mobile columns that included cavalry squadrons on the grounds of the infantry officer’s unfamiliarity with the élan of cavalry - a seemingly spurious complaint that surely missed the point as opportunities to demonstrate tactics demanding cavalry panache were rare on the veldt.<sup>51</sup> Despite early concerns that relying solely on infantry officers could blinker the mobility and initiative of the horsed Mounted Infantry,<sup>52</sup> infantry officers commanding Mounted Infantry remained the norm,<sup>53</sup> although during the latter stages of the Boer War, composite mobile columns were at times commanded by officers from most branches of the army and,

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<sup>48</sup> TNA WO 33 / 37 Précis on Mounted Infantry 1881; Denman, ‘The Future of Mounted Infantry’, pp. 382-91.

<sup>49</sup> TNA WO 105 / 29 Colonel Alderson’s Mounted Infantry Brigade.

<sup>50</sup> Appendix Five.

<sup>51</sup> LHCMA, *De Lisle Papers*, 2, ‘Narrative of the South African war 1899 – 1902, 10 January 1900; De Lisle, *Reminiscences of Sport and War*, p.89; Murray Cosby Jackson, *A Soldier’s Diary: South Africa 1899 – 1900. The experiences of a NCO of the Hants Regiment and 7th Mounted Infantry during the Boer War* (London: Max Goschen, 1913; paperback ed., reprint Leonaur, 2009), p.90.

<sup>52</sup> Hamilton, ‘Mounted Marksmen and the Dismounted Service of Cavalry’, pp. 261-87.

<sup>53</sup> Lumley, ‘Mounted Riflemen’, pp. 638-56, dramatically predicted the use of cavalry officers to lead Mounted Infantry would ‘destroy the purpose for which such corps are organised’.

for a war not renowned for the universal competency of the officer class,<sup>54</sup> there were undoubtedly some very successful commanders of mobile columns who were neither trained as Mounted Infantry officers nor as cavalrymen.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, Boer War experiences notwithstanding, the abstraction of an officer and men in detachment size from the same battalion, further subdivided into close-knit groups of four men, as praised by Mounted Infantry enthusiasts such as Alderson, commended a decentralised approach to command, ideal for the typical small unit piecemeal deployment of Mounted Infantry,<sup>56</sup> and comprised the key informal command structure.<sup>57</sup> The process also encouraged soldiers' self-reliance, personal initiative, minimised cross-posting between unfamiliar Mounted Infantry companies and reduced the risk of failure of cohesion inherent in the multitudinous origins of the Mounted Infantry.<sup>58</sup> The primacy of maintaining relationships between officers and men during Mounted Infantry duties was demonstrated by the Camel Corps of Wolseley's Desert Column during the Nile Expedition 1884 – 85. Abstraction on the principles of the Mounted Infantry was Wolseley's preferential method for forming the Corps, not only for the purposes of optimal selection but also in consideration of the role of the

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<sup>54</sup> NAM, *Roberts Papers*, 7101-23-122-2, letter to Akers-Douglas, 29 August 1901, and 7101-23-209, detailing the large number of senior officers, particularly cavalry officers, whom Roberts dismissed from command in 1900.

<sup>55</sup> TNA, *Kitchener Papers*, PRO 30/57/22, letter from Kitchener to Brodrick (Secretary of State for War), 1 November 1901, in which Kitchener described Colonel Benson, a Royal Artillery officer, as one of his best mobile column commanders.

<sup>56</sup> TNA WO 27 / 503 Army Manoeuvres 1904.

<sup>57</sup> Baker, *A Fine Chest of Medals*, p.27, indicated the popularity of this organisational structure with the private soldier.

<sup>58</sup> Alderson, *With the Mounted Infantry and the Mashonaland Field Force 1896*, p.4.

Camel Corps that will be explored in a subsequent chapter.<sup>59</sup> In the Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment, largely abstracted from line infantry regiments in theatre or the Mediterranean, only its commanding officer, the ill-fated Major George Gough, 14<sup>th</sup> Hussars, and his major, Thomas Phipps, 7<sup>th</sup> Hussars, were not infantry officers.<sup>60</sup> Abstraction from cavalry and Foot Guards regiments, neither of which had experience in furnishing Mounted Infantry to form the other camel regiments, was innovative and maintained the officer-soldier linkage, yet its application to these regiments was questionable tactically with respect to their adaptability to the Mounted Infantry role.<sup>61</sup> Wolseley attempted to influence not only which regiments would be utilised but also officer selection. But, in fairness, Wolseley's preferences were founded usually on his personal knowledge of these officers' previous combat or Mounted Infantry experience.<sup>62</sup> Such intervention was both a reflection of Wolseley's personality, as exemplified by his accumulation of trusted acolytes as senior and staff officers known as his 'ring', and his sincere view that the success of the Camel Corps rested on the character and abilities of its officers.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, Wolseley was only successful in

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<sup>59</sup>TNA WO 110 / 10 Despatch of the Troops to Upper Egypt & Soudan 1884; TNA WO 32 / 6111 Organisation & equipment of the Camel Corps 1884.

<sup>60</sup> Colonel Sir C. Wilson, *From Korti to Khartum* (London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1885), p.42; Edward Gleichen, *With the Camel Corps up the Nile 1885*, (London: Chapman and Hall 1888, Leonaur reprint 2009), p.80; TNA WO 105 / 25 Field Marshal Lord Roberts: confidential reports, letter 13 March 1900, Gough to Cowan; Gough received a head injury from a spent round during the enemy incursion into the square at Abu Klea and despite recovering subsequently displayed mental health problems, finally taking his own life in 1900 following his removal from field command.

<sup>61</sup> Alex Macdonald, *Too Late for Gordon and Khartoum* (London: John Murray, 1887), p.60; Geoffrey Powell, *Buller: a Scapegoat?* (London: Leo Cooper, 1994), p.76.

<sup>62</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6111 Organisation & equipment of the Camel Corps 1884

<sup>63</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6111 *ibid.*



securing the services of 72 per cent of those officers whom he requested,<sup>64</sup> whilst he was not immune from external pressures, including Royal intervention, influencing his appointments that resulted in the brief appointment of Lieutenant Colonel Primrose to command the Guards Camel Regiment<sup>65</sup> and Colonel Stanley Clarke, with no active service or recent command experience, to command the Light Camel Regiment.<sup>66</sup> This latter appointment was in direct opposition to Wolseley's personal preference for Hugh McCalmont, 7<sup>th</sup> Hussars, whose prior appointment to the latter command had to be rescinded.<sup>67</sup> The impact of these external influences was exacerbated by Wolseley's tolerance of lobbying by friends, colleagues and others of political or social influence who wished to accompany the expedition themselves or promote the preferment of favourites. Certainly Wolseley's weakness in permitting such 'jobbery' was not unique among senior commanders in the late Victorian army.<sup>68</sup>

Although clear linkages between junior officers and their abstracted regimental detachments in the camel regiments were maintained, the Camel

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<sup>64</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6111 Organisation & equipment of the Camel Corps 1884.

<sup>65</sup> Royal Archives, Windsor, UK (hereafter RA): *Cambridge Papers*, letter 26 September 1884, reel 46, letter to Wolseley; TNA WO 147 / 41, Diary of the Nile Expedition 1884-85, Primrose would be superseded by his second-in-command, Lieutenant Colonel Boscawen, and subsequently commanded the base depot at Korti.

<sup>66</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6111 Organisation & equipment of the Camel Corps 1884; TNA WO 147 / 41 Diary of the Nile Expedition 1884 – 85, Clarke was the baggage master of the Desert Column and relinquished command to McCalmont during the campaign.

<sup>67</sup> Sir C.E. Callwell, (ed.), *The Memoirs of Major-General Sir Hugh McCalmont KCB, DSO* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1924), p.230 & p.233; A. Preston, (ed.), *In Relief of Gordon: Lord Wolseley's campaign journal of The Khartoum Relief Expedition 1884 – 1885* (London: Hutchinson, 1967), p.108.

<sup>68</sup> T.H.E. Travers, 'The Hidden Army: structural problems in the British Officer Corps 1900 – 1918', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 17 (3), 1982, pp. 523-44.

Corps and its command structure received criticism from contemporary correspondents<sup>69</sup> and latterly historians,<sup>70</sup> primarily on account of the number of aristocrats serving in the officer cadre of the Corps, with Anglesey, in his history of the British Cavalry, derogatorily terming the Camel Corps the 'Nile Circus',<sup>71</sup> whilst Ian Hamilton remarked caustically at the time that the Desert Column was 'the spectacle of most of Debrett's and the élite of London Society riding across the desert on camels',<sup>72</sup> alleging it to be nothing more than a *dilettante* experiment dreamed up by Wolseley.<sup>73</sup> Clearly, by virtue of his employment with the River Column rather than participating in the more famous Desert Column's Camel Corps, Hamilton is far from an impartial observer whilst his membership of Roberts' 'ring' of patronage, antagonistic to Wolseley, is well-known. Nonetheless, the inference is clear that Wolseley selected officers not on merit but by political importance, be that regimental or social. The consequence has been a prevailing orthodoxy, as summarised by French, that when the aristocracy 'donned khaki, they infused the regular officer corps with an anti-modern and

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<sup>69</sup> Wilson, *From Korti to Khartoum*, p.11, considered that the camelry was a mistake but his testimony was coloured by his exculpatory efforts to avoid incipient opprobrium arising from his failure to relieve Khartoum; Kochanski, *Sir Garnet Wolseley*, p.172, recounts Ian Hamilton's complaint of the Camel Corps as a heterogeneous crowd of samples from crack regiments.

<sup>70</sup> Asher, *Khartoum*, p.188, considers that the selection of the Camel Corps officers was detrimental to the rank and file, presumably through the former's alleged incompetence; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.60, implies that the selection of officers and troops from the 'smartest' regiments was an error; Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, 3, p.321.

<sup>71</sup> Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, 3, *ibid*.

<sup>72</sup> I.B.M. Hamilton, *The Happy Warrior: A Life of General Sir Ian Hamilton* (London: Cassell, 1966), p.61.

<sup>73</sup> John Lee, *A Soldier's Life: General Sir Ian Hamilton 1853 – 1947* (London: Pan, 2001), pp. 26-27.

anti-professional spirit'.<sup>74</sup> Michael Asher lists six hereditary peers, four sons of peers and one count among the Camel Corps officers<sup>75</sup> whilst Snook reflects the 'unusually high preponderance' of aristocratic officers participating in some of the Camel regiments as well as an excessive number of senior officers in the Guards Camel Regiment.<sup>76</sup> Was this coincidence or by design? Reviewing Wolseley's preferred officer selections, cross-referenced with the *Army Lists* of 1885, far from preferentially selecting officers with aristocratic connections, only 17 per cent of Wolseley's recommendations were for titled officers.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, can the observation of a predominance of aristocratic officers in the Camel Corps be explained in any other way? Further analysis implicates the regimental composition of the Camel Corps as the answer.<sup>78</sup> Analysis of the relevant *Army Lists* indicates that 35 per cent of officers in the cavalry detachments of the Heavy Camel Regiment were scions of aristocratic families and, although high, this percentage merely reflects the percentage of aristocrats serving in these

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<sup>74</sup> French, *Military Identities*, p.176.

<sup>75</sup> Asher, *Khartoum*, p.188.

<sup>76</sup> Appendix Four; Snook, *Into the Jaws of Death*, p.261-62, indicates that the Guards Camel Regiment boasted seven lieutenant colonels whilst all officers bar one in the Heavy Camel Regiment was a peer or son of a peer.

<sup>77</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6111 Organisation & equipment of the Camel Corps 1884.

<sup>78</sup> Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, pp.338-39, the critical division between the peerage and landed gentry was the possession of title, prestige and, in general, greater personal wealth; Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society*, pp.28-30 & p.50; this analysis uses a simplified methodology based on Spiers' work with the ranks of peerage and baronetcy as categorised by Harries-Jenkins with the following in descending order of status: Duke, Marquess, Earl, Viscount and Baron. Heirs apparent were included through their family's lesser title whilst younger sons of Duke or Marquess rank and Earl, Viscount and Baron were identified by the appellation of Lord or Honourable respectively. This analysis excludes knighted individuals who may have been honoured through military achievement rather than possession of a hereditary title.

regiments as a whole with, for example, the average percentage of aristocratic officers in the Household Cavalry being 22 to 36 per cent.<sup>79</sup> There were fewer but still numerous aristocrats in the Guards Camel Regiment<sup>80</sup> (23.5 per cent) and Light Camel Regiment<sup>81</sup> (9.5 per cent) respectively but again this reflects the prevalence of titled officers within their parent regiments. The prevalence in the Foot Guards ranged between 19 per cent and 26 per cent with a quarter of the officers in the Coldstream Guards being titled. For the hussar regiments, who were the sole contributors to the Light Camel Regiment, the average was 7.5 per cent. Conversely, a similar analysis of the officers commanding detachments in the Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment, itself numerically constituting 28 per cent of the Camel Corps but derived from line infantry regiments rather than 'smart' regiments, shows only two officers with aristocratic credentials.<sup>82</sup> Gwyn Harries-Jenkins confirms the significant number of aristocratic officers in the British Army, noting that of 316 landowning Victorian peers who died between 1897 and 1916, 44 per cent had served in the army, usually in 'exclusive' regiments<sup>83</sup> whilst Spiers concurs, with an estimate of 21 per cent of army officers from the aristocracy serving in the army in the 1830s.<sup>84</sup> Although line infantry

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<sup>79</sup> *Army List*, January 1885.

<sup>80</sup> Comprising detachments from the following regiments: 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Grenadier Guards, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Coldstream Guards, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Scots Guards, Royal Marine Light Infantry

<sup>81</sup> Comprising detachments from the following Hussar regiments: 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>.

<sup>82</sup> Appendix Two.

<sup>83</sup> Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society*, p.28.

<sup>84</sup> Spiers, *The Army and Society*, p.6.

regiments on the whole were not 'smart' and did not generally attract titled officers, a higher prevalence occurred, as expected, in the 'smart' rifle regiments of approximately 5 per cent.<sup>85</sup> Thus this analysis refutes the insinuation that the Camel Corps was preferentially populated by aristocratic officers inveigled into their posts on the basis of Wolseley's 'jobbery'. Instead, this analysis confirms the explanation that it was Wolseley's choice of regiments, plus his penchant for forming novel élite units out of existing regiments,<sup>86</sup> rather than his choice of individual officers, that resulted in this embarrassment of camel-borne aristocracy. Moreover, Wolseley defended his selection as a desire to use the comparatively over-established cavalry and Guards to ease the pressure of abstraction on the line infantry.<sup>87</sup>

Wolseley intended to be rather more partisan with his recommendations for awards following the end of the campaign, intending to preferentially reward the River and Desert columns rather than those fighting in the eastern Sudan,<sup>88</sup> a discrepancy in proportions of officers promoted or decorated that elicited adverse comment in the national Press<sup>89</sup> but not borne out by analysis of the metrics of promotions, mention in dispatches and award of

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<sup>85</sup> *Army List*, January 1885.

<sup>86</sup> Frederick Myatt, *The British Infantry 1660 – 1945* (Poole: Blandford Press, 1983), p.143, suggests this tendency represented Wolseley's lack of confidence in battalion commanders rather than a search for excellence.

<sup>87</sup> Preston, *In Relief of Gordon*, p.14; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.61, considers this erroneous as only 25 per cent of home-stationed cavalry regiments were fully established numerically.

<sup>88</sup> Arthur, *The Letters of Lord and Lady Wolseley*, p.219.

<sup>89</sup> *The Times*, 17 September 1885.

gallantry medals across the three forces.<sup>90</sup> Whilst the Desert Column constituted 16 per cent of all forces in Sudan, the percentages of officers of the Camel Corps promoted to Major or Lieutenant Colonel was 15 per cent and 14 per cent respectively. Ten per cent of senior officers of the Desert Column were nominated for the award of the Order of the Bath. Within the Camel Corps itself, the percentage of 'mention in dispatches' favoured the Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment with 32 per cent of recommendations for the Camel Corps whilst the Heavy Camel Regiment garnered the largest percentage of awards of the Distinguished Conduct Medal (46 per cent). There was no evidence of any predominance of titled officers receiving awards or promotion. However, as a concluding thought, the presence of aristocracy within a regiment<sup>91</sup> should not necessarily be seen negatively - even from the distance of our egalitarian age. Even in 1914, Francis Maitland considered the presence of well-connected officers in his hussar regiment conferred an intangible sense of being 'special by association' with a resulting beneficial impact on discipline and *esprit de corps*.<sup>92</sup>

However returning to the problem of the formal command structure of the Mounted Infantry as part of its organisational culture, if abstraction, despite

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<sup>90</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6136 Lord Wolseley's final report on conclusion of the expedition to the Soudan 1885; *The London Gazette*, 25 August 1885, General Lord Wolseley's Final Despatch; J.V. Webb, *The Abu Klea Medal Rolls* (London: private publishing, 1981), pp.1-150.

<sup>91</sup> *Army List*, August 1914, in performing a similar analysis from the *Army List* of 1914, similar patterns of aristocratic families in 'smart' regiments is present although numerically reduced. The prevalence of titled officers in 1914 in regiments that had contributed previously to the Heavy Camel Regiment in 1884 was now 15 per cent, the Guards 20 per cent, Hussar regiments 6 per cent and the line infantry 1.7 per cent.

<sup>92</sup> Maitland, *Hussar of the Line*, p.22.

its organisational and fiscal benefits, was potentially a negative influence through a removal from regimental structure, Hutton's optimistic mantra was that abstraction, ensuring representation of the parent battalions, maintained regimental *esprit de corps* at the detachment or company level and safeguarded both the honour of the Mounted Infantry and the parent infantry regiments.<sup>93</sup> Hutton's viewpoint suggests that he never seriously contemplated the Mounted Infantry developing a distinct and separate identity of its own beyond that of the sub-battalion level,<sup>94</sup> which, for the majority of the Mounted Infantry's existence, was the size of unit deployed in combat.<sup>95</sup> This indicates that the Mounted Infantry did not need to forge an organisational identity as it remained, and in Hutton's opinion, would always remain, an off-shoot of the regular infantry. Although in the case of the nascent camel regiments, Snook considers that a transfer of loyalty failed,<sup>96</sup> there is no evidence that Wolseley either actively promoted such transference nor expected a new identity for the Camel Corps regiments, preferring to keep them separate from each other whilst not disturbing regimental affiliations,<sup>97</sup> identities and *esprit de corps* of the abstracted

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<sup>93</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture One, 2 June 1886, pp.1-44, although Hutton was accused of tampering with the regimental system.

<sup>94</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Five, 5 June 1891, pp.1-30.

<sup>95</sup> TNA WO 27 / 503 Army Manoeuvres 1904; TNA WO 32 / 7089 Formation of Mounted Infantry Battalions on Mobilisation 1906.

<sup>96</sup> Snook, *Into the Jaws of Death*, p.264.

<sup>97</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6111 Organisation & equipment of the Camel Corps 1884.

detachments.<sup>98</sup> Clearly there was no cogent rationale for an inception of a novel and persisting identity for a temporary Camel Corps.

The problems arising from the Mounted Infantry's command structure were exacerbated in South Africa where individual companies from Mounted Infantry battalions were often dispersed geographically with, for example, the two companies of the Royal Irish Rifles Mounted Infantry, part of the 9<sup>th</sup> Mounted Infantry battalion, never serving under the battalion's commanding officer or with other constituent units of the 9<sup>th</sup> Mounted Infantry.<sup>99</sup> This occurrence was far from rare but the decentralised basis of the Mounted Infantry's command structure, at least at the sub-battalion level, inculcated resilience to any adverse impact of the army's tendency to disperse Mounted Infantry in small unit size. Thus the opportunity to develop an identity at even larger formation size failed during the Boer War despite external views to the contrary<sup>100</sup> as such formations were never more than theoretical as Mounted Infantry battalions were dispersed continually according to the perceived exigencies of the campaign.<sup>101</sup> Alderson complained that every general wished to split up the Mounted Infantry into small groups and in doing so 'they render their most powerful striking arm impotent'.<sup>102</sup> Ian Hamilton, the commander of the Mounted Infantry Division in 1900, bemoaned the lack of

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<sup>98</sup> Wilson, *From Korti to Khartum*, p.36; Marling, *Rifleman and Hussar*, p.138.

<sup>99</sup> Anon, *Seventeen Months' Trekking with the Royal Irish Rifles Mounted Infantry* (Hertford: Henderson & Spalding, 1909), p.44.

<sup>100</sup> General C.F v d. Goltz, 'Military Lessons of the South African War'. *National Review*, 42, 1902, pp. 371-94.

<sup>101</sup> TNA WO 105 / 29 Colonel Alderson's Mounted Infantry Brigade.

<sup>102</sup> BL, *Alderson Papers*, 50088, letter to Hutton, 1<sup>st</sup> June 1901.



opportunity to demonstrate the worth of larger formations of Mounted Infantry, a sentiment acknowledged by Roberts.<sup>103</sup> However, in defence of the frittering away of Mounted Infantry in company or battalion size, Roberts reflected that commanders in South Africa always clamoured for the inclusion of Mounted Infantry in their commands, emphasising the Mounted Infantry's perceived versatility of combining musketry with mobility.<sup>104</sup> Eventually the composition of mobile columns and brigades on active service during the insurgency phase of the Boer War included prototypical all-arms components of Mounted Infantry, cavalry, horse artillery and colonial Mounted Rifles. Although this arose initially from the need to enhance mobility in the presence of a numerically inadequate cavalry force that had become dependent on Mounted Infantry and colonial Mounted Rifles, this mixing of different troops became an accepted approach in South Africa with the Assistant Adjutant General asking in 1901 whether the Commander-in-Chief approved the composition of a Cavalry Brigade to include two companies of Mounted infantry, a machine-gun section and a battery of horse artillery.<sup>105</sup> Roberts encouraged this approach, particularly with reference to the inclusion of Mounted Infantry, although in contrast to his reputation of being antipathetic to cavalry, Roberts reflected that arming the

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<sup>103</sup>Elgin Commission, Cd.1791, II, submission by Ian Hamilton (Q.13845 , p.104); TNA WO 108 / 410 Home and Overseas Correspondence by Field Marshal Lord Roberts 5<sup>th</sup> September 1900 – 1<sup>st</sup> January 1901, letter to Lansdowne (Secretary of State for War), 29 April 1900; Elgin Commission, Cd 1791, II, submission by Roberts (Q.13282, p.68).

<sup>104</sup> TNA WO 108 / 409 Home and Overseas Correspondence by Field Marshal Lord Roberts 12<sup>th</sup> December 1899 – 4<sup>th</sup> June 1900, letter to Lansdowne, 15 April 1900.

<sup>105</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6260 Composition of a Brigade of Cavalry 1901.

cavalry with a rifle instead of its current carbine might render the requirement for Mounted Infantry less pressing.<sup>106</sup> Clearly, at the inception of such mixed mobile commands, their composition did not encourage the development of an over-arching identity for their Mounted Infantry with an attenuated command structure succinctly captured by Kipling's *MI*:

Our Sergeant-Major's a subaltern, our Captain's a Fusilier –

Our Adjutant's "late of Somebody's 'Orse", an' a Melbourne

auctioneer.<sup>107</sup>

Therefore the Mounted Infantry's command structure encouraged a Mounted Infantry-specific identity at the company and detachment level rather than at higher formations including as a branch of the army. Service in the Mounted Infantry was popular, securing the 'pick of the young infantry officers',<sup>108</sup> not only because of the opportunity for combat and the experience of independent company-sized command in wartime<sup>109</sup> but also because the Mounted Infantry was, for a period at least, a coveted service on trial, subject to much debate in military circles, and therefore attractive to junior infantry officers seeking advancement.<sup>110</sup> Similarly, the official view was that the

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<sup>106</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6260 Composition of a Brigade of Cavalry 1901, Roberts' response, 13 November 1901.

<sup>107</sup> Kipling, *The Complete Verse*, pp.370-72.

<sup>108</sup> Godley, *Life of an Irish Soldier*, p.103; Tylden, 'Mounted Infantry', pp. 176-79.

<sup>109</sup> Godley, *Life of an Irish Soldier*, p.32; Hallam Parr, *Recollections and Correspondence*, p.166; F.M. Crum, *Memoirs of a Rifleman Scout* (Stirling: A. Learmouth & Son, 1950), p.36; Maguire, 'The Mounted Infantry Controversy', pp.602- 5; 'Ikona', 'The Passing of the old MI', pp. 209-13.

<sup>110</sup> Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, 3, p.273.

'best' rank and file from line regiments could be found easily for Mounted Infantry work<sup>111</sup> which offered opportunities for training with horses that was potentially convertible to a marketable trade for employment outside the army.<sup>112</sup> Nonetheless, as exhaustion with the war in South Africa developed in the army during 1901,<sup>113</sup> despite earlier enthusiasm,<sup>114</sup> service in the Mounted Infantry became less welcome,<sup>115</sup> primarily due to a perception by soldiers of the Mounted Infantry being overworked.<sup>116</sup> This sense of imposition was exacerbated unfortunately by the apparent injustice of an unfavourable pay differential between Mounted Infantry and both its colonial Mounted Rifles counterparts and the volunteer Imperial Yeomanry who received five times the daily pay of the Mounted Infantry whilst undertaking similar mounted roles.<sup>117</sup> As indicated in the previous chapter, the issue of

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<sup>111</sup> Goodenough and Dalton, *The Army Book for the British Empire*, p.176.

<sup>112</sup> Goodenough, and Dalton, *The Army Book for the British Empire*, pp.175-76; David French, 'The Mechanization of the British Cavalry between the World Wars', *War in History*, 10(3), 2003, pp. 296-320, makes a similar point regarding marketable skills as a mechanic (rather than stable skills) to explain the popularity of mechanisation among cavalry rank and file in the inter-war years.

<sup>113</sup> TNA, *Kitchener Papers*, PRO 30 / 57 / 22, letter to St John Brodrick, Secretary of State for War, 8 November 1901, in which Kitchener admits to being disheartened; letter to Broderick, 16 November 1901, Kitchener accepts the possibility of physical [rather than psychological] exhaustion but the pressure of work required for mobile columns to cooperate in operations meant that resting of columns and their constituent units could not be guaranteed.

<sup>114</sup> Lieutenant G.E.S. Salt, *Letters and Diary of Lt. G.E.S. Salt during the War in South Africa 1899 – 1900* (London: John Murray, 1902) (printed for private circulation), letter 4 January 1900; NAM, *Verney Papers*, 8111-52, letter 5 October 1901; Cosby Jackson, *A Soldier's Diary*, p.13.

<sup>115</sup> Lachlan Gordon – Duff, *With the Gordon Highlanders to the Boer War and beyond 1880 - 1914* (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 2000), p.153.

<sup>116</sup> Lieutenant B. Moeller, *Two Years at the Front with the Mounted Infantry* (London: Grant Richards, 1903), p.99; TNA WO 108 / 409 Home and Overseas Correspondence by Field Marshal Lord Roberts 12<sup>th</sup> December 1899 – 4<sup>th</sup> June 1900, telegram 15 April 1900.

<sup>117</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Du Moulin, *Two Years on Trek being some account of the Royal Sussex Regiment in South Africa* (London: Murray & Co., 1907), p.267, complains that 'insult was added to

pay for the Mounted Infantry remained an interesting side issue throughout its existence linking mounted functionality with identity and *esprit de corps*. Leaving aside the wartime antagonism felt by the Mounted Infantry towards the Imperial Yeomanry and colonial Mounted Rifles,<sup>118</sup> the peacetime Mounted Infantry in training had received, for many years, cavalry rates of pay reflecting the temporary additional stable duties required.<sup>119</sup> Conversely, the lack of cavalry pay for Mounted Infantry officers, and consequential wrangling in War Office correspondence, remained a minor *cause célèbre* in the years after 1902.<sup>120</sup> Conversely, in a frankly bizarre example of logic, cavalry rates of pay were given to mobile infantry employed as military cyclists on the grounds that, rather than needing compensation for stable duties, cyclists would be employed alongside cavalry and that their role was likely to require them to spearhead any advance into enemy-held territory with the additional pay as compensation for this danger – an arrangement that unsurprisingly caused consternation with the Army Council's Finance member.<sup>121</sup> Illogically, differential pay rates both marked out the functionality of the Mounted Infantry as different from foot infantry in peace but also undermined any 'sameness' with other mounted troops in wartime.

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injury' when Imperial Yeomanry were attached to the Sussex Regiment's Mounted Infantry for instruction.

<sup>118</sup> Kipling, *The Complete Verse*, pp.370-71, 'When you want men to be Mausered at one and a penny as day; We are no five-bob colonials – we are the 'ome-made supply'.

<sup>119</sup> Hannay, 'Mounted Infantry', pp. 416-24; TNA WO 32 / 8763 Provision of horses for Mounted Infantry Officers 1904.

<sup>120</sup> TNA WO 32 / 8762 Provision of Chargers for Mounted Infantry Officers 1903; TNA WO 32 / 8764, Pay for Mounted Infantry Officers supplied with Government Horses 1904.

<sup>121</sup> TNA WO 32 / 4737 Provision of Cyclists for employment with the Cavalry Division 1913.

Returning to the model of organisational culture, functionality as a domain has been alluded to previously. For the Mounted Infantry, the basis of its functionality resided with its combined infantry skills and enhanced mobility although doctrinal arguments over role would influence the army and the understanding by general public of its identity.<sup>122</sup> Clear distinctions between Mounted Infantry and cavalry could be obscure to the uninitiated with one newspaper defining the functional abilities of the Mounted Infantryman as being drilled in fighting both dismounted and from the saddle, which as already discussed in the Introduction indicated a fundamental error of understanding<sup>123</sup> even after the Boer War where doctrinal boundaries had blurred in practice.<sup>124</sup> Even the name 'Mounted Infantry' was subject to debate in the wider military press with the problem being its connotation with the equine.<sup>125</sup> Alternative appellations ranging from 'ranger', 'scout' and even 'chasseur' were championed unsuccessfully in the Press.<sup>126</sup> As the Mounted Infantry was horsed, even though its cobs differed from the larger cavalry horses, the mere essence of being equine-mounted functioned as a marker for all that was at risk, at least in cavalry officers' opinions, in its military role, its horsed identity, existing way of life and, by extension, its

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<sup>122</sup> *Western Mail*, 9 February 1888, 'Mounted Infantry'; *The Times*, 5 September 1882.

<sup>123</sup> *The Graphic*, 5 August 1882.

<sup>124</sup> Battine, 'The Use of the Horse Soldier in the Twentieth Century', pp. 309-30; Anon, 'Mounted Rifles and Mounted Infantry', *Cavalry Journal*, 1, 1906, pp. 29-32, felt it was needed to list the differences between Mounted Infantry and Mounted Rifles.

<sup>125</sup> Macartney, 'Mounted Infantry', pp.8-13.

<sup>126</sup> MacAndrew, 'Mounted Infantry', pp. 416-31; Macartney, 'Mounted Infantry', pp. 8-13; Childers, *War and the Arme Blanche*, p.356, nihilistically proposed a return to the terms of only either cavalry or infantry.

social standing in the army and in wider society.<sup>127</sup> As a case in example, during the debate regarding the abolition of the cavalry's lance in 1903, the Adjutant General asked rhetorically how Lancer regiments, devoid of their lances, should be called, suggesting less than helpfully, 'hussars'.<sup>128</sup> Proof that the horse and its connotations was the problem<sup>129</sup> is the lack of antagonism shown towards the mobile infantryman in his reincarnation as military cyclist by cavalry officers<sup>130</sup> including those antipathetic to Mounted Infantry such as Haig.<sup>131</sup> Whilst Mounted Infantry enthusiasts, particularly Hutton, his protégé Alderson and Evelyn Wood, clearly articulated similar visions of what the Mounted Infantry should be,<sup>132</sup> others had failed to comprehend this, either through wilfulness or misunderstanding, with the propagation of friction between protagonists and detractors jeopardising the Mounted Infantry's functional identity.<sup>133</sup> Hutton had always emphasised that

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<sup>127</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6782 Debate regarding the abolition of the lance 1903.

<sup>128</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6782 *ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> Battine, 'The Use of the Horse Soldier in the Twentieth Century', pp. 309-30, suggested that it was merely the horse that divided infantry and cavalry in the post-war army.

<sup>130</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6570 Organisation of Cyclist Corps for the Territorial Army 5 September 1907, originally military cyclists were volunteers from the Territorial Force and clearly no competition for the cavalry in 'smartness' or standing within the army; TNA WO 32 / 4737 Provision of Cyclists for employment with the Cavalry Division 1913; Ray Westlake, *The British Army of August 1914: an Illustrated Directory* (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 2005), p.83, even 'smart' cavalry regiments such as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Life Guards eventually furnished a cyclist detachment in 1914.

<sup>131</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence submitted by Haig (Q.19468, p.411); TNA WO 32 / 6570 Organisation of Cyclist Corps for the Territorial Army 5 September 1907, Haig as Director of Military Training proposed that large bodies of cyclists could be employed with cavalry provided they had received proper training.

<sup>132</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture One, 2 June 1886, pp.1-44; Alderson, *With the Mounted Infantry and the Mashonaland Field Force 1896*, p.5; Wood, *Mounted Riflemen: Lecture at the RUSI on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1873*, pp.1-25.

<sup>133</sup> 'Lancer', 'The Question of Mounted Infantry: a reply to 'A Rifleman'', pp. 228-31; Major R.H. Carr-Ellison, 'Mounted Infantry', *United Services Magazine*, 22, 1900, pp. 165-68; TNA WO 33/ 37 Précis

it remained imperative that Mounted Infantry should preserve their identity as infantry.<sup>134</sup> Hutton's argument was that preservation of an identity as infantry ensured that the Mounted Infantry retained infantry skills in terms of tactics such as musketry and the ability to capture then retain territory in the face of enemy counter-attack.<sup>135</sup> Later a similar argument temporarily scotched the tentative proposal for both infantry and cavalry to supply military cyclists on grounds that the cavalry lacked appropriate infantry skills.<sup>136</sup>

If the functional identity of the Camel Corps is considered, Buller expressly enunciated its Mounted Infantry principles, refuting any notion of it being camel-borne cavalry<sup>137</sup> whilst Wolseley too disabused the cavalry detachments of the Camel Corps of any notion of retaining 'cavalry spirit'.<sup>138</sup> Wolseley was clear he wanted camel-mounted Mounted Infantry for his Desert Column,<sup>139</sup> raised, equipped, and fighting dismounted as Mounted

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on Mounted Infantry 1881, even Buller stated erroneously that Mounted Infantry and cavalry were equivalent.

<sup>134</sup> Hutton, 'The Military Question of Today', pp.748-58.

<sup>135</sup> Hutton, 'The Military Question of Today', *ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> TNA WO 32 / 4737 Provision of Cyclists for employment with the Cavalry Division 1913, although similar calls for cyclists to be provided solely from rifle regiments, an identical proposal to a previous but rejected model for horsed Mounted Infantry, was also rejected.

<sup>137</sup> TNA WO 147 / 42 Events in Egypt & Soudan 1884: Notes for the Use of the Camel Regiments; Colonel H.E. Colville, *Official History of the Sudan Campaign*, 1, (London: HMSO, 1889), p.240.

<sup>138</sup> *Cavalry Training 1907*, p.12, considered 'cavalry spirit' as reflecting a 'spirit of enterprise and dash, the sense of discipline and loyalty to both leaders and comrades'; G. Des Barrow, 'The Spirit of Cavalry', *Cavalry Journal*, 1, 1906, pp.12-23, warned, with hyperbole, that the removal of the spirit of cavalry made it useless to the army it was supposed to serve; Childers, *War and the Arme Blanche*, pp. xiv-xv, after 1902, Roberts would decry this 'spirit' which he considered synonymous with the cavalry's outmoded adherence to the principle of the *arme blanche*.

<sup>139</sup> Macdonald, *Too Late for Gordon*, p.60; Gleichen, *With the Camel Corps*, p.25.

Infantry, rather than a transposed cavalry.<sup>140</sup> This view of camel-warfare was not universal as camelry employed in India and littoral Sudan rode two men per camel facilitating the prospect of camel-backed combat distantly suggestive of cavalry-orientated warfare.<sup>141</sup> This suggested minimal cross-fertilisation in camel warfare expertise from India,<sup>142</sup> partly reflecting Wolseley's distrust of Indian troops, whom he considered unreliable against an Arab enemy on ethnic and for some, co-religious grounds,<sup>143</sup> and his own lack of service and command in India. However, despite pronouncements from Buller and Wolseley, most of the Camel Corps was not truly Mounted Infantry in functionality or identity.<sup>144</sup> Camel-borne troops could not match the horsed Mounted Infantry's mobility and manoeuvrability with slower and more hazardous mounting and dismounting and limited speed – a weakness undermining their utility recognised in Colonel Callwell's '*Small Wars*'.<sup>145</sup> Furthermore, the dismounted drill necessary of Mounted Infantry was allegedly anathema to the cavalry detachments,<sup>146</sup> while the Foot Guards had no recent precedent for providing a mounted role.

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<sup>140</sup> TNA WO 110 / 10 Despatch of the Troops to Upper Egypt & Soudan 1884; TNA WO 32 / 6111 Organisation & equipment of the Camel Corps 1884.

<sup>141</sup> General Sir G.W. Green, 'The Organisation and Employment of Camel Corps in warfare', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 29, 1885- 6, pp. 521-37.

<sup>142</sup> TNA WO 147 / 42 Events in Egypt & Soudan 1884.

<sup>143</sup> Colville, *Official History*, p. 27.

<sup>144</sup> *London Gazette*, 25 August 1885, Despatches from Lieutenant General Sir G Graham: horsed Mounted Infantry was also deployed successfully alongside the Suakin Camel Corps in littoral Sudan.

<sup>145</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, pp.425-27.

<sup>146</sup> Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, 3, p.327.



Therefore, if the functionality of the regular Mounted Infantry contributed to its identity, then as indicated previously, a blurring of functional distinction between all mounted troops occurred during the Boer War. Although largely unrecognised, if the cavalry and Mounted Infantry on active service were now largely indistinguishable from each other, this bilateral loss of prior identity was replaced through paradigm shift to a chimera of being a cross between Mounted Infantry and Mounted Rifles and that, for some commentators, this new breed of mounted soldier should be formalised and permanent within the army's organisation.<sup>147</sup> Of course there was precedent for the assimilation of specialist troops into permanent regiments such as light infantry companies at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>148</sup> Moreover, the Mounted Infantry, with its improved equestrianism, became the blueprint for the army on campaign in South Africa. With logistical<sup>149</sup> and manpower limitations and a pressing need for increased mobility, elements of the army deemed surplus to prevailing requirements had been reconfigured on the Mounted Infantry blueprint to form mobile units such as the Royal Artillery Mounted Rifles. Ian Hamilton wrote that:

‘We are going to have six companies of Royal Artillery Mounted Rifles up at Pretoria in a fortnight's time. I hear the Gunners like the idea immensely. They are working hard at drill and shooting and are

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<sup>147</sup> H.A. Gwynne, *The Army on Itself* (London: Frederick Warne & Co., 1904), p.191, concluded that permanency might only stretch as far as a permanent training cadre but that up to 1/8<sup>th</sup> of the army should be trained in this mounted functionality.

<sup>148</sup> Saul David, *All the King's Men* (London: Penguin Viking, 2012), p.368.

<sup>149</sup> Major R.C. Lewis, *On the Veldt: a plain narrative of service afield in South Africa* (Hobart, Tasmania: private publisher, 1902), p.29.

determined that the reputation of the Royal Regiment [of Artillery] shall not suffer at their hands'.<sup>150</sup>

For Kitchener and Roberts the Mounted Infantry model was now both ubiquitous across the veldt and functionally utilitarian – the 'ikona',<sup>151</sup> undertaking all military roles from scouting to convoy escort and participating in mobile columns' drives against the blockhouse lines. This Mounted Infantry ubiquity also matched a quasi-official recommendation that actually in future, all infantry should be trained as Mounted Infantry – clearly an unaffordable and unsustainable recommendation that was not implemented.<sup>152</sup> A similar state of blurred identity would affect the Mounted Infantry in the post-Boer War years when, in its role as non-cavalry divisional mounted troops, its identity as horsed infantry undertaking traditional cavalry functions overlapped with the reformed hybrid cavalry.<sup>153</sup> Thus, although the Mounted Infantry achieved some functional identity, this was never distinctive enough to confirm a homogenous organisational identity, for a tendency towards being a 'jack-of-all-trades' persisted – a doctrinal state resulting from the lack of a clear agreement as to the Mounted Infantry's role within the army. Despite Hutton's dire warnings,<sup>154</sup> the Mounted Infantry in 1901

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<sup>150</sup> LHCMA, *Hamilton Papers*, 2/3/7, letter to Roberts, 12 December 1901.

<sup>151</sup> Denman, 'The Future of Mounted Infantry', pp.382-91, published earlier in the war, proposed the Mounted Infantry as a *corps d'élite* but this was before the mobile infantryman became ubiquitous.

<sup>152</sup> TNA WO 108 / 184 Notes by Col. J.M Grierson RA on return from South Africa.

<sup>153</sup> Battine, 'The Use of the Horse Soldier in the Twentieth Century', pp. 309-30.

<sup>154</sup> Hutton, 'The Military Question of Today', pp.748-58.

and 1902 had indeed gone some way into being a form of cavalry irrespective of its infantry origins.

Returning to the social anthropological model of organisational culture, the fourth domain relates to loyalty, identity and *esprit de corps*. As indicated earlier in this chapter, there were polarised views on the likelihood of establishing *esprit de corps* in the Mounted Infantry. Maguire accused pre-war abstraction for failing to instil *esprit de corps*, although his opinion elicited an editorial disclaimer rejecting his viewpoint.<sup>155</sup> As already noted, loyalty and proud 'belonging' on behalf of officers and men, critical to *esprit de corps*, was highly valued by senior army commanders for its beneficial impact, inculcating pride in the regiment in morale, discipline and military efficiency.<sup>156</sup> For, as Wolseley remarked, 'If a regiment has *esprit de corps* strongly developed throughout its ranks, that regiment will be efficient'.<sup>157</sup> In South Africa, a modicum of ready-made *esprit de corps* was conferred on colonial Mounted Rifles by the appellation of eponymous titles.<sup>158</sup> An example of this was the colonial Mounted Rifles formed by Major Michael Rimington of the 6<sup>th</sup> Dragoons. Known as Rimington's Guides, they revelled in the informal name of 'Rimington's Tigers' on account of the leopard skin worn as puggarees around their slouch hats that underlined by their vaunted

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<sup>155</sup> Maguire, 'The Mounted Infantry Controversy', pp. 602-05.

<sup>156</sup> Kentish, *The Maxims of the late Field Marshal Viscount Wolseley*, p.31, 'make a man proud of himself and of his Corps and he can always be depended upon'.

<sup>157</sup> Kentish, *The Maxims of the late Field Marshal Viscount Wolseley*, p.30.

<sup>158</sup> Maude, *Cavalry*, p.268.

reputation as excellent horsemasters.<sup>159</sup> However, with Mounted Infantry battalions known generally by either their numerical allocation or occasionally in the case of companies, by referring to their parent regiment, the opportunity for inducing such identity and loyalty appear at first consideration to be limited. Nevertheless, the *esprit de corps* of Mounted Infantry battalions in South Africa, particularly the initial eight battalions and Hubert Gough's composite battalion, were considered excellent by contemporary sources. Here shared experience, developing loyalty within the formal and informal command structure, prior training and evolution of 'belonging' replaced tradition, spectacle and title to promote *esprit de corps*.<sup>160</sup> As the War progressed with further Mounted Infantry expansion, parent infantry regiment identity rarely influenced a developing loyalty. Only the 25<sup>th</sup> Mounted Infantry battalion was comprised solely from one infantry regiment, the KRRC<sup>161</sup>. In the pre-Boer War years, a proposed grouping of abstracted companies from similar geographical areas together was mistaken by the Press as a method for inculcating *esprit de corps*,<sup>162</sup> likened to territorial associations following the Cardwell-Childers reforms, but in fact, merely presaged post-Boer War proposals that were founded in administrative convenience at mobilisation.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, 4, pp.80-81.

<sup>160</sup> Cosby Jackson, *A Soldier's Diary*, p.204; Kipling, *The Complete Verse*, pp.370-72, 'I used to be in the Yorkshires once, Sussex, Lincolns and Rifles once but now I am MI!'

<sup>161</sup> Hare, *The Annals of the King's Royal Rifle Corps*, IV, p.331.

<sup>162</sup> *The Graphic*, 9 June 1894, 'Our Mounted Infantry Force'.

<sup>163</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7090 Mounted Infantry battalions, organisation 1906.

Previously, Wolseley denied a lack of *esprit de corps* in the Camel Corps as he predicted that the 1,100 men of the Camel Corps would be worth two of the best battalions of infantry of the line in terms of military effectiveness,<sup>164</sup> although his reckless prediction predated the use of line infantry for the Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment.<sup>165</sup> Conversely, the Duke of Cambridge, unhappy with Wolseley's suggested abstraction, proposed a conversion of a regiment of Hussars and a battalion of Rifles into the Camel Corps to benefit unit cohesion and *esprit de corps*,<sup>166</sup> thus mirroring some of the models previously considered in the inception of the Mounted Infantry movement. Wolseley maintained his decision in the face of opposition from the Duke of Cambridge and Queen Victoria<sup>167</sup> with the former raising concerns that army *esprit de corps* had already been threatened by the recent army reforms<sup>168</sup> and that Wolseley's unsound principle of élite selection would add further harm.<sup>169</sup> Wolseley's threat to convert a fifth of each regiment embarked into Mounted Infantry, necessitating a larger, more expensive force to be embarked, presaged Roberts' similar method of Mounted Infantry expansion

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<sup>164</sup> RA, *Cambridge Papers*, reel 46, letter 26 September 1884, from Wolseley; the construct of 'military effectiveness' will be considered in more detail in the following chapter.

<sup>165</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6111 Organisation & equipment of the Camel Corps 1884.

<sup>166</sup> Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, 3, p.321.

<sup>167</sup> RA, *Cambridge Papers*, reel 46, letter 26 September 1884, letter to Wolseley in which Cambridge was particularly incensed at the inclusion of the cavalry and Guards; Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, 3, p.322.

<sup>168</sup> TNA WO 33 / 35 Report of a Committee on the Formation of Territorial Regiments as proposed by Colonel Stanley's Committee, December 1880 & Memorandum (No. 5) on the working of the Double or Linked Battalion System: Memorandum by HRH Field-Marshal Commander-in-Chief.

<sup>169</sup> Preston, *In Relief of Gordon*, p.40; RA, *Cambridge Papers*, reel 46, letter 26 September 1884, letter to Wolseley.

in South Africa in 1900, and would have presumably resulted in a similar dire outcome.<sup>170</sup> Externally, Wolseley's confidence in his force's *esprit de corps* never wavered.<sup>171</sup> Similarly Lieutenant Colonel Reginald Talbot of the Household Cavalry denied any deficit in *esprit de corps* in the Heavy Camel Regiment as a cause for the breaking of the square at Abu Klea, claiming loyalty that 'the Camel Corps was the flower of the British Army'.<sup>172</sup> Talbot had additional reasons to promote the Heavy Camel Corps as an effective fighting force in an attempt to deflect the predicted criticism within military circles and in the general Press of his cavalry regiments for their apparent failure at Abu Klea.<sup>173</sup> In exculpating his command, Talbot dissembled, taking care in personal correspondence to warn against leaks to the Press,<sup>174</sup> claiming that the square wasn't actually broken in the Arab attack as the square had yet to be formed appropriately – an exculpation that will be investigated in a subsequent chapter.

Part of the 'loyalty / identity / *esprit de corps*' construct is the emotional concept of self-pride in 'being the best' founded in shared experiences binding the group internally.<sup>175</sup> Clearly, this may occur on a number of levels including drill, sporting success, social, formal and informal appearance,

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<sup>170</sup> Preston, *In Relief of Gordon*, p.41.

<sup>171</sup> *London Gazette*, 25 August 1885, despatches from General Lord Wolseley.

<sup>172</sup> Captain Willoughby Verner, *Sketches in the Soudan* (London: R.H. Porter, 1885), n.p.

<sup>173</sup> *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 1 March 1885; Lieutenant Colonel R. Talbot, 'The Battle of Abu Klea', *The Nineteenth Century*, 19, 1886, pp. 154-59.

<sup>174</sup> Household Cavalry Museum Archives, Windsor, UK, (hereafter HHC), *Talbot Papers*: letter from Lieutenant Colonel R.A. Talbot, 1<sup>st</sup> Life Guards, 28 January 1885.

<sup>175</sup> Kirke, *Red Coat, Green Machine*, p.97.

training, and success in operations, with the latter defined by numerous metrics. Colonel Henderson considered that, for the Mounted Infantry, merely by being selected by their commanding officers for training was enough for *esprit de corps* to develop.<sup>176</sup> In terms of 'being the best', Kipling's 'ikona' proudly claimed that despite its inauspicious origins, the experienced Mounted Infantry in South Africa couldn't be distinguished at "arf a mile from the crackest cavalry",<sup>177</sup> purposefully using a favourable comparison with 'smart' cavalry regiments, that was particularly adroit at a time when the cavalry versus Mounted Infantry debate was reaching its zenith. Memoirs of the Nile Expedition indicate a similar sense of pride within the Camel Corps, imbuing a sense of makeshift identity whether focussing on appearance or efficiency,<sup>178</sup> and the camel regiments promoted competition between themselves with McCalmont, as second-in-command of the Light Camel Regiment clearly not an impartial observer, recommending it as the smartest of the camel regiments.<sup>179</sup> The Press added to these competitive perceptions among the expeditionary force claiming that the dispatch of the Desert Column with its Camel Corps attracted more domestic public attention than the embarkation of the River Column,<sup>180</sup> predicting

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<sup>176</sup> Henderson, *The Science of War*, p.55.

<sup>177</sup> Kipling, *The Complete Verse*, pp.370-72.

<sup>178</sup> Gleichen, *With the Camel Corps*, p.61; Marling, *Rifleman and Hussar*, p.126 & p.138; *The Times*, 16 July 1885, recalled the adoption of a Corps flag and a Corps march of 'The Campbell's [replaced in this case by the 'Camels'] are Coming'.

<sup>179</sup> Callwell, *The Memoirs of Major General Sir Hugh McCalmont*, p.250, although in this context 'smartest', is meaning in appearance rather than social or military standing.

<sup>180</sup> *The Times*, 27 September 1884.

greater importance to its role in the outcome of the campaign,<sup>181</sup> only to withdraw its unequivocal support later in the campaign when it criticised the use of the Camel Corps as Mounted Infantry as a tactical error.<sup>182</sup> Identity and competitiveness co-existed within each camel regiment as well at the detachment level where individuality arising from parent regimental traditions was prized over the 'sameness' arising from membership of a particular camel regiment.<sup>183</sup>

But what of other factors contributing to *esprit de corps*, sense of 'belonging' and identity? For example, the value of uniform in forging identity in the Victorian era was well-recognised and moreover it encouraged recruitment<sup>184</sup> and, perhaps even attracted a better 'class' of recruit to the ranks.<sup>185</sup>

However there were no key uniform changes exclusive to the Mounted Infantry of a magnitude to influence the development of identity or loyalty as the Mounted Infantry tended to wear the uniform of its parent regiment in keeping with its improvised *ad hoc* origins. Again this underlines that the Mounted Infantry were expected to remain organisationally part of their parent regiment and therefore did not need to forge a separate identity through uniform, traditions and spectacle. However concessions to its functional role as horsed infantry meant minor adaptations particularly hard-

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<sup>181</sup> *The Times*, 30 September 1884.

<sup>182</sup> *The Times*, 16 January 1885.

<sup>183</sup> Gleichen, *With the Camel Corps*, pp.11-12.

<sup>184</sup> Hughes Myerly, 'The Eye must entrap the mind', pp.105-31.

<sup>185</sup> Hamilton, 'Mounted Marksmen and the Dismounted Service of Cavalry', pp. 261-87; French, *Military Identities*, p.98, describes the influence of military spectacle and regimental loyalty albeit in a later age.



wearing cord breeches becoming accepted issue plus the wearing of ammunition bandoliers first seen in the 1881 Transvaal and 1882 Egyptian campaigns.<sup>186</sup> Even Highland regiments' Mounted Infantry companies in South Africa in 1899 - 1902 relinquished kilts, arguably a Highland regiment's most distinctive identity, for cord breeches – an example of functional practicality overcoming tradition and previous identity.<sup>187</sup> The ammunition bandolier worn by the Mounted Infantry not only increased the amount of ammunition personally available when operating distantly from the ammunition train, particularly when rough terrain or long lines of communication encountered on colonial expedition strained logistics, while the closing flaps prevented inadvertent loss of cartridges when mounting and dismounting rapidly.<sup>188</sup> The combination of its infantry dress with minor adaptations for its enhanced functionality was not only a cost saving to the Treasury (rather than devising a novel uniform) but was particularly apt for a temporary and exclusively active service force needing to mobilise quickly in theatre and which did not require release of additional kit from depots around the country. Furthermore it compared favourably in terms of functionality with the cavalry's uniform of the 1870s and 1880s of tight tunic, riding breeches, exuberant headdress and spurs, none of which were conducive to rapid

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<sup>186</sup> Laband, *The Transvaal Rebellion*, p.74; Wright, *A Tidy Little War*, p.150.

<sup>187</sup> Lachlan Gordon – Duff, *With the Gordon Highlanders to the Boer War*, p.63.

<sup>188</sup> TNA WO 147 / 42 Events in Egypt & Soudan 1884; TNA WO 32 / 6129 Suakin Field Force: Camel Corps 1885; Gwynne, *The Army on Itself*, p.125.

dismounting or dismounted musketry.<sup>189</sup> In fact the issue of spurs was a minor *cause célèbre* with the Camel Corps with a contemporary witness recording that the Royal Marines' camel detachment serving in the Guards Camel Regiment sang:

When years ago I listed, lads, to serve our gracious Queen, the  
Sergeant made me understand I was a Royal Marine. He said  
sometimes they served in ships and sometimes served on shore. But  
never said I should wear spurs and be in the Camel Corps.<sup>190</sup>

Even the Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment exhibited pride in their spurs until Wolseley prohibited their wearing.<sup>191</sup> Symbolically cavalry-orientated, the use of spurs was prohibited by Hutton although that did not ensure their absence from Mounted Infantry units.<sup>192</sup> The rationale for their prohibition in horsed Mounted Infantry was sound enough in that despite being mounted, the level of equitation required of the Mounted Infantryman was merely to keep his seat when moving across terrain whilst spurs would be an encumbrance to agility when dismounted. Yet when in later years the Mounted Infantry required improved equitation skills for its expanded role including reconnaissance and scouting, a re-evaluation of this prohibition was necessary.

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<sup>189</sup> *The Times*, 16 October 1882, 'The Army and its Critics', described as the 'tyranny of fashion'; Hutton, 'Mounted Infantry', pp.695-738, decried the cavalry soldier's 'clanking' sword, 'jingling spurs', and that he was 'crowned with an impossible though showy headdress'.

<sup>190</sup> Macdonald, *Too Late for Gordon*, p.83.

<sup>191</sup> Marling, *Rifleman and Hussar*, p.126.

<sup>192</sup> Hutton, 'The Military Question of Today', pp. 748-58.

If the horsed Mounted Infantry did not demonstrate significant uniform adaptation for its role, the same cannot be said for the Camel Corps, most of whom<sup>193</sup> wore a novel uniform designed for protection in the desert. Snook considers that the wearing of this uniform, admittedly with its antecedents in the preceding Egyptian campaign,<sup>194</sup> marked the Camel Corps out as an élite.<sup>195</sup> Mirroring the Mounted Infantry's previous adaptations, breeches were of yellow ochre cord with knee-length blue putties; the foreign-service helmet stained with tea and topped off with blue-tinted goggles for protection against the glare of the desert sun. Nevertheless, despite the inclusive 'sameness' conferred by uniform, detachments maintained individuality using badges and numerals signifying regiments of origin<sup>196</sup> or regimental colours worn as puggarees wound around their helmets.<sup>197</sup> The sight of a soldier of the Heavy Camel Regiment prompted Wolseley to remark:

Fancy a Life Guardsman clothed like a scarecrow and with blue goggles on, mounted on a camel over which he has little control.

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<sup>193</sup> Royal Marine Light Infantry detachment, initially tasked as Wolseley's personal bodyguard then part of the Guards Camel Regiment, arrived late with eye-witnesses remarking on their pipe-clayed accoutrements and their commander's scarlet tunic.

<sup>194</sup> TNA WO 147 / 34 Report on the Mounted Infantry in Egypt 1882, the cord breeches were considered by senior officers as functional but 'slovenly'.

<sup>195</sup> Snook, *Into the Jaws of Death*, p.261, 'élite', in this context, relates to a chosen or selected group with specific, often advanced, training and skills; Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society*, p.49, defines 'military élite' differently - by rank, office or, more nebulously, on the grounds of membership of regiments believed to be at the centre of military life; Gleichen, *With the Camel Corps*, p.44.

<sup>196</sup> G. Tylden, 'The Camel Corps and the Nile Campaign of 1884-5', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 37, 1959, pp. 27-32.

<sup>197</sup> Gleichen, *With the Camel Corps*, pp.11-12.

What a picture!<sup>198</sup>

Furthermore, twenty-nine scarlet tunics were carried for use of the detachment tasked to approach Khartoum<sup>199</sup> as Wolseley attributed great importance to the effect of the red-coated soldier, irrespective of numerical inadequacy, to the morale of the besieged and the unnerving of the besiegers. Thus, from the perspective of uniform, if considered as a microcosm of the organisational culture of the Camel Corps, whilst a novel unifying identity was possible, detachments chose to retain the identity and their allegiance to their parent regiment. However, this was not how the *Times* saw it, prematurely prophesising a homogeneity whereby ‘the camelry is a new force within the British Army’,<sup>200</sup> which even then was not a view not universally shared by all of the army’s senior officers including those participating in the Desert Column.<sup>201</sup>

The Boer War encouraged uniform adaptations but not specifically for the Mounted Infantry. The widespread replacement of the infantry helmet with the soft slouch hat, which was less cumbersome, facilitated prone shooting (in a campaign where any exposure to facilitate shooting was likely to be fatal) and was considered, at least initially, to be more protective against the sun,<sup>202</sup> was not specific to Mounted Infantry. Its similarity to the Boers’

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<sup>198</sup> Arthur, *The Letters of Lord and Lady Wolseley*, p.125.

<sup>199</sup> Tylden, ‘The Camel Corps and the Nile Campaign of 1884-5’, pp. 27-32.

<sup>200</sup> *The Times*, 16 July 1885.

<sup>201</sup> Wilson, *From Korti to Khartoum*, p.11.

<sup>202</sup> Gwynne, *The Army on Itself*, p.125.

hats<sup>203</sup> caused confusion, both unintentionally<sup>204</sup> and intentionally, being used for deception by the Boers in conjunction with wearing other clothing,<sup>205</sup> resulting in a request for the replacement of slouch hats with helmets by the Imperial Yeomanry. This request foundered on Treasury parsimony as the Imperial Yeomanry was financed privately and was not the financial responsibility of Government.<sup>206</sup> The 25<sup>th</sup> Mounted Infantry did not favour the slouch hat, being unable to distinguish friend from foe,<sup>207</sup> a prediction that came to fruition when it was overrun by General Botha's Boers at Bakenlaagte, when hindered by poor visibility and inclement weather. As the war progressed, logistical starvation of Boer insurgents meant that the wearing of captured army clothing was now necessity rather than choice even though capture thus attired merited capital punishment.<sup>208</sup>

If uniform only contributed slightly in passing to the identity of the Mounted Infantry, what was the impact of armaments or other equipment? As *bona fide* infantry, the Mounted Infantry's main armament was the infantry rifle,

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<sup>203</sup> Nasson, *The War for South Africa*, p.85, describes the Boers' 'customary felt hat' as a sacrosanct item of clothing as distinctive for the wearer as the French army's *le pantaloon rouge*.

<sup>204</sup> Salt, *Letters and Diary* (printed for private circulation), diary entry, 11 January 1900.

<sup>205</sup> Anon, *Seventeen Months' Trekking with the Royal Irish Rifles Mounted Infantry*, p.63, described how a Mounted Infantry patrol was ambushed by Boers wearing British uniforms; LHCMA, *Hamilton Papers*, 2/3/3, telegram to Roberts, 27 November 1901, 'I have bullets put into them when I catch them in our kharki [*sic*] uniform. Only two days ago I had a man shot that we caught so dressed'.

<sup>206</sup> TNA WO 108 / 307 Proceedings of the Army Board 1899 – 1900.

<sup>207</sup> Crum, *Memoirs of a Rifleman Scout*, p.62.

<sup>208</sup> NAM, *Roberts Papers*, 7101-23-114-1, cipher 5120, 30 September 1900, 'all prisoners of war dressed in British uniforms ... are to be shot at once'; Du Moulin, *Two Years on Trek*, p.298; Cosby Jackson, *A Soldier's Diary*, p.76, however the problem was not solely that of the Boers as Mounted Infantry uniforms were reportedly repaired with prison clothing looted from Frankfort prison in the Orange Free State.

which during the Mounted Infantry's existence, after the retirement of the Martini-Henry, was the Lee-Metford rifle, introduced in 1888, and latterly, the Lee-Enfield.<sup>209</sup> The lack of experience with the Martini-Henry rifle in the cavalry detachments of the Camel Corps, accentuated by their lack of dismounted training, contributed to the criticism of Wolseley's selection of cavalry as Mounted Infantry by his Chief of Staff, Buller, and other officers.<sup>210</sup> This error will be discussed in more detail in a following chapter. Later, after the near-disaster of Abu Klea, Wolseley would rue privately his decision to use cavalry as Mounted Infantry and he deflected any culpability back to the cavalry on the grounds that picked men should have performed better.<sup>211</sup> In defence of Wolseley's requirement that the cavalry use infantry rifles, a more prosaic reason for arming the whole Camel Corps with the same weapon was to avoid logistical problems of transporting two different calibre of small arms' ammunition for rifle and carbine.<sup>212</sup> The debate about the arming of the Camel Corps presaged the debate decades later about the rearming of the cavalry with the infantry rifle during and after the Boer War where, despite staunch defence of the cavalry carbine from many quarters, the longer range and accuracy of the rifle was acknowledged.<sup>213</sup> As noted

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<sup>209</sup> Ford, 'Towards a Revolution in Firepower?' pp.273-99; Michael Baldwin and Keith Miller, *The Development of Soldiers' Weapons, 1816 – 1914*, The Victorian Soldier: Studies in the History of the British Army 1816 – 1914' (London: National Army Museum, 1993), Marion Harding (ed.), pp. 196-207.

<sup>210</sup> Powell, *Buller*, p.76; Marling, *Rifleman and Hussar*, p.132; *The Times*, 27 September 1884.

<sup>211</sup> Preston, *In Relief of Gordon*, p.121.

<sup>212</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6111 Organisation & equipment of the Camel Corps 1884.

<sup>213</sup> TNA WO 105 / 29 Arming of the Cavalry with a long rifle 1900; TNA WO 108 / 272 Extracts of Reports by Officers Commanding Units in South Africa 1899 -1901: rifles, carbines, small arms ammunition, sword bayonet.

previously, a side-debate regarding the issuing of a personal protection weapon to the Mounted Infantry occurred.<sup>214</sup> Hutton was concerned that small detachments of Mounted Infantry, separated from the main force due to its wide-ranging role, would be left defenceless if attacked whilst mounted if not armed with a personal weapon comparable to the cavalry's sabre. Despite his proposal for the issuing of revolvers, reflecting the side-arms available to the Mounted Infantry during the 1882 Egyptian campaign, Wolseley rejected the request.<sup>215</sup> A similar debate would re-surface in 1912, this time over the arming of the Yeomanry with a personal weapon with the sword-bayonet once again the suggested, if surprising, compromise bearing in mind the Yeomanry's historical attachment through its cavalry origins to the sabre that was implicitly and symbolically cavalry-orientated.<sup>216</sup> The Yeomanry's perceived lack of opportunity for sword skills' training prompted debate regarding other options including, most improbably, a 'stout cudgel', reminiscent of Brigadier General Brabazon's unusual submission to the Elgin Commission for the arming of the Imperial Yeomanry with a tomahawk.<sup>217</sup> As previously noted, the potential utilisation of machine guns had not been ignored yet their early mechanical unreliability and cumbersome weight had

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<sup>214</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture One, 2 June 1886, pp.1-44.

<sup>215</sup> Lumley, 'Mounted Riflemen', pp. 638-56, the use of a revolver whilst mounted was considered to be more of a hazard to rider and horse than to the enemy; Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture One, 2 June 1886, pp.1-44.

<sup>216</sup> Major H.G. Watkin, 'Why not a sword-bayonet for the Yeomanry', *Cavalry Journal*, 7, 1912, pp.107-09.

<sup>217</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.168.

resulted in some ambivalence among regimental officers.<sup>218</sup> Thus the machine gun was not an invention that was identified with the Mounted Infantry paradigm, although close cooperation between Mounted Infantry and machine guns, particularly in flank attacks whereby the increased firepower would be beneficial, became part of rudimentary doctrine in *Combined Training 1902*.<sup>219</sup> With regards to any other equipment specially for the Mounted Infantry as a marker of its identity, Hutton designed a Mounted Infantry saddle to aid weight reduction needed for the Mounted Infantry's smaller cobs,<sup>220</sup> whilst on the Nile, the Camel Corps debated two patterns of wooden saddles<sup>221</sup> with neither saddle able to compensate for the camels' failing nutritional status that eventually affected the Corps' mobility through excessive camel losses.<sup>222</sup> Thus neither armaments nor equipment were major contributors to Mounted infantry identity.

Of course, *esprit de corps* and loyalty as determinants of identity have an important human component. As Alan Ramsey Skelley noted, *esprit de corps*

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<sup>218</sup> Evans, 'The British Army and Technology before 1914', pp.113-22; Dundonald, *My Army Life*, p.84, describes his advocacy for machine guns as a regimental cavalry commander and his invention of a light gun carriage to improve the tactical utilisation of the regiment's Maxim.

<sup>219</sup> *Combined Training 1902*, p.31.

<sup>220</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers*, XXXIV Add., 50111, 21 January 1888, based upon the US Cavalry's saddle, Hutton's model was 1 ½ stones (9.5 Kg) lighter than the standard cavalry issue.

<sup>221</sup> Gleichen, *With the Camel Corps*, p.22, the more robust 'Mounted Infantry' pattern was reserved for the use of the officers whilst the 'knifeboard' pattern was used by the other ranks; Asher, *Khartoum*, p.189, camels refused to tolerate the addition of stirrups that consequently were abandoned.

<sup>222</sup> Gleichen, *With the Camel Corps*, p.67 & p.118; TNA 33 / 209 Committee on Weight on the Horse in Mounted Branches 1901, an arcane debate over saddlery was mirrored by discussions around bridle bits in the horsed Mounted Infantry as the softer bridles used by the Mounted Infantry were deemed unacceptable by the cavalry whose preferred 'harder' horse furniture was predicated on needing greater stability in the saddle during *arme blanche* action, an opportunity virtually never realised during the Boer War.



played an important role in fostering discipline in the Victorian army and *vice versa*.<sup>223</sup> He concluded that good *esprit de corps*, sound training and discipline contributed to good morale. But there are practical difficulties in utilising disciplinary records as a marker of *esprit de corps* in the Mounted Infantry for a number of reasons. Clearly, as a force configured for colonial active service, the opportunities for misbehaviour on active service were less than during routine garrison duties. Using desertion rates as an example, such indiscipline in the Nile Campaign was impractical and potentially suicidal with death from dehydration or following capture as likely outcomes.<sup>224</sup> Only five desertions from the Heavy and Guards Camel Regiments were recorded and none from the Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment in 1884-85.<sup>225</sup> In matters as mundane but important as water discipline, the experienced soldiers of the Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment were considered by Colonel Charles Wilson to have excelled, reflecting their discipline and, arguably, their wisdom attained from longer overseas service in comparison to the regiments embarked from home.<sup>226</sup> Furthermore, the men abstracted for Mounted Infantry duty were often the best within their parent infantry battalion and perhaps would be expected to demonstrate the

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<sup>223</sup> Alan Ramsay Skelley, *The Victorian Army at Home* (Montreal: McGill –Queens University Press, 1977), p.136.

<sup>224</sup> Egyptian sub-editor, 'Among the missing of the Heavy Camel Corps', *Cavalry Journal*, 9, 1914, pp. 286-87, recounted the grisly deaths of two soldiers accidentally separated from the Desert Column in 1885 as told to officers by local tribesmen in 1898.

<sup>225</sup> Webb, *The Abu Klea Medal Rolls*, pp.1-150.

<sup>226</sup> Wilson, *From Korti to Khartum*, p.9.

best disciplinary records.<sup>227</sup> As a practical issue, disciplinary misdemeanours were recorded generally against the parent regiment rather than specifically ascribed to the Mounted Infantry except where the Mounted Infantry was configured semi-permanently as in Egypt after 1885. Analysis of the pay lists of 'A' Company Mounted Infantry stationed in Egypt between 1886 and 1888 revealed only two convictions, specifically drunkenness, both in the detachment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion Royal Irish Regiment,<sup>228</sup> despite the nefarious temptations of Cairo, with no offences committed by soldiers from the other Mounted Infantry detachments from the Royal Fusiliers, Rifle Brigade, Yorkshire, Cheshire, and Welsh Regiments.<sup>229</sup> However, this is not to say that those in the Mounted Infantry were perfectly behaved or refrained from pugilistic defence of the honour of their parent regiments, underlining that loyalty to and identity with the parent battalion remained powerful even during Mounted Infantry training.<sup>230</sup> There is however anecdotal evidence that discipline within the Mounted Infantry was threatened during the retreat back across the Bayuda Desert in 1885. Although neither mentioned in

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<sup>227</sup> Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons reports, Army Returns 1884, indicated negligible disciplinary offences in infantry and cavalry in Egypt and Sudan. Even in India the rate of offence was substantially lower (less than 1 per cent average per battalion) in comparison to those stationed at domestic depots (average 9 per cent when three cavalry regiments are sampled and approximately 4 per cent when four infantry battalions are sampled). This might be accounted for in part by the younger age of new recruits and shorter time in service in those in the home (depot) battalions; TNA WO 32 / 6111 Organisation & equipment of the Camel Corps 1884, sought only men of 'good character'.

<sup>228</sup> TNA WO 33 / 41 Confidential Reports on the Egyptian Command 1883, this battalion was already known to senior officers as a 'rough and ready corps'.

<sup>229</sup> TNA WO 16 / 2493 Pay Lists 'A' Company Mounted Infantry October 1886 to March 1888.

<sup>230</sup> *The Times*, 4 January 1912, 'Serious Military Riot at Longmoor', contrary to the alarmist news reporting, the disturbance owed more to football rivalry between Scottish and Yorkshire infantry battalions than representing a breakdown of military order.

official dispatches nor in Evelyn Wood's memoirs<sup>231</sup> and therefore requiring caution regarding its veracity, Colonel De Sales La Terrière, then a junior officer in the Light Camel Regiment, recounted how the rearguard at Gakdul Wells refused to march due to exhaustion and lack of camel transport until threatened by Wood with public exposure and consequent regimental disgrace.<sup>232</sup> The identity of the unit remains obscure but triangulation with the details of the Desert Column's rearguard, circumstantially implicates two possible infantry detachments including one from the Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment.<sup>233</sup>

Therefore, what can be concluded about the *esprit de corps* of the Mounted Infantry? Surprisingly, in view of the many reasons why abstraction and the mixing of unfamiliar detachments of troops together into a temporary organisation configured only for active service should have lacked cohesion, there is evidence of *esprit de corps* being present but, as with the notion of identity itself, this appears to have functioned at a level more basic than the Mounted Infantry movement as a whole thus contributing to morale, efficiency, loyalty to colleagues and professional pride at a company level.<sup>234</sup> Even after the demise of the Mounted Infantry, its *esprit de corps* was kept

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<sup>231</sup> Field Marshal Sir Evelyn Wood, *From Midshipman to Field Marshal* (London: Methuen & Co., 1906), p.177, in fact complimented the Mounted Infantry for its discipline in rearguard.

<sup>232</sup> Colonel B. De Sales La Terrière, *Days That Are Gone* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1924), p.210.

<sup>233</sup> Marling, *Rifleman and Hussar*, p.148; TNA WO 147 / 41 Diary of the Nile Expedition 1884-85, indicated that the last of the rearguard to arrive back at Korti were detachments of the 19<sup>th</sup> Hussars, Royal Irish Regiment and Royal West Kent (part of the Mounted Infantry Camel regiment) although which detachment was involved in the alleged near-mutiny remains conjecture.

<sup>234</sup> Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army*, p.108.

kindled by the annual Mounted Infantry Dinner. Despite its popularity with some senior officers such as Hamilton, Hutton and Alderson,<sup>235</sup> not every senior officer approved of the Dinner, most vehement being Buller who considered it anathema on the grounds of trying to confer distinctiveness to a skill to which every infantry officer should aspire.<sup>236</sup> Buller, whilst not completely antipathetic to the Mounted Infantry *per se*, had always regarded the role of Mounted Infantry to be a requisite of a well-trained infantryman with merely the added rudiments of riding rather than warranting consideration as a separate military arm.<sup>237</sup>

Although a social anthropological model has been applied to the Mounted Infantry's organisational culture throughout this chapter, it is acknowledged that other models describing military culture and identity exist. In *Military Identities*, French suggests alternative approaches including the sociological requisites for survival of an organisation, namely: ability to propagate the group; ability to absorb and train new members; maintain order; motivate members whilst demonstrating the benefits of the organisational culture to the wider organisation and, finally, successful adaptation to external changes.<sup>238</sup> If these factors are applied to the Mounted Infantry, many of these requisites are indeed fulfilled. Propagation, absorption and training of newly selected recruits were satisfied by abstraction and peacetime training

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<sup>235</sup> LHCMA, *Hamilton Papers*, 14/5/1, letter from Maurice Tomlin, 12 February 1913.

<sup>236</sup> LHCMA, *Godley Papers*, letter from Buller, 23 April 1905, calling the notion of a celebratory dinner as 'losing step in an evil direction'.

<sup>237</sup> TNA WO 33 / 37 Précis on Mounted Infantry 1881.

<sup>238</sup> French, *Military Identities*, p.334.

in the Mounted Infantry schools and, after 1902, in peacetime simulation during manoeuvres. Despite the uncertainty over doctrine and debate over organisation, the Mounted Infantry remained sustainable and its deployment included in *Field Service Regulations* until immediately prior to the First World War when the Mounted Infantry Schools were closed thus preventing training of any further cadres.<sup>239</sup> The benefits of the Mounted Infantry to the wider army, at least during the war in South Africa, were evident as shown by the conversion of units into Mounted Infantry and Mounted Rifles.<sup>240</sup> As will be explored in a later chapter, it is arguable but not self-evident that benefits from the Mounted Infantry to the wider army waned as the focus of strategic military planning re-focussed towards a future European battlefield. The final factor of 'adaptability' was the potential weakness threatening the Mounted Infantry's survival. Frequently the emergence of the 'hybrid' cavalryman in comparison to the seeming lack of adaptation of the Mounted Infantry has been considered the precipitant for the Mounted Infantry's demise.<sup>241</sup> However this view is only tenable if the Mounted Infantry is seen as a formalised homogenous arm with its own identity, rather than as a functionality of mobile infantry with an identity indistinguishable from parent infantry battalions. The functional adaptation of mobile (rather than 'mounted' with its equine connotations) infantry into the military cyclist and, later on,

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<sup>239</sup> *Field Service Manual: Mounted Infantry Battalion (Expeditionary Force)* (London: HMSO, 1913).

<sup>240</sup> Firepower, MD 371: Boer War: wastage of personnel; correspondence between Kitchener and the Adjutant General relating to the conversion of Royal Artillery batteries to Mounted Rifles, letter from Kitchener, (20/Arty/2847), 30 January 1902; NAM, *Roberts Papers*, 7101-23-33, letter from Kitchener, 27 December 1901.

<sup>241</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.218.

mechanised infantry, is supportive of the survival of the Mounted Infantry concept.

Badsey proposes that for infantry regiments there was both an institutional and a social stake in promoting their Mounted Infantry detachments around the time of formalisation of Mounted Infantry training.<sup>242</sup> True, there were potential tactical benefits accruable if the battalion was posted overseas and had a company already trained in mounted duties yet this hypothesis becomes less tenable as peacetime abstraction removed officers and men, often reportedly the more ambitious junior officers and accomplished non-commissioned officers and men in the battalion, for several months' training whilst the home stationed battalion was also depleted by sending drafts overseas to its sister battalion. Thus, whilst these pressures could be rationalised if the Mounted Infantry was to be in support of its own infantry battalion or even its own brigade, the prospect of losing these men for configuration as Mounted Infantry at mobilisation when they would be attached as fire support to the cavalry brigades or, latterly, as non-cavalry divisional mounted troops protecting a division that might not include its own parent battalion, pallid the enthusiasm of infantry lieutenant colonels for releasing men for Mounted Infantry training.<sup>243</sup> Therefore it is difficult to identify what institutional or social preferment could be gained by the parent

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<sup>242</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p. 67; Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Major General Knox (Q.17576, p.319), noted that the usual objection to abstraction shown by Infantry battalion commanders evaporated during the Boer War when they were 'only too glad to mount their whole regiment' indicating the benefits of being mounted out on the veldt.

<sup>243</sup> *The Times*, 16 February 1912; TNA WO 163 / 13 Minutes of the Proceedings of the Army Council, précis 378, 1908.

battalions other than the reflection of any plaudits earned by its Mounted Infantry on active service, as predicted previously by Hutton.<sup>244</sup>

In re-evaluating the principal research question defined at the beginning of the chapter, any prospect for the Mounted Infantry of a separate identity as a new branch of the army was inauspicious to say the least. Abstraction, decentralised command structure, wrangling over doctrinal role and, until after the Boer War, reconfiguration only for active service, mitigated against a new identity predicated on the emergence of tradition and spectacle. However, an identity of sorts emerged from the Mounted Infantry's functionality. Nevertheless, a more traditional identity built on organisational allegiance also remained, tied to the parent regiment as exemplified by the adorning of the Guards Mounted Infantry slouch hats in 1902 with the ribbon of the Brigade of Guards.<sup>245</sup> During the Boer War, the sharing of military experiences created, albeit temporarily, an identity focussed on the Mounted Infantry 'ikona' for the duration of hostilities. Although after 1888 the Mounted Infantry Schools' training cadres provided some semblance of permanency, their limited scope of drill and basic equitation plus the short duration of the courses could not be expected to deliver an organisational culture with an overarching identity. Later in 1902, mirroring an initial grouping of companies in either geographical or infantry type arrangements,<sup>246</sup> the proposed grouping of Mounted Infantry from similar regiments to form battalions with

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<sup>244</sup> Hutton, 'Mounted Infantry', pp.695-738

<sup>245</sup> NAM, *Roberts Papers*, 7101-23-181, 27 November 1901

<sup>246</sup> Godley, 'The Development of Mounted Infantry training at home', pp. 52-55.

named identities such as the Fusilier Mounted Infantry (previously 20<sup>th</sup> Mounted Infantry) or the Rifle Brigade Mounted Infantry (previously 13<sup>th</sup> Mounted Infantry) was more about organisational simplification rather than fostering of identity and *esprit de corps*.<sup>247</sup> Counterfactually, the establishment of a permanent Mounted Infantry regiment as occasionally proposed,<sup>248</sup> even if it avoided degradation of its infantry skill, may have produced an identity on a more predictable pattern although on a scale limited by its permanency as discussed in a previous chapter. Nonetheless, it may be contended that an organisational culture did develop in keeping with Kirke's model. A formal command structure meant that, until the exigencies of the Boer War, Mounted Infantry command at the detachment and company level rested on infantry officers trained as Mounted Infantry and who were familiar to their men from the outset – even before selection for Mounted Infantry training. Functional roles meant the development of official regulations and drill manuals<sup>249</sup> as well as a plethora of unofficial texts distilling practical experiences for their readers,<sup>250</sup> all contributing to a functional identity. Despite a number of minor uniform and equipment

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<sup>247</sup> NAM, *Verney Papers*, letter 5 October 1901.

<sup>248</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers*, XXXIV, Add. 50111, 'The Proposed Mounted Infantry Regiment, 2 September 1887.

<sup>249</sup> *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1884; Regulations and Field Service Manual for Mounted Infantry 1889; Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1897; Mounted Infantry Training 1906; Mounted Infantry Training 1909; New Training Regulations: Mounted Rifles*, *Army Review*, II, 1912, pp. 380-84.

<sup>250</sup> Captain F. Johnson, *Instructions for Mounted Infantry* (Cape Town: J.C. Juta & Co., 1895); Warre Cornish, *Letters and Sketches – Appendix II: the training and equipment of Cavalry and Mounted Infantry*; Frankland, 'Mounted Infantry Maxims', pp. 155-70; Captain C.H. Anderson-Pelham, *Questions and Answers for Cavalry, Imperial Yeomanry and Mounted Infantry*, third edition (Aldershot: Gale and Polden, 1905); Captain B.L. Anley, *Practical Hints for Mounted Infantrymen* (Aldershot: Gale and Polden, 1902), are just a number of examples of this genre of military writing.



adaptations to facilitate the Mounted Infantry's military role, none were sufficiently specific to the Mounted Infantry and did not contribute to the forging of a branch-wide identity. Therefore, in answering the principal research question, the Mounted Infantry's organisational impermanence did impair the evolution of an identifiable military identity but only at the level of a formalised homogenous institution and yet, because of maintained identity and loyalty at the more basic structural level, there appears to have been no failure of *esprit de corps*<sup>251</sup> and thus no proposed adverse effect on the Mounted Infantry's institutional survival. Furthermore, an understanding of both the level at which loyalty, identity and *esprit de corps* existed, with its clear link to parent regiment affiliation, exonerates the Mounted Infantry officers from the insinuations of sabotaging the Mounted Infantry's existence and survival by their ongoing allegiance to their pre-existing regimental family. It is fundamentally incorrect to seek evidence of a homogenous Mounted Infantry organisational culture and identity on traditional lines. For reasons explored previously, the Mounted Infantry was not conceived as, or indeed organised as, a separate branch of the army but a functional structure of trained infantrymen with enhanced mobility. Naturally, confusion occurred as the spectrum of roles ascribed to the Mounted Infantry continued to expand, which, in part, fuelled institutional hostility from the cavalry. With this understanding, it is clear that there was no need to develop an identity beyond the detachment, company, or less frequently, battalion level as a higher identity remained with the infantry arm and the regimental system.

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<sup>251</sup> Cosby Jackson, *A Soldier's Diary*, p.204.

Thus, in this context, loyalty to the regimental system did not equate to disloyalty to the Mounted Infantry concept.

If the Mounted Infantry's organisational culture, and by extension its identity, was dependent on several factors, particularly its functional role, then the transformation of the Mounted Infantry from *ad hoc* improvised infantry force with brevity of training to a formal organisation predicated on prescribed training requirements mirrored the increasingly complex role expected of the Mounted Infantry and the confusion and misunderstanding that surrounded it. Pre-1880, the only requirements for extemporised Mounted Infantry was the ability to retain their seats when mounted and riding across rough terrain,<sup>252</sup> a training considered by senior officers to be amenable to improvisation on the march.<sup>253</sup> As throughout the Mounted Infantry's existence the premise of having already attained full competence in infantry tactics and musketry was a pre-requisite for abstraction, Mounted Infantry training was not primarily concerned with improving marksmanship, which was recognised as an army-wide issue,<sup>254</sup> nor in tactics but two-fold, that of improving equitation, when experience with horses was decreasing among army recruits,<sup>255</sup> and the

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<sup>252</sup> Lieutenant Colonel C. à Court Repington, *Vestigia* (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1919), p.81, recalled the experiential method of learning to ride in the Burma Mounted Infantry.

<sup>253</sup> TNA WO 33 / 37 Précis on Mounted Infantry 1881, evidence from Lieutenant-Colonel Carrington although Majors Russell and Barrow and Colonel Bray all rejected this viewpoint claiming that 4 – 6 weeks of training was necessary pre-combat duties.

<sup>254</sup> TNA WO 33 / 37 Committee on Musketry Instruction in the Army 1881.

<sup>255</sup> Major General M.F. Rimington, *Our Cavalry*, (London: Macmillan & Co., 1912), p.18, estimated that, at the time of writing in 1912, only about 15 per cent of recruits to cavalry regiments had previous experience with horses and therefore a lower percentage of those in the Mounted Infantry might be expected; Denman, 'The Future of Mounted Infantry', pp. 382-91, makes an earlier but similar point as Rimington; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.232, makes a link

broader aspects of Mounted Infantry work alongside other military elements. Nevertheless, the Mounted Infantry was affected by developments in musketry and infantry tactics particularly 'fire and movement', using cover, reliance on personal initiative<sup>256</sup> and individual shooting rather than volley-firing.<sup>257</sup> This is considered in more detail in a later chapter. Therefore, at least initially, the emphasis was placed on attaining a basic competence in riding and horse care although the other main thrust of training, in keeping with the army at the time, was still the inculcation of drill. Eventually Mounted Infantry training would encompass more than equitation and would include battalion-sized training and tactical exercises.<sup>258</sup> Drill manuals and regulations were published as early as 1884. In the end there would be a plethora of texts for Mounted Infantry, Mounted Rifles, Imperial Yeomanry and colonial units, each drawing similar conclusions around drill but none advocating precise doctrine.<sup>259</sup> The possession of separate drill from those of foot infantry and cavalry was both important in practice and contributed to a Mounted Infantry identity although as previously discussed, this was far from being an organisational identity. Unfortunately such drill had a negative side with, as previously noted, cavalry officers of the Camel Corps disdaining

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with the 11 per cent decrease in the horse population in the Edwardian years resulting from increasing mechanisation and industrialisation.

<sup>256</sup> Du Moulin, *Two Years on Trek*, p.48.

<sup>257</sup> Stephen M. Miller, *Lord Methuen and the British Army* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), p.57.

<sup>258</sup> *Mounted Infantry Training 1906*, p.3.

<sup>259</sup> New Training Regulations: Mounted Rifles', *Army Review*, II (II), 1912, pp. 380 -84.

participation in Mounted Infantry drill<sup>260</sup> until replaced by the improvised camel drill, devised by the Corps' commander, Herbert Stewart. The new camel drill was practical but contributed nothing to identity or shared 'belonging' throughout the Camel Corps<sup>261</sup> and equally failed to address deficiencies in dismounted infantry drill and tactics. As Wolseley's express approach was to drill the Corps exactly as if it was Mounted Infantry,<sup>262</sup> the abdication of imposing a modified Mounted Infantry drill represents both a failure of the Camel Corps as a competent 'fit for purpose' force and a failure of command. Indeed, the Camel Corps was poorly served in terms of training with little experience in camel riding or camel husbandry.<sup>263</sup> For the Heavy Camel Regiment in particular, there was inadequate training and time available to become *de facto* Mounted Infantry<sup>264</sup> with the unfamiliarity of Martini-Henry rifle and bayonet magnified by the inadequacy of only 60 practice rounds per cavalryman during the cavalry's outward journey.<sup>265</sup> The value of prior training over extemporisation was sacrificed for the concepts of 'éliteness', 'smartness' and military reputation. Similarly this lesson of 1881

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<sup>260</sup> Dundonald, *My Army Life*, p.28; Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, 3, p.327; Gleichen, *With the Camel Corps*, p.26 & p.192.

<sup>261</sup> Macdonald, *Too Late for Gordon*, p.61, Macdonald, a journalist embedded with the Light Camel Regiment, reflected the problems of camel drill particularly in the light of different numbers and breeds available as well as their temperamental reluctance to respond identically; Colville, *Official History*, p.102.

<sup>262</sup> RA, *Cambridge Papers*, reel 46, letter from Wolseley, 27 October 1884.

<sup>263</sup> Marling, *Rifleman and Hussar*, p.125.

<sup>264</sup> Dundonald, *My Army Life*, p.24.

<sup>265</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6111 Organisation & equipment of the Camel Corps 1884, instruction from Wolseley, 20 September 1884; Tylden, 'The Camel Corps and the Nile Campaign of 1884-5', pp. 27-32; Gleichen, *With the Camel Corps*, p.12; Roberts, 'The Army – as it was and as it is', pp. 1 – 26.

and 1885 was not heeded by Roberts during his precipitate expansion of the Mounted Infantry in January 1900<sup>266</sup> with dire consequences for the Mounted Infantry's competency in horsemastership and contributing to exorbitant equine losses, a deficiency that only improved slowly.<sup>267</sup> Indeed, John Vaughan, a post-War Commandant of the Cavalry School, estimated that Mounted Infantry should receive two months' training prior to active service<sup>268</sup> rather than, as before in South Africa, only three days.<sup>269</sup> Although the emerging exigencies of the campaign's need for mobility perhaps mitigated Roberts' decision, the evident result conclusively disproved the effectiveness of *ad hoc* improvisation once and for all. Nonetheless, the Mounted Infantry demonstrated a capacity for successful adaptation that arguably paved the way for the rest of the army in South Africa. It transformed itself in terms of equestrian skills and tactics, despite a forced reliance on experiential training and insufficient equipment,<sup>270</sup> successfully matching its tactics to the changing nature of warfare in South Africa from conventional conflict to insurgency. Rather than fighting pitched battles, the Mounted Infantry, although far from unique in this process among the British Army, developed tactics for approaching potentially hostile farms and kopjes.

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<sup>266</sup> NAM, *Roberts Papers*, 7101-23-110-5, 15 January 1900.

<sup>267</sup> Du Moulin, *Two Years on Trek*, Appendix A, p.1, estimated greater than 50 per cent equine death in the first four months of 1901 in his Mounted Infantry battalion; Kipling, 'MI', *The Complete Verse*, pp.370 -72, complained of 'three days to learn equitation' but subsequently sounded a positive note of improvement - 'we don't hold on by the mane no more, nor lose our stirrups – much'.

<sup>268</sup> John Vaughan,, 'Cavalry Notes', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 1901, 45, pp. 449-55.

<sup>269</sup> Cosby Jackson, *A Soldier's Diary*, p.32.

<sup>270</sup> Du Moulin, *Two Years on Trek*, p.259.

Early in the war, extensive flanking rides had been adopted to avoid Boer marksmen yet as the conflict wore on tactics evolved which incorporated flanking, envelopment and modified direct frontal attacks. Evolving tactics of the so-called 'galloping charge' included elements of a frontal attack where the speed and coordination of the men involved in the galloping charge, with the attacking line extended and outflanking the defenders' position, followed by rapid dismounting and completion of the assault on foot, diminished casualties in the attackers through their concerted approach which stretched the defenders and attenuated their firepower. But such tactics demanded improved equitation from the mounted troops, particularly the Mounted Infantry, whose skills, at least initially, had been inadequate for such tactics.<sup>271</sup> As *Notes on Mounted Infantry* explained:

In the South African War, a new form of tactics sprang into life; tactics which, prior to that war, would certainly have been pronounced suicidal. Had a man before the South African War asserted that a mounted force of sixty rifles would deliberately charge a hill held by, say twenty dismounted men all well versed in the use of the rifle, and further, could charge it successfully, I fancy he would have found some difficulty in getting anyone to agree with him'.<sup>272</sup>

Such lessons learned out on the veldt were identified through official reports commissioned by the Commander-in-Chief and eventually disseminated

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<sup>271</sup> Appendix Six; Captain Llewellyn Saunderson, *Notes on Mounted Infantrymen* (Aldershot: Gale and Polden, 1904), p.73.

<sup>272</sup> Saunderson, *Notes on Mounted Infantrymen*, pp.68-69.

through formal orders,<sup>273</sup> the revision or provision of new tactical manuals,<sup>274</sup> military lectures<sup>275</sup> and personal publications.<sup>276</sup> Successful adoption, however, spawned unforeseen implications, particularly extending the Mounted Infantry's role into assuming responsibility for reconnaissance from the cavalry.<sup>277</sup> This acceptance of novel roles for which the Mounted Infantry had never trained should not be considered a failure of foresight of its formal training programme nor of the Mounted Infantry Schools themselves but merely that of expediency in wartime. On the contrary, the opening of the Mounted Infantry School of Instruction at Aldershot in 1888 had been one of the positive outcomes of the 1881 Transvaal campaign as a response to the failure of the campaign's improvised Mounted Infantry.<sup>278</sup> Infantry Riding Depots, both at home and abroad, had been proposed by the Intelligence Division where selected men would be taught mobility whilst maintaining their

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<sup>273</sup> NAM, *Roberts Papers*, 7101-23-114-1, 3 August 1900; TNA WO 108 / 272 Extracts from Reports by Officers Commanding Units in South Africa during 1899 – 1902: rifle, carbine, small arms ammunition, sword and bayonet, whilst such reports focussed on specifics, the reports also provide an interesting insight into controversies played out by regimental and senior officers underpinned by their experiences, opinions and prejudices - in this example, clues to the firepower versus *arme blanche* debate as well as the discussion whether the cavalry should retain their carbines or be re-armed with infantry rifles.

<sup>274</sup> *Combined Training 1902*, p.51, for example 'night operations are of value, both in attack and defence...may be made during the darkness but they are more usually so timed that the assault is delivered just as the light begins to break'.

<sup>275</sup> Lieutenant Colonel E.H. Rodwell, *Reflections on the Boer War: three tactical lectures* (Lahore, Civil & Military Gazette, 1901); Churchill. 'Some Impressions of the War in South Africa', pp. 102-13.

<sup>276</sup> Major General H.M. Bengough, CB, *Notes and Reflection on the Boer War* (London: William Clowes & Sons, 1900); Anley, *Practical Hints for Mounted Infantrymen* (Aldershot: Gale and Polden, 1902), are examples.

<sup>277</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p115.

<sup>278</sup> TNA WO 33 / 37 Précis on Mounted Infantry 1881.

infantry skills.<sup>279</sup> This initial step towards matching formalised training with 'fit for purpose' functionality was the establishment of a Training Squad at Aldershot, a forerunner of the School for Instruction, that accommodated four officers and up to 100 men for three months with three sequential courses a year. Improbably and reflecting bureaucratic expediency rather than thoughtful design, the Commandant, ranked as Deputy Assistant Adjutant General on the Headquarters staff, also commanded Aldershot's School of Cookery,<sup>280</sup> whilst the Mounted Infantry School's adjutant had to be borrowed initially under protest from an infantry battalion.<sup>281</sup>

However the opening of Mounted Infantry Schools did not in itself solve the problem of producing adequate numbers of trained Mounted Infantry as there was no consensus as to the quantum of trained Mounted Infantry required by the British Army, which, in part, reflected that the Mounted Infantry had a history of extemporisation when needed rather than being planned with future conflicts in mind.<sup>282</sup> It was only in the years after 1902, when a formal organisational role was identified for the Mounted Infantry by the War Office by matching Mounted Infantry companies, initially to cavalry brigades,<sup>283</sup> then to Infantry divisions as divisional mounted troops, that a numerical

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<sup>279</sup> TNA WO 33 / 37 *ibid*.

<sup>280</sup> Godley, *Life of an Irish Soldier*, p.32

<sup>281</sup> Godley, 'The Development of Mounted Infantry training at home', pp. 52-55.

<sup>282</sup> Roberts, 'The Army – as it was and as it is', pp. 1-26, experience in South Africa thus led Roberts to call for the Mounted Infantry to be numerically equal to a quarter of the Infantry establishment.

<sup>283</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7090 Mounted Infantry Battalions on Mobilisation 1906; Godley, 'The Development of Mounted Infantry Training at Home', pp.52-55, indicated an ability to train 20 Mounted Infantry battalions (80 Mounted Infantry companies) annually.



requirement for Mounted Infantry was established.<sup>284</sup> Whilst the principle of short training courses, supported through abstraction, ensured a flow of officers and men, it was uncertain whether each course should be filled by novices or previously trained men seeking 'refresher' courses to maintain their skills.<sup>285</sup> Opinions differed. *The Times'* special correspondent, clearly favouring the principle of training new men, alleged that many of the courses were filled with men who had previously undergone Mounted Infantry training whilst, conversely, Haig criticised the Mounted Infantry failing to maintain its equitation skills with a lapse of two years since many Mounted Infantrymen had practised riding skills, suggesting that refresher training was uncommon.<sup>286</sup>

If the output of the Mounted Infantry schools in England and Ireland from 1888 until 1899 was numerically inadequate for the eventual needs of the campaign in South Africa, the magnitude and predominant requirement for mounted troops had not been predicted, despite the Boers' reputation as consummate Mounted Riflemen, as their tactics in 1881 had been more those of investment and tactical defence rather than mobile warfare.

Although the pre-war trained Mounted Infantry embarked in 1899, comprising two battalions, were considered to be competent militarily,<sup>287</sup> subsequent

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<sup>284</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7093 Mobilisation of Imperial Yeomanry for the Field Army 1907, when the Mounted Infantry was substituted for the Imperial Yeomanry as divisional mounted troops, as proposed in November 1907, the suggestion was for two companies of Mounted Infantry per infantry division.

<sup>285</sup> *The Times*, 23 August 1905, 'The Cavalry Lessons of the War', claimed that only 40 companies were abstracted *per annum* from line regiments.

<sup>286</sup> Scott, *Douglas Haig: The Preparatory Prologue*, p.146, quoted as diary entry, 23 November 1899.

<sup>287</sup> TNA WO 108 / 184 Notes by Colonel J.M Grierson RA on return from South Africa.

Mounted Infantry did not have the benefit of such peacetime training, a crucial discrepancy that Godley highlighted to the critical cavalry readership of the inaugural edition of the *Cavalry Journal*.<sup>288</sup> Godley believed that parent infantry regiments also benefitted from Mounted Infantry training through osmosis of advanced skills such as scouting and personal initiative, inculcated in Mounted Infantry training, from their Mounted Infantry detachments upon return from training.<sup>289</sup> Indeed the Mounted Infantry's scouting abilities towards the end of the Boer War, albeit more experiential than from training, was considered the equivalent of the cavalry by at least one infantry officer,<sup>290</sup> although their detractors in the Press and army might have considered that this was not 'setting the bar' particularly high.<sup>291</sup> Nevertheless, resulting from the increasing utilitarianism of the improved Mounted Infantry during the Boer War,<sup>292</sup> post-war plans optimistically suggested an expansion in Mounted Infantry training by another 3,000 men, which quickly foundered due to the projected cost of £75,000. Despite

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<sup>288</sup> Godley, 'The Development of Mounted Infantry training at home', pp. 52-55.

<sup>289</sup> LHCMA, *Godley Papers*, 3 /56, letter to Byng, 16 February 1905.

<sup>290</sup> Major B.F.S. Baden-Powell, *War in Practice: some tactical and other lessons of the campaign in South Africa 1899 – 1902* (London: Isbister & Co., 1903), p.240, whether filial loyalty overcame institutional prejudice or not, the manuscript of this book was read and approved by Baden-Powell's more famous cavalry officer brother, Robert Baden-Powell, and even more surprisingly by Michael Rimington, an ardent detractor of Mounted Infantry.

<sup>291</sup> Childers, *War and the Arme Blanche*, p.73; Gough, *Soldiering On*, p.67, considered temporary secondment to colonial Mounted Police had taught him more about scouting than all his previous service in the 16<sup>th</sup> Lancers; Baden-Powell, *War in Practice*, p.246; Jones, 'Scouting for Soldiers', pp. 495-513.

<sup>292</sup> TNA WO 108 / 409 Home and Overseas Correspondence by Field-Marshal Lord Roberts 12<sup>th</sup> December 1899 – 4<sup>th</sup> June 1900, letter to Lansdowne, 29 April 1900, 'Our Mounted Infantry has much improved of late and I intend to see whether their employment in large bodies will not bring about more satisfactory results'.

Roberts' influence in encouraging expansion of Mounted Infantry, even expansion by a minimum of 1,000 soldiers was deemed unaffordable by the Treasury.<sup>293</sup> As more schools opened, both at home and abroad, all purporting to train drill to the same standards, variability was suspected, at least by Roberts,<sup>294</sup> who considered in the immediate post war years that Aldershot's Commandant, Alexander Godley, who had accrued a considerable reputation as a trainer of Mounted Infantry,<sup>295</sup> should also supervise the Mounted Infantry Schools at Shorncliffe and Colchester where training standards had been criticised,<sup>296</sup> with the Aldershot school, that had relocated to nearby Longmoor in 1903, providing the exemplar for Mounted Infantry training among the schools. Longmoor provided enough space for mounted training,<sup>297</sup> for hunting (recognised as an integral part of officer training) and polo.<sup>298</sup> In its heyday, two battalions of Mounted Infantry could

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<sup>293</sup> TNA WO 108 / 308 Proceedings of the Army Board June 1901 – March 1902, Army Estimates 1902/03, cost savings were envisaged by the sharing of horses for training between Mounted Infantry and Imperial Yeomanry – a proposal unlikely to succeed as both arms' training would overlap during the year.

<sup>294</sup> TNA, *Kitchener Papers*, PRO 30/57/20, letter from Roberts, 28 November 1901.

<sup>295</sup> LHCMA, *Godley Papers*, 5 / 2, obituary 8 March 1957; TNA, *Kitchener Papers*, PRO 30/57/20, letter from Roberts, 28 November 1901, 'I like too what I hear of the Mounted Infantry. Godley knows how to train them and as I have heard indifferent accounts of the men trained at Shorncliffe and Colchester, I have ordered him to superintend the whole Corps.'

<sup>296</sup> LHCMA, *Godley Papers*, 3/239, letter 29 November 1901.

<sup>297</sup> Allan Mallinson, *1914: Fight the Good Fight* (London: Bantam Press, 2013), p.84, re-tells a calumny of cavalry origin that the selection of Longmoor rested on its heath land being the softest ground in England onto which the Mounted Infantry could fall – a jibe at variance with the greatly improved equitation of the Mounted Infantry since 1902.

<sup>298</sup> Godley, *Life of an Irish Soldier*, pp.102-04; E.A.H. Alderson, *Pink and Scarlet or Hunting as a School for Soldiering* (London: William Heinemann, 1900) with the premise of the value of hunting as training for officers expounded upon by Alderson throughout its 217 pages; Evelyn Wood, 'British Cavalry 1853 – 1903', *Cavalry Journal*, 1, 1906, pp. 146-54, considered that a day's hunting was of greater benefit in terms of training than a whole season of polo particularly in assessing topography from horse-back and fine-tuning equitation skills.

be accommodated for training at Longmoor, undertaking courses of three months' duration in equitation, horsemanship, scouting, musketry, and outpost duty – with the assumption made by senior army commanders that the officers and men were already fully trained as infantry.<sup>299</sup> Personal equitation was completed in the initial fortnight then successively section, company and battalion duties and roles, both mounted and dismounted, culminated in tactical exercises in weeks nine to twelve and a final week of field firing and scouting competitions.<sup>300</sup> Therefore the course provided instruction in the requisite skills both for traditional Mounted Infantry responsibilities and for the extended (cavalry) roles for which the Mounted Infantry had been designated after the Boer War with *Mounted Infantry Training 1906* stressing the importance of practising tactics of manoeuvre especially on the enemy's flanks, seizure of tactically important ground and to function as rallying points for retirement.<sup>301</sup> Even so, the Chief of the General Staff, even as late as 1905, perhaps harking back to simpler (and cheaper days) of training, questioned whether Mounted Infantry training was now too extensive in comparison to the pre-Boer War years, citing examples of apparently successful minimalist Mounted Infantry training abroad, particularly in Burma<sup>302</sup> although his was a minority view even among senior commanders. Additionally, the Mounted Infantry Schools were tasked with

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<sup>299</sup> Frankland, 'Mounted Infantry Maxims', pp. 155-70.

<sup>300</sup> *Mounted Infantry Training 1906*, pp.3-4.

<sup>301</sup> *Mounted Infantry Training 1906*, pp.56-57, nevertheless, it was also stated that 'when cavalry are not available, [Mounted Infantry] may have to perform the mounted duties of reconnaissance, scouting and patrolling'.

<sup>302</sup> TNA WO 163 / 10 Minutes of the Proceedings of the Army Council, précis 160, 1905.

another role on mobilisation that of forming the nuclei of Mounted Infantry headquarters staff<sup>303</sup> in an attempt to diminish concern, recognised in the Press, that the novel (and eventually unfulfilled) large scale deployment of Mounted Infantry would confound senior commanders unfamiliar with the arm.<sup>304</sup> In fairness, the principles and utilisation of Mounted Infantry on active service was not covered in the curriculum at the Staff College which remained more focused on theoretical aspects of war largely illustrated by lessons from the Franco-German and American Civil Wars<sup>305</sup> although analyses of the war in South Africa and the Russo-Japanese War were not disregarded.<sup>306</sup> Valuable training did not only occur at the Mounted Infantry Schools - a notable change in the years after 1902 was the introduction of more frequent peacetime tactical simulation through army manoeuvres.<sup>307</sup> Not only did manoeuvres attempt to embed tactics based on doctrine but encouraged rudimentary combined cooperative training with other arms, notably cavalry and horse artillery. This was in keeping with the tenets laid down in *Combined Training 1902*, now becoming necessary as the Mounted Infantry's role in army doctrine as both protective divisional mounted troops for the infantry and in independent mixed mounted brigades with cavalry

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<sup>303</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7091 Mounted Infantry battalions: mobilisation 1907.

<sup>304</sup> Denman, 'The Future of Mounted Infantry', pp. 382-91.

<sup>305</sup> Joint Services Command and Staff College, Shrivenham, UK, CR/1903/1 & 2 Staff College Curricula 1903.

<sup>306</sup> Brian Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College, 1854 – 1914* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), p.197.

<sup>307</sup> Martin Samuels, *Command or Control? Command, Training and Tactics in the British and German Armies 1880 – 1918* (London: Frank Cass, 1995), pp.56-57, there were no large scale manoeuvres between 1873 and 1898 although they occurred annually after 1902.

were formalised.<sup>308</sup> Concurrently, the years after the Boer War also witnessed an expansion in oversight of the army<sup>309</sup> by Inspectors from the General Staff reporting to the Army Council, including written appreciations of the Mounted Infantry on manoeuvres<sup>310</sup> that were disseminated back to the units themselves through reports.

If the benefits of the Mounted Infantry Schools seem clear and Mounted Infantry training for officers was popular and considered important in practice,<sup>311</sup> the utilisation of these officers was more questionable. Broadly speaking officer promotion and career advancement in the army was only loosely based on aptitude with Evelyn Wood complaining that promotion merely relied on the absence of negative comments which encouraged acceptance of mediocrity throughout the officer corps.<sup>312</sup> At least Mounted Infantry officer training specifically cited criteria that included recommendation by regimental commander for officer selection through demonstrable high standards,<sup>313</sup> with the schools remaining an opportunity for officers to attain post-Commission training which, as Timothy Bowman and Mark Connelly have noted, was a rarity in the Edwardian, and by

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<sup>308</sup> TNA WO 108 / 308 Proceedings of the Army Board June 1901 – March 1902, which debated how best to employ Mounted Infantry in the future; TNA WO 32 / 6829 Future of Mounted Infantry 1900.

<sup>309</sup> Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, p.65.

<sup>310</sup> TNA WO 27 / 504 Aldershot Command Papers 1905-7; TNA WO 27 / 508 Inspector General of Forces' Annual Report 1904.

<sup>311</sup> *The Times*, 16 February 1912, claimed that 'the Mounted Infantry course is splendid training for young infantry officers, non-commissioned officers and men as it opens their eyes and widens their horizons'.

<sup>312</sup> TNA WO 32 / 8637 System of Selection of Officers for Promotion 1900.

<sup>313</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers*, XXXIV, Add. 50111, paper written 23 May 1884.

extension, Victorian, army.<sup>314</sup> Most infantry regiments agreed to second officers for Mounted Infantry training with 85 per cent of infantry regiments having officers undergoing training between 1888 and 1892.<sup>315</sup> The average number of officers trained *per annum* at this time period was thirty-six. The reasons for a sixth of regiments failing to send officers for training vary. None were sent from the Grenadier or Coldstream Guards (although representatives were sent from the Scots Guards) for neither Guards Regiments had a tradition of overseas garrison duties and were unlikely to be subject to active service abstraction with the Guards Camel Regiment and the Guards Mounted Infantry being anomalous exceptions. County line regiments had no such excuses but failed to respond either through overseas colonial postings or through the reluctance of their commanding officers to lose their best officers and men on mobilisation.<sup>316</sup> Although the Foot Guards, other than the Scots Guards, are noticeable for their absence, the same cannot be said for other 'smart' infantry regiments who did not eschew Mounted Infantry training. Analysing Hutton's nominal role from his inaugural tenure as Commandant of Aldershot's Mounted Infantry School,<sup>317</sup> and using French's criteria for 'smartness',<sup>318</sup> a third of officers abstracted for

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<sup>314</sup> Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, p.32, other opportunities included schools of musketry, signalling and, eventually, machine gun training.

<sup>315</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers*, XXIII, Add. 50100, 'Lieutenant Colonel Hutton's Nominal Role of Mounted Infantry Officers 1<sup>st</sup> February 1888 – 31<sup>st</sup> August 1896'.

<sup>316</sup> Ikona, 'The Passing of the Old MI', pp.209-13.

<sup>317</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers*, XXIII, Add. 50100, 'Lieutenant Colonel Hutton's Nominal Role of Mounted Infantry Officers 1<sup>st</sup> February 1888 – 31<sup>st</sup> August 1896'.

<sup>318</sup> French, *Military Identities*, p.165.

Mounted Infantry training came from the top twenty most prestigious line infantry regiments. However this does not imply that prestigious regiments sought Mounted Infantry training preferentially compared to less 'smart' infantry regiments. The majority of participating line regiments only abstracted between one and four officers. Again this undermines Badsey's suggestion of institutional preferment for regiments forming Mounted Infantry companies at this time.<sup>319</sup> The explanation for this preponderance of officers from 'smart' infantry regiments arises from over-representation by the Rifle Brigade and KRRC with twenty officers seconded for training, reflecting both Hutton's crusading zeal in attracting officers for Mounted Infantry from his old regiment, KRRC, and its counterpart and the continuing belief in the army that previous light infantry training conferred attributes similar to those needed for Mounted Infantry work.<sup>320</sup> However, the utilisation of officers trained in the pre-Boer War years, at least those from Hutton's period as Commandant, was to be poor. Only six per cent of officers trained as Mounted Infantry officers from 1888 to 1892 assumed command of Mounted Infantry in 1899 – 1900.<sup>321</sup> Further analysis shows that in fact a third of Mounted Infantry trained officers (36 per cent) had already left the army by 1900, thus discounting this possibility as a single explanation for this poor conversion of officers from training to command. From the remaining two-

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<sup>319</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.67.

<sup>320</sup> Hare, *The Annals of the King's Royal Rifle Corps*, IV, pp.331-32.

<sup>321</sup> *Army List*, April 1900, was chosen as an end-point for this period as it marked the start of the formal reorganisation of the Mounted Infantry following Roberts' precipitate expansion of Mounted Infantry earlier in January 1900 with adequate time for these officers' services to be re-employed in the expanded Mounted Infantry i.e. if they were going to be in command of Mounted Infantry, this was the most likely time when it would occur.



thirds of the officers still serving in the army, only 9.4 per cent were appointed to be in command of Mounted Infantry indicating a poor return on four years of specialist training. To this poor return should be added the relatively small number of the Mounted Infantry commanders with active service experience with the Mounted Infantry. The future General De Lisle complained that only he, among Mounted Infantry commanding officers in South Africa in 1900, had prior active service Mounted Infantry experience with the Mounted Infantry.<sup>322</sup> As less than eight per cent of officers were employed with colonial forces or with domestic militia, with a smaller number on special service in theatre or undertaking duties such as musketry instructors, most officers with pre-war Mounted Infantry training, despite being a sizeable pool, were still employed on regimental duties, despite the critical need for additional mounted troops as recognised by Roberts.<sup>323</sup> If there was, at best, delay, and, at worst, a woeful failure to use officers with pre-war Mounted Infantry training in the initial six months of the war, then how can Badsey's retrospective observation of the preponderance of senior army officers in 1914 with Mounted Infantry experience be explained for, as Godley proudly noted in his autobiography, the majority of officers who rose to high command in 1914 –18 had served in the Mounted Infantry.<sup>324</sup>

Therefore the career progression for officers in command of Mounted Infantry units in the Boer War has been analysed prospectively using serial

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<sup>322</sup> LHCMA, *De Lisle Papers*, 2, 'Narrative of the South African War 1899 – 1902', 3 February 1900.

<sup>323</sup> *Army List*, April 1900.

<sup>324</sup> Godley, *Life of an Irish Soldier*, p.103.

*Army Lists* up to August 1914 with attainment of lieutenant colonel or higher rank as end point for the analysis. Using combined regimental and seniority-matched peers as controls to minimise bias from inter-regimental variation in promotion prospects and to circumvent any possibility of regimental preferment through patronage, a comparative quantitative assessment has been undertaken between those with Mounted Infantry command experience and matched colleagues who did not. Analysis reveals that 56 per cent of officers commanding Mounted Infantry during the Boer war at a rank of captain or major achieved lieutenant colonel rank or higher by 1914 whilst only 20.5 per cent of non-Mounted Infantry controls achieved regimental or higher command. Interestingly, the time taken, on average, to achieve promotion from captain to major was identical between the two populations (eight years), whilst the speed of attainment of lieutenant colonel rank surprisingly favoured those without Mounted Infantry command (sixteen years) rather than ex-Mounted Infantry officers (twenty-six years), an anomaly probably explained by the comparatively small numbers of individuals included in the analysis.<sup>325</sup> Nevertheless, despite the confounding variable of sample size, Mounted Infantry officers did not achieve promotion faster than their matched peers.<sup>326</sup> However, non-Mounted Infantry officers were three times more likely to leave the army in the years 1902-14 than their ex-Mounted Infantry colleagues. Assuming that all officers in line regiments had an equal opportunity to achieve lieutenant

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<sup>325</sup> *Army Lists*, 1900 – 1914.

<sup>326</sup> *Army Lists*, 1900 – 1914.

colonel rank during their careers and that the number of battalions remained the same, the chances of captains and majors in the late Victorian army attaining this rank was approximately 14 per cent for captains and 25 per cent for majors, suggesting that the 20.5 per cent for non-Mounted Infantry officers (captains and majors combined) was about average.<sup>327</sup> The apparently improved promotion chances of the Mounted Infantry officers suggests that service in the Mounted Infantry was indeed advantageous for higher promotion with more officers with such experience remaining in the army although bias from additional variables resulting in increased departure from service by those without Mounted Infantry experience cannot be discounted. Clearly this analysis must be interpreted cautiously, not least because of the relatively low numbers of officers prevents statistical exactitude, but also because the process cannot distinguish innate differences between the two groups i.e. were the Mounted Infantry officers inherently more successful or ambitious than their matched control colleagues leading to selection for Mounted Infantry duty in the first place, perhaps in keeping with the claim of only accepting the 'pick' of the 'best' officers? Similarly, this analysis does not explain why officers without Mounted Infantry experience were more likely to leave the army than their matched peers. Nevertheless, in answering one of this chapter's research questions, Mounted Infantry command experience seemed a positive prognostic factor in achieving regimental or higher command.

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<sup>327</sup> *Army Lists, 1900 – 1914*; Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, p.90, indicates that corresponding rates of advancement from captain to lieutenant colonel in the 1870s pre-abolition of purchase would be, on average, 14 ½ years, suggesting that promotion without purchase was a retarding effect.

The chapter's other subsidiary question regarding Mounted Infantry training was whether Mounted Infantry training matched the roles demanded of it and broadly, whether the training of the Mounted Infantry produced a force 'fit for purpose' Although as discussed previously, whilst the Mounted Infantry doctrinally and organisationally espoused infantry origins and the Mounted Infantry School propagated infantry-based tactics and drill, there remained tension within the army resulting from the institutional friction between cavalry and the Mounted infantry. This hostility was never greater than at the inception of formal Mounted Infantry training at Aldershot. Chosen for its extensive stabling due to the number of cavalry regiments based at Aldershot,<sup>328</sup> the Mounted Infantry was obstructed on numerous occasions including the reluctance by General Drury Lowe, the Inspector General of Cavalry, to permit the use of cavalry horses from regiments on furlough or the use of Aldershot's indoor riding schools for equitation training, requests that Hutton considered partly to blame for the propagation of institutional friction between Mounted Infantry and cavalry.<sup>329</sup> Cavalry commanding officers appeared to distrust the motives cited for the proposed sharing of their horses with the nascent Mounted Infantry<sup>330</sup> and although temporarily solved by Hutton's suggestion that horses of cavalry regiments due for embarkation to India should be used for Mounted Infantry training with 58 horses borrowed from the Royal Dragoons, 60 from the 5<sup>th</sup> Lancers and 118

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<sup>328</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers*, Add. 50111, XXXIV, 2 September 1887.

<sup>329</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Three, 12 November 1890, pp.1-20.

<sup>330</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers*, XXXIV, Add. 50111, 2 September 1887.

from the 18<sup>th</sup> Hussars<sup>331</sup> the obstruction was only solved in 1891<sup>332</sup> by the purchase of 120 cobs for Mounted Infantry training making it finally independent of the cavalry's horses for training.<sup>333</sup> With a touch of hyperbole while containing an element of grim truth, these cobs have been described as the '120 unfortunate steeds who trained the entire mounted infantry of the British (home) army'.<sup>334</sup> But this arrangement also ensured a more suitable animal for training than the larger cavalry horses, which as the Mounted Infantry intended sourcing their mounts locally on campaign, were less suitable for training. The problem of inadequate provision of indoor riding schools for winter training persisted even when the Mounted Infantry School relocated to Longmoor, and featured as constructive criticism in the 1909 Inspection of the Mounted Infantry School at Longmoor.<sup>335</sup> Other organisational criticisms made by the Inspector General of Forces were the lack of isolation lines for sick horses and no wagon shed, yet the report otherwise contained glowing recommendations of the enthusiasm of the staff, good standards of equitation, excellent demonstration of mounted drill and effective execution of tactics, particularly concealing the held horses of

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<sup>331</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers*, XXXIV, Add. 50111, 2 September 1887; Baker, *A Fine Chest of Medals*, p.10, recalls taking over the cavalry troop horses from the 11<sup>th</sup> Hussars in Aldershot.

<sup>332</sup> Goodenough and Dalton, *The Army Book for the British Empire*, p.172.

<sup>333</sup> Godley, 'The Development of Mounted Infantry training at home', pp. 52-55.

<sup>334</sup> Denman, 'The Future of Mounted Infantry', pp. 382-91.

<sup>335</sup> TNA WO 27 / 508 Inspector General of Forces' Annual Reports 1904- 1913, Inspection of the School for Instruction for Mounted Infantry, Longmoor, 25 May 1909.

advance guards, effective scouting and repelling attacks by cavalry during simulated combat.<sup>336</sup>

Further aspects of this institutional friction between mounted branches affected Mounted Infantry training as the participation of cavalry personnel for teaching equitation was withheld by the Inspector General of Cavalry on the spurious grounds of being too busy.<sup>337</sup> Nevertheless, the absence of cavalry rough riders opportunely meant that infantry officers were required to train their men, which was of benefit in minimising any dilution of the Mounted Infantry ethos through the influence of cavalry teachings, although standards were jeopardised potentially by the variability of infantry officers' riding proficiencies.<sup>338</sup> Although officers from 'smart' infantry regiments might possess excellent standards of equitation, a skill honed by their leisure pursuits, those from less prestigious regiments might neither ride efficiently enough to train their men<sup>339</sup> nor command a private income adequate to own horses for leisure purposes. Alternative support for equitation training was considered from the artillery whose rough riders taught riding skills and importantly, though left unsaid, were not cavalymen and would contribute to the Mounted Infantry's ethos of not relying on the cavalry. Hutton wrote,

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<sup>336</sup> TNA WO 27 / 508 Inspector General of Forces' Annual Reports 1904- 1913, Inspection of the School for Instruction for Mounted Infantry, Longmoor, 25 May 1909.

<sup>337</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers*, Add. 50111, XXXIV, 2 September 1887.

<sup>338</sup> Fuller, *The Last of the Gentlemen's Wars*, pp. 122-23.

<sup>339</sup> Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, p.102, notes that Officer Cadets at Sandhurst received limited equitation training, amounting to only 39 hours annually; W.S. Churchill, *My Early Life* (London: Eland, 2002), p.45, attended extra equitation training privately in his spare time at Knightsbridge Barracks under tuition from the Riding Master of the Royal Horse Guards.

there was no need to rely on cavalry regiments to train Mounted Infantry as the Mounted Infantry may then start to imitate the actions of the cavalry.<sup>340</sup> However this is not to say that institutional friction prevented all forms of collaboration between cavalry and Mounted Infantry in training, particularly during the Boer War where some cavalry regiments generously placed their horses at the disposal of infantry regiments that had been ordered to find Mounted Infantry companies for service in South Africa.<sup>341</sup> Moreover, the chief lesson of the Cavalry Manoeuvres of 1890, a relatively minor affair that included just three companies of Mounted Infantry, was, at least in the opinion of Hutton, how Mounted Infantry with comparatively short training was able to support cavalry, both in terms of its standard of equitation but also how its firepower contributed to the impact of the cavalry.<sup>342</sup> Hutton reprised the modest praise that his three companies of Mounted Infantry received from the national Press, concluding grandiosely that the Manoeuvres had 'proven the great value of mobile infantry in regular warfare'.<sup>343</sup> In fact the inclusion of Mounted Infantry, rather than demonstrating favourable inter-arm cooperation, exposed some of the tactical differences between how the Mounted Infantry, with its infantry origins, and the cavalry thought. Utilising horses borrowed from the 11<sup>th</sup> Hussars, the Mounted Infantry dismounted frequently, hiding their horses in farm buildings and successfully ambushed the opposing cavalry comprising

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<sup>340</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers*, XXXIV, Add. 50111, 2 September 1887.

<sup>341</sup> Saunderson, *Notes on Mounted Infantrymen*, p.7.

<sup>342</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Four, 20 April 1891, pp.1-27.

<sup>343</sup> *The Times*, 13 November 1890.

the Household Cavalry, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Dragoons and 8<sup>th</sup> Hussars. The Manoeuvres also demonstrated that the Mounted Infantry did not sustain equine casualties any more frequently than some cavalry regiments at approximately 11 per cent and decidedly less than some, with the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars suffering a 38 per cent loss rate, although such regimental variations were not considered significant by the Director and his staff, being arguably more indicative of their different roles and tasks.<sup>344</sup> The following year, the failure of a frontal attack mounted by Mounted Infantry during the 1891 Autumn Manoeuvres in Hampshire,<sup>345</sup> and the Director's conclusion that flanking attacks would have been preferable, pre-dated the experiences of the early Boer War where this tactical lesson had to be re-learned by the army following Roberts' arrival<sup>346</sup> and following costly failures that involved frontal attacks against the Boers in 1899 and early 1900.<sup>347</sup> During the same 1890 Manoeuvres, the Mounted Infantry was left scouting across open ground despite the presence of cavalry which demonstrated the ongoing lack of inter-arm cooperation and the willingness of the Mounted Infantry under Hutton to undertake tasks for which it was not trained nor best suited. All of this tends to undermine Hutton's previous claims for the Mounted Infantry as adjunct rather than replacement to the cavalry.<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> NAM, Scrapbook of the Cavalry Manoeuvres 1890 by the wife of Captain E.A.H. Alderson (Adjutant, Mounted Infantry Regiment), 1891.

<sup>345</sup> TNA WO 279 /1 Autumn Manoeuvres in Hampshire 1891.

<sup>346</sup> TNA WO 105 / 40 Notes for Guidance in South African Warfare, 1900.

<sup>347</sup> LHCMA, *Hamilton Papers*, 2/4/7 'Notes for Guidance in South African Warfare', 26 January 1900, reiteration of Roberts' orders.

<sup>348</sup> TNA WO 279 /1 Autumn Manoeuvres in Hampshire 1891.



Following the Boer War, the pace of reform in the army slowed compared to early 1900<sup>349</sup> yet peacetime military manoeuvres increased, partly due to the purchase of 41,000 acres of Salisbury Plain as a result of the Manoeuvres Act 1898.<sup>350</sup> Whilst piecemeal deployment of Mounted Infantry on manoeuvres was usual, four battalions of Mounted Infantry, comprising about 1,600 Mounted Infantry, were brought together for large scale manoeuvres at Aldershot shortly after the Boer War under Godley, mounted surprisingly on borrowed cavalry horses through French's encouragement (thus undermining the usual perception of French as staunchly antagonistic to the Mounted Infantry).<sup>351</sup> This permitted a rare opportunity to practice manoeuvring large bodies of Mounted Infantry. Conversely, the army manoeuvres of 1904 simulated a combined military and naval invasion on the Essex coast line but also provided an example of the army's evolving trend towards inter-arm cooperation between a number of different mounted troops including 8<sup>th</sup> Hussars, two companies of Mounted Infantry and a small detachment of military cyclists whose ability to move significant distances penetrating opposing defence lines impressed senior army officers.<sup>352</sup> Not all the conclusions drawn from such manoeuvres were recognised as important lessons that would be transferable immediately to military planning as demonstrated in the 1908 Aldershot Manoeuvres. This specifically pitted

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<sup>349</sup> Amery, *The Problem of the Army*, p.2, however Amery's reforming ambitions must be taken into account in his pronouncements.

<sup>350</sup> Spiers, *The Army and Society*, p.230.

<sup>351</sup> Godley, *Life of an Irish Soldier*, p.106; French, *Some War Diaries*, p.51, diary entry, 11 November 1900, where French confides his concerns over Roberts' pro-Mounted Infantry inclinations.

<sup>352</sup> TNA WO 27 / 503 Army Manoeuvres 1904.

a Mounted Infantry-containing mixed Mounted Brigade against a standard Cavalry Brigade with inconclusive results with both sides showing poor standards of reconnaissance and a failure to 'economise' horseflesh by using mounted troops for exhausting amounts of outpost duty when cyclists could have done accomplished set tasks faster and quieter.<sup>353</sup> The evidence for choice between these two types of brigades was thus absent and could not inform future planning. Nonetheless, experience of command during such prototypic all-arms cooperation was considered valuable by senior army officers.<sup>354</sup> Therefore, the lessons informing the Mounted Infantry's organisation, doctrine, future deployment and training requirements, gleaned from peacetime manoeuvres must be concluded to have been strictly limited.

However lessons could be identified in more than just peacetime manoeuvres. A large number of tactical lessons for the regular Mounted Infantry were gleaned from its active service, particularly its experiences on the veldt that had indeed been beneficial in terms of training and future doctrine. The need to use cover, concealment, subterfuge, initiative and personal judgement was summed up neatly if a little facetiously by mimicking the phrasing of official drill manuals, as: 'If you see a Boer galloping, it is not. You never see a Boer and he rarely gallops. If you see no one, it is probably a Boer'.<sup>355</sup> Clearly such aphorisms were not specific to Mounted Infantry but

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<sup>353</sup> TNA WO 279 / 21 Aldershot Command Staff Tour and Manoeuvres 1908.

<sup>354</sup> Thorneycroft, 'Some notes on Mounted Infantry', pp. 161-66.

<sup>355</sup> Lieutenant Colonel H.C. Lowther, *From Pillar to Post* (London: Edward Arnold, 1912), p.108.

affected the army as a whole.<sup>356</sup> Hamilton, a long-standing supporter of the Mounted Infantry, considered that important lessons identified for the army were, among others, the futility of frontal attacks, the criticality of scouting and flank guards and the pre-eminence of the rifle.<sup>357</sup> Such lessons translated into Mounted Infantry tactics with 'good' scouting being one of the positive attributes noted during the Mounted Infantry Inspection in June 1905<sup>358</sup> although a similar inspection the following year struck a note of warning that the Mounted Infantry scouts failed to dismount enough and that the held horses were left exposed to enemy fire,<sup>359</sup> a criticism not reserved exclusively for Mounted Infantry as the cavalry also received similar criticism several years later for the same tactical deficiency.<sup>360</sup>

If as a marker of its training programme the Mounted Infantry's equitation is considered, to what level of equitation should the Mounted Infantry have aspired? Minimal requirements laid down in the 1884 *Regulations* stipulated a mere three days' equitation with modest expansion to a minimum of two weeks of personal equitation instruction in the 1906 *Mounted Infantry Training*.<sup>361</sup> Later, opinions differed with some authors such as Cornish suggesting that riding skills, which he did not explicitly link with the role

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<sup>356</sup> J Keskar & J. Lew Ins, 'Kopje-Book Maxims', *Kipling Journal*, September 2004, p. 3 & p.31, also quote a useful maxim of 'abandoned women and abandoned kopjes are best left alone'.

<sup>357</sup> LHCMA, *Hamilton Papers*, 2/4/7, 'Notes for Guidance on South African warfare', 26 June 1900.

<sup>358</sup> TNA WO 27 / 502 Mounted Infantry Inspection 1905.

<sup>359</sup> TNA WO 27 / 505 Inspection of the Mounted Infantry 1906.

<sup>360</sup> TNA WO 163 / 15 Annual Report of the Inspector General of Forces 1909.

<sup>361</sup> *Mounted Infantry Training 1906*, pp.3-4.

expected of the Mounted Infantry, should equate to that of a cavalry recruit<sup>362</sup> and whilst clearly aspirational, Cornish's suggestion was also impractical in the time available for training. However the impact of inadequate equitation was far-reaching. The semi-official veterinary history of the Boer War acknowledged that whilst the Aldershot-trained Mounted Infantry with pre-war training was competent in equitation, this skill was unsurprisingly deficient in the extemporised Mounted Infantry<sup>363</sup> contributing to the equine losses that marked the campaign<sup>364</sup> and prolonging the war, in the opinion of the veterinary history's author, by two years.<sup>365</sup> If, in the words of the future Field Marshal Sir William Robertson, that 'no more unfortunate horse ever lived than the horse of the Mounted Infantry during the early period of the march from the Modder to Pretoria'<sup>366</sup>, the Mounted Infantry's equestrianism subsequently improved dramatically. In his *Practical Hints*, Anley illustrated the primacy of horsemastership by devoting no less than four pages to horse care, stating that 'every moment devoted to the care and saving of his horse is time well spent'.<sup>367</sup> Clearly the growing need for the highest standard of riding skills was understood as the riding of the Mounted Infantry at the

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<sup>362</sup> Warre Cornish, *Letters and Sketches – Appendix II*, p.435; R.A. Lloyd,, *A Trooper in the Tins: Autobiography of a Life Guardsman* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1938), p.25, considered that even after passing out from riding school, a cavalryman was still not particularly proficient in equitation.

<sup>363</sup>TNA WO 108 / 184 Notes by Col. J.M Grierson RA on return from South Africa.

<sup>364</sup> Major General F. Smith, *A Veterinary History of the War in South Africa 1899 – 1902* (London: H&W Brown, 1919), p.31.

<sup>365</sup>Smith, *A Veterinary History*, p.v.

<sup>366</sup> Field Marshal Sir William Robertson, *From Private to Field-Marshal* (London: Constable, 1921), p.105.

<sup>367</sup> Anley, *Practical Hints for Mounted Infantrymen*, p.29.

Inspection in 1909 was deemed excellent by the Inspector General of Forces, no less a person than the cavalryman, Sir John French.<sup>368</sup>

Therefore, standards of equitation and both mounted and dismounted duties can be seen as a continuum that commenced on the veldt and progressed throughout peacetime simulation in the subsequent years. Du Moulin of the Royal Sussex Regiment recalled his regiment's steep 'learning curve' following the formation of new Mounted Infantry companies in November 1900 and again in mid-1901 to form the 21<sup>st</sup> Mounted Infantry.<sup>369</sup> By August 1901, more than 1,000 men of the Royal Sussex Regiment were undertaking mounted duties in South Africa and although initially considered only fit for convoy escort duties, by late 1901 Du Moulin considered them now expert Mounted Infantry.<sup>370</sup> The need to improve the Mounted Infantry's equitation competence prompted Hamilton to recommend that new Mounted Infantry should be 'trickled' into veteran Mounted Infantry battalions to gain experience quickly, citing as evidence how the 28<sup>th</sup> Mounted Infantry from Malta, fell prey easily to an ambush by the Boers, purely through tactical inexperience.<sup>371</sup>

Other failures that would influence subsequent training, apart from those associated with inexperienced equitation, arose from the Mounted Infantry's initial lack of adaptation to the type of warfare it encountered. Arguably, the

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<sup>368</sup> TNA WO 27 / 508 Inspector General of Forces' Annual Reports 1904- 1913, Inspection of the School for Instruction for Mounted Infantry, Longmoor, 25 May 1909.

<sup>369</sup> Du Moulin, *Two Years on Trek*, p.258 & p.230.

<sup>370</sup> Du Moulin, *Two Years on Trek*, p.320.

<sup>371</sup> LHCMA, *Hamilton Papers*, 2/3/7, letter to Roberts, 16 February 1902.

lack of written doctrine, a dependency on drill manuals and the absence of a General Staff to provide direction in doctrine and dissemination of lessons learned from conflicts across the Empire was the context in which this failure of adaptation occurred. Nevertheless, the Mounted Infantry commanders must surely bear some responsibility as after all, the active service nature of the arm should have ensured that tactical flexibility and adaptation to prevailing warfare remained a priority even though there was no attempt to provide this in training at the Mounted Infantry Schools. The impact of this on military effectiveness will be considered in a subsequent chapter. In the Sudan, the Camel Corps needed concentrated firepower against the shock tactics of the Arab tribesmen yet, as will be contended in a later chapter, although volley-firing had much to commend it in such circumstances, the use of the infantry square, beneficial though it was for protection and security, did not permit optimal delivery of firepower through its geometric configuration. In South Africa, the problems of adequate reconnaissance, the climatic factors that permitted long distance marksmanship, the Boers' propensity for concealment and ambush and the army's predominant drill requiring close order advances and volley firing, at least initially, contributed to the army's early failures. However, tactical adaptation, such as the pressing requirement to secure high ground overlooking the line of march of a convoy, did occur eventually through practical experience as already indicated.<sup>372</sup> Lessons such as avoidance of being silhouetted against the skyline were learnt from the Boers who, in turn, demonstrated their own

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<sup>372</sup> Appendix Six; Anley, *Practical Hints for Mounted Infantrymen*, p.38.

forms of tactical adaptation, charging into dead ground before rapid dismounting then either sniping or advancing on foot as at the battle of Bakenlaagte or the development of mounted charges firing from the saddle that became more common from mid-1901. The Boers' habit of rapid dismounting and immediate 'snapshooting' without any re-alignment of their rifle sights conferred such an advantage that Hamilton proposed training Mounted Infantry in similar tactics.<sup>373</sup> Unfortunately, mounted charges by colonial Mounted Rifles and indeed regular Mounted Infantry with fixed bayonets as makeshift lances must surely be an example of tactical maladaptation in a war unfavourable to *arme blanche* tactics and whilst perhaps understandable in the heat of battle,<sup>374</sup> this aberration in tactics was disappointingly for Hamilton and Hutton not an isolated phenomenon.

Returning in conclusion to this chapter's research questions regarding identity and training, the Mounted Infantry evolved a functional, rather than organisational, identity despite its changing military role. The formalisation of training was an advance on *ad hoc* extemporisation yet despite amendments to the duration of the course and the contents of its programme, the course remained focussed largely on equitation and, in the absence of agreed formal doctrine, failed to equip the Mounted Infantry with the ability for rapid adaptation to the exigencies of warfare encountered overseas. As the

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<sup>373</sup> LHCMA, *Hamilton Papers*, 2/3/1, letter to Roberts, 13 November 1901.

<sup>374</sup> Sheffield, *The Chief*, p.42; Scott, *Douglas Haig: The Preparatory Prologue*, p.148, diary entry 4 December 1899; LHCMA, *Hamilton Papers*, 2/3/13, letter to Roberts, 21 February 1902; Rimington, *Our Cavalry*, p.13; Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Haig (Q.19476, p.411), where Haig refuted the suggestion of encouraging the use of fixed bayonets and rifles with the New Zealand Mounted Rifles as makeshift 'hog spears' as this was an imperfect arrangement that did not work.

eventual role of the Mounted Infantry became clearer, there were attempts to instruct a force 'fit for purpose' with, for instance, enhanced equitation training to support the Mounted Infantry's extended mounted roles inherent to divisional mounted troops. Arguably, the lack of permanence of the Mounted Infantry exacerbated this deficiency and contributed to this lack of being 'fit for purpose'. The Mounted Infantry was unique in the Victorian army, not least through its state of impermanence and its method of abstraction in time of war, but also the comparatively small unit size at which loyalty and *esprit de corps*, functions of its organisational culture, preferentially existed. There is little evidence of a homogenous loyalty to the Mounted Infantry *per se*. Such loyalty and allegiance at this level remained with the parent infantry regiment although this tendency diminished in South Africa where the length of the campaign for the Mounted Infantry battalions encouraged an informal evolution of identity transiently focussed more on the Mounted infantry battalion rather than parent regiment. But it is fundamentally erroneous to seek an identity for the Mounted Infantry as a homogenous branch of the army as this was never envisaged, even by the Mounted Infantry's most ardent protagonists. Acceptance of this negates allegations of disloyalty by Mounted infantry officers in favouring the regimental system. Moreover, rather than demonstrating disloyalty, junior officers were often enthusiastic about temporary service in the Mounted Infantry, a service that appeared beneficial to their promotion prospects and one upon which many senior officers in 1914 could draw during the initial weeks of manoeuvre before the spectre of trench warfare descended on the banks of the Aisne.



## Chapter Four

### Military Effectiveness

Whether truly prescient or merely optimistic, contemporary authors were quick to promote the regular Mounted Infantry model on the basis of its participation in colonial campaigning, suggesting that ‘an army possessing a large number of mounted men capable of being used as infantry has an incalculable advantage over one that has them not’.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Mounted Infantry, not only as a conceptual force but in the reality of active service, had ‘won laurels in all our recent campaigns’.<sup>2</sup> The contribution of Mounted Infantry to a successful conclusion of warfare was indicated as being fundamental and even capable of ‘altering the accepted rules of warfare’.<sup>3</sup> These published accolades and predictions seem to indicate that the Mounted Infantry was an important factor in the prosecution of war in the late Victorian era. Therefore this chapter will explore the veracity of such claims in order to answer the chapter’s principal research question of whether the Mounted Infantry was a militarily effective force. However, before military effectiveness and the metrics by which it may be assessed are defined, the

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<sup>1</sup> Hamilton, ‘Mounted Marksmen and the Dismounted Service of Cavalry’, pp. 261-87.

<sup>2</sup> Brigadier General Viscount Melgund, ‘The Mounted Rifleman’, *United Services Magazine*, 1, 1890, pp. 305-15.

<sup>3</sup> Melgund, ‘The Mounted Rifleman’, *ibid*; *The Times*, 8 September 1881, claimed that Mounted Infantry was ‘almost universally admitted to be a necessity portion of future armies’.

preparatory question of why there should be any question regarding the Mounted Infantry's military effectiveness will be considered briefly.

Three main issues potentially jeopardised the Mounted Infantry's ability on the battlefield, namely: its organisation, its doctrine and its logistical requirements. The first two categories have been dealt with in previous chapters but to recap, the impermanent basis of the Mounted Infantry's formation, based on abstraction, both for peacetime training and on active service mobilisation, risked unit cohesion and could result in ineffectual command, although such potential weaknesses were mitigated by a decentralised command structure and a focus of identity and *esprit de corps* at the company level that was the size of formation most frequently deployed as a discrete military unit.<sup>4</sup> The absence of a clear and consistent doctrinal role, or at least one universally understood by senior army and Mounted Infantry officers,<sup>5</sup> and the tendency for the Mounted Infantry's role to change over the years of its existence,<sup>6</sup> remained a risk for the Mounted Infantry's military effectiveness on campaign. Yet, as in South Africa in 1900-02, the very nature of the Mounted Infantry's eventual utilitarianism, celebrated by the iconography of the experienced veldt-wise<sup>7</sup> 'ikona',<sup>8</sup> contributed to the

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<sup>4</sup> *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1897*, p.5 & p.60.

<sup>5</sup> Alderson, *With the Mounted Infantry and the Mashonaland Field Force 1896*, p.5.

<sup>6</sup> Badsey, 'The Boer War (1899 – 1902) and British Cavalry Doctrine', pp. 75-98.

<sup>7</sup> E.A.H Alderson, *Lessons from 100 Notes Made In Peace And War* (Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1908), p.8, commended a number of aphorisms for active service including 'if you don't know for *certain* that there are no Boers in a place, always suppose there are at least 300 and act accordingly – play the game and don't give any catches'.

<sup>8</sup> Kipling, *The Complete Verse*, pp.370-72; 'Ikona', 'The Passing of the old MI', pp. 209-13.

Mounted Infantry's usefulness, at least in the eyes of senior army commanders.<sup>9</sup>

The third factor that risked the Mounted Infantry's ability to fight was its logistical requirements. These will be considered in more detail later in this chapter but as an active service arm, the Mounted Infantry formed only on mobilisation for combat overseas usually in hostile territory at the furthest reaches of logistical supplies.<sup>10</sup> Although this logistical challenge applied to other units participating in the same campaign, the fact that the Mounted Infantry did not have a permanent peacetime organisation or depot with stockpiled equipment,<sup>11</sup> meant that they were often required to source supplies and equipment locally, including the sourcing of its mounts in theatre, although that at least in theory resulted in the use of the most suitable animals for the climate and terrain.<sup>12</sup> Hence the Mounted Infantry not only faced the logistical challenges common to all units of the entire

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<sup>9</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6260 Composition of a Brigade of Cavalry 1901, Roberts claimed that 'I can scarcely call to mind an occasion while I was in command in South Africa when cavalry were ordered out when the Commanding Officer did not beg to have some Mounted Infantry sent with him'.

<sup>10</sup> Goltz, 'Military Lessons of the South African War', pp. 371-94, evocatively described the distances involved in the Boer War as 'the total depth of the theatre of war from Cape Town to the Limpopo is equal as the crow flies to the distance from Vienna to Moscow'. He also remarked that 'even that part of Europe which is most poorly provided with railways is three times more accessible than the theatre of war of the late Boer republics'; Colonel Sir H. Vincent, 'Lessons of the War: personal observations and impressions of the forces and military establishments now in South Africa', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 44, 1900, pp. 605-62, made a similar estimation indicating that the lines of communication for the British Army in South Africa equated to the distances encountered by starting 'from Calcutta, landing at Marseilles and fighting at Hamburg'.

<sup>11</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7869 Formation of Mounted Infantry 1900; TNA WO 32 / 7091 Mounted Infantry battalions mobilisation 1907, a situation only partly ameliorated after the Boer War with three battalions' sets of equipment held at Aldershot.

<sup>12</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture One, 2 June 1886, pp.1-44.

expeditionary force but also idiosyncratic problems specific to its organisation and formation.<sup>13</sup>

To answer the chapter's research question, four military campaigns have been selected for analysis, which, as indicated in the Introduction, permit a comparison of the Mounted Infantry at chronologically different times in its evolution, in campaigns against markedly different adversaries and in different environments.<sup>14</sup> It is acknowledged that other campaigns such as those occurring in Burma, Mashonaland, Somaliland or Tibet could equally have been included as case studies but nevertheless, the selected campaigns are, arguably, the major deployments on active service of the British Army during the time period covered by this thesis with which to ascertain the Mounted Infantry's military effectiveness. Although as Nasson has claimed, all these 'small wars' shared the common drivers of achieving success at minimal cost, both monetary and human, in difficult geo-climatic circumstances and requiring a human dimension based on courage and morale<sup>15</sup> in unfamiliar environments without immediate recourse to reinforcements, each campaign manifests its own peculiarities, not least for the Mounted Infantry. The functions expected of the Mounted Infantry differed markedly from being substitute cavalry in the Transvaal Rebellion 1881, as an adjunct conferring additional firepower to the cavalry in Egypt

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<sup>13</sup> British Army Publication: *Operations*, 0308b and 0402, 'expeditionary force' in this context refers to a military force with the capabilities necessary for a military operation, configured for operational deployment outside of the homeland with an express strategic purpose.

<sup>14</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture One, 2 June 1886, pp.1-44, 'the work required by the British soldier, aye and sailors too, is as varied as the climates under which they serve'.

<sup>15</sup> Nasson, *The War in South Africa*, p.96.

in 1882, as camel-borne mobile infantry in the Nile Expedition 1885 and as a utility force combining cavalry roles with policing duties, including escort protection, farm searches and the cross-country pursuit of insurgents, that characterised the guerrilla war occurring after the fall of Pretoria. Thus it is against this contextual backdrop of four imperial campaigns that the Mounted Infantry's military effectiveness will be investigated. However as a prelude, it is necessary to clarify the concept of 'military effectiveness' and define the metrics used to aid the analysis of the Mounted Infantry on active service.

As a broad generalisation, the concept of military effectiveness is a multifaceted construct with elements pertaining to the overall success of the mission or war, the achievement of predetermined objectives for the arm itself,<sup>16</sup> efficiency in resource utilisation,<sup>17</sup> resilience to adverse factors including terrain and climate<sup>18</sup> as well as in response to contact with adversaries,<sup>19</sup> and whilst some elements can be assessed objectively, others are more subjective depending on the viewpoint and opinion of the observer undertaking the analysis. Military effectiveness can be considered on a number of levels including political, strategic, operational and tactical, as defined in this thesis' initial chapter. The nature of Victorian colonial wars,

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<sup>16</sup> British Army Publication: *Operations*, 0513 a-c.

<sup>17</sup> British Army Publication: *Operations*, 0904b, defines 'efficiency' as 'achieving the maximum level of support for the least logistical effort to make the best use of finite resources, the supply network and lines of communication.

<sup>18</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.57, 'small wars are, generally speaking, campaigns against nature than against hostile armies'.

<sup>19</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, pp.66-69; Michael Howard, *Clausewitz: a very short introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.25.

fought with resource- limited expeditionary forces,<sup>20</sup> combined with a prevailing tendency for personalisation of command, often resulted in a merging of operational and tactical command that permitted an expeditionary force commander to exert his own personal style of fighting during an expedition. This situation was magnified by the absence of written army doctrine. Both Roberts and Wolseley surrounded themselves with selected subordinates with proven abilities from a limited pool of aspirants.<sup>21</sup> Yet increasingly, improving communications technology permitted the Government to demonstrate a greater involvement, if not control, at the strategic and operational levels of command across the Empire.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, using four case studies of imperial campaigns, components of military effectiveness will be evaluated through analyses of the Mounted Infantry's application of firepower, attainment of mobility, provision of force protection, ability in undertaking cavalry roles of reconnaissance and scouting when required, specific contribution to the attainment of objectives or fulfilment of the campaign, Mounted Infantry officers' recognition and understanding of lessons learned from the campaigns and whether these lessons influenced subsequent Mounted Infantry doctrine and training. Thus the focus is more on operational and tactical factors rather than the political or strategic

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<sup>20</sup> British Army Publication: *Operations*, 0308b, notes, not entirely self-evidently when viewed from a historical perspective, that expeditionary forces require proper resourcing.

<sup>21</sup> Brigadier General F.P. Crozier, *Angels on Horseback* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1932), p.70, others were less charitable with Crozier writing 'jobbery ran rampant down Pall Mall' indicating an atmosphere of undue preferment through political or personal influence that was accepted if not always welcomed by senior commanders.

<sup>22</sup> Niall Ferguson, *Empire: how Britain made the Modern World* (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 168-69, considers that the telegraph, together with the steamship and railway, were the three most significant technological advances in the development and control of the Empire.

although the analysis reflects these variables when necessary to illustrate the Mounted Infantry on active service. Whilst a number of metrics are considered, part of the difficulty in quantifying specific relevant metrics reflects the challenges inherent in the Mounted Infantry model itself. It is acknowledged that out of necessity, the majority of the metrics considered are qualitative rather than quantitative. Whether casualties, disciplinary records<sup>23</sup> or awards are considered, the recording of such metrics is usually attributed to the parent battalion rather than primarily to the Mounted Infantry unit. Similarly, assessing rates of equine loss during the Boer War between cavalry regiments and Mounted Infantry is also fraught with difficulty<sup>24</sup> as simple numerical comparisons fail to take account of different tasks allotted to various mounted units, the relative requirements of different mobile columns working across different terrains, the nature of their mounts and experience of the men - noting that for the Mounted Infantry, length of time on active service or possession of pre-war training was directly proportional to their competency as horsemasters.<sup>25</sup> The other confounding problem of metrics in determining success is whether the statistics truly reflect military progress and thus indicate who was 'winning the war', a problem replicated

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<sup>23</sup> TNA WO 16 / 2493 Pay Lists 'A' Company Mounted Infantry October 1886 to March 1888, is an exception to the rule with semi-permanent Mounted Infantry being considered as an entity with its component detachments recorded separately ; TNA WO 108 / 174 Final recommendations for the Mounted Infantry in South Africa 1902, is another exception dealing with recommendations for awards among officers and non-commissioned officers of Mounted Infantry battalions although this was at the end of a long conflict during which the Mounted Infantry had developed a degree of permanency (at least for the duration of the conflict) that conferred an identity separate to that of the officers' permanent battalions. Nonetheless, the officers were still referred to by both their Mounted Infantry number and nomenclature of parent regiment.

<sup>24</sup> Childers, *War and the Arme Blanche*, p.197.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, *A Veterinary History*, p.238.

in other conflicts, particularly counterinsurgencies.<sup>26</sup> Most pertinently, metrics quoted for the later stages of the Boer War concentrate on quantitative values such as numbers of farms searched and burned,<sup>27</sup> rounds of ammunition and numbers of rifles captured, types and quantum of livestock seized<sup>28</sup> and prisoners of war captured (despite the ever-present problem in determining combatant from non-combatant during an insurgency).<sup>29</sup> None of these metrics reliably indicated either military success from a strategic perspective nor operationally facilitated easy comparison between the achievements of Mounted Infantry and cavalry.<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, it is anticipated that this analysis will help clarify the Mounted Infantry's contribution to the colonial campaigns under evaluation as a measure of its military effectiveness, for as Howard Bailes points out, the lessons of Victorian colonial conflicts were 'neither insignificant nor ignored'<sup>31</sup> by the army's senior commanders and to an extent, also influenced later army doctrine and military planning.

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<sup>26</sup> Gregory A. Daddis, 'The Problem of Metrics: assessing progress and effectiveness in the Vietnam War', *War in History*, 19(1), 2012, pp. 73-98.

<sup>27</sup> Du Moulin, *Two Years on Trek*, p.267, quantified the significant resource implication for this duty on his mobile column of two companies of Mounted Infantry delegated this task daily.

<sup>28</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.145, 'the adoption of guerrilla methods by the enemy almost necessarily forces the regular troops to resort to punitive measures directed against the possessions of their antagonists'.

<sup>29</sup> LHCMA, *Hamilton Papers*, 2/4/10/4, reflected that the challenges were not resolved by Roberts' proclamation of 14 August 1900 that legitimised farm burning if it was suspected or proven that insurgents were being harboured in the dwelling.

<sup>30</sup> Du Moulin, *Two Years on Trek*, p.111; Lieutenant Colonel J. Watkins Yardley, *With the Inniskilling Dragoons: the Record of a Cavalry Regiment during the Boer War 1899 – 1902* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1904), p.330, each list, as examples, the yield from field operations using such metrics.

<sup>31</sup> Howard Bailes, 'Technology and Imperialism: a case study of the Victorian Army in Africa', *Victorian Studies*, 24 (1), 1980, pp. 82-104.



Throughout its existence, two fundamental outcomes were central to the application of Mounted Infantry firepower, namely the adjunctive effect of the Mounted Infantry's rifle fire in support of cavalry action<sup>32</sup> and the Mounted Infantry's functionality as a mobile reserve of infantry bringing additional firepower to the firing line.<sup>33</sup> The latter function of being a mobile infantry reserve was an important attribute that distinguished the regular Mounted Infantry from most other nations' variants of Mounted Infantry.<sup>34</sup> Clearly, Hutton considered that the ability to apply firepower on the imperial battlefield was of crucial if not pre-eminent importance in colonial campaigning, asserting that 'it is firepower which alone is really effective against savages or even Asiatics; that lance and sabre is of small real value in comparison'.<sup>35</sup> Hutton subsequently qualified this unequivocal pro-Mounted Infantry statement, acknowledging that mounted pursuit of retreating adversaries could be decisive in attaining victory but he stopped short of fully endorsing the doctrine of the *arme blanche*.<sup>36</sup> Similarly the 1897 *Regulations* confirmed that the basis of the Mounted Infantry's effectiveness in battle was predicated

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<sup>32</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Three, 12 November 1890, pp.1-20, considered optimistically that the addition of Mounted Infantry to the cavalry increased the latter's power by a hundred-fold.

<sup>33</sup> *Mounted Infantry Training 1906*, pp.56-57.

<sup>34</sup> *Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv – Kriegsarchiv* (hereafter BHaStA (K)), *Dienstordnung für Eskadrons Jäger zu Pferde 1900* (BHaStA(k)/Abt.IV GenKdo I b.A.K(F) 290), the German use of Mounted Infantry, apart from in its overseas possessions, was almost exclusively in a communications role and not as a mobile reserve of firepower, a role otherwise delegated to units of *Jägers* attached to cavalry regiments.

<sup>35</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Four, 20 April 1891, pp.1-27.

<sup>36</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, *ibid.*

on the accuracy and efficiency of its rifle fire.<sup>37</sup> For the Mounted Infantry as an abstracted infantry force, clearly its attribute of firepower remained that of the infantry in general and reflected the infantry's weaponry, musketry skills, ability to take and hold ground, its application of prevailing tactics whether 'forming square' or 'fire and movement' and, in part, remained subject to any weaknesses of the infantry either from its tactics or weaponry. During the Mounted Infantry's lifetime, the principal infantry weapon, its rifle, underwent a number of technological advances. A major change, commencing in 1888, was the replacement of the single-shot Martini-Henry rifle with the magazine-fed Lee-Metford.<sup>38</sup> Although this meant faster reloading and therefore, potentially, a greater application of firepower,<sup>39</sup> the introduction of the multi-round magazine risked creating tensions between fire discipline,<sup>40</sup> excessive utilisation of ammunition and, most pertinently for colonial campaigns that often had lengthy lines of communication, threatened the adequacy of supply of ammunition. This change in rifle also diminished some of the adverse factors associated with the Martini-Henry rifle, which in replacing the Snider rifle<sup>41</sup> had itself contributed to improved accuracy and consequent lethality through increased rates of fire. The Martini-Henry was renowned for its fierce

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<sup>37</sup> *Regulations for Mounted Infantry 1897*, p. 60.

<sup>38</sup> Ford, 'Towards a Revolution in Firepower?' pp.273-99.

<sup>39</sup> Captain G.E. Benson, *Smokeless powder and its probable effect upon the tactics of the future*, Aldershot Military Society, Lecture Tuesday 23 March 1893 (Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1893), provides a contemporary overview of the impact of these technological advances.

<sup>40</sup> Captain Ian Hamilton, *The Fighting of the Future* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1885), p.15, Hamilton was suspicious of the use of magazine-fed rifles in case this diminished fire discipline and, by extension, accuracy of musketry.

<sup>41</sup> Myatt, *The Soldier's Trade: British Military Developments*, p.33, the Snider was considered to be the first official army breechloader rifle.

recoil that was implicated in the infantry's inaccurate shooting by the War Office's Committee on Musketry Instruction.<sup>42</sup> Yet the rifle was considered by the Committee to be superior in accuracy to the cavalry's Martini-Henry carbine at distances beyond 800 yards (730 metres).<sup>43</sup> This accuracy at greater distance contributed to the accolades received by the Mounted Infantry during the Egyptian Campaign in 1882 where the Mounted Infantry, alongside cavalry, anchored the right wing of Wolseley's force against flanking attacks coming out of the desert either by regular Egyptian cavalry or its Bedouin auxiliaries by shooting accurately at ranges of up to 2000 yards (1830 metres).<sup>44</sup> Admittedly not every military commentator was as complimentary about the Mounted Infantry's musketry prowess as illustrated by the German Army's history of the conflict.<sup>45</sup> However British official reports acknowledged that the accuracy of shooting reflected that the Mounted Infantrymen had been selected for their marksmanship and their previous Mounted Infantry service,<sup>46</sup> and thus played an important tactical

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<sup>42</sup> TNA WO 33 / 37 Committee on Musketry Instruction in the Army; Myatt, *The Soldier's Trade: British Military Developments*, p.34.

<sup>43</sup> TNA WO 33 / 37 Committee on Musketry Instruction in the Army.

<sup>44</sup> TNA WO 33 / 41 Confidential Reports on the Egyptian Command 1883; TNA WO 106 / 5951 Report on Egypt: Intelligence Branch 1882.

<sup>45</sup> Lieutenant Colonel H. Vogt, *The Egyptian War of 1882* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1883), p.110 & p.34, although Vogt acknowledged that 'the want of cavalry was made up to a certain extent by Mounted Infantry who rendered good service'.

<sup>46</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6094 Dispatches of the Egyptian War 1882, correspondence from Archibald Alison to the Secretary of State for War, 19 July 1882, claiming the merit for the inception of the Mounted Infantry force - 'it now appeared what could be done by having in the ranks of the infantry regiments a number of men fully trained to the duties of Mounted Infantry'; TNA WO 28 / 356 Expedition to Egypt: General Orders 1882.

role in the campaign.<sup>47</sup> This assessment was despite the fact that the Mounted Infantry's numerical paucity had been exacerbated by needing to delegate extra men for horse holding duties due to the nature of their locally sourced mounts.<sup>48</sup> The Martini-Henry rifle also had another weakness, that of frequent jamming during repeated use, particularly in desert conditions, thus undermining its reliability on colonial campaigns. Although a weak extractor mechanism may have been the culprit,<sup>49</sup> a number of additional factors were implicated and considered contributory to this flaw, estimated by Captain Crabb, an experienced musketry instructor in the Grenadier Guards, to have affected approximately 25 per cent of Martini-Henry rifles used in action at Abu Klea during the 1885 Nile campaign.<sup>50</sup> These additional factors included the particular design of the Martini-Henry's rifling with seven grooves that were easily fouled with repetitive firing; the further effects of rapid firing contributing to fouling through excessive ammunition charge; the ambient heat, and, finally, sand contamination.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore the prevailing but imperfect cartridge design of a thin coil of brass attached to a disc-shaped base of the priming cap, either permitted sand particles to foul the

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<sup>47</sup> Colonel J.F. Maurice, *The Campaign of 1882 in Egypt* (London: HMSO, 1887), p.47.

<sup>48</sup> TNA WO 147 / 34 Report on the Mounted Infantry in Egypt 1882, reported concerns that the use of the Khedive's stallions, rather than more docile animals, required a greater number of horse holders than the quarter of men expected.

<sup>49</sup> Ford, 'Towards a Revolution in Firepower?', pp.273-99; Myatt, *The Soldier's Trade: British Military Developments*, p.34.

<sup>50</sup> TNA WO 147 / 57 Special Committee on Small Arms: report on jamming of cartridges in the Martini-Henry rifle and complaints with regards to bayonets in Egypt 15<sup>th</sup> October 1885 – 19<sup>th</sup> April 1886.

<sup>51</sup> TNA WO 147 / 57 Special Committee on Small Arms: report on jamming of cartridges in the Martini-Henry rifle, *ibid*; Joseph Lehmann, *The First Boer War* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972), p.108.

cartridge<sup>52</sup> or, when combined with the weak extractor, caused the cartridge to disintegrate and jam the breech.<sup>53</sup> None of these factors should have surprised Wolseley at Abu Klea as during his advance up the Nile in 1884, 50 per cent of the rifles used on a crocodile hunting trip had jammed.<sup>54</sup> The War Office Committee also postulated an additional human dimension to the problem of jamming by suggesting that the 'excitement of the firer' was a further contributory factor.<sup>55</sup> Despite a suggestion to the contrary,<sup>56</sup> all detachments of the Camel Corps, irrespective of their arm of origin, were affected by jamming of their Martini-Henry rifles.<sup>57</sup> As selected marksmen with exemplary infantry credentials, it is likely that the Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment had, at worst, only a comparable rate of jamming to other detachments due to these mechanical and environmental issues and conceivably perhaps, a lower rate than its cavalry colleagues who were unused to firing the Martini-Henry rifle until their on-board training during their sea journey to Egypt.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Gleichen, *A Guardsman's Memories*, p.25.

<sup>53</sup> Ford, 'Towards a Revolution in Firepower?', pp.273-99, the alternative, a solid brass cartridge did not have such flaws yet was more expensive and complex to manufacture and the cartridge's increased weight added to the logistical problems of adequate supply when on expedition.

<sup>54</sup> Preston, *In Relief of Gordon*, p.55.

<sup>55</sup> TNA WO 147 / 57 Special Committee on Small Arms: report on jamming of cartridges in the Martini-Henry rifle and complaints with regards to bayonets in Egypt, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1885 – 19<sup>th</sup> April 1886.

<sup>56</sup> Nash, *Chitral Charlie*, p.21, makes the claim that the Royal Marine Light Infantry detachment of the Guards Camel Regiment avoided jamming by wrapping a cloth around the rifle breech.

<sup>57</sup> TNA WO 147 / 57 Special Committee on Small Arms: report on jamming of cartridges in the Martini-Henry rifle and complaints with regards to bayonets in Egypt 15<sup>th</sup> October 1885 – 19<sup>th</sup> April 1886, specifically notes that even the Guards Camel Regiment suffered jamming.

<sup>58</sup> Gleichen, *A Guardsman's Memories*, p.25.

The cavalry would again be at a disadvantage in the Boer War in terms of firearm range and accuracy through their preferential retention of the carbine<sup>59</sup> in comparison to the infantry's Lee-Metford and subsequently Lee-Enfield rifles. The latter's rifling was less susceptible to fouling and wear from cordite-containing ammunition.<sup>60</sup> The cavalry's carbine was not only at a disadvantage when compared to the infantry's weapon<sup>61</sup> but it was significantly inferior to the weapon of its adversary, the Boers' Mauser. A contemporary military opinion indicated that 'the Mauser will easily kill you at a distance of two miles and the carbine does not carry to within half a mile of this and does not shoot nearly so well'.<sup>62</sup> This deficiency in weaponry and its possible impact on the cavalry's firepower, in comparison to the Mounted Infantry, was a concern for Roberts who noted a growing dependency in army commanders on the Mounted Infantry for its firepower<sup>63</sup> and whilst French tried to dispel Roberts' poor opinion of cavalry firepower,<sup>64</sup> the cavalry officer, Edmund Allenby, recognised the beneficial effects of re-

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<sup>59</sup> Childers, *War and the Arme Blanche*, p.9 & p.86; Crichton, 'The Yeomanry and its future', pp. 661-91, although representing Yeomanry views, Crichton merely echoed the cavalry's view when he fervently hoped that 'we may never be obliged to hamper ourselves and our horses with the long rifle'.

<sup>60</sup> Baldwin and Miller, 'The Development of Soldiers' Weapons, 1816 – 1914', pp. 196-207; Rodney Atwood, *Roberts & Kitchener in South Africa 1900 – 1902* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2011), p.281.

<sup>61</sup> TNA WO 108 / 272 Extracts of Reports by Officers Commanding Units in South Africa 1899 -1901: rifles, carbines, small arms ammunition, sword bayonet, although Buller mendaciously persisted in his opinion of equity in range and accuracy between carbine and rifle.

<sup>62</sup> A.F. Russell, *Cavalry Doctor: letters written from the field 1900 – 1900* (Constantia: privately published by Dr I. Robertson, 1979), p.81.

<sup>63</sup> TNA WO 108 / 409 Home and Overseas Correspondence by Field-Marshal Lord Roberts 12<sup>th</sup> December 1899 – 4<sup>th</sup> June 1900, correspondence with the Secretary of State for War, 15 April 1900.

<sup>64</sup> French, *Some War Diaries*, p.15, diary entry, 5 April 1900.

arming the cavalry with the rifle.<sup>65</sup> Clearly this change had the inescapable effect of propelling the cavalry functionally, if not organisationally, more towards the Mounted Infantry paradigm.<sup>66</sup> However the rifle was not a weapon without its own imperfections with concerns raised by Mounted Infantry and infantry officers that the Lee-Metford had a tendency to shoot aberrantly to the right,<sup>67</sup> an anomaly that also affected the Lee-Enfield temporarily until modifications were made.<sup>68</sup> Although contemporary predictions were made in military publications regarding the additional firepower possible from integration of Maxims with both Mounted Infantry and cavalry,<sup>69</sup> the unreliability of early machine guns, as exemplified by the jamming of the Gardner gun at Abu Klea,<sup>70</sup> and additional factors such as their weight, the problems of transporting them<sup>71</sup> and the cynicism regarding

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<sup>65</sup> Brian Gardner, *Allenby* (London: Cassell, 1965), p.45.

<sup>66</sup> Childers, *War and the Arme Blanche*, p.168.

<sup>67</sup> TNA WO 108 / 272 Extracts of Reports by Officers Commanding Units in South Africa 1899 -1901: rifles, carbines, small arms ammunition, sword bayonet.

<sup>68</sup> TNA WO 105 / 24 Lord Roberts: confidential reports, 25 January 1900, report by Lieutenant Colonel Cunningham, Worcestershire Regiment who tested eight Lee-Enfield rifles and found that they all shot approximately 2 feet (0.6m) to the right at a range of 400 yards (366m). This experimental finding was confirmed by six marksmen from the Royal Irish Regiment who tested eight Lee-Enfield rifles and again found them to all shoot to the right at a range of 350 yards (320m).

<sup>69</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Five, 5 June 1891, pp.1-30.

<sup>70</sup> *London Gazette*, 28 April 1885, in a personal testimony, Lord Charles Beresford, in charge of the Gardner gun at Abu Klea, explained that the gun was jammed after 70 rounds fired (40 of which had been fired inaccurately too high) by the extractor of the second barrel from the right that pulled the head off the previously fired empty cartridge cylinder thus blocking the automatic insertion of a new round into the chamber; Wilson, *From Korti to Khartoum*, p.33, Wilson's account differs in the details of how many rounds were fired by the Gardner before jamming with Wilson claiming an insignificant 10 rounds. This adds to the opinion that automated guns added little to infantry firepower at this time.

<sup>71</sup> Evans, 'The British Army and Technology Before 1914', pp.113-22, that eventually led to the cavalry being issued with the new and lighter Vickers machine gun.

the value of machine gun troops by soldiers,<sup>72</sup> diminished the popularity and tactical value of this technological innovation with officers and soldiers alike, until the years after the Boer War.<sup>73</sup> Thus the possession of the infantry rifle, in comparison to the cavalry carbine, conferred an advantage on the Mounted Infantry as mobile mounted troops, yet possession of a superior weapon was insufficient on its own to ensure the delivery of effective firepower. This also demanded higher standards of musketry skills and improved infantry tactics on the battlefield,<sup>74</sup> underpinned fortunately in the Mounted Infantry by the selection of fully trained infantrymen.<sup>75</sup>

Therefore, when evaluating the Mounted Infantry's military effectiveness in the Transvaal Rebellion, it is difficult to assess the hastily extemporised Mounted Infantry,<sup>76</sup> configured from volunteers from the 58<sup>th</sup> Foot and 60<sup>th</sup> Rifles who claimed good musketry skills but only basic levels of equitation, in terms of its firepower and distinguish it from the infantry as a whole. The analysis is obscured even more by the leavening of the Mounted Infantry with small numbers of troopers from the KDG and members of the Army

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<sup>72</sup> Anon, *The Cossack Post: the Journal of B Squadron, Paget's Horse, De La Rey's Farm, Lichtenberg, Transvaal, February – May 1901*, (London: Junior Army and Navy Stores Ltd., 1901), 20 March 1901, 'Maxim gunners are peculiarly susceptible to any disease curable only by complete rest'.

<sup>73</sup> Captain R.V.K Applin, 'Machine guns with Cavalry', *Cavalry Journal*, 2, 1907, pp. 320-25; Evans, 'The British Army and Technology Before 1914', pp. 113-22; Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.440, stated 'it is indeed only comparatively recently that machine guns have proved a success in any kind of warfare'; Captain the Honourable Lord C. Beresford, 'Machine Guns in the Field', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 28, 1884 – 5, pp. 941-63, provides an alternative pre-Boer War viewpoint.

<sup>74</sup> Maude, *Cavalry*, p.275, warned against the assumption that accurate shooting in war can be secured by peacetime target practice.

<sup>75</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Four, 20 April 1891, pp.1-27.

<sup>76</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture One, 2 June 1886, pp.1-44, described the Mounted Infantry at Laing's Nek as 'makeshift and untrained'.



Service Corps<sup>77</sup>. General Colley appeared not to particularly favour Mounted Infantry or irregular cavalry<sup>78</sup> and thus the *ad hoc* Mounted Infantry were deployed optimistically as substitute cavalry in attempting to supply all of Colley's mounted needs,<sup>79</sup> until the arrival of the 15<sup>th</sup> Hussars immediately before Majuba.<sup>80</sup> Thus there appears not to have been a specific Mounted Infantry component to Colley's operational plans other than an attempt to configure a makeshift cavalry. This underlines the contemporaneous lack of understanding within the British Army of how best to tactically deploy Mounted Infantry - a vestige of the preceding years of extemporisation when needed. Overall the Mounted Infantry would play a minor role in the conflict and as such was frittered away at the battle of Laing's Nek. Here the Mounted Infantry's futile charge uphill into enemy rifle fire sustained casualties both from Boer bullets but also from its own inadequate equitation and consequently was devoid of any offensive impact. As a result, the attacking 58<sup>th</sup> Foot was exposed on its right flank to enfilade fire that precipitated its retreat.<sup>81</sup> Clearly a dismounted assault by the Mounted Infantry, using favourable cover in a manner shortly to be demonstrated by

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<sup>77</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7810 Dispatches from South Africa 1881- Laing's Nek.

<sup>78</sup> W. Willoughby Verner, *The Military Life of HRH George, Duke of Cambridge* (London: John Murray, 1905), p.190, letter to the Duke of Cambridge, 12 February 1881; Firepower, *Colley Papers*, notebook of General Sir George Pomeroy Colley, MD 229, comments that 'irregular cavalry did not work well in Persia' – although the illegibility of further notes prevents further elucidation on this theme.

<sup>79</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7811 Telegrams & Dispatches South Africa 1880, correspondence with the Secretary of State for War, 19 December 1880; Lady Bellairs, *The Transvaal War 1880-81* (London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1885), p.371; Laband, *The Transvaal Rebellion*, p.130.

<sup>80</sup> Hare, *The Annals of the King's Royal Rifle Corps*, IV, p.337.

<sup>81</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7810 Dispatches from South Africa 1881- Laing's Nek; TNA, *Ardagh Papers*, PRO 30/40 / 3, 'Transvaal Engagements 1880 – 81', lecture by Colonel Spence.

the Boers at Majuba,<sup>82</sup> would have been more suitable for the predominantly infantry composition of this mounted detachment. Nonetheless, the command of the detachment by a cavalry officer, Major Brownlow of the KDG, effectively ruled out this tactical option. Instead, his inculcated tradition of cavalry élan verging, in Laband's view, on incompetent impetuosity, held sway.<sup>83</sup> Again this underlines the subsequent Mounted Infantry principle that wherever possible Mounted Infantry should be commanded by infantry officers. Colley's misuse of the Mounted Infantry as a cavalry substitute required to undertake a plethora of potentially contradictory roles, may be mitigation with which to partly exculpate Brownlow.<sup>84</sup> Despite Colley's effusive post-battle commendation, particularly of Brownlow,<sup>85</sup> this was not the Mounted Infantry's finest moment. Yet the mounted detachment's almost complete absence of training, magnified by the wrong tactics on an inauspicious battlefield, were errors that are difficult to ignore. The losses incurred at Laing's Nek subsequently impacted on the battle at Ingogo River, an action predicated on trying to preserve Colley's lengthy lines of communication<sup>86</sup> through the paucity of remaining Mounted Infantry for scouting and force protection. Apart from some expert musketry by the 60<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7827 Dispatches, reports & Courts of Inquiry 1881 – Majuba.

<sup>83</sup> Laband, *The Transvaal Rebellion*, p.149.

<sup>84</sup> Laband, *The Transvaal Rebellion*, p.130, enumerates Colley's expectation for his mounted troops including, scouting, force protection, flank attacks and pursuit when the opportunity arose.

<sup>85</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7810 Dispatches from South Africa 1881- Laing's Nek; Lehmann, *The First Boer War*, p.157, alleges that Brownlow refused to talk to his men for days after their failure at Laing's Nek.

<sup>86</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7813 Dispatches from South Africa 1881 – Ingogo River; Lieutenant-General Sir Edward Hutton, *A Brief History of the King's Royal Rifle Corps 1755 – 1918* (Winchester: Warren & Son, 1925), p.24.

Rifles, Ingogo River sheds little light on the remaining Mounted Infantry's military effectiveness.<sup>87</sup> Thus the conclusions drawn from the Mounted Infantry's involvement in the Transvaal Rebellion is less about the value of its firepower and more about the importance of Mounted Infantry training prior to combat, the need for at least basic standards of equitation and a need to understand how the deployment of Mounted Infantry, taking into account its rudimentary doctrine, contributed to operational planning. The absence of staff officers with Mounted Infantry experience, resulting from the *ad hoc* nature of the arm and the lack of higher formations of Mounted Infantry, was a deficiency that was never to be wholly corrected even after the Boer War. Thus the lesson highlighting the importance of prior training for troops destined to be used as Mounted Infantry, seemingly confirmed in northern Natal in 1881, formed part of the Intelligence Department's seminal 1881 précis and can be considered, arguably, the most important lesson recognised by senior army officers in relation to the inception of the Mounted Infantry arising from this conflict.<sup>88</sup>

The experiences of the Transvaal Rebellion also enhanced the infantry's awareness of the importance of marksmanship as a contributor to firepower. The prowess of Boer shooting,<sup>89</sup> although by no means accepted universally

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<sup>87</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7813 Dispatches from South Africa 1881 – Ingogo River; Marling, *Rifleman and Hussar*, p.51, called it a 'pyrrhic victory'; Laband, *The Transvaal Rebellion*, p162, although Laband laments the lack of mounted troops at Ingogo resulting from the defeat at Laing's Nek.

<sup>88</sup> WO 33 / 37 Précis on Mounted Infantry 1881.

<sup>89</sup> TNA, *Ardagh Papers*, PRO 30/40/1, lecture transcript 'Engagements in 1880 – 81' by Colonel J. Spence who stated that 'The Boers are Mounted Infantry well-armed with weapons of precision and are grand shots'; Willoughby Verner, *The Military Life of HRH George, Duke of Cambridge*, p.190, letter to the Duke of Cambridge, 12 February 1881.

by British soldiers either in 1881,<sup>90</sup> or in the later Boer War,<sup>91</sup> was considered generally to have been superior to the British soldiers in accuracy, rapidity of fire and demonstrated the worth of individual shooting prowess. It was considered, with perhaps a degree of hyperbole, as 'a novel method of warfare... demonstrating [the] great skills in use of their weapons',<sup>92</sup> or put another way, substantiated the mythology of the Boer as the 'most perfect Mounted Infantry' in the world'.<sup>93</sup> Although there was a desire to emulate the Boer rifleman through improved musketry practice in regiments such as the 58<sup>th</sup> Foot who had witnessed Boer marksmanship first-hand,<sup>94</sup> this ethos was neither absorbed by the wider army, still dependent on the infantry drill manual, nor did it translate into new doctrine.<sup>95</sup> This was despite the efforts of individual officers, particularly Ian Hamilton, who advocated superior marksmanship through applied musketry instruction that placed a premium on personal skill rather than relying on the firepower of the company volley.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Mole, *The King's Hussar*, p.209, 'the vaunted marksmanship of the Boers, of which so much has been heard, is vastly exaggerated'.

<sup>91</sup> TNA WO 108 / 272 Extracts of Reports by Officers Commanding Units in South Africa 1899 -1901: rifles, carbines, small arms ammunition, sword bayonet, submission by Major H Stewart, 4<sup>th</sup> Mounted Infantry, 'our men are so immeasurably superior to the Boers as shots (I speak of the regular Mounted Infantry); E.M. Spiers, *Letters from Ladysmith* (Barnsley: Frontline, 2010), p.138, a soldier in the 1<sup>st</sup> Border Regiment claimed that the Boers were 'not such good shots as they are supposed to be. They are all right if they are lying down with something to rest their rifles on but as soon as you go towards them they fire very wild'; Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Thorneycroft (Q.12440, p.19), 'Boer shooting has deteriorated since the last war in 1881'.

<sup>92</sup> Hannay, 'Mounted Infantry', pp. 416-24.

<sup>93</sup> TNA 32 / 7806 Proposal for the advance to the Transvaal 1881.

<sup>94</sup> Spiers, *The Army and Society*, p.210.

<sup>95</sup> Spiers, *The Army and Society*, p.230.

<sup>96</sup> Hamilton, *The Fighting of the Future*, p.15.

Hamilton would re-visit this theme several years later during the Boer War where, despite his advocacy of individual marksmanship and dispersed attacks to minimise casualties, these techniques were still not universally practised throughout the army.<sup>97</sup> As Hamilton scathingly wrote: 'to blaze away at a Boer galloping across the veldt without knowing where your bullet goes is no better practice than firing blank cartridges',<sup>98</sup> and moreover risked excessive utilisation of ammunition supplies that was a continual logistical concern during expeditionary warfare. Hamilton's was by no means a lone voice. Major General Bengough called for more tactical rifle practice rather than training in volley firing or static target shooting on ranges<sup>99</sup> whilst Du Moulin, commanding the Sussex Regiment's Mounted Infantry in the Boer War, reflected that 'volley firing is useless and what should be adopted is controlled individual firing using the magazine always and refilling it behind cover'.<sup>100</sup> One positive driver for the adoption of individual firing as opposed to volley firing was prior experience fighting on the North West Frontier of India, particularly in the recent Tirah Campaign.<sup>101</sup> As Du Moulin reflected:

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<sup>97</sup> Lieutenant Colonel E.H. Rodwell, *Reflections on the Boer War: three tactical lectures* (Lahore, Civil & Military Gazette, 1901), p.36.

<sup>98</sup> LHCMA, *Hamilton Papers*, 2/3/1, letter to Roberts, 13 November 1901.

<sup>99</sup> Bengough, *Notes and Reflection on the Boer War*, p. 32, although he was at pains to caution against solely using the Boer War as a reason for re-formulating all tactics and strategy; Hannay, 'Mounted Infantry', pp. 416-24, also made a plea for adequate ammunition to be made available for training. He noted that the US infantry cartridge allowance was 50 rounds per man per month; Tylden, 'The Camel Corps and the Nile Campaign of 1884-5', pp. 27-32, Mounted Infantry on overseas garrison duties were permitted 10 rounds per man per week, thus roughly the same as for the US infantry.

<sup>100</sup> Du Moulin, *Two Years on Trek*, p.48.

<sup>101</sup> Field Marshal Lord Birdwood, *Khaki and Gown* (London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1941), p.103, also recognised similarities between the tactics of the Boer and Afridis.

‘the experience gained in this war against the Afridis was extremely valuable to the officers and men, as the system of fighting adopted by the crafty Pathan bore many points of similarity to that carried out by brother Boer’.<sup>102</sup> In both scenarios, the adversary was adept at using cover and concealment whether in ‘hill fighting’ in India or in Natal, using the tactic of ambush with long distance marksmanship effecting surprise and inflicting casualties.<sup>103</sup> In South Africa, these tactics were aided by seemingly special atmospheric conditions that enhanced long range musketry.<sup>104</sup> If this was an experiential lesson learned by individual battalions and commanders, then why was this lesson not disseminated throughout the army? The absence of a written doctrine promulgated by a General Staff again provided an inhibiting context for dissemination of such tactical innovation. Colonel Callwell’s *Small Wars*, part manual, part semi-official doctrine, and the War Office’s *Combined Training* published in 1902,<sup>105</sup> began to reverse the preceding decades’ reliance solely on drill manuals. However even more retarding was the reluctance of senior army commanders for uniformity in operational matters, in fairness recognising that no single tactic suited all operational scenarios, which constituted the varied challenges of the colonial British Army.<sup>106</sup> This

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<sup>102</sup> Du Moulin, *Two Years on Trek*, p.13.

<sup>103</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.287.

<sup>104</sup> Badsey, ‘The Boer War (1899 – 1902) and British Cavalry Doctrine’, pp. 75-98.

<sup>105</sup> *Combined Training 1902*.

<sup>106</sup> Colonel I.F. MacAndrew, ‘Mounted Infantry’, *United Services Magazine*, Part 2, 1885, pp. 416-31, considered that the Mounted Infantry was ‘unquestionably a weapon of warfare of very great power suited to the abnormally varied conditions of the services of the British Army’; Callwell, *Small Wars*, although by the third edition in 1906, this book contained chapters of subjects (and terrain) as diverse as bush fighting, hill fighting and ‘principles of laager and zeriba warfare’.

was illustrated by the army's experiences in Africa where the tactics employed against the Boer would have been unsuitable against the Sudanese warrior. Although successful military doctrine is not necessarily scenario-specific, the prevailing *status quo* without an overarching doctrine emphasised the weaknesses of personalised command whereby personal experience and opinion erroneously equated to definitive knowledge in a limited pool of senior generals.<sup>107</sup>

Operationally and tactically, the relative might of infantry firepower ought to have contributed to the successful conclusions of expeditionary warfare. In many colonial campaigns, pitting technology against the more primitive weaponry of indigenous tribesmen meant that concentrated modern firepower could easily outmatch the offensive power of adversaries. Yet, because of the propensity of tribal warriors to ambush and use the sudden onslaught of shock tactics encouraged by terrain, much of the power of modern rifle technology risked being blunted.<sup>108</sup> Thus protection against warriors' shock tactics required a different approach compared to the individual musketry needed on the North West Frontier. A concerted weight of firepower was required to stop the momentum of a charge of warriors.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Travers, 'The Hidden Army', pp. 523-44.

<sup>108</sup> P.L. MacDougall, 'Our System of Infantry Tactics: What is it?', *The Nineteenth Century*, 17, 1885, pp. 833-46, stated that the charge of religiously-inspired tribesmen on foot was 'more formidable than a charge of cavalry' which, whilst there is some substance to the concept of the power of an inspired attacking force of warriors, is unlikely to match the physical momentum of a mounted charge; Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.206, deprecates any unnecessarily defensive attitude.

<sup>109</sup> *London Gazette*, 20 February 1885, the Camel Corps' commander, Brigadier General Sir Herbert Stewart, claimed that the incursion into the square at Abu Klea merely resulted from the weight of enemy numbers; Colonel Mike Snook, *Beyond the Reach of Empire* (London: Frontline Books, 2013), p. 497, Snook concurs with the theory that the weight of the attack permitted an incursion into the

The usual, though not exclusive, solution was the infantry square. The formation of square provided 360 degree protection, a hollow centre for the wounded and the commissariat and with the formation of two or more ranks per face, permitted the firing of continuous volleys by defenders. Furthermore, although unwieldy when moving, the square was both a defensive and, potentially offensive, formation. Equally though, movement of a square risked gaps appearing in one or more of its faces, often the rear face which tended to be the weaker of the four sides.<sup>110</sup> This risk arose either from the orientation of the troops in the rear-face or by disruption of the square's integrity such as at Abu Klea, in part through the dilatoriness of the camels accompanying the square. Defensively, the square had other weaknesses too with the corners being particularly vulnerable due to the abrupt change in orientation of the defenders' fire.<sup>111</sup> Hence tribesmen tended to focus their attacks on these corners, often attacking in a pyramidal configuration to minimise their own casualties.<sup>112</sup> In response, the corners of the square fortuitously tended to flatten and thus inadvertently increase the firepower produced at these vulnerable positions. Other inherent problems with the square was the limiting of firepower to just one 'face' rather than from the whole force, an observation that stimulated debate in military circles whether alternative tactics permitted a greater application of firepower

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British square although he considers that this was a separate and preliminary incursion prior to the main 'breaking' of the square.

<sup>110</sup> Major C.C. King, 'Soudan Warfare', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 29, 1885, pp. 887-958.

<sup>111</sup> Major C.C. King, 'Soudan Warfare', *ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> Macdonald, *Too Late for Gordon*, p.235.



without jeopardising force protection, such as echeloned lines<sup>113</sup> or smaller squares providing inter-dependent fire support (although the risk of ‘friendly fire’ was thus increased).<sup>114</sup> Although by the 1880s, in an era of increasing lethality from rifle and artillery fire, the formation of square in European conflicts was obsolete due to the high casualty rates expected from concentrating soldiers in close order, the square remained an acceptable tactic in hostile terrain overseas.<sup>115</sup>

The squares at Abu Klea and Abu Kru in the Nile campaign in 1885 provide suitable models to assess the balance of the benefits and weaknesses of the tactic. The near-disaster of the square at Abu Klea, where the integrity of the square failed allowing enemy incursion into the centre of the square, had a multi-factorial causation. As already indicated, the robustness of the rear-face was threatened through the slowness of the camels walking up a gravelly incline.<sup>116</sup> The square was moving slowly and had recently changed direction under senior orders<sup>117</sup> with this change in direction creating uneven

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<sup>113</sup> MacDougall, ‘Our System of Infantry Tactics’, pp. 833-46.

<sup>114</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.189, defended the use of the square as late as 1906 but only in specific circumstances overseas; King,, ‘Soudan Warfare’, pp. 887-958.

<sup>115</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.29, reflected that though expeditionary warfare necessitated adaptability in tactics depending on adversary, an essential part of this approach was the ability to defend against enemy shock tactics hence his ongoing support for the use of the square.

<sup>116</sup> Willoughby Verner, *Sketches in the Soudan*, n.p.

<sup>117</sup> Brigadier General Sir Douglas Dawson, *A Soldier- Diplomat* (London: John Murray, 1927), pp.95-96, blamed Stewart, commanding the Camel Corps, for changing the direction of travel of the square although he also claimed that it was Burnaby in charge of the square at Abu Klea. This seems unlikely as Burnaby was not present in any official capacity and that as a cavalry officer, he was less well-qualified than others, particularly the infantry commander Lieutenant Colonel Boscawen who would later assume executive command of the square at Abu Kru following Stewart’s mortal wounding; Snook, *Beyond the Reach of Empire*, p.248, disagrees and considers that it was likely that Burnaby , due to his seniority, may have been given command of at least parts of the square with Boscawen, in

sides and necessitating transfer of one of the Heavy Camel Regiment's detachments (Royal Scots Greys) to the left face to lengthen it.<sup>118</sup> The subsequent Arab attack added to the potential for disaster as its start point was very close to the square (150 yards / 137m), thus limiting the ability of the skirmishers outside the square to return to safety<sup>119</sup> whilst simultaneously obscuring the defenders' field of fire and reducing the number of volleys that could be delivered in such a short space of time. Snook argues that the use of skirmishers from the Mounted Infantry was ill-advised,<sup>120</sup> conferring no advantage over the square's firepower. Yet this ignores the increased casualties resulting from enemy sniper fire later at Abu Kru where skirmishers were not deployed that required the square to lie prone until the Arabs charged. Arguably, at Abu Klea, the greatest culpability remains with the Heavy Camel Regiment detachments in the rear-face where their inexperience in the use of the Martini-Henry rifle was exacerbated by the comparatively poor accuracy and rapidity of their rifle fire<sup>121</sup> and their lack of infantry drill required to maintain the square.<sup>122</sup> If a 25 per cent incidence of

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command of his own Camel Regiment, being subordinate in rank to Burnaby; Major General Henry Brackenbury, *The River Column* (London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1885), p.54, provides contemporaneous evidence that Burnaby was afforded an official role with Wolseley and Buller apparently appointing Burnaby to command the future depot at Metemmeh on the Nile; *London Gazette*, 25 August 1885.

<sup>118</sup> Lieutenant Colonel R. Talbot, 'The Battle of Abu Klea', *The Nineteenth Century*, 19, 1886, pp. 154 – 59; Household Cavalry Archives, Windsor, *Talbot Papers*, letter 28 January 1885.

<sup>119</sup> HHC, *Talbot Papers*, letter 28 January 1885.

<sup>120</sup> Snook, *Beyond the Reach of Empire*, p.496.

<sup>121</sup> Marling, *Rifleman and Hussar*, p.116, 'in those days, except at close range, the cavalry's shooting was rotten'.

<sup>122</sup> RA, *Cambridge Papers*, correspondence from Wolseley, 27 October 1884, indicating the need to drill the camel detachments as if they were Mounted infantry equipped with horses; Dundonald, *My*

rifle jamming is applied equally around the infantry square,<sup>123</sup> the resulting deficit in firepower emanating from the rear face through its inexperience was theoretically almost half of that of the other faces.<sup>124</sup> This deficiency was magnified by the error, almost certainly due to Colonel Burnaby's orders,<sup>125</sup> of disrupting the square's defensive architecture through some cavalry detachments' opening out linearly.<sup>126</sup> While understandable in the context of trying to maximise their firepower,<sup>127</sup> this act was a fatal blow to maintaining defence through the square's integrity.<sup>128</sup> With a conservative assessment of one third of the rear-face out of position and unable to fire cohesively, the theoretical calculation of the rear face's firepower diminishes further to approximately a third of the firepower from the other faces where there were infantry or Mounted Infantry. Lieutenant Colonel Talbot, commander of the Heavy Camel Regiment, tried to deflect subsequent criticism of his

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*Army Life*, p28, acknowledged that cavalry drill was too loose in formation for working in a square; Wilson, *From Korti to Khartum*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>123</sup> HHC, *Talbot Papers, Ludgate Magazine*, 1893, 'General Sir Herbert Stewart's March Across the Desert', by Corporal of Horse Brooks, 1<sup>st</sup> Life Guards, described how empty cartridges required expulsion from the breech with cleaning rods.

<sup>124</sup> Mounted Infantry / Guards-containing front face: 12 rounds per minute per man with average of 300 men in the front face ranks but with 25 per cent jamming gives a firepower rate of 900 rounds per minute; the cavalry rear face firing at a slower rate of 7 rounds per minute per man with the same number of soldiers and comparable jamming rate produced 525 rounds per minute i.e. 42 per cent reduction in firepower.

<sup>125</sup> HHC, *The Eagle (Journal of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dragoons)*, April 1910, the author, Burn Murdoch, states that it was Burnaby who ordered the wheeling out of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards out of line; *Lloyd's Weekly*, 1 March 1885, firmly blamed Burnaby; *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 14 March 1885, allegedly using evidence from Burnaby's friends and family, discounted that Burnaby was to blame.

<sup>126</sup> Appendix Three.

<sup>127</sup> MacDougall, 'Our System of Infantry Tactics', pp. 833-46.

<sup>128</sup> Macdonald, *Too Late for Gordon*, p.235, as a contemporary witness, clearly states that the movement of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards out of line was at the command of Burnaby who perished at Abu Klea.

cavalrymen by claiming rather disingenuously that the square had not been 'broken' as it had never 'formed properly'<sup>129</sup> on account of the gap caused by the wandering camels. Additionally he also defended his men's standard of shooting.<sup>130</sup> Yet in private correspondence, Talbot admitted Burnaby's mistake and consequent culpability for the penetration of the square.<sup>131</sup> Clearly the episode raises questions over the cavalry's lack of training, the issue of inappropriate delegation of command in the square and coordination of fire control of the square's sides, as well as the level of local intelligence of terrain and understanding of prevailing Arab tactics. Undoubtedly Wolseley should shoulder some of the blame as it was his idea to abstract men from cavalry regiments to fight as camel-borne Mounted Infantry<sup>132</sup> although he too was careful to deflect blame back onto the Heavy Camel Regiment, stating his disappointment that as selected men they hadn't performed better.<sup>133</sup> Talbot, among other correspondents, praised the performance of the Mounted Infantry Camel regiment.<sup>134</sup> Although it is difficult to quantitatively assess the Mounted Infantry's firepower in the square at Abu

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<sup>129</sup> HHC, *Talbot Papers*, letter 28 January 1885.

<sup>130</sup> Talbot, 'The Battle of Abu Klea', pp. 154-59.

<sup>131</sup> HHC, *Talbot Papers*, letter 28 January 1885.

<sup>132</sup> Wilson, *From Korti to Khartum*, pp. 32-33, certainly this appears to have been Wilson's opinion when enumerating the causes of the penetration of the square. He considered the use of cavalry as Mounted Infantry to have been a fundamental error. This criticism from Wilson needs to be understood in the political context whereby Wolseley made efforts to distance himself from any culpability for the failure to relieve Khartoum, deflecting the blame resolutely towards Wilson; Dundonald, *My Army Life*, p.83-84, acknowledged that the requirement for the numerically small cavalry contingents to master infantry drill was flawed.

<sup>133</sup> Preston, *In Relief of Gordon*, p.121.

<sup>134</sup> Talbot, 'The Battle of Abu Klea', pp. 154-59; Gleichen, *With the Camel Corps*, p. 85 & p.101, commented on the excellence of the Mounted Infantry's firepower both at Abu Klea and Abu Kru.

Klea due to problems with metrics, Talbot considered that it was the firepower of the Mounted Infantry that rescued the situation following the Arab incursion into the square when the Mounted Infantry and Guards reversed and fired into the square.<sup>135</sup> Eye-witness accounts also describe the discrepancy in the amount of enemy dead in front of the front face where the Mounted Infantry first countered the Arab charge and the smaller numbers in front of the other faces of the square.<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, the apparent veering of the Arab attack away from the Mounted infantry's front face down the left face and onto the angle of the rear face has been considered a response to the Mounted Infantry's firepower<sup>137</sup> and bearing in mind the Mounted Infantry's experienced infantry drill and musketry practice in comparison to the Heavy Camel Regiment, it would be surprising if the former had not applied greater firepower to the attack. If the metrics of casualties is considered, unsurprisingly the Heavy Camel Regiment suffered the greatest number of casualties of the Camel Corps (68 per cent)<sup>138</sup> although interpreting this as failure of effectiveness is difficult in view of the

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<sup>135</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.400, although Callwell makes the point that it was the bayonet that was the principal weapon that helped clear the square's interior but as an infantry tactic, this still underlines the value of using infantrymen in the square rather than cavalrymen unused to bayonet drill; Wilson, *From Korti to Khartum*, p.83, praised the 'steadiness of the Guards and the Mounted Infantry'; T. Archer, *The War in Egypt and the Soudan: an episode in the history of the British Empire* (London: Blackie & Son, 1886), p.26, considered it was the Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment that saved the square through its firepower; Dawson, *A Soldier-Diplomat*, p.97.

<sup>136</sup> Wilson, *From Korti to Khartum*, p.36.

<sup>137</sup> Willoughby Verner, *Sketches in the Soudan*, n.p.

<sup>138</sup> Webb, *The Abu Klea Medal Rolls*, pp.1-150, the major losses were in the 4<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards, 5<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards, 1<sup>st</sup> (Royal) Dragoons and 2<sup>nd</sup> Dragoons (Royal Scots Greys); Snook, *Beyond the Reach of Empire*, p.528, provides a remarkably similar assessment with his calculation indicating that the Heavy Camel Regiment suffered 61 per cent of all casualties in the square at Abu Klea.

Arab incursion occurring at precisely this part of the square defended by the cavalymen where fighting became hand-to-hand.<sup>139</sup> Nevertheless, it was ironic that the dragoons of the Heavy Camel Regiment, previously the historical prototype for Mounted Infantry, should have been the component of the Camel Corps whose effectiveness as Mounted Infantry failed at Abu Klea. Some of the lessons of Abu Klea were immediately recognised by the Camel Corps commanders when the force next came under attack at Abu Kru. Here the field of fire was maintained by withholding the use of skirmishers.<sup>140</sup> The Gardner gun was not included in the defence of the square in view of its proclivity to jam at inopportune moments and the integrity of the square was maintained throughout the attack despite the preliminary enemy sniping.<sup>141</sup> Arguably, the need for force protection, particularly against such shock tactics, meant the persistence of the square when it was otherwise obsolete in other theatres and, as described previously, deterred the evolution of the tactics of individual musketry until the experiences of the Boer War. The potential influence of reliable, portable machine guns able to deliver concentrated firepower without frequent jamming in colonial scenarios remains conjecture but might have been a potent stimulus to the adoption of different tactics.

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<sup>139</sup> Talbot, 'The Battle of Abu Klea', pp. 154-59, Talbot's defence of the Heavy Camel Regiment's performance included the claim that no other part of the square defended by cavalymen was penetrated although this seems to be somewhat irrelevant as exculpation as this was the point on the square where the main assault fell.

<sup>140</sup> Willoughby Verner, *Sketches in the Soudan*, n.p.; W. Melville Pimblett, *Story of the Soudan War* (London: Remington & Co., 1885), p.256.

<sup>141</sup> Snook, *Into the Jaws of Death*, p.313.

Thus, in conclusion from the viewpoint of applying firepower, the Mounted Infantry was considerably better than its cavalry counterparts through its enhanced musketry skills and familiarity with the rifle and by virtue of the Mounted Infantry's selection as expert marksmen, comparable to the best of the foot infantry. However, like its foot counterparts, the Mounted Infantry's effectiveness remained subject to prevailing army tactics including the limitations of the square.<sup>142</sup> Therefore, in the search for evidence of its military effectiveness, the second main *raison d'être* for Mounted Infantry, that of the application of mobility to firepower, where the challenge was to ensure 'requisite power of locomotion and the same mobility as cavalry without loss to its value as infantry',<sup>143</sup> demands analysis in order to determine the Mounted Infantry's military effectiveness.

Conferring mobility remained a fundamental purpose of the Mounted Infantry. Mobility permitted the Mounted Infantry to extend its firing line, retaining its firepower but reducing its casualties,<sup>144</sup> rather than as a dense formation clustered together on foot (although even the foot infantry were starting to extend their lines for similar reasons under certain commanders such as Ian Hamilton). Enhanced mobility conferred many benefits for the army that included allowing wider flanking movements that facilitated effective reconnaissance without discovery by the defenders and avoided losses through enemy fire; ability to outflank then enfilade in attack; cutting off lines

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<sup>142</sup> King, 'Soudan Warfare', pp. 887-958.

<sup>143</sup> Goodenough and Dalton, *The Army Book for the British Empire*, p.177.

<sup>144</sup> Denman, 'The Future of Mounted Infantry', pp. 382-91; Jones, *From Boer War to World War*, p.78.

of retreat of the defenders; pursuit of a fleeing enemy; improved protection of lines of communication; the delivery of mobile reserves where needed and to rapidly reinforce captured ground against enemy counter-attack. The assessment of the Mounted Infantry's mobility needs a comparative consideration of the Mounted Infantry's equitation abilities, its utilisation and care of its mounts, whether ponies or camels, the interface between its skills and tactics used on the battlefield and its contribution to the overall conduct of military campaigns. Reflecting the political reality within the contemporary British Army, a backdrop to the evaluation of these factors is the durable institutional competition between mounted arms that has been considered in preceding chapters, which necessitates comparison and contrast of the Mounted Infantry's mobility in the four selected conflicts with the performance of the regular cavalry.

As previously noted, the equitation and horsemanship of Mounted Infantry had been predicated, at least until 1888 with the opening of the Mounted Infantry schools, on brevity of training or experiential learning adequate for a rider to remain in his seat and care for his horse until the experiences of the Boer War.<sup>145</sup> Although perhaps an acceptable approach in small policing expeditions where the Mounted Infantry only needed to display limited mobility when accompanying foot soldiers, the fundamental errors inherent in this thinking were exposed in 1881 at Laing's Nek during the Transvaal Rebellion where Colley accepted (or gambled) that perfunctorily mounted infantrymen could gallop and charge uphill under fire, tactics which clearly

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<sup>145</sup> *Mounted Infantry Training 1906*, p. 12.



exceeded their abilities as horsemen.<sup>146</sup> Leaving aside the lack of capability for such cavalry tactics, Mounted Infantry needed enough equitation skills to be able to ride over difficult terrain along imperial borders, a factor magnified in significance when opposed by a highly mobile mounted adversary such as the Boers.<sup>147</sup> With expediency outweighing the lessons of 1881, Roberts' precipitate expansion of the Mounted infantry in South Africa in January 1900 was accompanied by little or no equitation training,<sup>148</sup> the frequent falls of Mounted Infantrymen becoming legend.<sup>149</sup> Winston Churchill caustically retold a Boer joke that the Mounted Infantry spent most of its time trying to keep hold of its hats.<sup>150</sup> The requirement for a large number of mounted troops should have been come as no surprise to the British Army as this potential had been realised presciently following the Transvaal rebellion<sup>151</sup> but had not featured in the initial planning of the Corps sent to South Africa in

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<sup>146</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7811 Telegrams & Dispatches South Africa 1880, telegram from Colley to Secretary State for War, 19 December 1880, although Colley recognised his weakness in mounted troops, it remains uncertain whether he recognised their lack of capability or just their numerical paucity.

<sup>147</sup> Colonel F.N. Maude, 'Mobility: its influence on strategy', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 52, 1908, pp. 196-207, estimated Boer mobility to be three-fold that of British regular Mounted Infantry although Maude's pro-cavalry leanings may have influenced this assertion.

<sup>148</sup> Smith, *A Veterinary History*, p.31; Maguire, 'The Mounted Infantry Controversy', pp. 602-05, estimated that in the first half of 1900, a quarter of Mounted Infantry never reached the frontline due to poor administration and staff work; Cosby Jackson, *A Soldier's Diary*, p.32, underwent three days' equitation training in South Africa.

<sup>149</sup> Scott, *Douglas Haig: The Preparatory Prologue*, p.147; Badsey, 'Mounted Combat in the Second Boer War', pp. 11-27.

<sup>150</sup> Churchill, 'Some Impressions of the War in South Africa', pp.102-113.

<sup>151</sup> TNA WO 33 / 37 Précis on Mounted Infantry 1881, written comments by Buller, 19 July 1881, 'if we have to fight the Boers again, we shall, after we have beaten them in the open, have to mount almost all of our infantry'; Bonne Esperance, 'Is Cavalry the arm for South Africa?', *United Services Magazine*, Part 2, 1886, pp. 311-17, the conclusion reached being that Mounted Infantry was preferable to cavalry in South Africa with the country's natural resources favouring smaller and more resilient ponies rather than larger cavalry horses.

1899. This error eventually precipitated a plea from Buller for more Mounted Infantry,<sup>152</sup> thus reflecting both a lack of learning from the previous 1881 campaign and an unfortunate tendency for both the British public and senior army officers to underrate the Boers as a mobile mounted fighting force.<sup>153</sup> Hence the need for appropriate standards of equitation in mounted troops would be a pertinent lesson of the Boer War with the post-war 1906 official manual, *Mounted Infantry Training*, stating categorically that ‘the idea that a “rough and ready” horseman is all that is necessary cannot be too strongly discountenanced. Sore backs and lack of confidence in the presence of the enemy are certain results of bad horsemanship’.<sup>154</sup>

As indicated above, by 1901–02 the equitation of Mounted Infantry had improved considerably<sup>155</sup> which contributed to improved mobility and translated into tactical innovation. In particular, the adoption of night marches, challenging if soldiers’ equitation was suspect that allowed the staging of dawn raids and the ambushing insurgents at first light.<sup>156</sup> This was a tactical adaptation previously employed successfully by Mounted Infantry in

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<sup>152</sup> NAM, *Roberts Papers*, 7101-23-114-1, telegram from Buller, 16 December 1899, requesting 8,000 irregulars organised and equipped as Mounted Infantry.

<sup>153</sup> TNA WO 105 / 5 Field Marshal Lord Roberts’ report on the situation in South Africa, 6 February 1900, ‘the difficulties of carrying on war in South Africa do not appear to be sufficiently appreciated by the British public’; Arthur Griffiths, ‘The Conduct of the War’, *The Fortnightly Review*, 397, 1900, pp. 1-10.

<sup>154</sup> *Mounted Infantry Training 1906*, p.12.

<sup>155</sup> Crum, *Memoirs of a Rifleman Scout*, p.90; Badsey, ‘Mounted Combat in the Second Boer War’, pp. 11-27; Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Bruce Hamilton (Q.17536, p.316), reportedly he once mounted a whole regiment and even those without previous Mounted Infantry training quickly became good Mounted Infantry.

<sup>156</sup> Crum, *Memoirs of a Rifleman Scout*, *ibid*; De Lisle, *Reminiscences of Sport and War*, p.109.

operations in Mashonaland,<sup>157</sup> and became a standard operating procedure for counterinsurgency operations in South Africa in 1901-02 whereby Boer commandos were often captured having rested overnight, falsely assuming protection in isolated farmsteads.

However this experiential 'learning curve' had been at the cost of excessive equine losses of 326,000 horses which, together with the deaths of over 51,000 mules and 195,000 oxen, amounted to a financial cost of more than £16,250,000.<sup>158</sup> In addition to such financial costs, this degree of equine wastage posed a major challenge for the availability of remounts<sup>159</sup> that was, in part, only resolved through overseas sourcing, which in turn added the problem of animal deaths during sea journeys<sup>160</sup> and the need for animal acclimatisation following disembarkation to the conundrum of achieving mobility. This need for equine acclimatisation was frequently overlooked by senior commanders who quickly dispatched new arrivals to the front to satisfy the need for fresh remounts to maintain mobility.<sup>161</sup> Clearly the

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<sup>157</sup> NAM, *Rose Papers*, 7201-9, Private Rose was in Number 3 section, Rifle Company, Mounted Infantry.

<sup>158</sup> Smith, *A Veterinary History*, p.v, losses evocatively described as stretching, if the dead animals were placed side by side, from London to Manchester.

<sup>159</sup> TNA WO 105 / 14 Telegrams received by Lord Roberts 1900, French requested urgent remounts for the Mounted Infantry, 12 August 1900.

<sup>160</sup> Smith, *A Veterinary History*, p.260, calculated at 3.7 per cent.

<sup>161</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1789, 1903, summary of conclusions, p.98, 'the chief cause of the loss of horses in the War was that they were for the most part bought from distant countries, submitted to a long and deteriorating sea voyage, when landed sent into the field without time for recuperation and then put to hard and continuous work on short rations'; Smith, *A Veterinary History*, p.239, a consensus of opinion indicated that two months' acclimatisation was required following a sea voyage, although Smith considered unrealistically that 12 months was more appropriate for optimal equine health; TNA WO 108 / 411 Home and Overseas Correspondence by Field Marshal Lord

problem of equine losses was not just confined to the Mounted Infantry. The official veterinary history identified generic problems with the British Army's treatment of its horses that implicated the cavalry as much as the Mounted Infantry.<sup>162</sup> These included inadequate forage, inadequate rations for the horses, insufficient watering,<sup>163</sup> and over-optimistic work schedules for the horses with mobile columns often covering in excess of 300 miles per month.<sup>164</sup> Furthermore, alongside a lack of remount services, veterinary services were inadequate, exacerbated particularly by a lack of farriers<sup>165</sup> especially in Mounted Infantry companies where it was recorded that it required seventy-four telegrams in order to secure the services of a farrier for just one company.<sup>166</sup> Unfortunately, this resulted in a tendency to abandon ill or lame horses out on the veldt.<sup>167</sup> It is difficult not to accuse this disorderly planning and disjointed organisation of support services of professional

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Roberts 5<sup>th</sup> September 1900 – 1<sup>st</sup> January 1901, correspondence with Lansdowne, 11-12 October 1900.

<sup>162</sup> Smith, *A Veterinary History*, pp. v-vi; TNA WO 108 / 411 Home and Overseas Correspondence by Field Marshal Lord Roberts 5<sup>th</sup> September 1900 – 1<sup>st</sup> January 1901, correspondence with Lansdowne, 11-12 October 1900, 'it is lamentable to see how little even cavalry soldiers know how to look after them [horses]'; Rimington, *Our Cavalry*, pp.205-06, claimed that even with excellent levels of horsemastership, experienced cavalry on active service would lose 15 per cent of its horses in the first week but a poorly trained cavalry would only have 15 per cent of its horses alive by the end of the same period.

<sup>163</sup> Sergeant Major Rowat, *A Soldier Who Did His Duty* (London: S.W. Partridge, 1912), p.65.

<sup>164</sup> Brevet Lieutenant Colonel F.F. Colvin and Captain E.R. Gordon, *Diary of the 9<sup>th</sup> (QR) Lancers during the South African Campaign 1899 – 1902* (London: Cecil Roy, 1904), p.304, as an example of the distances covered and the workload of mounted troops, the 9<sup>th</sup> Lancers averaged the following distances per month: 255 miles (1900), 365 miles (1901) and 315 miles (1902).

<sup>165</sup> Smith, *A Veterinary History*, p241-42, indicated that there was a deficiency of approximately 40 per cent of farriers.

<sup>166</sup> Smith, *A Veterinary History*, p.242.

<sup>167</sup> Smith, *A Veterinary History*, p.83, cited 550 horses of 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Brigade and attached Mounted Infantry companies abandoned on the veldt.

incompetence, mitigated minimally by a defence that the scale of the War had not been recognised by the War Office at the outset in 1899. In the subsequent atmosphere of criticism and personal exculpation between cavalry and Mounted Infantry commanders, witnessed in their evidence to the Elgin Commission,<sup>168</sup> it is hardly surprising that levels of equine loss between cavalry and Mounted Infantry were considered by commentators such as Childers as metrics for comparative military efficiency.<sup>169</sup> Unproven accusations had been made previously about the Mounted Infantry's perceived inadequacies in horse care years earlier following the 1882 Egyptian Campaign – unsurprisingly by a cavalry officer.<sup>170</sup> In his evidence submitted to the Elgin Commission, French claimed that 'excepting local garrison companies, few Mounted Infantry could retain their seats at a trot over rough ground and were entirely ignorant of the care of their horses'.<sup>171</sup> French conceded that after three months' experience, the Mounted Infantry improved in equitation but it was rarely enough, in the prejudiced views of cavalry officers, for the Mounted Infantry be used successfully for scouting work. Conversely, Bruce Hamilton, a protagonist of Mounted Infantry,

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<sup>168</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, various evidence submitted by Colonel Rimington (pp.29-31), General Ian Hamilton (pp.104-11), Major General Pole Carew (pp.262-64), Colonel Haig (pp.401-12) and Colonel Baden-Powell (pp.423-40) as examples.

<sup>169</sup> Childers, *War and the Arme Blanche*, p.197, recognised widespread failure of horsemastership but emphasised that the cavalry's record was no better than the Mounted Infantry, quoting equine losses in the cavalry in excess of 30 per cent whilst that of the Mounted Infantry and Mounted Rifles of approximately 18 per cent. Childers' data appears favourably exaggerated in support of his hypothesis of the overall ineptitude of cavalry.

<sup>170</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Four, 20 April 1891, pp.1-27, comment made in the post-lecture debate by Colonel McCalmont, 4<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards.

<sup>171</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence submitted by General French (Q.17129, p.301). Interestingly, this would be almost identical language used in Haig's later submission.

considered, perhaps rather surprisingly, that Mounted Infantry achieved adequate equitation standards after only two or three weeks.<sup>172</sup> Ian Hamilton claimed that the Mounted Infantry eventually demonstrated horse care skills equal to or exceeding that of the cavalry and informed the Elgin Commission that:

In the latter part of the War when the men had learnt to ride and scout, and the officers had gained experience, the regular Mounted Infantry, especially the first ten regiments, were, in my humble opinion, the best mounted troops in South Africa.<sup>173</sup>

If accusations of excessive equine wastage tainted both Mounted Infantry and cavalry, Kitchener attempted to emulate the mobility of the Boer commandos during the insurgency years, by increasing the number of remounts available to his mobile columns. This approach though merely increased the rate of equine loss through ongoing poor equine care with Kitchener noting that 'Boer ponies thrive; our horses simply die'.<sup>174</sup> Thus polarity of opinion over equitation standards and training requirements between Mounted Infantry and cavalry permeated the submissions to the Elgin Commission, reflecting institutional prejudice as much as personal opinion and battlefield experience, and clearly demarcated the forthcoming battle lines regarding the doctrine and continued existence of the Mounted

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<sup>172</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence submitted by Major General Bruce Hamilton (Q.17466, p.313 & Q.17536, p.316).

<sup>173</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence submitted by Ian Hamilton (Q.13941, p.111).

<sup>174</sup> TNA, *Kitchener Papers*, PRO 30/57/22/3.

Infantry in the post-war years, which will be considered in more detail in a later chapter. But in trying to establish the comparative nature of level of equine loss as a marker for military effectiveness between Mounted Infantry and cavalry, the challenges of different military tasks (at least initially), levels of training and even initially, different mounts,<sup>175</sup> diminish the veracity of numerical comparisons until later in the campaign where from 1901 the Mounted Infantry and cavalry became largely interchangeable in all but name and training.<sup>176</sup> Nevertheless, there are anecdotal reports of *greater* comparative mobility in the Mounted Infantry compared to the cavalry with De Lisle boasting of the mobility and manoeuvrability of his New South Wales Mounted Rifles in outflanking an enemy-occupied kopje whilst the cavalry remained immobile, seemingly paralysed by its orders not to risk incurring casualties.<sup>177</sup> It is difficult to conclude definitively a true comparative difference in equine losses with, for example, the 6<sup>th</sup> Dragoons losing an average of 87 per cent of their horses in the whole of the Boer War whereas the 1<sup>st</sup> Mounted Infantry lost 64 per cent of their horses in just 14 months.<sup>178</sup> Overall the Cavalry Division was estimated to have lost 24 per

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<sup>175</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6781 Papers on the Organisation and Equipment of Cavalry by the General Officer Commanding Cavalry Division 1900, French complained that as a result of problems in the supply of remounts, 'animals originally purchased for Mounted Infantry have, owing to force of circumstances, been allotted to cavalry to the absolute detriment to the mobility of that arm'; NAM, *Roberts Papers*, 7101-23-110-5, 9 March 1900, Roberts sought smaller horses and Burmese ponies for the Mounted Infantry and cavalry although the latter preferred Indian country horses.

<sup>176</sup> Childers, *War and the Arme Blanche*, p.168; Anon, 'Mounted Rifles and Mounted Infantry', *Cavalry Journal*, 1906, 1, pp. 29-32.

<sup>177</sup> LHCMA, *De Lisle Papers*, 2, Vol. 1, 'Narrative of the South African War 1899 – 1902', 29 May 1900; Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, 4, p.172.

<sup>178</sup> Smith, *A Veterinary History*, p.227.

cent of its mounts throughout the War<sup>179</sup> but then even its commander, John French, was not immune to criticism, being cited as one of the worst culprits for under-watering his horses,<sup>180</sup> though this problem was common to most mounted units.<sup>181</sup> Churchill lectured that the Mounted Infantry's expenditure of horses was three-fold that of the cavalry although this generalisation is difficult to substantiate.<sup>182</sup> The performance of colonial Mounted Rifles with regards to their equine losses, as perceived by senior officers, was controversial with Wolseley promoting the natural horsemanship skills of colonial volunteers,<sup>183</sup> particularly from rural Canada, whilst Kitchener bemoaned colonials' equitable ignorance of matters equine.<sup>184</sup> Clearly such differences of opinion reflected a multitude of competing prejudices. Climate and environment too played their part with Alderson's column, whilst not exclusively composed of Mounted Infantry, losing up to 80 per cent of its animals in the inhospitable and disease-ridden lowland of eastern Transvaal while the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mounted Infantry, operating in the higher and drier western Transvaal, lost only 11.5 per cent of its horses.<sup>185</sup> Cosby Jackson estimated

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<sup>179</sup> Smith, *A Veterinary History*, p.71.

<sup>180</sup> Russell, *Cavalry Doctor*, p.66.

<sup>181</sup> Rowat, *A Soldier Who Did His Duty*, p.65, also acknowledged that the horses of the KRRC Mounted Infantry occasionally went without water for up to 30 hours.

<sup>182</sup> Churchill, 'Some Impressions of the War in South Africa', pp. 102-13; Rimington, *Our Cavalry*, p.205, went even further claiming that the Mounted Infantry was five times as costly in horses than the cavalry, again without providing evidence to verify his claim and thus may not be untainted with institutional prejudice.

<sup>183</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1790, I, evidence submitted by Wolseley (Q.9370, p.395).

<sup>184</sup> TNA, *Kitchener Papers*, PRO 30/57/23, letter 29 November 1901.

<sup>185</sup> Smith, *A Veterinary History*, pp.157-62.



the life expectancy of a horse in his seasoned Mounted Infantry Company was only three months, through equine exhaustion and disease, rather than enemy bullets.<sup>186</sup> Later in the campaign, equine wastage was magnified by Kitchener's operational plans for constant 'drives' of mobile columns, even though his staff often tried to 'hide away some detachment of cavalry or Mounted Infantry in the hope that he [Kitchener] may forget their existence', but he rarely did.<sup>187</sup> Thus despite a traditional self-belief held by the British cavalry of being expert horsemasters,<sup>188</sup> a similar woeful picture of equine loss affecting all mounted troops<sup>189</sup> led to a better appreciation of the issues of horsemastership and equitation that included the need to reduce the weight carried on a horse's back.<sup>190</sup> Optimising opportunities for dismounting and walking their horses for both cavalymen and Mounted Infantrymen became an ethos enshrined in post-war training up to the First World War,<sup>191</sup> eventually yielding dividends in equine health in the initial weeks of war in

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<sup>186</sup> Cosby Jackson, *A Soldier's Diary*, p.32.

<sup>187</sup> LHCMA, *Hamilton Papers*, 2/3/9, letter to Roberts, 24 December 1901.

<sup>188</sup> Captain Valentine Baker, *The British Cavalry: with remarks on its practical organisation* (London: Longmans & Co., 1858), p.29, 'I am quite sure that English dragoons take greater care, and have a greater regard for their horses than the French.

<sup>189</sup> Smith, *A Veterinary History*, p.v, in the Preface, Evelyn Wood commented 'It must be admitted that as an army we are not good horsemasters'.

<sup>190</sup> TNA WO 33 / 209 Committee on Weight on the Horse in Mounted Branches 1901; Warre Cornish, *Letters and Sketches – Appendix II*, p.437; Alderson, *Pink and Scarlet*, p.85; NAM, *Fitzgerald Papers*, 7912-76, 'people forget that what most matters to the horse is the time a heavy weight is on its back'; Churchill, 'Some Impressions of the War in South Africa', pp. 102-13, Churchill improbably blamed the weight of the cavalry's sword for impairing that arm's mobility.

<sup>191</sup> Anley, *Practical Hints for Mounted Infantrymen*, p.29; *Mounted Infantry Training 1906*.

1914 compared to other allies' cavalries.<sup>192</sup> The sourcing of the remounts was another important factor in both the cavalry's and Mounted Infantry's military effectiveness. The Mounted Infantry's precept was to be mounted on the most suitable animal available in theatre rather than embarking its own horses like the cavalry.<sup>193</sup> This was appropriate when the Mounted Infantry was extemporised hurriedly in theatre for a particular expedition – although a limited selection and availability of animals could be problematic.<sup>194</sup> There were few horses available to Colley in 1880 at the start of the Transvaal Rebellion as supplies had been exhausted by the preceding Basuto War.<sup>195</sup> Political concern in avoiding inciting military involvement of neighbouring Boer states or fomenting rebellion in Cape Colony prevented more geographically extensive searches for remounts thus contributing to the shortfall of mounts available for the nascent Mounted Infantry.<sup>196</sup> Similar deficiencies would befall German troops who adopted the same principle of sourcing of mounts locally during the Herero rebellion in German South West

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<sup>192</sup> Home, *The Diary of a World War 1 Cavalry Officer*, p.19, 6 September 1914; Vaughan, *Cavalry and Sporting Memories*, p.162, blamed French cavalry training (and saddlery) for the amount of sore backs affecting Sordet's Cavalry Corps in August 1914 .

<sup>193</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture One, 2 June 1886, pp.1-44.

<sup>194</sup> W.S. Churchill, *The Boer War* [comprising 'London to Ladysmith via Pretoria' and 'Ian Hamilton's March' (London: Longman's, Green & Co. 1900, reprinted Leo Cooper, 1989), p.126, illustrated the downside of this principle at Venter Spruit, 22 January 1900, where the heavier and larger horses of the Royal Dragoons were able to ford the fast-flowing river whereas the local lighter ponies of the Light Horse and Mounted Infantry were swept off their legs.

<sup>195</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7802 Preparations in South Africa 1880 – 81; Marling, *Rifleman and Hussar*, p.27.

<sup>196</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7802 Preparations in South Africa 1880 – 81; TNA WO 32 / 7811 Telegrams & Dispatches South Africa 1880, correspondence from W. Owen Lanyon, Administrator Transvaal, 3 January 1881.

Africa in the early 1900s.<sup>197</sup> Nevertheless despite such limitations, this approach did have its benefits such as the use of the Khedive's Bodyguard's horses<sup>198</sup> in the 1882 Egyptian Campaign. Their tolerance of the environment, particularly the heat, manifest as improved stamina, enhanced the Mounted Infantry's mobility, contributing to its early deployment in the early policing operations,<sup>199</sup> screening of the army on the perimeter of Alexandria and Ramleh,<sup>200</sup> and its involvement in Wolseley's vanguard advancing along the Sweetwater Canal following the landings at Ismailia.<sup>201</sup> This advance protected the army's water supply from Egyptian attempts to sabotage the Canal.<sup>202</sup> The Syrian ponies on which the Mounted Infantry

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<sup>197</sup> BHaStA(K)/Abt. IV MKr 814, *Überblick über die bei der Entsendung von Verstärkungen für die Schutztruppe in Südwestafrika gesammelten Erfahrungen und die in den Kommissions-beratungen zu erörternden Reichs-Kolonialamt. Kommando der Schutztruppen M 1184/08 A1*, Berlin, 1 November 1908; French General Staff, 'A German Colonial Campaign: the operations against the Bondelszwarts and Hereros from the beginning of October 1903 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 1905', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 50, 1906, pp. 87-97, 207-14 & 326-34.

<sup>198</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6094 Dispatches of the Egyptian War 1882, Alison to the Secretary of State for War, 19 July 1882; Hallam Parr, *Recollections and Correspondence*, p.171.

<sup>199</sup> TNA WO 33 / 40 Military Affairs in Egypt 1882, permission granted to raise 60 Mounted Infantry for police duties granted on 21 July 1882; TNA WO 163 / 664 Egypt: Proceedings and Special Council 1882.

<sup>200</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Three, 12 November 1890, pp.1-20, Hutton claimed that the Mounted Infantry undertook the majority of outpost and skirmishing work; Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Four, 20 April 1891, pp.1-27, this assertion of primacy of the Mounted infantry was, not unnaturally, disputed by McCalmont who considered that the cavalry equalled the Mounted Infantry in terms of dismounted work. This would appear unlikely not only just in view of their possession of carbines rather than rifles and their unfamiliarity with infantry drill but also their fatigued horses.

<sup>201</sup> Maurice, *The Campaign of 1882 in Egypt*, p.51; Vogt, *The Egyptian War of 1882*, the German military view was that the Household Cavalry's horses at the battle of Mahuta seemed out of condition, almost certainly reflecting an unmet need for further acclimatisation, unlike the Indian cavalry horses that were familiar with conditions and who had suffered a shorter sea journey; TNA WO 106 / 210 Journal of Operations: expedition to Egypt 1882.

<sup>202</sup> *London Gazette*, 26 August 1882, the falling level of the canal persuaded Wolseley to push his Mounted Infantry forward to prevent the Egyptian efforts.

were mounted did not require acclimatisation unlike the cavalry's horses disembarking after their sea journey<sup>203</sup> and coped better with the desert's climatic and geological challenges and lack of forage.<sup>204</sup> The result was greater mobility for the Mounted Infantry than for some of the disembarked cavalry permitting the former to participate in the mounted pursuit of Egyptian cavalry after El-Magfar and a cavalry charge at Mahsama,<sup>205</sup> despite this tactic being unfamiliar to the Mounted Infantry.<sup>206</sup> The preferential benefits of being mounted on local ponies with reduced logistical requirements compared to cavalry horses would be, by necessity, re-learned in the Boer War, trading size and the power needed for the *arme blanche* for the endurance of the local breeds.<sup>207</sup> However the limited availability of suitable cobs, exacerbated by inflationary prices paid for them by the army, resulted in ongoing problems in supply,<sup>208</sup> and thus still necessitated procurement overseas.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> *London Gazette*, 26 August 1882, the cavalry's horses were only permitted two days of acclimatisation.

<sup>204</sup> Charles Royle, *The Egyptian Campaigns 1882 – 85* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1886), p.292.

<sup>205</sup> Maurice, *The Campaign of 1882 in Egypt*, p.51.

<sup>206</sup> Sergeant J. Philip, *Reminiscences of Gibraltar, Egypt and the Egyptian War* (Aberdeen: D. Wyllie and Sons, 1893), p.60.

<sup>207</sup> Bengough, *Notes and Reflection on the Boer War*, p.20, remarked that 'a small horse makes less show on a ceremonial parade but he has his revenge in time of war'.

<sup>208</sup> TNA WO 108 / 307 Proceedings of the Army Board 1899 – 1900, 16 November 1899 and 29 December 1899; Gordon – Duff, *With the Gordon Highlanders to the Boer War*, p.223, paid the not inconsiderable contemporary sum of £16 for a Boer pony.

<sup>209</sup> TNA WO 108 / 307 Proceedings of the Army Board 1899 – 1900, 16 November 1899, 29 December 1899, and 16 March 1900, initiating overseas procurement from Argentina.

If the principle of procuring the most suitable animal for the conditions in theatre was sound enough, the choice of camels for the Desert Corps in the Nile expedition of 1885 remains controversial.<sup>210</sup> The use of camels seems, on first consideration, obvious<sup>211</sup> with other nations' armies also using camelry in their overseas forces.<sup>212</sup> Yet the camel was a peculiar beast with many foibles.<sup>213</sup> Not only was the camel difficult to ride and control, it could not be easily manoeuvred<sup>214</sup> and thus was selected purely for its endurance across desert.<sup>215</sup> The camel's health was notoriously fickle and whilst able to withstand significant wounds,<sup>216</sup> fell prey to illness unpredictably easily.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Wolseley, *The Soldier's Pocket-book*, pp. 68-69, even before the Nile Expedition, Wolseley recognised that camels were 'extremely delicate in constitution and liable to diseases little understood'.

<sup>211</sup> Lumley, 'Mounted Riflemen', pp. 638-56, identified potential challenges to the use of camels thus indicating that the risks involved in a camel-borne force was known to the British Army before Wolseley embarked on the Nile Expedition.

<sup>212</sup> Capitaine Moll, *Infanterie Montée à Chameau: notes sur l'organisation d'une compagnie montée a chameau dans les 1<sup>er</sup> et 3<sup>e</sup> territoires militaires de l'Afrique Occidentale* (Paris: Henri Charles-Lavauzelle, 1903) was a semi-official handbook; BHaStA(K)/Abt. IV MKr 814, *Überblick über die bei der Entsendung von Verftärkungen für die Schutztruppe in Südwestafrika, Kommando der Schutztruppen M 1184/08 A1*, Berlin, 1 November 1908.

<sup>213</sup> RA, *Cambridge Papers*, Reel 46, letter from Wolseley to Duke of Cambridge, 27 October 1884, stated that 'he [the camel] is a hateful beast, in my opinion, but a wondrous animal in the desert'. Wolseley would later revoke his approbation.

<sup>214</sup> Gleichen, *A Guardsman's Memories*, p.25; Archer, *The War in Egypt and the Soudan*, p.228, 'the camel is not a pleasant beast to ride'.

<sup>215</sup> RA, *Cambridge Papers*, correspondence from Wolseley, 27 October 1884, describing the slowness of mounting and dismounting; TNA WO 147 / 42 Events in Egypt & Soudan 1884: 'Notes for the use of the Camel Regiments by the General Officer in Command in Egypt'.

<sup>216</sup> Callwell, *The Memoirs of Major General Sir Hugh McCalmont*, p.70; Gleichen, *With the Camel Corps*, p.74, recorded the recovery of health of 73 camels initially thought to be moribund; Marling, *Rifleman and Hussar*, p.132.

<sup>217</sup> General Sir G.W. Green, 'The Organisation and Employment of Camel Corps in warfare', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 29, 1885- 6, pp. 521-37, warned that camels were particularly sensitive to the cold; Gleichen, *A Guardsman's Memories*, p.28, camels became unwell through heat loss if their saddles were removed too soon after exercise; Callwell, *The Memoirs of Major General Sir Hugh McCalmont*, p.245.

Wolseley's inauspicious choice of the camel was magnified by the Camel Corps' woeful unpreparedness in camel husbandry,<sup>218</sup> having embarked rough riders with no previous knowledge of camel riding<sup>219</sup> and having failed to apply relevant knowledge both from the Indian Army<sup>220</sup> and from other military sources.<sup>221</sup> In 1884, the whole process of purchase and utilisation of camels appears fraught with issues as diverse but fundamental as purchasing the correct breeds of camels,<sup>222</sup> differentiating riding from baggage camels, awareness of the animals' health and age<sup>223</sup> and the requirements for the animals' ongoing welfare.<sup>224</sup> Officers' suspicions of the local indigenous people were well-founded,<sup>225</sup> and thus local knowledge was

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<sup>218</sup> Wilson, *From Korti to Khartum*, pp.10-11, acknowledged the Camel Corps' error in assuming that it knew best, ignoring the experience of local Arabs. Even within the army there was disagreement over the best way to optimise the camels' health with Wilson and Burnaby diametrically opposed on the benefits of preferentially working camels either during the day or night.

<sup>219</sup> Marling, *Rifleman and Hussar*, p.125.

<sup>220</sup> TNA WO 147 / 39 Report on the Nile Expedition 1884-5, noted the physical superiority of Indian camels.

<sup>221</sup> Frederick Burnaby, *A Ride to Khiva* (London: Cassell, Petter & Galpin, 1876; reprint Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1997), p.202; Callwell, *The Memoirs of Major General Sir Hugh McCalmont*, p.48; Gleichen, *A Guardsman's Memories*, p.36.

<sup>222</sup> Dundonald,, *My Army Life*, p.25, noted the different water requirements between breeds of camel – the Delta camel expecting access to water daily compared to every three days for Aden camels; Callwell, *The Memoirs of Major General Sir Hugh McCalmont*, p.238, 'tedious question of camel purchase'.

<sup>223</sup> TNA WO 147 / 42 Events in Egypt & Soudan 1884, 'Notes for the use of the Camel Regiments by the General Officer in Command in Egypt', stated that ageing of camels was feasible through examination of dentition with full dentition occurring when a camel reached eight years of age.

<sup>224</sup> Colville, *Official History*, p.205.

<sup>225</sup> TNA WO 110 / 10 Despatch of the Troops to Upper Egypt & Soudan 1884, report from Major Kitchener, 19 October 1884, 'never believe anything they [the Arabs] say'; Gleichen, *A Guardsman's Memories*, p.28; Wilson, *From Korti to Khartum*, p.4, accused locals of sabotage causing slippage of loads off the camels and also theft of water supplies; Brackenbury, *The River Column*, p.42, confirmed continuous theft of supplies and loss of up to 30 per cent of supplies through damage including both accidental and intentional; Jean Bray, *The Mysterious Captain Brocklehurst*

ignored or, at best, considered unreliable.<sup>226</sup> Although as Wolseley's Chief of Staff, Buller has borne a large proportion of the blame for purchasing too few camels for the Desert column's requirements,<sup>227</sup> it is clear that he received inconsistent and frankly contradictory instructions from Wolseley,<sup>228</sup> despite Wolseley proclaiming Buller's 'great administrative capacity'.<sup>229</sup> In addition, deficiencies in saddlery, forage and baggage camel drivers<sup>230</sup> contributed to the logistical nightmare,<sup>231</sup> with Buller correctly predicting his future censure for any failures and the eventual apportioning of much of the blame to him.<sup>232</sup> From the remarkably consistent estimations of camel mobility,<sup>233</sup> the traverse of the Bayuda Desert from Korti to Metemmeh, short-circuiting the

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(Cheltenham: Reardon, 2006), p.93, indicated that the indigenous helpers were often found to have lost equipment or have damaged saddles.

<sup>226</sup> TNA WO 147 / 42 Events in Egypt & Soudan 1884; Brackenbury, *The River Column*, p.15; Bray, *The Mysterious Captain Brocklehurst*, p.98, Brocklehurst commanded the 'travelling camel remount depot'.

<sup>227</sup> Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, p.285; Asher, *Khartoum*, p.278; Lowther, *From Pillar to Post*, p.26, although Lowther's estimate that one camel could carry eight days' supplies for 25 men seems wildly optimistic as this would have indicated that only 65-70 baggage camels would have been necessary for the Camel Corps if a direct and continuous march had been attempted; Gleichen, *A Guardsman's Memories*, p.29; Marling, *Rifleman and Hussar*, p.129.

<sup>228</sup> TNA WO 147 / 41 Diary of the Nile Expedition 1884 – 85, 7 October 1884; Wilson, *From Korti to Khartoum*, p.15; Callwell, *The Memoirs of Major General Sir Hugh McCalmont*, p.14.

<sup>229</sup> *London Gazette*, 25 August 1885, Wolseley's last campaign dispatch.

<sup>230</sup> Colville, *Official History*, p.102, these factors were considered in the Official History to be Buller's exculpation.

<sup>231</sup> Callwell, *The Memoirs of Major General Sir Hugh McCalmont*, p.15.

<sup>232</sup> Powell, *Buller*, p.75.

<sup>233</sup> Wolseley, *The Soldier's Pocket-book*, pp. 68-69, indicated that the 'cruising speed' of a camel was approximately 2 – 2.5 mph; Burnaby, *A Ride to Khiva*, p.202; Moll, *Infanterie Montée à Chameau*, p.13, indicating 6 – 7 km/hour (3-4 mph).

great bend on the Nile, should have taken approximately five to nine days.<sup>234</sup> Yet the inadequate number of camels necessitated an initial shuttle run between Korti and Gakdul Wells followed by rest days that resulted in this timing being completely unachievable through camel exhaustion,<sup>235</sup> with the traverse eventually taking twenty-two days. Considering the completeness of the destruction of the camel force during the expedition, there is no useful metric available to determine comparative mobility, as a proxy of military effectiveness, between the various camel regiments. Nevertheless, for the Camel Corps as a whole, considering that reinforcements from the Royal Irish Regiment traversed the desert on foot in eleven days, it is difficult not to concur with Sir Charles Wilson's comment that: 'it would be heresy to say that the camelry is a mistake, but if Tommy Atkins cannot march in such a climate as this, we had better give up fighting'.<sup>236</sup> Furthermore, Wilson added that it was only the initial twenty miles of the march that was archetypal desert, otherwise the desert was replete with forage, wood and water and the ground, predominantly gravel, was easy to march on,<sup>237</sup> in contrast to the predictions prior to embarkation of the Desert Column.<sup>238</sup> Certainly Major General Edward Gleichen, reflecting with hindsight in his memoir, thought that: 'as things turned out, I really believe that we should

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<sup>234</sup> Pimblett, *Story of the Soudan War*, p.218; *The Times*, 13 December 1884, predicted a traverse taking nine days.

<sup>235</sup> Wilson, *From Korti to Khartum*, p.xvi.

<sup>236</sup> Wilson, *From Korti to Khartum*, p.11.

<sup>237</sup> Wilson, *From Korti to Khartum*, p.xxvi; Macdonald, *Too Late for Gordon*, p.341.

<sup>238</sup> Preston, *In Relief of Gordon*, p.92.



have done better had we marched on foot the whole way and used our camels as extra baggage animals'.<sup>239</sup> Recently Snook has suggested that marching on foot might have exacerbated any tendency to dehydration among the soldiers yet this might have been off-set by the increased logistical capacity for supplies, particularly water, if all camels were loaded with supplies.<sup>240</sup> Thus the overall effectiveness of the Camel Corps is highly questionable,<sup>241</sup> and as Snook has summarised succinctly, it appeared to be a 'resource-intensive novelty'.<sup>242</sup> Perhaps more importantly was the fact that the delays caused through inadequate camel numbers alerted the enemy to the Desert Column's advance and resulted in the battles at Abu Klea and Abu Kru.<sup>243</sup> Even if these battles and the delays imposed through recuperation did not materially diminish the chances of saving Gordon at Khartoum,<sup>244</sup> the combination of logistical deficiencies, camel wastage through inadequate nutrition<sup>245</sup> and overwork,<sup>246</sup> such that all the survivors

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<sup>239</sup> Gleichen, *A Guardsman's Memories*, p.29, although how this would have influenced Wolseley's choice of the inclusion of cavalry contingents is speculative.

<sup>240</sup> Snook, *Beyond the Reach of Empire*, p.493.

<sup>241</sup> MacAndrew, 'Mounted Infantry', pp. 416-31, thought the Camel Corps disappointing; Lieutenant General Sir F. Middleton, 'Mounted Infantry', *United Services Magazine*, 5, 1892, pp. 178-84, took an opposing stance, viewing the Camel Corps as a success.

<sup>242</sup> Snook, *Beyond the Reach of Empire*, *ibid.*

<sup>243</sup> Callwell, *The Memoirs of Major General Sir Hugh MacCallmont*, p.44; Macdonald, *Too Late for Gordon*, p.203.

<sup>244</sup> Snook, *Beyond the Reach of Empire*, p.499.

<sup>245</sup> Gleichen, *With the Camel Corps*, p.67.

<sup>246</sup> Dundonald, *My Army Life*, p.32.

of the camel regiments walked back across the desert in retreat,<sup>247</sup> destroyed the Camel Corps, reducing mobility and, following two pitched battles, its fighting effectiveness.

Thus the question may be asked legitimately how the Mounted Infantry's mobility, flawed in the Transvaal<sup>248</sup> and, as discussed above, in the Sudan, but of note in Egypt and eventually in South Africa, contributed to these respective campaigns? Clearly the inopportune deployment of extemporised Mounted Infantry in the Transvaal and their limited number squandered on the slope at Laing's Nek limited its contribution to the rest of the campaign.<sup>249</sup>

The eventual embarkation of Mounted Infantry reinforcements from Aldershot, albeit arriving too late to participate in hostilities, was itself novel with Mounted Infantry being formed at home then dispatched overseas rather than configured solely in theatre.<sup>250</sup> The mobility of the Mounted Infantry in Egypt conferred both force protection on the extreme right desert flank and helped secure the army's freshwater supply with the Mounted Infantry's mobile firepower being an adjunct to the cavalry in keeping with the doctrine

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<sup>247</sup> Marling, *Rifleman and Hussar*, p.149 indicated that less than 20 per cent of camels of the Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment survived the traverse of the Bayuda Desert 'poor brutes, they were utterly worn out'; Callwell, *The Memoirs of Major General Sir Hugh McCalmont*, p.240.

<sup>248</sup> Lehmann, *The First Boer War*, p.160.

<sup>249</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7825 South Africa: statements concerning the attack on the 94<sup>th</sup> Regiment at Bronkers Spruit and actions in the Transvaal; TNA WO 32 / 7811 Telegrams & Dispatches South Africa 1880, Colley to the Secretary of State for War, 19 December 1880, recognising the deficiency in mounted troops; Bellairs, *The Transvaal War*, p.375.

<sup>250</sup> Parliamentary Papers, Transvaal 1880 – 81, C2837; *The Times*, 10 January 1881; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 6 January 1881; TNA WO 33 / 37 Précis on Mounted Infantry 1881.

proposed previously by Wood and Hutton.<sup>251</sup> Furthermore, the Mounted Infantry retained its mobility to the extent that it participated in the dash to secure the surrender of Cairo's citadel, along with some but not all cavalry elements<sup>252</sup> after the conclusion of the battle of Tel-el-Kebir. This indicates impressive comparative mobility, underpinned by appropriate standards of equitation, and thus conferred real military value.<sup>253</sup>

However it is perhaps the Boer War where the mobility of the Mounted Infantry makes its mark on the totality of the campaign<sup>254</sup> as attaining mobility comparable to that of the Boers was considered by Ian Hamilton to be the critical objective towards winning the war.<sup>255</sup> The improved mobility of the Mounted Infantry<sup>256</sup> permitted the development of new tactics, combining the ability to rapidly deploy firepower on the flanks or rear of Boer positions as well as the evolution of the tactical 'galloping charge',<sup>257</sup> covering distance

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<sup>251</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers*, 50086, Vol. IX, 'Memorandum upon the Mounted Infantry's Organisation and Training', December 1891.

<sup>252</sup> Dawson, *A Soldier-Diplomat*, p.76, compared the pace of the Mounted Infantry, Indian cavalry and 4<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards favourably to the slower Household cavalry, complimenting the Mounted infantry's apparent standard of equitation.

<sup>253</sup> Wright, *A Tidy Little War*, p.261.

<sup>254</sup> NAM, *Roberts Papers*, 7101-23-110-5, letter from Roberts, 9 March 1900, 'the success of the campaign depends so materially on the mounted troops being efficient that I trust there will be no lack of good serviceable horses'.

<sup>255</sup> LHCMA, *Hamilton Papers*, 2/4/7, letter from Grierson, 26 January 1900.

<sup>256</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Haig (Q.19299, p.401), initially the Mounted Infantry could 'scarcely retain their seats at a trot over rough ground', although Haig later relents, stating that the Mounted Infantry improved after three months (not an unreasonable time in peacetime and comparable to cavalry recruits), although the standard of equitation was rarely 'ever good enough for scouting'.

<sup>257</sup> Saunderson, *Notes on Mounted Infantrymen*, p.79, advised to 'consider before you gallop and when after due consideration you decide to gallop then gallop and gallop hard'.

rapidly to minimise casualties before rapid dismounting and utilisation of dismounted infantry skills to seize enemy territory.<sup>258</sup> The Mounted Infantry, in reaching its apogee in the application of mobile firepower, arguably realised its tactical potential and doctrinally validated the non-cavalry mounted soldier paradigm. Such tactical innovations would be adopted in official training manuals after the Boer War.<sup>259</sup> The insurgency phase of the Boer War had stimulated the Mounted Infantry to attain even greater mobility<sup>260</sup> achieved by reducing logistical requirements, particularly reliance on transporting infantry in oxen-wagons,<sup>261</sup> but also by improving its horsemanship<sup>262</sup> that permitted greater distances to be covered especially at night.<sup>263</sup> Callwell reflected that initial mobile columns were lethargic affairs with a large proportion of men marching on foot. With increasing numbers of men mounted, the columns' mobility improved. Thus, although a greater

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<sup>258</sup> Saunderson, *Notes on Mounted Infantrymen*, pp. 68-69.

<sup>259</sup> *Combined Training 1902*, pp.56-57, instructed Mounted Infantry and other mounted troops supported by artillery and machine guns to seize flanks to facilitate enfilading the enemy.

<sup>260</sup> Montagu-Douglas-Scott, *Twelve diary letters*, letter 19 December 1901, estimated Boer mobility to be four times that of the Mounted Infantry due to the retarding effect on mobility of wagons and field guns.

<sup>261</sup> TNA WO 105 / 18 Telegrams from Lieutenant General Hunter 1900, November 1900, at this stage of the War, foot soldiers comprised up to 16 per cent of Hunter's mobile column; Archie Hunter, *Kitchener's Sword-Arm: the Life and Campaigns of General Sir Archibald Hunter* (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 1996), p.154, oxen-wagons moved at 1 – 2 mph.

<sup>262</sup> LHCMA, *De Lisle Papers*, 2, 2, 14 September 1900, decried the lack of mobility of his mobile column noting that half of the column was untrained in mounted duties; Saunderson, *Notes on Mounted Infantrymen*, pp. 68-69, considered that the greatest risk to the Mounted Infantry was poor horsemanship that exposed riders to accurate enemy rifle fire.

<sup>263</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.139; Anon, *Seventeen Months' Trekking*, p.68, the Royal Irish Regiment mounted Infantry covered more than 90 miles in 20 hours; LHCMA, *Hamilton Papers*, 2/3/6, letter to Roberts, 6 December 1901, reflected the distances involved in this campaign: 'the area is so enormous and the troops are distributed in such very small columns that I feel it will take me several months before I can say with certainty where every corps and every commander is located'.

amount of territory could be traversed, Callwell claimed conversely that the thoroughness of counterinsurgency operations was risked through the absence of foot soldiers that would have previously stayed in the locality for a number of days undertaking policing duties.<sup>264</sup> Nevertheless, the British mounted troops' increasing mobility permitted greater surprise with improved counterinsurgency performance as evidenced by increased capture of Boer combatants,<sup>265</sup> their weaponry,<sup>266</sup> ammunition, livestock and the reduction in ambush and destruction of British convoys.<sup>267</sup> Whilst this does not impart any estimate of comparative superiority between the mounted arms, it does underline the assertion that the Mounted Infantry adapted and improved under the pressures of active service and finished the Boer War with comparable, if not anecdotally better,<sup>268</sup> mobility compared to the cavalry, which, in the context of early 1900, is a significant achievement. Thus in conclusion, although the Mounted Infantry's history of mobility was chequered, with enough training and experience, its mobility rendered it a militarily effective force.

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<sup>264</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.139.

<sup>265</sup> TNA, *Kitchener Papers*, PRO 30/57/22, letter to Broderick, 11 October 1901, although Kitchener complained that the number of Boers captured was failing, in part due to fewer numbers at large, but also because troops were being diverted to protect Cape Colony from insurgency and those dispatched to support the front in Natal.

<sup>266</sup> TNA WO 105 / 27 Lord Roberts: confidential reports, indicating that many of the weapons previously captured had been old relics rather than modern rifles.

<sup>267</sup> LHCMA, *Hamilton Papers*, 2/3/2, letter to Roberts, 26 November 1901, reflected Hamilton's belief that the counterinsurgency would require greater numbers of mounted troops than predicted.

<sup>268</sup> Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, 4, pp. 172-73.

So far the analysis of the Mounted Infantry's military effectiveness has concentrated at the tactical level of its relative firepower and mobility. Yet in assessing the Mounted Infantry, its responses to the 'friction of war' during a campaign and ascertaining its contribution both to the success or otherwise of its objectives and that of the army, are, as previously discussed, integral to determining its military effectiveness. Sources of friction may be external, relating to environment and terrain or the tactics of adversaries, or internal, related to issues of command, organisation and logistics that span more than the tactical level and include political, strategic and operational factors. Remaining with the tactical level, the Transvaal Rebellion had been an unmitigated disaster for the Mounted Infantry. Although the inadequacies identified at Laing's Nek and Ingogo River have been highlighted previously, the near-annihilation of the 94<sup>th</sup> Foot on the road to Pretoria immediately prior to commencement of hostilities, exposed failings at all levels. Politically the state of the Rebellion in the Transvaal remained uncertain and handed the initiative to the Boers and, to a degree, partly exculpated the casual way in which the 94<sup>th</sup> Foot's column proceeded without adequate force protection<sup>269</sup> - although its four Mounted Infantrymen could hardly have offered much warning of the ambush that was to befall the column despite the regimental commander being pre-warned of this very risk.<sup>270</sup> The strategic need to concentrate the scattered garrisons in the Transvaal, the

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<sup>269</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 28 December 1880; TNA WO 32 / 7811 Telegrams & Dispatches South Africa 1880, correspondence from Colonel Bellairs, 21 December 1880, considered damningly that the 94<sup>th</sup> Foot had deployed 'no proper lookout and [showed] a neglect of all caution'.

<sup>270</sup> Laband, *The Transvaal Rebellion*, p.92; Bellairs, *The Transvaal War*, p.78, although the actual position of the ambush was not forecast correctly.

precipitating reason for the 94<sup>th</sup> to be on the road, was not an unreasonable premise while a state of peace remained.<sup>271</sup> Yet the uncoordinated planning fatally exposed Colonel Anstruther and his 94<sup>th</sup> Foot to an impossible dilemma when surrounded and faced with the Boer ultimatum that effectively meant either disobeying written orders or massacre.<sup>272</sup> Later, although the Mounted Infantry's tactical failures of reconnaissance, force protection and the ill-conceived flank attack at Laing's Nek reflect inadequate training and numerical inferiority, operationally the problem for the Mounted Infantry was much more fundamental. What Colley really wanted was not Mounted Infantry but cavalry,<sup>273</sup> and in acknowledging this, Colley committed his Mounted Infantry to inopportune cavalry action.<sup>274</sup> Colley's error was compounded by a combination of personal haste in wanting to progress with the campaign militarily, without recourse to waiting for cavalry reinforcements, and political pressure to proceed and lift the investments of several towns and their garrisons,<sup>275</sup> although the Duke of Cambridge would

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<sup>271</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7811 Telegrams & Dispatches South Africa 1880, correspondence from W. Owen Lanyon, Transvaal Administrator, to Colley, 23 November 1880, indicating his opinion that it would be 'well to concentrate as many of the Mounted Infantry here [Pretoria] as possible'.

<sup>272</sup> Lehmann, *The First Boer War*, p.117, the average number of wounds per man in the 94<sup>th</sup> Foot was five, indicating a hailstorm of rifle fire.

<sup>273</sup> Willoughby Verner, *The Military Life of HRH George, Duke of Cambridge*, p.190, 12 February 1881, 'I do not think that Mounted Infantry are very well suited to this work'.

<sup>274</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7806 Proposal for the advance to the Transvaal 1881, with proscribed mounted tactics of threatening Boer flanks forcing them to abandon their positions – a tactic that went so horribly wrong at Laing's Nek.

<sup>275</sup> Ian F.W. Beckett, 'George Colley', *Victoria's Generals* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2009), S.J. Corvi & I.F.W. Beckett, (eds.), pp.74-91, encapsulates Colley's dilemma of whether to wait for the dispatched reinforcements and thus risking loss of invested garrisons or proceeding with the resources available to him; TNA WO 32 / 7810 Dispatches from South Africa 1881- Laing's Nek, correspondence from Colley to the Secretary of State for War, 1 February 1881.

later advise waiting for reinforcements.<sup>276</sup> It appears that Colley fatally gambled that his small Mounted Infantry detachment would suffice.<sup>277</sup> In stark contrast, Wolseley's Egyptian Campaign appears to have been much more clearly considered and planned.<sup>278</sup> Even if, as General Alison insinuated, the formation of the Mounted Infantry was an impromptu one,<sup>279</sup> the deployment of the Mounted Infantry away from gendarmerie duties around Alexandria to accompany Wolseley's attack appears inspired. Wolseley's limited cavalry numbers, amounting to four cavalry regiments and a further three of Indian cavalry,<sup>280</sup> were not large,<sup>281</sup> yet not of the same magnitude of problem as faced by Colley. The Mounted Infantry's subsequent actions garnered much praise from the popular Press such that it excessively eulogised the Mounted Infantry as 'the most prominent feature of the expedition',<sup>282</sup> and also secured commendation in an official appreciation.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> RA, *Cambridge Papers*, 23 /6, reel 39, letter to Colley, 17 February 1881 & 24 February 1881.

<sup>277</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7811 Telegrams & Dispatches South Africa 1880, telegram from Coley to Secretary of State for War, 19 December 1880.

<sup>278</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6093 Instructions to General Sir G J Wolseley 1882, indicating the strength of his expeditionary force, the source of his units, lines of command and a definitive strategic mission statement.

<sup>279</sup> TNA WO 33 / 40 Military Affairs in Egypt 1882, telegram from Alison to Wolseley, 21 July 1882; TNA WO 32 / 6094 Dispatches of the Egyptian War 1882, Alison to Secretary of State for War, 19 July 1882.

<sup>280</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6093 Instructions to General Sir G J Wolseley 1882.

<sup>281</sup> Vogt, *The Egyptian War of 1882*, p.34, 'the want of cavalry was made up to a certain extent by Mounted Infantry'.

<sup>282</sup> *The Times*, 30 August 1882.

<sup>283</sup> TNA WO 147 / 34 Report on the Mounted Infantry in Egypt 1882.



Operationally, the terrains encountered in mountainous northern Natal and in the Egyptian desert both look inauspicious for the successful use of Mounted Infantry. Yet the markedly different performances of the Mounted Infantry in these campaigns underlines how the terrain only had a modest impact and that other factors, particularly the horses upon which the force was mounted and the possession of either experiential learning or previous training carried greater weight than geo-climatic considerations in the determination of the Mounted Infantry's military effectiveness. Strategically and topographically, Colley had little option in terms of his route of advance into the Transvaal, reducing his operational options to three roads<sup>284</sup> thus negating any element of surprise. Conversely, Wolseley's feint along the Egyptian coast and his disembarkation at Ismailia on the Suez Canal confounded Egyptian defences that had focussed mistakenly on a predicted British advance from the Nile Delta.<sup>285</sup> As already indicated, part of Wolseley's operations planning was founded on securing a freshwater supply for his expeditionary force for, as Callwell remarked subsequently in *Small Wars*, 'the less fertile and productive the theatre of war, the more elaborate have to be the arrangements for the commissariat'.<sup>286</sup> Despite the climatic difficulties encountered in desert warfare such as in the Sudan, Callwell recognised that logistics were in fact simplified in this environment by really only needing to

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<sup>284</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7810 Dispatches from South Africa 1881- Laing's Nek.

<sup>285</sup> TNA WO 106 / 210 Journal of Operations: expedition to Egypt 1882; Maurice, *The Campaign of 1882 in Egypt*, p.18.

<sup>286</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.57.

protect and defend wells along the lines of communication<sup>287</sup> although, as the Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment discovered, a dry well at Abu Hasheen meant reliance on camel-borne water supplies for 72 hours.<sup>288</sup>

Clearly though freshwater supplies were not the only logistical considerations, which also encompassed issues as diverse as food, animal forage,<sup>289</sup> ammunition supplies, processes for casualty evacuation,<sup>290</sup> availability of both reinforcements and remounts and, perhaps surprisingly to modern sensibilities, other 'essential' supplies such as supply of champagne.<sup>291</sup> Although the adage that colonial expeditions were fought as much against nature as against adversary is inherently true,<sup>292</sup> the need to protect lines of communication and supply features prominently in all of the four campaigns analysed in this chapter. The need to re-trace his footsteps to ensure adequate protection of lines of communication was the primary factor for Colley precipitating the battle of Ingogo River in 1881<sup>293</sup> whilst the

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<sup>287</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.118.

<sup>288</sup> Willoughby Verner, *Sketches in the Soudan*, n.p., the well had been emptied recently by the Light Camel Regiment.

<sup>289</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, pp.58-59.

<sup>290</sup> Willoughby Verner, *Sketches in the Soudan*, n.p., described how after Metemneh, most of the camels were required for casualty evacuation with the casualty convoy, commanded by Talbot, coming under attack having travelled only 9 miles. The situation was saved by the arrival of the Light Camel Regiment from Abu Klea; Gleichen, *With the Camel Corps*, p.133.

<sup>291</sup> Bray, *The Mysterious Captain Brocklehurst*, pp.86-87 and p.91, Brocklehurst's 'moveable camel remount depot', of which 65 per cent were sick camels, shadowed the Camel Corps in its journey down the Nile towards Korti; Gleichen, *With the Camel Corps*, p.152, recalled how the aristocratic officers of the Heavy Camel Regiment returned to Korti and finished off their supplies of champagne.

<sup>292</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.57.

<sup>293</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7813 Dispatches from South Africa 1881 – Ingogo River, telegram from Colley to Secretary of State for War, 12 February 1881.

need to procure supplies of water in Egypt<sup>294</sup> has been mentioned previously. The need to transport supplies down the Nile for both River and Desert Columns,<sup>295</sup> with the latter unable to carry enough supplies for its own needs,<sup>296</sup> was a limiting factor in logistics magnified by the unsuitability of some of the supplies with one-third of biscuits transported being inedible.<sup>297</sup> The need to transport the maximum amount of ammunition into the Sudan led to Wolseley's decision to simplify logistics and only take the 0.45 calibre cartridges suitable for the Martini-Henry rifle with, as already discussed, unfortunate results for the cavalry detachments unused to the rifle.<sup>298</sup> Clearly a balance was needed to be found between secure protection of lines of supply and needing to delegate excessive numbers of troops to this task with the consequent risk of emasculating military effectiveness of the force when the army risked becoming 'merely an escort for its food'.<sup>299</sup> As a microcosm of this problem of inadequate logistics whilst also reflecting factors idiosyncratic to the Mounted Infantry and Mounted Rifles, the Boer War Mounted Infantry, fundamentally short of equipment and supplies, attracted the allegation of being chronic thieves, particularly of horses.<sup>300</sup> Major Lewis, commanding the Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen, a colonial Mounted Rifles

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<sup>294</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.62.

<sup>295</sup> Brackenbury, *The River Column*, p.2.

<sup>296</sup> Colville, *Official History*, p.60.

<sup>297</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.63.

<sup>298</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6111 Organisation & equipment of the Camel Corps 1884.

<sup>299</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.59.

<sup>300</sup> Hallam Parr, *Recollections and Correspondence*, p.170; Cosby Jackson, *A Soldier's Diary*, p.31.

unit, summed up the enforced mentality, writing that 'if you want anything in South Africa, you must just hustle for it'.<sup>301</sup>

The preceding discussion has concentrated largely on the operational and tactical considerations in estimating the Mounted Infantry's military effectiveness. At the strategic level, the inception and deployment of the Camel Corps in 1884 was indeed relevant to the Camel Corps' performance. Although Wolseley decided on the inception of the Camel Corps in September 1884,<sup>302</sup> its deployment in a dash across the Bayuda Desert was not its original *raison d'être*, which was to shadow the River Column as a flank guard. The 'desert dash' would only be resorted to in the event of delays to the River Column.<sup>303</sup> Thus the option to risk a march across the desert was concluded after Wolseley's vacillation over the most suitable approach to Khartoum, whether riverine, as initially favoured by Wolseley,<sup>304</sup> or potentially utilising an overland pilgrims' route from Suakin to Berber.<sup>305</sup> These deliberations, the so-called 'battle of the routes',<sup>306</sup> were also influenced by the tardiness of the whole expedition that largely stemmed from the Government's delay in agreeing a response to the problem in the

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<sup>301</sup> Lewis, *On the Veldt*, p.29.

<sup>302</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6111 Organisation & equipment of the Camel Corps 1884, initially indicated the need for 1,100 men comprising 40 men from each Household cavalry regiment, 40 men from each domestically based line cavalry regiment, 40 men from each Guards' battalion and 40 men from each rifle battalion; TNA WO 110 / 10 Despatch of the Troops to Upper Egypt & Soudan 1884.

<sup>303</sup> Colville, *Official History*, p.60.

<sup>304</sup> Colville, *Official History*, p.31, and allegedly supported by Gordon; TNA WO 147 / 42 Events in Egypt & Soudan 1884.

<sup>305</sup> Dawson, *A Soldier-Diplomat*, pp.88-89.

<sup>306</sup> Pimblett, *Story of the Soudan War*, p.218.

Sudan and the dispatch of Wolseley's expeditionary force.<sup>307</sup> This response had, in turn, been influenced heavily by public opinion<sup>308</sup> including two unlikely proposals for amateur relief forces by well-meaning Englishmen prepared to undertake what the army was seemingly reticent to do by a dash across the desert to Khartoum. The dispatch of Wolseley's force and then his eventual precipitate decision to send a flying column across the desert, as Snook remarks, gave Buller little time to prepare the Camel Corps logistically,<sup>309</sup> an error with ramifications for its mobility and which squandered the camels as a means of transport. In turn this delayed the traverse of the desert by at least twelve days and, if the battles of Abu Klea and Abu Kru are accepted as an unnecessary waste of lives, diminished the Camel Corps' military effectiveness. The issue of whether camelry was in fact necessary has already been considered<sup>310</sup> but it is arguably another example of the terrain featuring excessively in military planning<sup>311</sup> and affecting the outcome of the campaign. However, local intelligence was available to Wolseley regarding the nature of the terrain from officers, such

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<sup>307</sup> Colville, *Official History*, p.60; Marling, *Rifleman and Hussar*, p.129, complained that 'this comes of Gladstone's vacillating policy'; Gleichen, *A Guardsman's Memories*, p.39.

<sup>308</sup> TNA WO 147 / 45 Memoranda on subjects connected with Nile Expedition, the Soudan War 1884-5, Honourable J.L Dawnay proposed a volunteer force of 1,000 men to advance to Khartoum and Lieutenant Colonel Sartorius mooted a similar idea, both of which received scathing criticism from Wolseley regarding the unworkable operations and logistics that such proposals would face.

<sup>309</sup> Snook, *Beyond the Reach of Empire*, p.494.

<sup>310</sup> Macdonald, *Too Late for Gordon*, p. 341, a post-campaign opinion being that 'if camel transport was lacking, the whole or part of the intended Desert Column should have been marched on foot in order to secure this object [Khartoum]'.

<sup>311</sup> Wilson, *From Korti to Khartoum*, p.xxvi; Brackenbury, *The River Column*, p.23, both note the change of desert to rocky terrain instead of fine sand although the comparatively late timing of the decision for dispatch of the Desert Column across the Bayuda Desert provides some mitigation for poor intelligence.

as Major Kitchener<sup>312</sup> and Lieutenant Stuart-Wortley,<sup>313</sup> serving with irregular local troops. The likelihood of needing to rely on camels had been suggested well before a decision to dispatch the Desert Column was taken.<sup>314</sup> The impact on the Mounted Infantry, singled out by Sir Charles Wilson for its excellence<sup>315</sup> was the same as for the rest of the Camel Corps although the Mounted Infantry's marching discipline during the retreat from Metemneh was also noted approvingly by Evelyn Wood.<sup>316</sup>

Returning to other potential frictions of war, the four campaigns under analysis illustrate the Mounted Infantry and the British Army,<sup>317</sup> not only in diverse terrains but against very different adversaries. The Mounted Infantry demonstrated its effectiveness against the poorly-motivated yet conventional Egyptian infantry and cavalry as well as its Bedouin irregular cavalry, largely through its accurate long range musketry, encouraged by the enemy's tactics of movement than concealment. In the Sudan, the retention of the firepower of company-level volleys showed its worth in both stopping the incursion into

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<sup>312</sup> TNA WO 110 / 10 Despatch of Troops to Upper Egypt and the Soudan, report from Kitchener, 19 October 1884.

<sup>313</sup> TNA WO 147 / 41 Diary of the Nile Expedition 1884-85.

<sup>314</sup> TNA WO 110 / 10 Despatch of Troops to Upper Egypt and the Soudan, report from Kitchener, 19 October 1884, 'camels should be sent in immense numbers from Lower Egypt so as to be independent of a supply from the Arabs of the desert'.

<sup>315</sup> Wilson, *From Korti to Khartum*, p.9.

<sup>316</sup> Field Marshal Sir Evelyn Wood, *From Midshipman to Field Marshal* (London: Methuen & Co., 1906), p.177, which is against the accusation of near-mutiny by the Mounted Infantry in the rearguard during the retreat noted previously.

<sup>317</sup> Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army*, p.33, eloquently indicates the wealth of experience of British officers in fighting a variety of wars, an 'almost unrivalled knowledge of guerrilla warfare. Indeed they [British officers] possessed a Homeric record of active service and personal gallantry'.

the square at Abu Klea and halting the enemy charge at Abu Kru. However the Boers presented a different style of adversary, combining the 'rapidity of Asiatic cavalry with the precision of fire of European infantry'.<sup>318</sup> The Boers demonstrated an ability to adapt their own tactics in response to poor British musketry with galloping charges, rapid dismounting and snap shooting skills that Ian Hamilton subsequently advocated for British infantry.<sup>319</sup> South Africa was the nemesis of the extemporised, inadequately trained, inexperienced Mounted Infantryman of *circa* 1881 and early 1900. With improved equitation, shooting and tactics combining mounted and dismounted skills, the introduction of surprise aided by the use of Boer scouts and the advent of night marches facilitating dawn raids,<sup>320</sup> previous nemesis now became qualified triumph. Thus if the tactical and operational shortcomings of the Mounted Infantry in the Transvaal in 1881 had contributed to the army's failure, the Mounted Infantry in Egypt and in South Africa in the latter half of the Boer War can be said to have contributed positively to the army's successful prosecution of these wars. However the nagging concern, fuelled by the persisting institutional antipathy between the opposing protagonists of the cavalry and Mounted Infantry regarding the existence of the Mounted Infantry, remained whether or not the Mounted Infantry was merely a fashion or whether, in fact, its successes could have been delivered by more plentiful

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<sup>318</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7806 Proposal for the advance to the Transvaal 1881, comment by Major General Archibald Alison.

<sup>319</sup> LHCMA, *Hamilton Papers*, 2/3/1, letter to Roberts, 13 November 1901.

<sup>320</sup> Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry*, 4, p.255, indicates that Colonel Benson was one of the earliest protagonists of the night march as evidenced by the metric of 21 successful night marches and dawn raids (75 per cent success rate) in a seven month period in 1901.

cavalry. In other words, was the Mounted Infantry's military effectiveness merely a circumstance of chance or indicative of a functionality that was irreplaceable by cavalry?

Of course, part of the answer is that this question must remain hypothetical as the comparative paucity of cavalry regiments could never fulfil the operational requirements in these four campaigns. The logistics of embarking cavalry regiments to serve in Africa was neither straight forward nor cheap but was achievable, as illustrated by the eventual arrival of cavalry reinforcements embarked from home in the Transvaal Rebellion and Boer War. At Laing's Nek, it is unlikely that cavalry would have been able to attain the ridge and enfilade Boer positions<sup>321</sup> nor, despite Colley's protestations, have been numerous enough to be able to turn the Boer flanks at Ingogo,<sup>322</sup> although the Boers' fear of a ranging cavalry threatening their lines of retreat may have conceivably helped dislodge the Boers from its defensive line spanning from Laing's Nek to Majuba.<sup>323</sup> Certainly this fear was palpable in the Boer War where the Boers' propensity to relinquish territory in favour of re-grouping at a distance and preserve their forces was a frustration to British forces.<sup>324</sup> However irrespective of a putative greater number of cavalry squadrons available in the Transvaal in 1881, contemporary reports indicate that the disembarking cavalry would have been utilised more as

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<sup>321</sup> Lehmann, *The First Boer War*, p.152; Leigh Maxwell, *The Ashanti Ring* (London: Leo Cooper, 1985), p.139, cites the lack of the Mounted Infantry skills.

<sup>322</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7813 Dispatches from South Africa 1881 – Ingogo River.

<sup>323</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p. 401.

<sup>324</sup> Churchill, 'Some Impressions of the War in South Africa', pp. 102-13.



Mounted Infantry than solely *arme blanche*.<sup>325</sup> In Egypt, the unique impact of the well-armed Mounted Infantry was recognised by senior commanders and the Press and though the Mounted Infantry worked symbiotically with the cavalry, it is unlikely that additional cavalry, if replacing Mounted Infantry, would have been as effective in its delivery of firepower due to its inability to deliver long range rifle fire, a conclusion also reached in official appreciations.<sup>326</sup> The Nile campaign offers another opportunity for direct comparison between cavalry and Mounted Infantry, both functioning in the role of mobile infantry. The artificiality of the arrangement of expecting Mounted Infantry functionality from cavalry detachments skews the fairness of any assessment. Yet the evidence from the square at Abu Klea is that the absence of Mounted Infantry would have contributed to a fatal failure of force protection and unlike the reality,<sup>327</sup> risked the total destruction of the square. A hypothetical situation devoid of the Camel Corps but with increased numbers of cavalymen alongside the 19<sup>th</sup> Hussars, who were the horsed cavalry regiment accompanying the Camel Corps, suggests a very different force and one that could not have been tasked with the objectives of the Camel Corps,<sup>328</sup> probably seeking instead to undertake reconnaissance in force across to the banks of the Nile but with no aspirations to establish a

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<sup>325</sup> *The Times*, 24 February 1881, 'cavalry regiments are to be exercised as much as possible in the duties of Mounted Infantry'.

<sup>326</sup> TNA WO 33 / 41 Confidential Reports on the Egyptian Command 1883, report by Lieutenant General Sir Archibald Alison, July 1883.

<sup>327</sup> Spiers, *The Victorian soldier in Africa*, p.117.

<sup>328</sup> Snook, *Into the Jaws of Death*, p.313; Gleichen, *With the Camel Corps*, p.69, the 19<sup>th</sup> Hussars' horses were as exhausted as the camels.

military presence on the river bank as a stepping stone for the advance on Khartoum.<sup>329</sup> Perhaps though, it is the Boer War where this hypothetical question can be most decisively answered.<sup>330</sup> The campaign involved the majority of British cavalry regiments with only five cavalry regiments eventually not serving in South Africa,<sup>331</sup> and whilst admittedly this was a numerically inadequate force overall for a campaign largely predicated on mobility, the general trend in the campaign was for the cavalry to transition towards being Mounted Infantry with the 18<sup>th</sup> Hussars being the first cavalry regiment to relinquish its edged weapons.<sup>332</sup> In partial mitigation, the duration of training required, should brand new cavalry regiments have been raised, was longer than the training of Mounted Infantry and politically, an expansion of the cavalry utilising domestic Yeomanry was fundamentally difficult through the latter's terms of service. When Yeomanry served in the nascent Imperial Yeomanry,<sup>333</sup> it conformed to the Mounted Infantry / Mounted Rifles paradigm,<sup>334</sup> this being despite the domestic Yeomanry's revulsion at the prospect, before the Boer War, of becoming Mounted

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<sup>329</sup> Wilson, *From Korti to Khartoum*, p.97, indicated that the horsed cavalry were a spent force being almost useless as cavalry and could only scout at short distances from camp.

<sup>330</sup> James, *Lord Roberts*, p.348, quotes Count Sternberg's opinion that it was only when the cavalry combined with the Mounted Infantry that it was to be feared.

<sup>331</sup> *Army Lists 1899 – 1902*, namely: 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Hussars, 4<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards and 21<sup>st</sup> Lancers.

<sup>332</sup> Crum, *With the Mounted Infantry in South Africa*, p.90.

<sup>333</sup> Ian F.W. Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition 1558 – 1945* (Manchester: University Press, 1991), p.3; Colonel Lord Harris, 'The Yeomanry', *Cavalry Journal*, 3, 1908, pp. 393-401.

<sup>334</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7866 Raising of the Imperial Yeomanry 1899.

Infantry.<sup>335</sup> The net result, that the cavalry (and to some extent, the Yeomanry) became more like Mounted Infantry, remains a powerful endorsement of the merits of the Mounted Infantry - at least for this particular colonial campaign. In addition, there is evidence for the almost universal appeal of utilising Mounted Infantry in South Africa, including Roberts' recollection that all cavalry commanders requested Mounted Infantry support<sup>336</sup> as well as the future Field Marshal Henry Wilson's opinionated utterance of 'what we want is a lot of Mounted Infantry...our cavalry are quite useless'.<sup>337</sup> Kitchener wrote that 'I like what I hear of the Mounted Infantry',<sup>338</sup> and the official German military opinion was that the Mounted Infantry became 'a most effective and valuable force'.<sup>339</sup> Hutton considered that the best that the Mounted Infantry could have offered was never realised by the lack of latitude given to Mounted Infantry commanders, particularly on the march to Pretoria that could have yielded even greater results<sup>340</sup>. The corollary of approbation for Mounted Infantry was deprecation of the

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<sup>335</sup> Crichton, 'The Yeomanry and its future', pp. 661-91.

<sup>336</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6260 Composition of a Brigade of Cavalry 1901; Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Gatacre (Q.16778, p.274), who complained that his Mounted Infantry were re-assigned as quickly as he could train them.

<sup>337</sup> Keith Jeffery, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.36, admittedly Wilson was renowned for being opinionated and antipathetic to cavalry; Fuller, *The Last of the Gentlemen's War*, p.267, made a similar unflattering comparison, noting that 'of the mounted troops we employed, the regular cavalry were the least useful' although Fuller's also well-known antipathy to the cavalry, particularly in relation to his espousal of armoured mechanised warfare, may have influenced his comments considering the late publication date of his Boer War memoirs.

<sup>338</sup> TNA, *Kitchener Papers*, 30/57/20, 28 November 1901.

<sup>339</sup> Colonel W.H.H Walters & Colonel H. Du Cane (trans.), *The German Official Account of the War in South Africa*, I, (London: John Murray), 1904, p.129.

<sup>340</sup> BL, *Alderson Papers*, 50088, letter from Hutton to Alderson, 3 June 1903.

cavalry,<sup>341</sup> with even Lieutenant Colonel Maude, a renowned supporter of the cavalry, acknowledging that: 'our cavalry have been freely blamed for shortcomings in the recent war, which even their best friends must admit to have been proved against them'<sup>342</sup> - a damning verdict indeed.

Thus, in conclusion, it is unlikely that even hypothetically, the cavalry would have been able to replace the Mounted Infantry in the four campaigns analysed as case studies in this thesis.<sup>343</sup> If the Mounted Infantry played important roles in these campaigns, it is legitimate to question whether the Mounted Infantry attained its objectives in these campaigns and what was the arm's contribution to the overall aim of the campaign. Therefore, returning to the assessment of the military effectiveness of the Mounted Infantry in attaining pre-determined objectives and contributing to the overall outcome of the campaign, the Mounted Infantry in the Transvaal Rebellion manifestly failed to deliver the cavalry-substitute tactical roles of scouting, advance and rear guards, flank attack and pursuit even though opportunities for the latter were never possible.<sup>344</sup> Equally, the Camel Corps was unsuccessful in traversing the Bayuda Desert in a timely fashion to establish a base ready for a relief attempt on Khartoum and, of course, the overall

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<sup>341</sup> TNA, *Ardagh Papers*, PRO 30/ 40 /3, letter from Major Forster, 27 July 1900, 'I am sorry to say that I think cavalry is an expiring arm. Cavalry no longer scouts or patrols'.

<sup>342</sup> Maude, *Cavalry*, p.270.

<sup>343</sup> Bengough *Notes and Reflection on the Boer War*, p.18, Bengough, while demonstrating pro-cavalry views and a lukewarm attitude towards Mounted Infantry, reflected early in the campaign in 1900 that despite his opinion that British cavalry was superior to all other European cavalry, the war in South Africa had 'undoubtedly laid bare certain defects in our cavalry training, equipment and organisation'.

<sup>344</sup> Laband, *The Transvaal Rebellion*, p.130.

mission to save Gordon failed. Yet these failures are not the whole story as exemplified by the defeat of the Mounted Infantry at Laing's Nek, which did not actually precipitate the defeat at Majuba that effectively terminated hostilities. Similarly, the relative tardiness of the Camel Corps did not condemn Khartoum to its fate,<sup>345</sup> for, as Snook concludes, the Camel Corps would not have been able to secure Gordon's escape and the River Column was weeks away in its progress towards Khartoum.<sup>346</sup> Although the Mounted Infantry received plaudits for its actions in Egypt to the extent that Hutton, clearly not an impartial observer by virtue of his close involvement with the arm, claimed the 'phenomenal success' of the Mounted Infantry in this brief conflict effectively established the arm's value,<sup>347</sup> it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the inception of the *ad hoc* Mounted Infantry was more by good fortune than design. There had been no clear overarching operational plan to utilise a small Mounted Infantry force (as its inception seems largely down to fate) yet it contributed significantly to both force protection and to the eventual objective of the campaign of restoring the Khedive's authority.<sup>348</sup> Nevertheless, this does not diminish the importance of the Mounted Infantry

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<sup>345</sup> Parliamentary Papers, Correspondence regarding British Military Operations in the Soudan, No.9.

<sup>346</sup> Snook, *Beyond the Reach of Empire*, p.500.

<sup>347</sup> Hutton, *A Brief History of the King's Royal Rifle Corps*, p.27.

<sup>348</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6093 Instructions to General Sir G J Wolseley 1882; TNA WO 28 / 356 Expedition to Egypt: General Orders 1882, Wolseley's General Order, 17 September 82, acknowledges the brevity of the campaign but also its success: 'In the space of twenty-five days, the Army has disembarked at Ismailia, traversed direct to Zigazig and occupied the capital of Egypt, fought and defeated the enemy five times'.

in Egypt,<sup>349</sup> in the context of an otherwise limited mounted force. In South Africa 1900-02, the Mounted Infantry contributed comprehensively to both operational and strategic objectives, particularly in the years of the insurgency.<sup>350</sup> Once the execrable horsemanship of the early extemporised Mounted Infantry battalions had improved, the Mounted Infantry conferred increasing mobility to the British Army in South Africa.<sup>351</sup> With predictions of guerrilla warfare voiced comparatively early after the crossing of the River Vaal,<sup>352</sup> the Mounted Infantry contributed to the refocussing of the army into a counterinsurgency force that, it must be remembered, won the Boer War. Admittedly the Mounted Infantry was not alone in contributing to this process, yet the doctrinal adaptation of other

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<sup>349</sup>TNA WO 32 / 6096 Sir Garnet Wolseley's Dispatches: Egypt 1882; *London Gazette*, Wolseley's dispatch, 2 November 1882, concluding that the services rendered by the Mounted Infantry had been invaluable; *London Gazette*, 19 September 1882, Wolseley's dispatch.

<sup>350</sup> BL, *Alderson Papers*, 50088, letter to Hutton, 1 November 1900, indicating the pressure for Mounted Infantry in every column - 'nearly every General's idea is to split up Mounted Infantry...so they render their most powerful striking arm impotent'; Smith, *The Utility of Force*, p.162, indicates it was the mobility of the Mounted Infantry in addition to the greater number of mounted troops, matching the Boer commandos mobility, that won the war.

<sup>351</sup> Hunter, *Kitchener's Sword-Arm*, p.154, the rate-limiting factor for the advancing British troops was the slow speed of oxen-pulled wagons that approximated to 1 – 2 mph, thus by increasing the percentage of troops who were mounted and reducing reliance on oxen-pulled wagons, mobility was enhanced; *Combined Training 1902*, p.89 listed the improved mobility of mounted troops that doubled its speed of movement in comparison to infantry on foot; Walters and Du Cane, *The German Official Account of the War in South Africa*, II, p.269, Mounted Infantry of 1,163 men comprised 26 per cent of all mounted troops in theatre in 1899 but only 3.5 per cent of all British troops and mounted troops overall accounted for 13per cent of the total number of troops present in theatre; TNA WO 105 / 18 Telegrams from Lieutenant General Hunter 1900, as an example, in Hunter's mobile column in November 1900, the percentage of mounted troops had increased slightly to 16 percent; Smith, *A Veterinary History*, p.148, by mid-1901, the Mounted Infantry and Mounted Rifles constituted 68 per cent of all mounted troops, totalling 57,000 men; Du Moulin, *Two Years on Trek*, p.259 and p.320, recalled the increase in Sussex Mounted Infantry from 250 to more than 1,000 men in 1901; TNA WO 108 / 96 Telegrams received by Kitchener, 14 November 1901, emphasised the need for travelling light by discarding all superfluous 'horse kit and camp furniture'.

<sup>352</sup> Lieutenant B. Moeller, *Two Years at the Front with the Mounted Infantry* (London: Grant Richards, 1903), diary entry, 20 May 1900.

forces into the Mounted Infantry paradigm such as the Royal Artillery confirms the importance of the model to senior army commanders in 1901 – 02.<sup>353</sup> Thus the chequered experiences of the Mounted Infantry in these four selected campaigns prevents an equivocal conclusion regarding its military effectiveness as measured by the metric of contribution to campaign outcomes yet, alternatively, the Mounted Infantry cannot be held materially responsible for those campaigns that failed and in the Boer War, can legitimately be considered to have played a major part in the victory.

Therefore this conclusion of the lack of consistent military effectiveness across the four campaigns under analysis raises the question whether any lessons were recognised by senior army commanders and also by the commanders of the Mounted Infantry by ‘enquiring as to the causes of failure’?<sup>354</sup> Moreover, were any of these truly understood by the Mounted Infantry and the army as a whole thus becoming embedded in doctrine and tactics? In the absence of a British General Staff,<sup>355</sup> the identification of lessons and their dissemination throughout the army relied less on formal edicts from the Commander-in-Chief or the Army Board and more on a combination of repeated revisions of official drill manuals,<sup>356</sup> teaching of

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<sup>353</sup> LHCMA, *Hamilton Papers*, 2/3/7, letter to Roberts, 12 December 1901.

<sup>354</sup> Amery, *The Problem of the Army*, p.10.

<sup>355</sup> ‘The Development of the General Staff’, *Army Review*, I (I), 1911, pp. 15-22; Amery, *The Problem of the Army*, p.217, called for the establishing of a General Staff with an integral Intelligence Department; David French and Brian Holden Reid, *The British General Staff: Reform and Innovation 1890 – 1939* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), for a full history of the General Staff’s inception.

<sup>356</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, pp.175-76 and p.181, shows that revisions of drill manuals could be controversial. *Cavalry Training 1904 (Provisional)* was, as described by Badsey, ‘a political football between the Roberts’ Ring and the senior cavalrymen’ over the next nine years and reflected by proxy the arguments of the firepower versus *arme blanche* debate.

future staff officers at the Staff College, lectures to learned military circles (complete with post-lecture debates recorded *verbatim*), a plethora of privately written and published 'notes', contemporary memoirs and dissemination of 'good' practice through reports and personal communication between commanders.<sup>357</sup> For instance, the impetus to reduce the impedimenta of mobile columns has been attributed both to the cavalry commander, Major Henry Scobell<sup>358</sup> and the 25<sup>th</sup> Mounted Infantry of Colonel Benson's column, with the latter's success disseminated widely by written order.<sup>359</sup> Although haphazard and slow, the processes for limited learning and dissemination of military lessons remained in existence throughout the years covered in this thesis and if the inception and evolution of the Mounted Infantry is considered by way of example, it can be seen that high profile personalities such as Hutton were prolific in their activities in promoting the arm through lectures to influential military discussion circles, collating transcripts of their lectures into pamphlet or book form at the same time as contemporary official drill regulations and field service manuals were introduced by the War Office. Perhaps this more nebulous approach was less direct and immediate in delivering change in comparison to direct orders from the Army Council yet the incomplete adherence to the Army Order 39 on the abolition of the cavalry lance for instance, hardly indicates a foolproof

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<sup>357</sup> Home, *The Diary of a World War 1 Cavalry Officer*, p.42, although such personalisation bred jealousy between officers with Home reminiscing that 'South Africa was the worst case, a lot of small columns with each operating on its own and the reputation of the commanding officer depending on those operations. This must lead to jealousy and the situation of the personal factor when put in contradistinction to the whole'.

<sup>358</sup> Thomas Packenham, *The Boer War* (London: Abacus, 1992), p.527.

<sup>359</sup> Crum, *Memoirs of a Rifleman Scout*, p.90, utilising stripped saddles for greater speed.



methodology for change management through formal orders either.<sup>360</sup>

Regarding the issue of the withdrawal of swords from cavalry regiments during the Boer War, Hamilton reflected that despite this being encouraged, no definitive order was ever dispatched to the effect thus leaving the decision to the discretion of regimental commanding officers which resulted unsurprisingly in a lack of uniformity of whether cavalry carried swords or not.<sup>361</sup> The 1881 Intelligence Department's précis can be considered to have laid down many of the basic tenets of the eventual Mounted Infantry model whilst Hutton's '*Five Lectures*' can be recognised retrospectively as providing doctrinal structure for the non-cavalry mounted soldier paradigm.

Therefore, what were the lessons for the Mounted Infantry derived from the four campaigns considered in this chapter? In the absence of a clear and unambiguous consistent doctrine, the lessons arising from these campaigns were arguably more about organisation and training than tactics. The experiences of the Transvaal Rebellion and the Egyptian campaign<sup>362</sup> were stimuli to a more considered and formalised approach to the organisation of the Mounted Infantry based on abstraction with the company as the basic administrative and tactical unit. The functionality of this approach meant that the organisational structure was never replaced throughout the Mounted Infantry's existence, despite the introduction of higher formations. As discussed previously, the importance of prior training of Mounted Infantry

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<sup>360</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6782 Debate regarding the abolition of the lance 1903.

<sup>361</sup> LHCMA, *Hamilton Papers*, 2/3/27, letter to Roberts, 30 April 1902.

<sup>362</sup> *The Times*, 5 September 1882; TNA WO 33 / 37 Précis on Mounted Infantry 1881.

experience was identified in Transvaal, Egypt and the Sudan yet this lesson was subjugated to competing military expediency in South Africa in 1900. This did not reflect any lack of understanding by Roberts who, as will be shown in a later chapter, can be considered as much of a founder of Mounted Infantry in India as Wolseley at home. The impact of this failure to heed this previous lesson, despite its recognition that had resulted in the inception of Mounted Infantry Schools, impaired the Mounted infantry's military effectiveness for several months and effected reputational damage to the Mounted Infantry for much longer. As a corollary to this lesson was an increasing awareness that standards of equitation could no longer be basic. This was inextricably linked with the greater demands on riding skills of Mounted Infantry underpinning the developing requirements for reconnoitring and scouting becoming increasingly formalised as doctrinal roles integral to deployment in independent mounted brigades or divisional cavalry in the years after the Boer War with resulting improved equitation during training.<sup>363</sup> Central to this improvement was the Mounted Infantry's officers' belief that the Mounted Infantry could indeed undertake duties, even those traditionally cavalry, if their equitation and horsemastership was good.<sup>364</sup> Arguably this realisation was the epicentre of the persisting institutional controversy between Mounted Infantry and cavalry that led to the misunderstanding that the Mounted Infantry thought itself capable to undertake these roles if required but that the cavalry assumed that the Mounted Infantry aspired to

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<sup>363</sup> TNA WO 163 / 15 Annual Report of the Inspector General of Forces 1910, Inspection of the School of Instruction for Mounted Infantry, Longmoor, 25 May 1909.

<sup>364</sup> Colonel A.J. Godley, 'Mounted Infantry as Divisional Mounted Troops and with the Mounted Brigade', *Cavalry Journal*, 4, 1909, pp. 140-45.

replace them initially functionally then organisationally.<sup>365</sup> Nonetheless, as Henderson argued following the Boer War,<sup>366</sup> perhaps the Mounted Infantry fulfilled more than just a tactical need for mobile firepower and, at least for a time during its existence, satisfied a psychological need in the army.

Arguably, the Mounted Infantry's functionality bridged the waning importance of edged steel weapons and reflected the increasing reliance on firepower at a time when the army was unable to relegate the *arme blanche*, whether cavalry charge or iconographic bayonet charge,<sup>367</sup> as both remained a fundamental martial skill of the professional soldier.

Organisationally, the campaigns in Egypt, Sudan and South Africa showed that abstraction could work and the two former campaigns tended to support Wolseley's preference for selected officers and troops on colonial campaign.<sup>368</sup> 'Cherry picking', at least in the numerically limited 'small wars'

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<sup>365</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Three, 12 November 1890, pp.1-20, 'Mounted Infantry can never usurp the function of an efficient, well-trained and ably-led cavalry'; Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Five, 5 June 1891, pp.1-30, in the post-lecture debate, Lord Airlie claimed that following the Nile Expedition, the Camel Regiments argued that they could functionally replace cavalry (presumably in North Africa) which seems a bizarre assertion on many levels - not least the issue of the fragility of camel health and that at least half of the Camel Corps were cavalymen. Nonetheless, it does highlight the sensitivity of cavalry officers to any perceived threat to their arm's continued existence.

<sup>366</sup> Henderson, *The Science of War*, p.55; Colonel George T. Denison, *A History of Cavalry: from the earliest times with lessons for the future* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1913, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition), p.433, affirmed that extensive deployment of Mounted Rifles with its mobile firepower could be decisive in a future European War. This assertion appeared in the first edition originally in 1877 yet was not removed from the second edition published in 1913, ironically the year of the Mounted Infantry's abolition; Evelyn Wood, *Achievements of Cavalry* (London: Bell & Sons, 1897), p.241, had previously made similar predictions.

<sup>367</sup> Baden-Powell, *War in Practice*, p.63, 'but though the bullet may be the chief factor of modern warfare, the bayonet may on occasions still count for something'.

<sup>368</sup> *London Gazette*, 2 November 1882, Wolseley's dispatch, noted that the Mounted Infantry's success in Egypt highlighted 'what a corps can do whose officers are most carefully selected and whose non-commissioned officers and men are similarly chosen from those who volunteer for special services of this nature'.

of the imperial battlefield seemed to work.<sup>369</sup> Despite the overall failure of the Camel Corps, evidence has been provided for the general approbation granted to the abstracted Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment. The pre-war trained Mounted Infantry in South Africa in 1899 was also applauded generally for its performance on the battlefield. In part this effectiveness was founded on its rifle power and thus underlined that one of the fundamental tenets of the Mounted Infantry was the selection of marksmen and the prevention (if at all possible) of quasi-*arme blanche* tactics, despite the Mounted Infantry adopting occasionally *arme blanche* tactics in pursuit with fixed bayonets.

Despite the post-1902 claims that the Mounted Infantry was only appropriate for service in South Africa,<sup>370</sup> the historical evidence does not support this. The Mounted Infantry, as mobile infantry, was deployed across North African sands, the varied landscapes of South Africa, whether arid near-desert or grassy veldt, the jungles of Burma and in mountainous Tibet.<sup>371</sup> As discussed in a later chapter, despite its counterfactual basis, the potential benefits of a deployment of Mounted Infantry in Western Europe in 1914 onwards can be argued convincingly.<sup>372</sup>

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<sup>369</sup> Gleichen, *A Guardsman's Memories*, p.21, Gleichen postulated that, for the Guards at least, their acclaimed performance in Egypt directly influenced Wolseley to select detachments for service in the Guards Camel Regiment of the Camel Corps.

<sup>370</sup> Bengough, *Notes and Reflection on the Boer War*, p.67.

<sup>371</sup> Brevet Major W.J. Ottley, *With Mounted Infantry in Tibet* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1906), is the standard work relating to this expedition from a Mounted Infantry's perspective.

<sup>372</sup> Henderson, *The Science of War*, p.379, considered that Mounted Infantry could have a role on a future European battlefield.

However, not all conclusions drawn from or applied to the four campaigns were correct,<sup>373</sup> and erroneous or overstated lessons were drawn in relation to the Mounted Infantry.<sup>374</sup> A clear example of the lesson in error was the assumption held by senior army officers following the Egyptian campaign that brevity of training was preferable to either no prior training or formalised extended training,<sup>375</sup> a belief, as previously noted, still voiced inexplicably in debate in 1905 by General Lyttleton, Chief of the General Staff.<sup>376</sup> Similarly, the fluctuating doctrinal role of the Mounted Infantry would result in the default utilitarianism of the Mounted Infantry, a 'jack-of-all-trades' filling in the gaps exposed by the inadequacy of the cavalry available. The ikona of the veldt was in fact the ikona of the counterinsurgency years *par excellence* and did not anticipate or predict the increasingly cavalry-like roles expected of the Mounted Infantry in the years 1902-13. Tactically though, the Boer War did dispel one misconception, that of the ever-present risk to the Mounted Infantry's horse-holders who had been considered by military theorists to be the prime objective of enemy cavalry – previously held to be an organisational weak link by cavalry theorists.<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>373</sup> *London Gazette*, 25 August 1885, Wolseley indicated that the Nile whalers were the product of his experience of the Canadian Red River expedition of 1870; Snook, *Beyond the Reach of Empire*, p.491, considers that extrapolating operationally from one river and its environment to another (on a different continent) was 'the very epitome of dogmatic thinking'.

<sup>374</sup> Crum, *The Question of Mounted Infantry*, p.46.

<sup>375</sup> *The Times*, 30 August 1882.

<sup>376</sup> TNA WO 163 / 10 Minutes of the Proceedings of the Army Council, précis 160, 1905.

<sup>377</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.412, although if this still remained a possible enemy tactic, it was a risk for dismounted cavalry too.

In conclusion, referring back to the research question upon which this chapter is based - whether or not the Mounted Infantry was a militarily effective force, it is clear that this is a challenging and multi-faceted question to answer. The metrics with which to assess, either quantitatively or semi-quantitatively, are limited and much of the criteria used in this assessment are by necessity qualitative, anecdotal or circumstantial. Nevertheless, despite such shortcomings, in three out of the four campaigns studied, the Mounted Infantry contributed positively on a tactical level to the campaign even if strategically the campaign was not a success overall. The evidence suggests that in these four campaigns, the Mounted Infantry, as mounted troops, were no worse than the cavalry in all metrics considered and there is evidence that much of what the Mounted Infantry undertook could not have been exceeded by the deployment of more cavalry, even if the latter was available. A limited number of lessons were identified by the Mounted Infantry and the army in general from these campaigns and, despite the problems of recognition and understanding of these issues, were assimilated into training and peacetime manoeuvres and eventually doctrine. Therefore, despite many evident deficiencies discussed in this chapter, it is at the most basic of tactical levels, that of supplying both mobile rifle power and acting as a reserve of infantry, two of the fundamental aspects of Mounted Infantry doctrine, that the Mounted Infantry must be considered, at least to a qualified degree, to have been a militarily effective arm.

## Chapter Five

### Demise

Writing in mid-1901, even before the conclusion of hostilities in South Africa, Rudyard Kipling confessed critically that: “We have forty million reasons for failure, but not a single excuse”.<sup>1</sup> Much of the subsequent decade would be influenced by the debate to both understand and address those ‘forty million reasons’.<sup>2</sup> In a similar vein, *The Times* was damning of the army stating that ‘the war in South Africa has brought to light defects in our Army which cannot be explained away’.<sup>3</sup> Central to the subsequent debate was the need for army reform, a need identified sporadically by army commanders before 1899 as acknowledged by a number of historians including Spiers, Beckett, Badsey and Phillips,<sup>4</sup> but a process accelerated by the war and which would continue throughout much of the decade leading up to the First World War.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kipling, *The Complete Verse*, p.238, ‘*The Lesson*’, is better known by the oft-quoted line of “We have had no end of a lesson: it will do us no end of good”, with an additional line even more critical of army performance that is rarely quoted in its entirety: ‘And so we got our licking – we did not deserve much less!’.

<sup>2</sup> Amery, *The Problem of the Army*, p.10; Mallinson, *The Making of the British Army*, p.272.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 28 February 1901.

<sup>4</sup> E.M. Spiers, ‘Between the South African War and the First World War, 1902 – 14’, *Big Wars and Small Wars* (London: Routledge, 2006), H. Strachan (ed.) pp. 21-35; Badsey, ‘Mounted Combat in the Second Boer War’, pp. 11-27; Phillips, ‘Who Shall Say That the Days of Cavalry Are Over?’, pp. 5-32; I.F.W. Beckett, ‘*The South African War and the late Victorian Army*’, *The Boer War: Army, Nation and Empire*, (Canberra: Army History Unit, 2000) Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey (eds.), pp. 32- 45.

<sup>5</sup> Spiers, ‘Between the South African War and the First World War, 1902 – 14’, pp. 21-35; Spiers, ‘The British Cavalry 1902 – 14’, pp. 71-79; E.M. Spiers, ‘Reforming the Infantry of the Line 1900 – 1914’, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 59, 1981, pp. 82-94; Jones, *From Boer War to World War: tactical reform of the British Army 1902 – 1914*, pp. 37-70; Evans, ‘The British Army and

While many aspects of this reform comprised high-level organisational change including the abolition of the post of Commander-in-Chief, the constitution and establishment of the Army Council and the inception of the British Army's General Staff,<sup>6</sup> the decade after 1902 witnessed more fundamental doctrinal change throughout the army including the mounted arms. It is against this contextual backdrop that the last decade of the Mounted Infantry's existence was played out.

Integral to the Mounted Infantry's eventual fate was the relationship between its organisational impermanence and the role required of it on the battlefield. The latter, projecting from the Mounted Infantry's experiences in South Africa, seemed assured in 1902 despite a persisting ambiguity in role highlighted by the absence of an official definition of the force until 1909.<sup>7</sup> Framed by the reform of the British cavalry that preoccupied supporters from both sides of this institutional divide for at least ten years,<sup>8</sup> the Mounted Infantry's search for a role, consistent with the orthodox structure of the army and its emerging strategy would influence the Mounted Infantry's final years

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Technology Before 1914', pp. 113-22, nevertheless, the speed, sustainability and extent of post-1902 reform is both contentious and, through its lack of uniformity within the army, incomplete.

<sup>6</sup> French and Holden Reid, *The British General Staff*, p.19; *The Times*, 28 February 1901.

<sup>7</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.217, considers that the *Field Service Regulations, Part 1: Operations* (London: HMSO, 1909), which focused on the mobility of mounted troops rather than the firepower versus *arme blanche* debate, reflected the true state of cavalry doctrine prior to the First World War rather than the controversial *Cavalry Training 1907* that was antipathetic to the Mounted Infantry and Roberts' previous policy promoting the primacy of the firearm for mounted troops including the cavalry.

<sup>8</sup> Maguire, 'The Mounted Infantry Controversy', pp. 602-05; C.S. Goldman, 'Cavalry: its true functions in modern war', *Cavalry Journal*, 1, 1906, pp. 65-79; 'Lancer', 'The Question of Mounted Infantry: a reply to 'A Rifleman'', pp. 228-31.



until its abolition in 1913.<sup>9</sup> Therefore three fundamental themes influencing the Mounted Infantry's ultimate survival, namely its organisation, its changing function and the delivery of its training, in the context of strategic, political and doctrinal change after 1902, will be the focus of this chapter. Prefacing this decade of transition (and one of the enduring legacies of the war in South Africa) was the intensification of the simmering cavalry versus Mounted Infantry debate.<sup>10</sup> The war had been, as a contemporary later wrote, "a cavalry war but not quite on old cavalry lines",<sup>11</sup> largely devoid of traditional massed *arme blanche* tactics, with the cavalry eventually subsumed into the monotony of the counterinsurgency work of the mobile columns and the primacy of the cavalry's edged weapon superseded by the Mounted Infantry's rifle.<sup>12</sup> With the Mounted Infantry finishing the war in a position of unprecedented operational importance, post-1902 the organisation of the army's mounted troops appeared uncertain and competitive.<sup>13</sup> Thus, although current historical orthodoxy attributes the Mounted Infantry's eventual demise to the cavalry's doctrinal adaptation, a

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<sup>9</sup> TNA WO 163 / 18 Minutes of the Army Council 1913.

<sup>10</sup> *The Times*, 27 December 1906; Maude, *Cavalry*, pp. 267 – 280.

<sup>11</sup> Major General Sir George Younghusband, *Forty Years a Soldier* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1923), p.313.

<sup>12</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6782 Debate regarding the abolition of the lance 1903, with Roberts stating that 'conditions of modern warfare are such that shock tactics on any large scale are unprofitable. Taken all round, therefore, the rifle is the most effective weapon'.

<sup>13</sup> Maude, *Cavalry*, pp. 267-80; TNA WO 163 / 10 Minutes of the Army Council 1905, Organisation of the Mounted Infantry; Brigadier General E.C. Bethune, 'The uses of cavalry and Mounted Infantry in modern warfare', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 50, 1906, pp. 619-36.

renaissance unmatched by the Mounted Infantry,<sup>14</sup> whether this represents the complete explanation remains unclear. Therefore, the chapter's principal research question, through an analysis of the multiple factors linked to the Army Council's decision to abolish the Mounted Infantry, will identify the predominant reason for the arm's demise and why the Mounted Infantry's apparently precipitous implosion occurred when it still remained an organisation afforded a definitive role within the army's mobilisation plans.<sup>15</sup>

As hostilities in South Africa ceased, the preparations for war and its conduct were subjected to an official *post-mortem* examination that would aggravate pre-existing tensions between cavalry and Mounted Infantry.<sup>16</sup> The process of identifying what went wrong in South Africa largely centred on the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa, better known as the 'Elgin Commission'. Its 'Terms of Reference' were both at once extensive, covering logistical issues of supply, manpower and equipment, transport by both land and sea and the military operations until the occupation of Pretoria, and frustratingly vague in expressly avoiding becoming either an official history of the conflict or a definitive commentary on military performance.<sup>17</sup> The seven

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<sup>14</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.217; TNA WO 163 / 18 Minutes of the Army Council 1913.

<sup>15</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7094 Mounted Infantry as Divisional Cavalry 1908; *Mounted Infantry Training 1909*.

<sup>16</sup> *The Times*, 9 September 1890, earlier reflected the friction between cavalry and Mounted Infantry indicating that 'Colonel Hutton's corps would probably have been accepted by the cavalry had not the field exercise of last year substituted Mounted Infantry for cavalry in the scouting and reconnoitring duties of an advance guard and had not the regulations for the Mounted Infantry [*Regulations and Field Service Manual for Mounted Infantry 1889*], issued at the same time, confirmed the impression that the newly-formed force was intended as a rival to cavalry in some of its most important duties'.

<sup>17</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd.1789, Terms of Reference, pp.1-4; *The Times*, 26 August 1903.

commissioners,<sup>18</sup> whilst politicians they were not drawn up on party affiliation lines, first sat to hear evidence on 7 October 1902, finally publishing their report, containing 143 pages of opinion, less than a year later on 25 August 1903. The Commission provoked marked reactions in the Press and army with *The Times* initially critical that evidence was to be heard in private,<sup>19</sup> then promoting the Commission as being the most important inquiry affecting the British Army since the Crimea.<sup>20</sup> As just one example of senior officer opinion, Kitchener agitated to suppress the report's general publication on the grounds of it being 'prejudicial to the interests of Empire'.<sup>21</sup> The commissioners' methodology was straightforward, taking oral testimony from a large number of senior officers with only a modicum of incisive cross-examination, none of which was judicially adversarial and only superficially cross-referencing testimonies. In this lay both the Commission's strength and its weakness with the breadth of personal testimony impressive yet the non-judicial process permitted, if not inadvertently encouraged, a furtherance of personal agenda,<sup>22</sup> inclusion of unsubstantiated if not suspect claims,<sup>23</sup> the

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<sup>18</sup> The commissioners were: Lord Elgin, Sir Henry Normal (the army representative), Sir John Hopkins (the navy representative), Sir George Goldie, Lord Esher, Sir John Eyre and Sir John Jackson.

<sup>19</sup> *The Times*, 9 October 1902.

<sup>20</sup> *The Times*, 26 August 1903.

<sup>21</sup> TNA, *Kitchener papers*, PRO 30 / 57 / 25, letter to Roberts, 13 April 1903, with a letter of rebuttal from Elgin, dated 6 August 1903.

<sup>22</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1790, I, evidence from Roberts (Q.10375, p.438), set out Roberts' future direction of policy to relegate the role of edged weaponry in favour of the rifle.

<sup>23</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1790, II, evidence from Major General Sir E. Knox (Q.17580, p.320), indicating his opinion of the complete redundancy of cavalry.

proffering of irrelevant anecdote,<sup>24</sup> and as far as the cavalry versus Mounted Infantry debate was concerned, an arena for institutional in-fighting with claim and counterclaim expressed in a mesmerising, if not confusing, wealth of opinion.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, senior officers, including Roberts, utilised the opportunities offered by oral testimony to explain, expiate and exculpate their wartime decisions and actions.<sup>26</sup> It is not surprising therefore that much of the evidence recorded was conflicting and from which clear conclusions leading to robust learning for the future was absent.<sup>27</sup> Even the commissioners urged caution in drawing conclusions from the testimonies of these wartime experiences and to avoid unnecessarily provoking army reorganisation, warning that the very nature of the War should not be extrapolated to future campaigns where conditions would probably differ from those in South Africa.<sup>28</sup> For the interested public, most newspapers produced regular coverage of the proceedings,<sup>29</sup> with systemic deficiencies in the War Office being emphasised leading to the conclusion that the pre-war army had been in an ‘appalling’ state of unreadiness for war and was

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<sup>24</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Ian Hamilton surprisingly claiming the pseudo *arme blanche* abilities of Mounted Infantry and Mounted Rifles in the charge (Q.13884, p.105).

<sup>25</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Ian Hamilton (Q.13845, p.104), Haig (Q.19299, p.401), French (Q.17211, p.305) and Rimington (Q.12698, p.29).

<sup>26</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Roberts (Q.13282, p.68), effectively exculpating himself from the fiasco of his precipitous expansion of the Mounted Infantry in 1900.

<sup>27</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1789, p.49, summary of opinion, the polarity of testimony regarding the varying merits of cavalry or Mounted Infantry was acknowledged by the commissioners.

<sup>28</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1789, p.49, summary of opinion.

<sup>29</sup> Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, p.150.

'devoid of a plan of campaign'.<sup>30</sup> As Bowman and Connolly identify, criticism of the War Office in the Press tended to obscure the army's culpability for its own shortcomings.<sup>31</sup> It is unsurprising that the public's response to the report's publication was described as 'shock' by *The Times*.<sup>32</sup> The Commission's recommendations concentrated on failure of logistics, inadequacy of military planning, and the high-level organisational changes relating to decentralisation of the War Office, abolition of the post of Commander-in-Chief and the organisation of the Army Council.<sup>33</sup> Seemingly, politicians remained an easier target for disparagement than army commanders in the field. The Commission restricted itself to recommendations rather than forced implementation of policy changes that might have induced tenacious institutional opposition.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, in the face of significant Press censure<sup>35</sup> backed by Parliamentary agitation,<sup>36</sup> real change did occur in the wake of the Elgin Commission and the subsequent War Office (Reconstitution) Committee chaired by Lord Esher. As a consequence, in 1904, the office of the Commander-in-Chief was abolished

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<sup>30</sup> *The Times*, 26 August 1903.

<sup>31</sup> Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, p.150.

<sup>32</sup> *The Times*, 29 August 1903.

<sup>33</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1789, p.146, summary of opinion.

<sup>34</sup> Brian Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), p.214.

<sup>35</sup> *The Times*, 30 January 1904, called for the Government to stop delaying the introduction of army reform.

<sup>36</sup> *The Times*, 9 December 1903, Winston Churchill called for a Commons' debate to learn lessons from the war and from the Elgin Commission.

in favour of a committee-style Army Council and, in 1905, a General Staff was created.<sup>37</sup>

Despite reservations regarding the impartiality and objectivity of evidence submitted to the Elgin Commission, its effectiveness in identifying lessons and its ability to provoke reform, the Commission tackled, if tangentially, the issue of the doctrinal debate over the mounted arms. Overall 60 per cent of officers rendering oral testimony to the Elgin Commission were favourably disposed to the Mounted Infantry concept based on their experiences in South Africa.<sup>38</sup> Roberts set the general tone stating that 'the Mounted Infantry is a most useful service',<sup>39</sup> albeit this statement being largely predicated on his preference for the rifle over edged weapons - a focus on armaments that featured prominently in the commissioners' subsequent questions.<sup>40</sup> Roberts' assertion was not only supported by his protégé, Ian Hamilton, who considered that, latterly, the Mounted Infantry had been the 'best mounted troops in South Africa',<sup>41</sup> but also by senior infantry and Mounted Infantry officers including Methuen, Stopford, Bruce Hamilton, Kelly-Kenny, Knox, Godley and, perhaps surprisingly, the cavalry officer, Robert Baden-Powell, who professed to be a great believer in Mounted Infantry,<sup>42</sup> an assertion considered by Badsey to reflect Baden-Powell's

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<sup>37</sup> Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College*, p.214.

<sup>38</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1790 – 1791, I & II, 1903, analysis of responses.

<sup>39</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1790, I, evidence from Roberts (Q.10376, p.438).

<sup>40</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.167

<sup>41</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Ian Hamilton (Q.13941, p.111)

<sup>42</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Colonel Baden-Powell (Q.19939, p.430).

pliable personality and his need for subsequent employment.<sup>43</sup> Clearly the majority of Mounted Infantry supporters were either infantrymen, particularly those with Mounted Infantry experience, or were affiliated to Roberts' ring of loyal supporters, thus demonstrating the complexity of personal agenda and professional allegiance that permeated the testimonies submitted to the Commission. Roberts' submission on the missed opportunity for deploying large numbers of Mounted Infantry in the field,<sup>44</sup> an error for which he ought to accept most responsibility as Commander-in-Chief in theatre,<sup>45</sup> could not absolve him of blame for the logistical nightmare precipitated by his decision to extemporise large numbers of untrained Mounted Infantry. In general, Mounted Infantry supporters qualified their approbation by stressing prerequisites of improved equitation, proficiency in musketry, sustained mobility, functional utility, brevity of training compared to traditional cavalry and its ease of numerical expansion. Major General Knox considered cavalry redundant<sup>46</sup> with his extreme view juxtaposed with diametric polarity of

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<sup>43</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.166, Badsey accuses Baden-Powell of being 'a pliable tool' grateful to Roberts for his subsequent selection as Inspector General of Cavalry in January 1903; Tim Jeal, *Baden-Powell* (New York: Yale NB, 1991), pp.326-756, conversely considers that Roberts had displayed erratic behaviour towards Baden-Powell following the siege of Mafeking, including scapegoating Baden-Powell for becoming besieged again in Rustenburg following Roberts' contradictory orders. Baden-Powell was then sidelined by his appointment to the South African Constabulary, a paramilitary gendarmerie with his appointment as Inspector General of Cavalry arguably appearing to be a form of rehabilitation in terms of his relationship with Roberts.

<sup>44</sup> Roberts, 'The Army – as it was and it is', pp. 1-26, stated the need after the war for large numbers of Mounted Infantry to be trained; Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Roberts (Q.13282, p.68), Roberts claimed that this was a 'great lesson' to be learned from the conflict.

<sup>45</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Roberts (Q.13282, p.68).

<sup>46</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1790, II, evidence from Knox (Q.17580, p.320).

Haig,<sup>47</sup> who stridently denigrated the continued existence of Mounted Infantry, thus contributing to the commissioners' view that polarity of testimony impaired validation and the drawing of relevant conclusions. Although Haig was foremost among the Mounted Infantry's detractors, he was not alone. Rimington's submission, like Haig's, advocated the complete abolition of the Mounted Infantry on the grounds of its poor horsemanship causing excessive equine losses<sup>48</sup> and claiming its effectiveness on campaign to be half that of trained cavalry.<sup>49</sup> Although a cavalry officer well-regarded throughout the army predominantly through his command of colonial Mounted Rifles, his assertion was not without the scent of prejudice, clearly delineating the lines for the forthcoming battles for institutional survival. Rimington also resurrected the hackneyed prediction that Mounted Infantry would be helpless against European cavalry through its lack of equitation and absence of a personal defensive weapon.<sup>50</sup> As indicated in a previous chapter, this prophesy, a presumed fundamental yet unsubstantiated flaw of Mounted infantry (at least to its detractors), remained a Damoclean threat to its survival whenever the prospect of a European conflict was contemplated. Haig also reiterated another durable myth, that retention of Mounted Infantry would lead to straightened logistics through active competition for remounts and forage, an allegation founded in the

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<sup>47</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1789, p.49 summary of opinion; Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Haig (Q.19507, p.412), 'Mounted Infantry is an expensive luxury'.

<sup>48</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1789, p.98, summary of opinion.

<sup>49</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Rimington (Q12727, pp.30-31).

<sup>50</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Rimington *ibid.*



experiences of South Africa but with little relevance for the European battlefield where forage would be plentiful and cavalry would not rely on the small cobs of the Mounted Infantry for remounts. Haig concluded that the Mounted Infantry was unnecessary for there was no Mounted Infantry function that the cavalry could not out-perform,<sup>51</sup> with this confident prediction foretelling his involvement in the Mounted Infantry's demise. French's evidence complemented his cavalry colleagues with his submission deprecating the Mounted Infantry through its poor equitation and failures of reconnaissance although his evidence lacked the singular cogency of Haig's denunciation by conceding that the Mounted Infantry had been 'most useful' on occasions.<sup>52</sup> The commissioners concluded rightly, after hearing more moderate submissions, that 'in practice there was no real distinction between the use of Mounted Infantry and Mounted Rifles and, in the latter part of the war, the cavalry were armed and employed in much the same way'.<sup>53</sup> The commissioners qualified their summation by concluding that whereas cavalry could function alone, Mounted Infantry could only function in conjunction with cavalry,<sup>54</sup> still reflecting the fear of the Mounted Infantry's predicted tactical helplessness against enemy cavalry - a nuance that owed much to Haig's antipathetic submission.

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<sup>51</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1790, II, evidence from Haig (Q.19468, p.411).

<sup>52</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1790, II, evidence from French (Q.17214, p.305).

<sup>53</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1789, p.49, summary of opinion.

<sup>54</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1789, p.50, summary of opinion.

Therefore, were there clear lessons to be learned by the Mounted Infantry from the deliberations of the Elgin Commission? Although the cavalry versus Mounted Infantry debate had been explored through submissions, no absolute recommendations regarding mounted doctrine or differentiation of mounted roles appeared in the Commission's report,<sup>55</sup> although the importance of equitation training to support reconnaissance through improved peacetime training was emphasised.<sup>56</sup> Importantly the Commission re-opened the debate whether the Mounted Infantry should be permanent or abstracted, though no clear recommendation was forthcoming.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, arguably for the Mounted Infantry at least, the heightened acrimony resulting from the Commission, whether related to the *arme blanche* debate, the deficits of extemporised Mounted Infantry or the question of Mounted Infantry permanence, was its main outcome.

Thus, although it is tempting to frame the last decade of the Mounted Infantry's existence purely in terms of these factors, this approach would overlook the interdependent changes occurring in function and identity to the Mounted Infantry. The details of such changes have been explored in two preceding chapters yet warrant brief reiteration to contextualise the Mounted Infantry's eventual demise. The Mounted Infantry transposed functionally and

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<sup>55</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1789, p.50, summary of opinion.

<sup>56</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Bruce Hamilton (Q.17461, p.313), Ian Hamilton (Q.13941, p.111), and Brigadier General Stopford (Q.16703, p.270); John Vaughan, 'Cavalry Notes', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 45, 1901, pp. 449-55.

<sup>57</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Lord Methuen (Q14350, p.128), Roberts (q.13251, p.66), Ian Hamilton (Q.13941, p.111), Major General Pole Carew (Q.16594, p.264), General Gatacre (Q.16783, p.274), Bruce Hamilton (Q.17461, p.313), and Godley (Q20021, p.435).

in its identity during these post-Commission years from 'ikona' utilitarianism to the discrete, if theoretical, duality of non-cavalry divisional mounted troops (officially referred to still as 'divisional cavalry') and cavalry-substitute within a Mounted Brigade accompanying cavalry, horse artillery and cyclists. The appellation 'cavalry' seemed to confirm the worst fears of the cavalry as to the Mounted Infantry's ambitions and while representing a legitimate search for a doctrinal role, this duality consigned the Mounted Infantry to a conversion from archetype, admittedly perhaps only for colonial conflict,<sup>58</sup> to a cavalry-substitute, dissipating its fundamental, if idiosyncratic, attributes as mobile infantrymen and risking competition and comparison to the reforming cavalry. This transition in function and identity was enacted against the backdrop of personal antipathy and evolving personal political influences,<sup>59</sup> and, most importantly, the re-focussing of military strategy towards a potential European conflict.<sup>60</sup> This process gained momentum following the Anglo-French *Entente* 1904<sup>61</sup> and in reaction to threatened hostilities arising from rival German and French North African aspirations during the Moroccan

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<sup>58</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 179, II, evidence from Lieutenant General Kelly-Kenny (Q.16927, p.283), who considered that the Mounted Infantry were more suited to South Africa than Europe – an opinion not universally shared by respondents.

<sup>59</sup> Travers, 'The Hidden Army', pp. 523-44; Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, p.75.

<sup>60</sup> Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, p.104, note that the army's global imperial role still continued unabated hindering any uniformity of doctrine or training.

<sup>61</sup> Michael Waterhouse, *Edwardian Requiem: A Life of Sir Edward Grey* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2013), p.103; Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe went to war in 1914* (London: Penguin, 2013), p.139, considers that the *Entente* was not primarily an anti-German agreement but one to 'mute colonial tensions' with France and perhaps as a precursor to improved relations with Russia, previously strained by Russian expansion into central Asia appearing to threaten British India; TNA CAB 16 / 2, The Military Requirements of the Empire as affected by the Defence of India 1907.

Crisis of 1905.<sup>62</sup> The souring of general relations with Germany, in part due to the latter's ambitious naval construction programme,<sup>63</sup> and an increasingly anti-German British foreign policy to counter German imperial ambitions<sup>64</sup> resulted in the resolve to deploy troops on the continent if necessary.<sup>65</sup> In the latter part of the decade, under the auspices of Henry Wilson, then Director of Military Operations<sup>66</sup> and a keen advocate of military cooperation with the French Army,<sup>67</sup> an expeditionary force, which included Mounted Infantry, expressly for deployment 'in a civilised country and in a temperate climate'<sup>68</sup> rather than in the colonies, was devised. Its inclusion in a novel continental expeditionary force, rather than for colonial campaigns, presented the Mounted Infantry with a number of challenges. As previously mentioned, throughout its existence the Mounted Infantry's ability to withstand a clash with European-trained regular cavalry had always been doubted by its detractors on the grounds of inferior equitation, lack of

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<sup>62</sup> D.S. Macdiarmid, *The Life of Lieut. General Sir James Moncrieff Grierson* (London: Constable & Company Ltd., 1923), p.212, dates French and British armies' *rapprochement* in military planning and cooperation from 1905; Jeffery, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson*, pp.85-86.

<sup>63</sup> Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, p.148.

<sup>64</sup> TNA CAB 37 / 86 / 1 Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany 1907.

<sup>65</sup> TNA CAB 38 /19 /49 The Military Aspect of the Continental Problem, Committee for Imperial Defence 1911.

<sup>66</sup> Jeffery, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson*, pp.86-87, the establishment of three directorates, Military Operations, Military Training and Staff Duties, occurred in 1904.

<sup>67</sup> Jeffery, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson*, p.99.

<sup>68</sup> *Field Service Manual 1913: Mounted Infantry Battalion (Expeditionary Force)* (London: HMSO, 1913), p.5, nonetheless there appears to have been little or no specific Mounted Infantry input into the planning of the Expeditionary Force, despite the inclusion of a Mounted Infantry battalion, although this might be explained by the contemporaneous waning of the Mounted Infantry's proposed roles as both divisional mounted troops and as a constituent unit of the proposed mixed Mounted Brigades.

personal weapons for defence and the accepted orthodoxy of the irresistible momentum of the mounted charge.<sup>69</sup> As noted earlier, Hutton had always advocated personal defensive weapons for Mounted Infantry use<sup>70</sup> and equally discredited this doom-laden prophesy by encouraging Mounted Infantry to fight dismounted in more favourable 'broken' ground if attacked by enemy cavalry, noting too that, tactically 'no commander of a cavalry force would risk his Mounted Infantry by employing them in the face of a European cavalry when the ground was favourable to the actions of that arm'.<sup>71</sup> However, the Mounted Infantry's reliability in the face of 'enemy' cavalry during manoeuvres plus the cavalry's weakness in dismounted fire tactics which persisted as late as 1910,<sup>72</sup> should have confirmed the Mounted Infantry's claim as troops of choice for mobile firepower on the battlefield.<sup>73</sup> Naturally, cavalry officers disagreed, with Rimington surprisingly claiming parity with the infantry in firepower despite the cavalry's numerical inferiority.<sup>74</sup> Hutton was not blind to the risks to his Mounted Infantry of being

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<sup>69</sup> Rimington, *Our Cavalry*, p.16 & p.129, quoted the aphorism that 'A horseman and a heavy shower of rain can get through anything' and, at least in the German Army, cavalry were inculcated that 'the sight of the lance is sure to make the enemy turn and fly'.

<sup>70</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers*, XXXIV, Add. 50111, August 1881.

<sup>71</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Two, 21 March 1889, pp.1-28.

<sup>72</sup> TNA WO 27 / 508 Annual Report of the Inspector General of Forces 1910; TNA WO 279 / 496 Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College under the direction of CIGS 1910, underlined the necessity of cavalry avoiding becoming embroiled in prolonged fire-fights due to its overall lack of firepower.

<sup>73</sup> *The Times*, 23 August 1905.

<sup>74</sup> Rimington, *Our Cavalry*, p.208, considered that British cavalry were ten to fifteen years ahead of their continental rivals in terms of fire control; General Sir Horace Smith – Dorrien, *Memories of Forty-Eight Years' Service* (London: John Murray, 1925), p. 359, Smith-Dorrien summoned all cavalry officers based at Aldershot, to an uncomfortable meeting in the 16<sup>th</sup> Lancers' Mess on 21 August 1909 to assert his requirements for greater attention to musketry training by the cavalry.

embroiled in mounted combat but clearly neither did he anticipate that Mounted Infantry would be deployed without the benefit of cavalry cooperation, thus emphasising that Hutton was never such an unrealistic and ardent advocate of Mounted Infantry that he assumed sole ability for his force in all possible mounted roles. Indeed, Hutton had recognised the lesson arising from previous cavalry manoeuvres of the need, not for competition, but for cooperation between cavalry and Mounted Infantry despite a dearth of integration or cooperation extant in the army at that time.<sup>75</sup> Although whether a future European conflagration would necessarily be preceded by a large-scale massed cavalry collision and whether this really constituted a risk to the deployment of Mounted Infantry remained speculative. This scepticism was borne out by subsequent events, at least on the Western Front, in August 1914. Although the Mounted Infantry's resilience to cavalry attack was never put to the test, the Inspector General of Forces, despite the artificiality of peacetime inspections, deemed the Mounted Infantry able successfully to repel enemy cavalry through dismounted action with no instances recorded of the Mounted Infantry being surprised and attacked whilst still mounted.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, the continent's patchwork of farm, copse and hedgerow was considered eminently suitable

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<sup>75</sup> *The Times*, 11 September 1890, reported that the Mounted Infantry penetrated the enemy lines but 'advancing over open ground against cavalry without cavalry support is beyond them [Mounted Infantry]'.

<sup>76</sup> TNA WO 163 / 15 Annual Report of the Inspector General of Forces 1909: Inspection of the School of Instruction for Mounted Infantry, Longmoor, 25 May 1909.

the use of mobile riflemen in skirmishing and ambush<sup>77</sup> with *Mounted Infantry Training 1906*<sup>78</sup> recommending these as preferred tactics against enemy cavalry. However, the Mounted Infantry now faced further competition from a reforming British cavalry<sup>79</sup> and military cyclists, whose claim of superiority as mobile infantryman in countries with metalled roads,<sup>80</sup> will be considered later in this chapter.

A second important influence impacting on the Mounted Infantry's doctrine and identity between the years 1902-13 was the resurrection of the debate on whether the Mounted Infantry should be permanent or reconfigured when required. The re-assignment of much of the army in South Africa to Mounted Infantry or Mounted Rifles was a temporary arrangement without post-war longevity as, leaving regimental loyalties aside, the army reverted to its pre-war organisation with even the Elgin Commission cautioning against assuming that lessons from South Africa should drive fundamental changes in army organisation.<sup>81</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Maude, in his book defending the cavalry, pointed out unequivocally 'the conditions which rendered it [the Boer War] unlike all others within human memory'.<sup>82</sup> Crucially for the Mounted Infantry, less than a third of senior army officers who submitted favourable

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<sup>77</sup> TNA WO 163 / 10 Army Council Minutes, Précis 160, 1905; *The Times*, 3 February 1903; L.S. Amery, *The Problem of the Army* (London: Edward Arnold, 1903), p.102; R. Baden-Powell, 'What lies before us', *Cavalry Journal*, 1, 1906, pp. 2-11.

<sup>78</sup> *Mounted Infantry Training 1906*, pp.56-57.

<sup>79</sup> Phillips, 'Who Shall Say That the Days of Cavalry Are Over?' pp. 5-32.

<sup>80</sup> *The Times*, 16 February 1912; Rimington, *Our Cavalry*, p.96.

<sup>81</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1789, p.49, summary of opinion.

<sup>82</sup> Maude, *Cavalry*, p.270.

views of the Mounted Infantry to the Commission, recommended a state of permanency.<sup>83</sup> While the identity of the Mounted Infantry was functional rather than organisational, this rejection of permanency does not imply disbelief in the arm or disloyalty from its officers. This realisation of functional identity rather than one predicated on organisation negates criticisms alleged of Mounted Infantry officers' institutional negligence undermining the arm's survival. As discussed previously, even junior officers, originally enthusiastic for service in the Mounted Infantry in South Africa,<sup>84</sup> chose to revert back to regimental service after hostilities ended, recognising that Mounted Infantry service was temporary and not life-long.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, the subsequent rejection of permanency by the War Office, predicated in part on cost-effectiveness and propensity for numerical expansion when needed,<sup>86</sup> was paralleled by the almost indecent haste with which Mounted Infantry battalions were disbanded in the immediate aftermath of the war when the number of Mounted Infantry battalions in South Africa reduced by 63 per cent in late 1902 and by another 50 per cent by October 1903, leaving just five Mounted Infantry battalions in the country thereafter.<sup>87</sup> The corollary of abstracted impermanence had been the adverse impact on manpower on parent infantry battalions, noted by the Inspector General of Forces as being

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<sup>83</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence against permanency, as examples, from Colonel Plumer (Q.18084, p.340), Roberts (Q.13251, p.66), Ian Hamilton (Q.13941, p.111), Major General Barton (Q.16336, p.255), Stopford (Q.16703, p.270), Gatacre Q.16783, p.274), Bruce Hamilton (Q.17461, p.313), and Godley (Q.20021, p.435); Maguire, 'The Mounted Infantry Controversy', pp. 602-05.

<sup>84</sup> NAM, *Verney Papers*, diary entry, 23 July 1902; Salt, *Letters and Diary*, p.68.

<sup>85</sup> NAM, *Verney Papers*, diary entries, 4 & 31 July 1902.

<sup>86</sup> TNA WO 163 / 10 Minutes of the Proceedings of the Army Council, précis 160, 1905.

<sup>87</sup> *Army Lists 1901, 1902 & 1903*, (London: HMSO, 1901-03).



viewed by infantry battalion commanders with ‘apprehension and alarm’<sup>88</sup> with such numerical deficits ameliorated by reservists. At least for regiments garrisoning South Africa, the Inspector General of Overseas Forces, Ian Hamilton, permitted the five infantry battalions to recruit above establishment by 156 officers and men for their Mounted Infantry companies<sup>89</sup> that were established as quasi-permanent forces away from the rest of their battalions for the duration of the tour of duty. At home, to mitigate against the resulting manpower crisis in the infantry battalions, designating an extra company per infantry battalion as trained Mounted Infantry was proposed, although adding a ninth company to the standard eight company battalion would not only have increased its cost but further exacerbate shortages arising from recruitment shortfalls.<sup>90</sup> The difficulty in balancing the supply of trained infantrymen for the Mounted Infantry without affecting the parent infantry battalion was never solved satisfactorily despite imaginative suggestions including the voluntary extension for Mounted Infantry service by soldiers about to be discharged into the Reserve already considered in Chapter Two. This would have diminished costs compared to the ‘ninth company’ proposal and would have found favour with infantry colonels but, in turn, may have jeopardised the numerical adequacy of the Reserve. Furthermore, the competency of Mounted Infantry reservists, if their equitation skills atrophied

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<sup>88</sup> TNA WO 27 / 508 Inspector General of Forces’ Annual Report 1904, remarked that ‘the Mounted Infantry is maintained entirely at the expense of the infantry battalions’.

<sup>89</sup> TNA WO 27 / 511 Report of the Inspector General of the Overseas Forces of an Inspection in South Africa 1911.

<sup>90</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7095 The Origins of Mounted Infantry 1910.

in the absence of retraining, was questioned.<sup>91</sup> However, by rejecting permanency, the only opportunity to capitalise on the Mounted Infantry's popularity and utility following the Boer War was lost, leaving the impermanent Mounted Infantry to political machination and the effects of a resurgent cavalry.

The firepower versus *arme blanche* debate following the Elgin Commission had been marked by Roberts' policy of promoting the primacy of firepower for all mounted troops,<sup>92</sup> highlighted by his ill-fated preface to *Cavalry Training 1904 (Provisional)*, and later, his involvement with Erskine Childers' *War and the Arme Blanche*, both of which were condemned by senior cavalry officers.<sup>93</sup> An extension of his pro-firepower argument was Roberts' attempted abolition of the cavalry lance except for practice, leisure and ceremonial duties in 1903,<sup>94</sup> an order never entirely adhered to by all senior cavalry commanders.<sup>95</sup> If Roberts campaigned on the principle of the efficacy of the rifle, cavalry protagonists' main responses were the need to maintain the 'cavalry spirit' of the *arme blanche*<sup>96</sup> and, negatively, the ineffectiveness of the Mounted Infantry in cavalry roles, particularly

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<sup>91</sup> TNA WO 163 / 10 Minutes of the Proceedings of the Army Council, précis 160, 1905.

<sup>92</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1790, I, submission by Roberts (Q10409, p.439); Elgin Commission, Cd.1791, II, submission from Ian Hamilton (Q.13940, p.110), likened the sword and lance to 'medieval toys' when compared to the rifle.

<sup>93</sup> *Cavalry Training 1904* (London: HMSO, 1904); Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.181; Editorial, 'War and the Arme Blanche', *Cavalry Journal*, 5, 1910, pp. 283-87.

<sup>94</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6782 Debate regarding the abolition of the lance 1903.

<sup>95</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p. 171.

<sup>96</sup> Spiers, 'Between the South African War and the First World War', pp. 21-35.

reconnaissance and attack, due to inadequate equitation.<sup>97</sup> French naturally aligned himself with his cavalry colleagues but attempted some degree of equanimity regarding the Mounted Infantry,<sup>98</sup> never being as vehement in his denigration as Haig. Kitchener, posted to India as Commander-in-Chief but still under political pressure from Roberts,<sup>99</sup> did not display such polarised views as Roberts and Haig, showing a modicum of alignment with Roberts' policy by re-designating two (out of thirty-one) Indian cavalry lancer regiments.<sup>100</sup> In fairness, the retention of the lance in the Indian cavalry was probably appropriate and considered useful for 'show and effect'<sup>101</sup> in dealing with the civilian population. Nevertheless, it is clear that Roberts hoped Kitchener would influence, if not restrain, Haig, now also posted to India as Inspector General of Cavalry, in the latter's promulgation of the *arme blanche*.<sup>102</sup> Kitchener responded to Roberts that:

Haig has arrived and I have had one talk with him and mean to have another. He seems to have a worrying idea that the moral of cavalry will be injured by dismounted training. I have told him I disagree with

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<sup>97</sup> Goldmann, *With General French and the Cavalry*, p.411.

<sup>98</sup> TNA WO 163 / 10 Minutes of the Army Council, précis 160, 1905, Organisation of the Mounted Infantry, French to Plumer, 4 June 1904, regarded the Mounted Infantry as an invaluable force.

<sup>99</sup> TNA, *Kitchener Papers*, PRO 30/57/28, Roberts to Kitchener, 10 May 1903, 'I look to you for support' and 13 April 1904, 'I am anxious to hear what you propose to do about the lance question in India'.

<sup>100</sup> TNA, *Kitchener Papers*, PRO 30/57/29, Kitchener to Roberts, 10 June 1903.

<sup>101</sup> TNA, *Kitchener Papers*, PRO 30/57/28, Roberts to Kitchener, 10 May 1903.

<sup>102</sup> TNA, *Kitchener Papers*, PRO 37/57/28, 24 September 1903, with Roberts urging Kitchener to keep Haig 'in the right line'.

this.<sup>103</sup>

Kitchener though recognised the deeper connotations of the proposed policy at home, counselling caution, as: ‘the cavalry are, I think, evidently very nervous that more is intended than is written down and.....they may lose the power or spirit to attack the enemy’s cavalry when it is necessary’.<sup>104</sup>

Despite seemingly diametrically opposed, the cavalry versus Mounted Infantry debate, played out in the military press,<sup>105</sup> official documents,<sup>106</sup> training manuals<sup>107</sup> and military debating circles,<sup>108</sup> was finely nuanced and, as Badsey has shown, the position between the leading protagonists on both sides of the debate was less marked than imagined with Roberts admitting that the use of the sword may be necessary occasionally, stating that ‘I agree with you that a cavalry soldier must have a sword and be able to use it. And he must have a rifle and able to shoot well’,<sup>109</sup> whilst having previously indicated that a limited number of Lancer regiments should be retained.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> TNA, *Kitchener Papers*, PRO 37/57/29, 5 November 1903.

<sup>104</sup> TNA, *Kitchener Papers*, PRO 37/57/29, Kitchener to Roberts, 26 January 1905.

<sup>105</sup> Editorial, ‘War and the *Arme Blanche*’, pp. 283-87, provides a bitterly defensive view of the cavalry and a forceful partisan denigration of Childers’ work.

<sup>106</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6782 Debate regarding the abolition of the lance 1903.

<sup>107</sup> *Mounted Infantry Training 1906; Mounted Infantry Training 1909; Cavalry Training 1904; Cavalry Training 1907*.

<sup>108</sup> Anon, ‘Which is the chief cavalry weapon?’, *Cavalry Journal*, 1907, 2, pp. 70-75; ‘Lancer’, ‘The Question of Mounted Infantry: a reply to ‘A Rifleman’, pp. 228-31; A.B.B., ‘A Defence of Mounted Infantry: an answer to ‘Lancer’, pp. 398-99; General Von Pelet-Narbonne, ‘Primary conditions for the success of cavalry in the next European War’, *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 50, 1906, pp. 326-34.

<sup>109</sup> TNA, *Kitchener Papers*, PRO 37 / 57 / 28, Roberts to Kitchener, 30 June 1903.

<sup>110</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd.1790, I, evidence from Roberts (Q.10409, p.439).

Childers, although firmly antipathetic to edged weapons, certainly did not advocate the cavalry's complete abolition.<sup>111</sup> If Haig remained trenchant in his rebuttal of everything related to the Mounted Infantry, he still reflected that there was a role for dismounted firepower even if it was to be delivered by cavalry.<sup>112</sup> Although Godley's submission to the Elgin Commission that 'the Mounted Infantry should be trained to take over from cavalry',<sup>113</sup> was misinterpreted by cavalry officers, the context was if cavalry were unavailable then Mounted Infantry, who should not be trained as cavalry *per se*, should have the requisite skills to step up to the challenge. There is no evidence that Godley ever actively considered that Mounted Infantry could or should replace cavalry in its entirety despite his advocacy for a large number of trained Mounted Infantry.<sup>114</sup> Thus if polarity between individuals was not as extreme as imagined, then optimistically, the official manual *Combined Training 1902*, metaphorically 'took a step forward' by actively promoted an embryonic inter-arm cooperation that included cavalry and Mounted Infantry.<sup>115</sup>

If the permanency question and persisting institutional friction, even if not so extreme as the protagonists assumed, permeated the decade, both were

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<sup>111</sup> Childers, *War and the Arme Blanche*, pp. 356-57; Crum, *The Question of Mounted Infantry*, p.49, Crum thought that Childers was 'going too far' in his criticism of the cavalry.

<sup>112</sup> *Cavalry Training 1907*, pp. 186-87, attributed by Badsey to Haig as author; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.209; Spiers, 'Between the South African War and the First World War', pp. 21-35.

<sup>113</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Godley (Q.20028, p.436).

<sup>114</sup> Godley, 'The Development of Mounted Infantry training at home', pp. 52-55.

<sup>115</sup> *Combined Training 1902*, p.31.

diversions from the realities of developing a European campaign-focused army. Despite obvious dissimilarities between the Boer War and a predicted continental conflagration as the Boers' style of warfare was very different to that expected of European conscript armies, the Germans' experience of French irregular *franc-tireurs* in 1870 - 71, which would influence subsequent German cavalry doctrine, superficially resembled aspects of the Mounted Infantry's counterinsurgency duties in South Africa in 1901 - 02 where even the cavalry had needed to eschew traditional tactics.<sup>116</sup> As much as the 'ikona' reflected the realities of the war in South Africa, then the changes affecting the Mounted Infantry reflected the predicted challenges of war in Western Europe. Although *Combined Training 1902* still identified with 'ikona' ubiquity by committing small Mounted Infantry units in vanguards, rearguards and flanks, if possible accompanied by machine guns and artillery,<sup>117</sup> Lieutenant Frankland of the 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Dublin Fusiliers, in the *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, highlighted the confusion over the Mounted Infantry's roles by listing no less than eleven separate functions expected of the Mounted Infantry.<sup>118</sup> By comparison, by 1904, the Mounted Infantry was designated specifically as firepower support to the cavalry with a Mounted

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<sup>116</sup> Vaughan, *Cavalry and Sporting Memories*, p.103, recounted how one cavalry regiment, the Bays, rued their relinquishing of swords when attacked by the enemy late in the war and were only saved by an *arme blanche* charge by the 7<sup>th</sup> Hussars.

<sup>117</sup> *Combined Training 1902*, p.101.

<sup>118</sup> Frankland, 'Mounted Infantry Maxims', pp.155-70, including: cavalry support behind the 'cavalry screen', seizing important features, defending strongholds, cover advances, cover the retreat of the cavalry, rallying points, flank attacks, reconnaissance, raids against enemy lines of communication, flank protection including convoy escort duties and mobile reserve.

Infantry battalion allocated per cavalry brigade,<sup>119</sup> the certainty of its institutional survival and deployment seemingly now irrefutable despite the benefits of massed Mounted Infantry on campaign never being actually realised.<sup>120</sup> Acknowledging such sentiment, French wrote to Colonel Plumer in June 1904:

The Mounted Infantry principle, as it is at present developed, has thoroughly taken hold of our army and is understood by officers and men alike. As such, I regard it as invaluable and I thoroughly agree with you in thinking that the possession of such a force will probably make all the difference between success and failure to a general commanding in the field who knows how to put them to their proper use.<sup>121</sup>

This question of 'how to put them to their 'proper use' was inextricably linked to its uncertain doctrine, its previous utilitarianism and the paucity of peacetime opportunities for senior army commanders to deploy Mounted Infantry, a force, it will be remembered, configured only for active service. Certainly concerns had been raised by the Inspector General of Forces in 1905 that 'there was still considerable doubt as to the correct role and organisation of Mounted Infantry in war',<sup>122</sup> indicating that doctrinal clarity had not been achieved. Moreover, this would later translate into

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<sup>119</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6830 Organisation of Mounted Infantry 1904.

<sup>120</sup> TNA WO 163 / 10 Minutes of the Proceedings of the Army Council, Précis 160, 1905; Thorneycroft, 'Some Notes on Mounted Infantry', pp. 161-66.

<sup>121</sup> TNA WO 163 / 10 Minutes of the Proceedings of the Army Council, Précis 160, 1905.

<sup>122</sup> TNA WO 27 / 508 Annual Report of the Inspector General of Forces 1905.

disparagement of the usefulness of the Mounted Infantry with *The Times* alleging that 'no one knows how to handle them [Mounted Infantry] in the field'.<sup>123</sup> If a startling admission, it was clearly self-fulfilling as the persisting absence of large formations of Mounted Infantry routinely deployed in peacetime manoeuvres precluded practice in the handling of such mounted troops as predicted. Nonetheless, by the end of the decade, with a noticeable drifting of doctrinal role, the Mounted Infantry was allocated, at least on paper, a cavalry-like role in the mixed Mounted Brigades of the expeditionary force alongside regular cavalry<sup>124</sup> and, in company-sized distribution<sup>125</sup> as protective divisional cavalry,<sup>126</sup> having replaced its temporary predecessor, the Imperial Yeomanry, in this function in 1908.<sup>127</sup> These designations predictably further inflamed institutional rivalry. Godley, in supporting this dual designation, highlighted its risks of antagonising the cavalry and the very real possibility that the Mounted Infantry could be expected to assume ex-cavalry roles for which it had not trained.<sup>128</sup> While

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<sup>123</sup> *The Times*, 16 February 1912.

<sup>124</sup> Godley, 'Mounted Infantry as Divisional Mounted Troops and with the Mounted Brigade', pp. 140-45.

<sup>125</sup> *Mounted Infantry Training 1906*, p.2, companies were to be abstracted from battalions of the same regiment if possible for purposes of morale. Following experiences of mobile columns in South Africa, Mounted Infantry transiently included 'pom poms' (quick-firing field artillery) but quickly replaced with machine guns.

<sup>126</sup> *Mounted Infantry Training 1906*, pp.56-57; Godley, 'Mounted Infantry as Divisional Mounted Troops and with the Mounted Brigade', pp. 140-45.

<sup>127</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7092 Mounted Infantry as Divisional Cavalry 1908; TNA WO 32 / 7093 Mobilisation of the Imperial Yeomanry for the Field Army 1907; TNA WO 163 / 11 Minutes of the Proceedings of the Army Council, Précis 278, 1906; Cairnes, *A Common-Sense Army*, p.83; TNA WO 32 / 7094 Mounted Infantry as Divisional Cavalry 1908.

<sup>128</sup> Godley, 'Mounted Infantry as Divisional Mounted Troops and with the Mounted Brigade', pp. 140-45.



the mobilisation plans of 1906 simplified the organisational reconfiguration of the Mounted Infantry through abstraction on an army district basis, with one of ten battalions assigned per cavalry brigade or infantry division,<sup>129</sup> tension between the two mounted arms persisted and despite presenting this mobilisation plan as a way of releasing cavalry to undertake independent and strategic roles including reconnaissance, cavalry officers presumed, naturally perhaps, that this was an unwelcome reiteration of Roberts' previously proposed cavalry reforms diminishing the importance of cavalry and attempting forced conversion of cavalry regiments to Mounted Rifles or Mounted Infantry,<sup>130</sup> despite reassurances from Hutton to the contrary.<sup>131</sup> Clearly confusion reigned in military circles with Captain Battine at the Royal United Services Institute exclaiming that 'we hear a lot of talk about Mounted Infantry but I do not think anybody could really tell you what was the difference between a Mounted Infantry corps and a cavalry corps'.<sup>132</sup> In the opposing Mounted Infantry 'camp', even the most ardent protagonists of the arm, Hutton and Alderson, also demonstrated uncertainty over the survival of

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<sup>129</sup> WO 32 / 7089 Formation of MI battalions on mobilisation 1906, the Mounted Infantry battalions would be grouped according to military districts e.g. 3<sup>rd</sup> Mounted Infantry comprised companies from Lancashire regiments (Lancashire Fusiliers, Loyal North Lancashire, South Lancashire and Manchester regiments), the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mounted Infantry being Scottish, 9<sup>th</sup> from the Home Counties (Royal West Surrey, East Kent, East Surrey and Royal Sussex) and 8<sup>th</sup> Mounted Infantry comprising the Rifles (two companies from the Rifle Brigade and two from the King's Royal Rifle Corps).

<sup>130</sup> LHCMA, *De Lisle Papers*, 4 (7), letter from Hutton to De Lisle, 23 February 1903, Hutton claimed that cavalry officers were in constant fear of conversion to Mounted Infantry; NAM, *Roberts Papers*, 7101 – 23 – 122, letter from Roberts to Kitchener, 3 June 1904.

<sup>131</sup> Major General E. Hutton, 'Cavalry of Greater Britain', *Cavalry Journal*, 1, 1906, pp. 24-28, however Hutton's political influence was, by this period waning, having been dispatched previously to command abroad in New South Wales, Canada and, after the Boer War, Australia and thus, arguably, away from the political in-fighting of senior army officers at home – see Appendix One.

<sup>132</sup> Battine, 'The Use of the Horse Soldier in the Twentieth Century', pp. 309-30.

their force. As early as November 1900, Alderson had asked Hutton about the future of the Mounted Infantry,<sup>133</sup> whilst, by mid-1902, just after cessation of hostilities in South Africa, Hutton advised Alderson to direct his energy into reorganising the Yeomanry into Light Horse, thus mimicking Hutton's strategy in the newly-federated Australia, whilst apologising that he could not fund suitable employment for Alderson in Australia.<sup>134</sup>

However, these new roles created additional challenges for the Mounted Infantry. Allocating a divisional cavalry role to an extemporised force posed inherent difficulties as liaison and communication, which would normally evolve during peacetime training, would be deficient if the Mounted Infantry was unavailable to participate in manoeuvres and if the Mounted Infantry was not aligned with a division that contained its parent battalion, a risk not lost on the Mounted Infantry's detractors in the Press.<sup>135</sup> Optimistically, the Army Council predicted that Mounted Infantry as divisional cavalry would ensure that protective duties would be undertaken more effectively than if performed by Yeomanry due to bonds of familiarity within the regular army which, in turn, would diminish infantry battalion commanders' reluctance to release their men for Mounted Infantry duties.<sup>136</sup> For the Mounted Infantry, its deployment in mixed Mounted Brigades now necessitated enhanced

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<sup>133</sup> BL, *Alderson Papers*, Add. Mss. 50088, letter to Hutton, 1 November 1900.

<sup>134</sup> BL, *Alderson Papers*, Add. Mss. 50088, letter from Hutton, 3 June 1902, Hutton considered that there were no cavalry commanders other than French with the knowledge, experience of administrative capacity to undertake such a transition.

<sup>135</sup> *The Times*, 7 August 1909 & 4 April 1910.

<sup>136</sup> TNA WO 163 / 13 Minutes of the Proceedings of the Army Council, précis 378, 1908.

equitation training in order to undertake the traditional 'cavalry screen' role that demanded greater riding skills across country.<sup>137</sup> Thus, for the first time, the Mounted Infantry truly appeared to be about to officially replace the cavalry in traditional specific cavalry duties and thus no longer remaining an adjunct to the cavalry but becoming the 'new' cavalry of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Godley, writing in the *Cavalry Journal*, perhaps in an attempt to ameliorate cavalry officers' reactions, emphasised that Mounted Infantry, now assured of its mobility through improved equitation training, would not however be assuming all traditional cavalry roles but concentrate on its previous tasks of protecting horse artillery and establishing a focus or 'pivot of manoeuvre' for the brigade, only trespassing into traditional cavalry work if absolutely necessary.<sup>138</sup> Whether the professionally ambitious Godley truly believed this apology remains speculation. While the benefits of combining Mounted Infantry, cavalry, horse artillery, cyclists and machine guns was promoted by the General Staff,<sup>139</sup> replacement of the cavalry by Mounted Infantry was never realistically entertained.<sup>140</sup> True, the concept of a heterogeneous Mounted Brigade held many attractions including sparing of the limited number of cavalry regiments available for deployment on the continent,

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<sup>137</sup> TNA WO32 / 7090 Mounted Infantry battalions: organisation 1906; TNA WO 32 / 7091 Mounted Infantry battalions, mobilisation 1907.

<sup>138</sup> Godley, 'Mounted Infantry as Divisional Mounted Troops and with the Mounted Brigade', pp. 140-45.

<sup>139</sup> TNA WO 33 / 2747 Report of a Conference and Staff Ride as carried out at the Staff College by Senior Officers of the General Staff 1905.

<sup>140</sup> TNA WO 163 / 13 Minutes of the Proceedings of the Army Council, Précis 378,1908; TNA WO 163/18 Minutes of the Army Council 1913; TNA WO 279 / 496 Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College under the direction of CIGS 1910; *The Times*, 23 August 1905; *The Times*, 27 December 1906 .

ensuring mobile firepower, encouraging improved inter-arm cooperation<sup>141</sup> and deploying a versatile mounted force. Yet the innovation, despite formulation on paper and trials of mixed Mounted Brigades in the 1908 Aldershot Manoeuvres,<sup>142</sup> never reached fruition in wartime, foundering on a combination of institutional inertia, resurgent 'hybrid' cavalry and army politics leaving the feeling of 'too little, too late'. Certainly, a similar symbiosis proposed immediately after the Mounted Infantry's inception could have confirmed the Mounted Infantry's doctrinal position before institutional hostility became entrenched<sup>143</sup> yet debate had always been dissipated over other issues particularly permanency versus abstraction. Eventually, following a sustained antagonistic pro-cavalry Press campaign deprecating the Mounted Infantry as divisional cavalry<sup>144</sup> facilitated by a repatriation of two cavalry regiments from garrison duties in South Africa thus increasing the number of available cavalry squadrons at home, the Army Council replaced the Mounted Infantry with cavalry, in conjunction with cyclists,<sup>145</sup> in both the Mounted Brigade and as divisional cavalry<sup>146</sup> effectively rendering the Mounted Infantry redundant.

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<sup>141</sup> Bethune, 'The Uses of Cavalry and Mounted Infantry in Modern Warfare', pp.619-36, stressed the need to move away from competition between the two mounted arms towards inter-arm cooperation.

<sup>142</sup>TNA WO 279 / 21 Aldershot Command Staff Tour and Manoeuvres 1908.

<sup>143</sup> *The Times*, 9 September 1890, 'The Cavalry Manoeuvres'; TNA WO 33 / 37 Précis on Mounted Infantry 1881.

<sup>144</sup> *The Times*, 7 August 1909, 4 April 1910, 16 February 1912, 18 May 1912 & 22 November 1913.

<sup>145</sup> TNA WO 279 / 42, Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College 1911.

<sup>146</sup> Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army*, pp. 261-62; *The Times*, 22 November 1913.

Clearly, this decade of flux in doctrine for the Mounted Infantry was not in isolation from changes in the rest of the army. Indeed the years after 1902 were marked by an expansion in overview and scrutiny of training by senior officers through increasing peacetime manoeuvres and inspections.<sup>147</sup> This increased focus on training and simulation, irrespective of much of its artificiality,<sup>148</sup> permitted analysis of military performance that, through the reports of the directors of manoeuvres, inspectors of individual arms and the deliberations of the Army Council, helped to invoke changes in the army and facilitated feedback to army commanders. The performance of the Mounted Infantry, previously only reconfigured occasionally in peacetime for training, was disjointed and inconsistent as judged by official reports,<sup>149</sup> arising from a lack of clarity as to what was expected of it. The 1905 Manoeuvres used Mounted Infantry as divisional cavalry yet their orders confusingly encompassed more than infantry and artillery protection duties and required the Mounted Infantry to function like cavalry in advance guard and strategic reconnaissance roles plus identification of enemy defence points by drawing enemy fire (all rather reminiscent of Alderson's sardonic '*Decoy Ducks*' essay arising from his Mounted Infantry experiences in South Africa)<sup>150</sup> as well as seizing and defending tactically important features such as

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<sup>147</sup> Spiers, 'Between the South African War and the First World War', pp. 21-35.

<sup>148</sup> D.M. Leeson, 'Playing at War: The British Military Manoeuvres of 1898', *War in History*, 15 (4), 2008, pp. 432-61

<sup>149</sup> TNA WO 27 / 504 Mounted Infantry Inspection 1905; TNA WO 27 / 505, Mounted Infantry Inspection 1906; TNA WO 27 / 508 Inspection of the School of Instruction for Mounted Infantry at Longmoor, 25 May 1909.

<sup>150</sup> 'Quack', 'The Decoy Ducks', *United Services Magazine*, 29 May 1900, n.p, attributed to Alderson.

bridges.<sup>151</sup> Clearly, as the report states, these were the anticipated roles of the Mounted Infantry in the next war but, as shown by similar tasks allotted to the Mounted Infantry during the 1906 Manoeuvres, remained at variance with official expectations laid down in the new *Mounted Infantry Training 1906* which explicitly described the tactical use of Mounted Infantry in terms of its cavalry support role.<sup>152</sup> This ambiguity harks back to the days of the 'ikona' when the Mounted Infantry turned its hand to anything as depicted in Kipling's poem. This emphasis on cavalry support faded as cavalry reform fulfilled Haig's prediction that the cavalry could match any task delegated to the Mounted Infantry and which supported his assertion, described in his 1907 *Cavalry Studies*, that the cavalry's battlefield roles would continue to expand.<sup>153</sup> Although minor practical deficiencies in the Mounted Infantry were identified during manoeuvres including providing inadequate protection for horses when dismounted,<sup>154</sup> remaining mounted for too long and, at times, manifesting a lack of initiative at company command level,<sup>155</sup> the narrative following the 1905 Manoeuvres remarked on, 'a standard of efficiency in the Mounted Infantry of the Aldershot Army Corps [which] was far beyond the GOC's [General Officer Commanding] expectations'.<sup>156</sup> As late as 1909, the Inspector General of Force's report complimented the Mounted Infantry,

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<sup>151</sup> TNA WO 27 / 508 Inspector General of Forces' Annual Report 1905.

<sup>152</sup> *Mounted Infantry Training 1906*, pp.56-57.

<sup>153</sup> Major General Douglas Haig, *Cavalry Studies* (London: Hugh Rees Ltd., 1907), pp.8-9.

<sup>154</sup> TNA WO 27 / 504 Mounted Infantry Inspection 1905.

<sup>155</sup> TNA WO 27 / 505 Mounted Infantry Inspection 1906.

<sup>156</sup> TNA WO 27 / 504 Mounted Infantry Inspection 1905.

referred to now in parts of the Press as the 'maidservants of the English military system',<sup>157</sup> not least on its keenness but also importantly, in view of criticism founded on its performance in the Boer War, its high standards of equitation and horsemastership.<sup>158</sup> Not all aspects of such appraisals were complimentary with the Mounted Infantry Inspection 1906 concluding that there was 'not much gained by employing Mounted Infantry...and the tasks could have been left to the Infantry'.<sup>159</sup> Thus the Mounted Infantry's ongoing existence always remained an open question within the army, both at the level of cavalry and Mounted Infantry officers but also seemingly in higher echelons such as the Inspectors General and the Army Council.

By the end of the decade the newly formed air battalions began to encroach on the traditional cavalry role of reconnaissance and threatened the roles of both cavalry and Mounted Infantry.<sup>160</sup> Despite the vicissitudes of mechanical reliability of primitive aircraft, atmospheric visibility and the challenges of interpretation of what could be seen from the air,<sup>161</sup> the evident lesson of the

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<sup>157</sup> *The Times*, 6 September 1912.

<sup>158</sup> TNA WO 27 / 508 Inspection of the School of Instruction for Mounted Infantry at Longmoor, 25 May 1909; TNA WO 27 / 505 Mounted Infantry Inspection 1906, complimented the Mounted Infantry for 'riding wonderfully'.

<sup>159</sup> TNA WO 27 / 505 Inspection of Mounted Infantry 1906.

<sup>160</sup> TNA WO 108 / 307 Proceedings of the Army Board 1899 – 1900, 22 December 1899, the Board's decision to reject any offers from 'inventors of flying machines' for prototypic aircraft, including the rejection of an 'airship', 15 January 1900, would ultimately be reversed once powered flight became mechanically possible.

<sup>161</sup> TNA AIR 1/776/204/4/391 Reports on Army Manoeuvres 1912 - RFC, air reconnaissance had been able to determine the presence of cavalry and correctly identified that the regiment in question was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dragoons but, admittedly, this was only deduced from the colour of their grey horses – a lesson which resulted in the horses' coats being camouflaged on mobilisation in 1914.

1912 Army Manoeuvres was the demonstrable value of the embryonic aerial reconnaissance namely that:

There can no longer be any doubt as to the value of airships and aeroplanes in locating an enemy on land. Though aircraft will probably have several uses in war, their primary duty is searching for information and consequently their alliance with cavalry will be of a close character.<sup>162</sup>

The benefits of aerial reconnaissance meant that the cavalry and other mounted troops, whilst not excluded from the duties of reconnaissance, were now in danger of demotion as its primary practitioners. Subsequent trials confirmed the feasibility of aerial scouting permitting surprisingly accurate identification of troops that led to imaginative, theoretical but often unworkable advice to troops how to remain unobserved on the ground.<sup>163</sup> It also became apparent that cooperation with other embryonic branches of the army, most importantly military cyclists, would be vital, a novel symbiosis of mobility in the air and on ground between aviators and mobile troops,<sup>164</sup> occurring at a time when distrust between cavalry and Mounted Infantry had not abated. In a lecture in 1911, De Lisle asserted that 'Mounted Infantry must be capable of all mounted duties except mounted attack' which, in

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<sup>162</sup> TNA AIR 1/776/204/4/391 Reports on Army Manoeuvres 1912.

<sup>163</sup> TNA AIR 1/1608/204/85/27 Visibility of Cyclist Battalions from the air by Air Scouts, including sheltering away from the grass verge under hedges and, if caught in the open, for troops to 'group themselves artistically with gaps of different lengths and not to line the grass margin of the road in perfect dressing and at equal intervals'.

<sup>164</sup> TNA WO 279 / 52 Army Exercise 1913.



hindsight, was an important assertion by an officer with experience in light infantry, Mounted Infantry and cavalry command as it underlined that just two years before its abolition an officer with hitherto balanced experience in all relevant arms still considered that the Mounted Infantry performed important duties and therefore had a future in the army.<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, De Lisle did not discount the ability of Mounted Infantry in a European conflict but merely accepted combat against enemy cavalry would test the Mounted Infantry more than on colonial campaigns. Nevertheless, the lack of evolution in Mounted Infantry doctrine apart of the compromise of its participation in mobilisation as divisional mounted troops and as a cavalry-sparing component of mixed Mounted Brigades, in hindsight perhaps reflecting the waning of popularity of the arm with senior army officers, can be seen as a prediction of the arm's imminent demise. To highlight the doctrinal distrust manifest in the army, a contemporary briefing paper for the Committee for Imperial Defence in 1911, prepared by the General Staff, suggested that "our cavalry (was) hardly equal to either French or German", conversely praising both infantry and artillery in comparison to continental armies.<sup>166</sup> Thus if the cavalry was considered to be inferior to other arms in the army and also in comparison to continental rivals, the Mounted Infantry's demise seems all the stranger. It is ironic, therefore, that the decade in which the Mounted Infantry

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<sup>165</sup> LHCMA, *De Lisle Papers*, 4 / 23 'Mounted Troops in Cooperation with other Arms', lecture 21 February 1911.

<sup>166</sup> TNA CAB 38 / 1 – 21 *The Military Aspect of the Continental Problem*, Committee for Imperial Defence 1911, the professional allegiance of the report's author remains conjecture but the military assistant secretary to the Committee for Imperial Defence was an infantry major which might explain how this appraisal proved so erroneous three years later.

was definitively defined and afforded a discrete military role,<sup>167</sup> was also the decade in which the Mounted Infantry largely turned its back on its infantry doctrine and became a cavalry substitute, explicitly assuming a role previously the responsibility of the cavalry of the line, exposing the arm to the ‘cavalry of poverty’ jibe of its detractors in the Press and to institutional in-fighting in the War Office.<sup>168</sup> Furthermore, as an additional threat, the decade also confirmed that the Mounted Infantry was not the only possible means of applying mobile firepower on the modern battlefield with the appearance of the mobile infantryman in the guise of the military cyclist.

Thus, with the advent of the military cyclist, the Director of the 1913 Army Exercises noted:

The value of cyclist battalions in close country came prominently to notice. Cyclists, to perform successfully the many duties for which they are peculiarly fitted, must be fully conversant with the role of mobile infantry, expert in the use of the rifle and thoroughly fit.<sup>169</sup>

The language used mirrored previous arguments regarding the Mounted Infantry with its emphasis on mobility, expertise in musketry and requirement as fully-trained infantry.<sup>170</sup> Similar admonitions against attempting combat whilst mounted resembled previous edicts for the horsed Mounted Infantry

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<sup>167</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7094 Mounted Infantry as Divisional Cavalry 1908.

<sup>168</sup> *The Times*, 16 February 1912.

<sup>169</sup> TNA WO 279 / 52 Army Exercises 1913, 23 – 25 September 1913.

<sup>170</sup> WO 32 / 4737 Provision of Cyclists for employment with the Cavalry Division 1913, confirmed that only infantry should be used as cyclists although conversion of the Rifle Brigade and KRRC, an echo of previous shelved plans for the horsed Mounted Infantry, was also considered briefly.

and underlined the bicycle as a mode of locomotion and not as a weapon of war.<sup>171</sup> The inception and development of the military cyclist as another form of mobile soldier occurred against a background of increasing popularity of cycling for leisure among the Edwardian public.<sup>172</sup> However military cyclists were not a completely new innovation. Previous trials using cyclists in European armies had yielded positive results even if the military role of cyclists had remained inconclusive.<sup>173</sup> The question, which mirrored the doctrinal quest affecting the Mounted Infantry, was: 'granted that the cycle be adopted as a new military equipage, to what purposes could it and its rider be most advantageously assigned?'<sup>174</sup>

Early British trials in the 1880s had been predominantly with rifle volunteers rather than regular infantry thus setting the trend almost until the First World War where the military cyclist tended to be an amateur soldier in the volunteers or, after 1908, the Territorial Force<sup>175</sup> rather than in the regulars. Cyclists had not been a rarity during the war in South Africa despite Roberts'

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<sup>171</sup> Major B.H.L. Prior, *The Military Cyclist: notes on the work of the individual soldier* (Norwich: Frank H. Goose, 1907), p.2, disabused the military cyclist of any thought of 'wondrous feats of valour whilst actually riding his machine'.

<sup>172</sup> Trapman, 'Cyclists in conjunction with Cavalry', pp. 353-64.

<sup>173</sup> *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 16 October 1886, reported successful trials of the French *vélocipèdiques* as well as an Austrian cyclist unit used in Army Manoeuvres in 1884. The *Gazette* predicted that the German army would follow suit shortly and predicted the "cycle as an invention capable of adding to the methods of modern warfare"; Marion Harding, 'Cads on Castors: a History of British Military Bicycling to 1914', *The Victorian Soldier: Studies in the History of the British Army 1816 – 1914* (London: National Army Museum, 1993) Marion Harding (ed.), pp. 147-53, reports trials of cyclists in the Italian army as early as 1875 where their purpose was for communication duties.

<sup>174</sup> *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 16 October 1886.

<sup>175</sup> Harding, 'Cads on Castors', pp. 147-53, initial reports of military cyclists were with the 1<sup>st</sup> Volunteer battalion of the Royal Sussex Regiment used as scouts mounted on pennyfarthing cycles, armed with revolvers, during the 1885 Easter Manoeuvres.

poor opinion of their value expressed to the Elgin Commission.<sup>176</sup> It has been estimated that cyclists comprised three per cent of all British forces in South Africa<sup>177</sup> and had the occasional notable military success in combat.<sup>178</sup> Admittedly, terrain constrained the use of cyclists to either roads<sup>179</sup> or, because of the paucity of suitable roads, to the railway where ingenious tandem cycles and four-man squad cycles capable of running on rails were used for the purposes of patrolling between blockhouses, for reconnaissance and casualty evacuation.<sup>180</sup> Even the Boers used cyclists in a limited capacity to spare their horses for routine camp duties.<sup>181</sup> With the development of *Cyclist Drill 1890*, based on the experiences of Royal Marine cyclists,<sup>182</sup> and *Cyclist Drill 1900*,<sup>183</sup> the basic organisational structure and military pre-requisites for military cyclists were set down and bore remarkable similarities to those of the Mounted Infantry. The presupposition of

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<sup>176</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1790, I, evidence from Roberts (Q.10401, p.438).

<sup>177</sup> D.R. Maree, 'Bicycles during the Boer War 1899 – 1902', *Military History Journal*, 4 (1), 1977, p.2, the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and City of London Imperial Volunteers were the first of several units to provide cyclist units. Colonial detachments of cyclists included the Rand Rifles, Cape Cycle Corps, Durban Light Infantry, Royal Australian Cycle Corps and the De Beers Mine Ambulance Corps.

<sup>178</sup> LHCMA, *De Lisle Papers*, 2 (ii), recorded the successful ambush of a small Boer detachment by 12 army cyclists at Slangfontein, 7 March 1901.

<sup>179</sup> *Cycle Drill 1890* (Chatham: Gale & Polden, 1890), p.11, although the manual surprisingly recommended training on broken ground as much as on smooth level terrain; *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 16 October 1886, claimed improbably that 'a strongly built tricycle, with an efficient rider, can be used in almost any place where a horse could be comfortably employed'.

<sup>180</sup> D.R. Maree, 'Bicycles during the Boer War', p.2, the predominant use of cyclists was for communications including the transportation of carrier pigeons that generally became unsettled if transported by horse.

<sup>181</sup> D.R. Maree, 'Bicycles during the Boer War', *ibid*, with Boer forces recruiting a 108 strong corps divided into seven sections

<sup>182</sup> *Cyclist Drill 1890*, p.i.

<sup>183</sup> *Cyclist Drill 1900* (London: HMSO, 1900), p.viii.

attainment of fully-trained infantry drill, the selection of officers and men on merit and the principle that cyclists should be commanded by their own officers throughout training and organisation based on small unit size,<sup>184</sup> all reflected that of the Mounted Infantry.<sup>185</sup> Furthermore, in keeping with horsed Mounted Infantry, military cyclists rapidly accrued an increasingly lengthy list of military roles and responsibilities including reconnaissance, advance guard and rearguard duties for which they were considered particularly well-suited because of their propensity for rapid dismounting and re-mounting.<sup>186</sup> What becomes clear is that cyclists faced many of the same tactical problems that had confronted horsed Mounted Infantry such as the optimum method of carrying rifles, whether attached to the cycle or slung over the man's shoulder; how should swords be carried; estimates of the load permissible on cycles and which cycle design was most appropriate and cost-effective.<sup>187</sup> Yet the evolution of the military cyclist was far less contentious, attracting much less opprobrium from within the army, than horsed Mounted Infantry. This lack of controversy extended to the cyclists' role and their organisation.<sup>188</sup> The post-war manual *Combined Training 1902* predicted that the cyclists' main role would be advance scouting when there

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<sup>184</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6570 Organisation of Cyclist Corps for the Territorial Army 1907.

<sup>185</sup> *Cyclist Drill 1900*, p.viii.

<sup>186</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6586 Demolition Equipment for the Territorial Force 1909.

<sup>187</sup> TNA WO 4737 Provision of Cyclists for employment with the Cavalry Division 1913, recommended a folding bicycle that had initially been rejected on grounds of cost in 1903.

<sup>188</sup> Colonel R.C.R Haking, *Staff Rides and Regimental Tours* (London: Hugh Rees Ltd., 1908), p.38, although there were dissenters with Haking warning that 'bicycles are no doubt useful to get from the railway station to the ground [for the staff ride] and back again but there is a great temptation not to leave the road'.

were metalled roads, anticipating the re-focussing of army thinking towards the European continental theatre.<sup>189</sup> Yet even this failed to invoke the ire of cavalry officers.<sup>190</sup> The reason was, seemingly, the perception of identity and a consequent lack of competition between two groups.

It is tempting to equate directly the roles of the military cyclists and Mounted Infantry but this was controversial.<sup>191</sup> With regards to functional roles, the cyclists' predominant task was scouting with cyclists claiming that their resilience,<sup>192</sup> speed,<sup>193</sup> endurance, and minimal maintenance requirements that meant that they were "the *beau ideal* Mounted Infantry of the road".<sup>194</sup> The use of cyclists during the Cavalry Division's training in 1912, whilst not quite revelatory, had yielded important lessons as not only were they important for communication and as escorts to the supply train but ranging 'enemy' cyclist patrols were considered as much a danger as its cavalry. During reconnaissance patrols, cyclists eclipsed horsed Mounted Infantry in

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<sup>189</sup> *Combined Training 1902*, p.132.

<sup>190</sup> TNA WO 32 / 4737 Provision of Cyclists for employment with the Cavalry Division 1913, this committee, chaired by Major General Allenby, also included a number of senior cavalrymen and was enthusiastic about the cooperation between cyclists and cavalry, although the former evidently in a subordinate role.

<sup>191</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6570 Organisation of Cyclist Corps for the Territorial Army 1907, considered that cyclists and Mounted Infantry were not equivalent; Prior, *The Military Cyclist*, p.2, took a diametrically opposite view; TNA WO 279 / 52 Army Exercises 1913, implied that cyclists were indeed mobile infantry and should be considered as Mounted Infantry.

<sup>192</sup> TNA WO 27 / 503 Army Manoeuvres 1904, the cyclists were found to have disembarked faster than cavalry, advanced further and faster than the infantry, blocked roads at night without detection despite the superiority of 'enemy' cavalry patrols and penetrated through the protective screen of 'enemy' cavalry.

<sup>193</sup> *Cyclist Drill 1900*, p.vi, 'the special utility of cyclists lies in the fact that they can traverse great distances along roads at a high speed'.

<sup>194</sup> Prior, *The Military Cyclist*, p.3;

endurance and penetration of the opposition's defences,<sup>195</sup> a conclusion previously also reached during the 1904 Manoeuvres.<sup>196</sup> Contrary to the persistent predictions of the Mounted Infantry's future annihilation on the points of foreign sabres, no such concerns were voiced about cyclists whose instructions to form a modified protective square behind their cycles with wheels set spinning to unnerve the enemy horses, were left untested in war.<sup>197</sup> Despite trials of regular infantry as despatch rider cyclists in 1888, cyclists were, for the most part, members of the volunteer force.<sup>198</sup> Indeed only Territorial troops formed complete cyclist battalions in 1914 with the regular army forming numerically limited sections<sup>199</sup> as the Army Council demonstrated no pretensions of raising independent regular cyclist regiments.<sup>200</sup> Clearly, in the context of the wrangling between cavalry and Mounted Infantry over reconnaissance roles, cyclists as scouts could have been portrayed equally as a challenge to the cavalry, yet there seems very little controversy between these two branches.<sup>201</sup> In fact, Haig appears to

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<sup>195</sup> Major I.G. Hogg, 'The Cavalry Division Training 1912', *Cavalry Journal*, 8, 1913, pp. 109-16.

<sup>196</sup> TNA WO 27 / 503 Army Manoeuvres 1904.

<sup>197</sup> Harding, 'Cads on Castors', pp. 147-53.

<sup>198</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6570 Organisation of Cyclist Corps for the Territorial Army 1907.

<sup>199</sup> Westlake, *The British Army of August 1914*, p.27, points out that most Territorial cyclist companies were attached to county infantry regiments, but four independent cyclist battalions (Kent, Huntingdonshire, Highland and Northern) existed.

<sup>200</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6570 Organisation of Cyclist Corps for the Territorial Army 1907.

<sup>201</sup> 'Lancer', 'The Question of Mounted Infantry: a reply to 'A Rifleman'', pp. 228-31, the transition of Mounted Infantry function to cyclists was, unsurprisingly, positively welcomed by the pseudonymous cavalryman author; TNA WO 33 / 3026 Report of the Advisory Committee on Motor Cyclists 1911, as noted previously, the possibility of being eclipsed by motor cycles was unrealistic during the period of this thesis.

have granted his approbation earlier to the cyclists by promoting cyclists in his submission to the Elgin Commission.<sup>202</sup> In *'Our Cavalry'*, Rimington welcomed cyclists as an 'accessory' in outpost and reconnaissance work, this being a step-change in attitude from Rimington's vociferous denunciation of horsed Mounted Infantry.<sup>203</sup> Being part-time soldiers and not part of the regular army, the cyclists were neither 'smart' nor from 'smart' regiments and thus no threat to the cavalry. Although much was made at the time of the attraction of cyclist companies encouraging recruitment of men who would not have otherwise entertained military service,<sup>204</sup> there was an undeniable and unbridgeable gulf, professionally and socially, between those in cyclists companies and cavalry regiments. Not being horsed, the cyclists did not suffer from the Mounted Infantry's controversial equine focus. From the cavalry's perspective, cyclists had none of the élan of mounted troops and patently could not deliver shock tactics.<sup>205</sup> Furthermore, the quantum of cyclists, even those from the regular army, remained substantially smaller than the Mounted Infantry and did not constitute a numerical threat to the cavalry, being too few to take on the role of fire support unlike the Mounted Infantry. Previously, cyclists' hopes for an expansion into a large force for home defence had foundered through fiscal constraint.<sup>206</sup> The long term

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<sup>202</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1790, II, evidence from Haig (Q.19299, p.401).

<sup>203</sup> Rimington, *Our Cavalry*, p.96.

<sup>204</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6570 Organisation of Cyclist Corps for the Territorial Army 1907.

<sup>205</sup> TNA WO 27 / 503 Army Manoeuvres 1904.

<sup>206</sup> *The Times*, 'Sir J.H.A. Macdonald on Infantry', 7 February 1901, however cyclists did not suffer the loss of a quarter of their number as horseholder "No. 3s" from the firing line unlike their mounted counterparts; *The Times*, 3 February 1903; TNA WO 32 / 6570 Organisation of Cyclist Corps for the



effect of such constraint was that cyclists would be always used in small numbers and a Cyclist Division was never contemplated. Unlike the Mounted Infantry, whose impermanence had been a persistent question mark, the cyclists' configuration attracted no dissent. Peacetime permanence, rather than abstraction, was never realistically considered, predicated perhaps on the Mounted Infantry's experience but more realistically on fiscal and organisational grounds.<sup>207</sup> There were similar complaints from infantry battalion commanders regarding the loss of their men to the cyclist detachments,<sup>208</sup> resembling complaints about abstraction to the Mounted Infantry, but there was no opposition to cyclist units being configured for peacetime manoeuvres probably due to the close cooperation seen between cyclists and the infantry divisions. Therefore, it was accepted with almost catechismal certainty that cyclists with the state of current technology could never replace cavalry but would perform as its auxiliary, its junior partner, furnished by abstraction from the regular infantry.<sup>209</sup> Thus, from the cavalry's perspective, if there was no doctrinal competition or equine focus, then there was no threat to its role, identity, prestige or way of life.<sup>210</sup>

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Territorial Army 1907; TNA WO 32 / 6571 Cyclist Battalions for the Territorial Force 1908; TNA WO 279 / 25 Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College, January 1909.

<sup>207</sup> TNA WO 32 / 4737, Provision of Cyclists for employment with the Cavalry Division 1913.

<sup>208</sup> TNA WO 279 / 25 Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College January 1909, although numerically abstraction for cyclist duties affected far less men per battalion than did abstraction for the Mounted Infantry.

<sup>209</sup> TNA WO 32 / 4737 Provision of Cyclists for employment with the Cavalry Division 1913; TNA WO 163 / 611 Recommendations of Committees on Army Matters 1900-1920, 'Cyclists for the Cavalry Division' No. 800 (79/4291); TNA WO 32 / 6586 Demolition Equipment for the Territorial Force 1909.

<sup>210</sup> LHCMA, *De Lisle*, Papers 4 (7), lecture 21 February 1911.

Eventual substitution of cyclists for Mounted Infantry as divisional cavalry, with the reduced costs of approximately £4,000 when employing cyclists instead of Mounted Infantry, dealt a mortal blow to the fortunes of the horsed Mounted Infantry.<sup>211</sup> Military cyclists were assimilated quickly into the army's doctrine providing comparatively mundane communications and orderly duties, now that the reformed cavalry provided its own firepower, therefore not completely assuming the defunct Mounted Infantry's functionality.<sup>212</sup> Advances in technology during this decade also permitted the advent of motor cyclists to aid communication particularly a more rapid transfer of intelligence between Headquarters and cyclist advance units.<sup>213</sup> Scarcity of ownership of motor cycles and the rarity of those requisite skills of motorcycle maintenance ensured enhancements to pay and automatic appointment of riders to non-commissioned officer rank making motor cyclists something of a temporary élite.<sup>214</sup> However, numerical insufficiency and inherent mechanical unreliability dissuaded the development of motorised Mounted Infantry.<sup>215</sup>

When hostilities began in August 1914, the General Officer Commanding Mounted Division had the 25<sup>th</sup> County of London and 6<sup>th</sup> Sussex cyclist

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<sup>211</sup> TNA WO 123 / 54 Army Orders 1912; *The Times*, 16 February 1912; TNA WO 32 / 4737 Provision of Cyclists for employment with the Cavalry Division 1913.

<sup>212</sup> WO 32 / 4737 Provision of Cyclists for employment with the Cavalry Division 1913.

<sup>213</sup> TNA WO 33 / 3026 Report of the Advisory Committee on Motor Cyclists 1911.

<sup>214</sup> TNA WO 33 / 3026 Report of the Advisory Committee on Motor Cyclists 1911, it was considered impractical for motor cyclists to carry rifles and they were only issued with revolvers.

<sup>215</sup> Captain R.S. Walker, 'Motor Mounted Infantry: a suggestion for the Territorial Army', *United Services Magazine*, 38, 1909, pp. 635-43.

battalions available for his use.<sup>216</sup> During the retreat from Mons, Brigadier General Haldane recalled the multiple roles of the cyclist companies he encountered,<sup>217</sup> many of whom functioned as despatch riders, rearguard patrols, guarding road intersections, blocking roads ready for ambush and skirmishing with advancing German cavalry, thus materially contributing to the escape of the beleaguered British Corps.<sup>218</sup> By November 1914, improved organisation resulted in an Army Cyclist Corps serving the whole of the British Army, comprising cyclists from both regular and Territorial battalions.<sup>219</sup> As late as September 1915, when static trench warfare was well-established and manoeuvre no longer possible, divisional mounted troops continued to combine a cavalry squadron and cyclist company.<sup>220</sup> Although potentially a form of Mounted Infantry in their own right, the volume of Mounted Infantry duties undertaken by cyclists was limited, largely by a lack of 'off road' capability, yet for the campaign in question, cyclists as mobile infantry ably maintained the Mounted Infantry ethos and whilst traditional Mounted Infantry had disappeared, its functionality persisted in the military cyclists, particularly their vestigial roles as scouts and mobile riflemen.

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<sup>216</sup>TNA WO 158 / 792 Cyclist Battalions under orders of GOC Mounted Division.

<sup>217</sup> General Sir Aylmer Haldane, *A Brigade of the Old Army 1914* (London: Edward Arnold, 1920), pp. 44-55; Richard Holmes, *Tommy* (London: Harper Collins, 2004), p.299.

<sup>218</sup> General Sir Aylmer Haldane, *A Soldier's Saga* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1948), pp.281-83.

<sup>219</sup>TNA WO 32 / 2665 Supply of Cyclists for Divisional Cyclist Companies 1914, Territorial troops were expected to provide the majority of cyclist reinforcements on the grounds that ex-civilians were more likely to have the requisite cycling skills than regular soldiers.

<sup>220</sup>TNA WO 106 / 1518 Composition of Infantry Divisions and Mounted Brigades 1915.

Whilst the British Army re-focussed on the possibility of conflict on the European mainland and attempted to assimilate both the lessons of 1899 – 1902 and post-war peacetime manoeuvres, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, the decade's major conflagration, provided a further case study for lessons relevant to army strategy.<sup>221</sup> Britain was not alone in this as eighty-three military observers from fifteen countries were attached to the opposing armies.<sup>222</sup> Although the impact of the Russo-Japanese War will be explored in a subsequent chapter, it is worth briefly outlining the conclusions drawn from the conflict with reference to the Mounted Infantry. For mounted troops at least, the War provided very few clear messages.<sup>223</sup> Many reports severely criticised both sides' cavalry forces, including *The Times* which stated unequivocally that 'cavalry has been conspicuous not by its absence but by its utter and astonishing ineffectiveness'.<sup>224</sup> The Russian cavalry, composed mainly of Cossack regiments,<sup>225</sup> fought dismounted and despite its numerical superiority over Japanese cavalry, rarely functioned as a mobile

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<sup>221</sup> Anon, 'What cavalry should learn from the late campaign in Manchuria', *Cavalry Journal*, 2, 1907, pp.360-63; General Sir Ian Hamilton, *A Staff Officer's Scrap-Book during the Russo-Japanese War* (London: Edward Arnold, 1912, 3rd ed.); TNA WO 33 / 350 Reports on the campaign in Manchuria; TNA WO 33 / 425 Extracts from the diaries of officers attached to the Japanese Army 1906.

<sup>222</sup> Yigel Sheffy, 'A Model not to follow: the European armies and the lessons of the war', *Impact of the Russo-Japanese War* (London: Routledge, 2007), Rotem Kowner (ed.), pp. 253-68, overall more than 240 reports were submitted by British observers alone.

<sup>223</sup> Jonathan B. A. Bailey, *Military history and the pathology of lessons learned: the Russo-Japanese War, a case study*, *The Past as Prologue* (Cambridge: University Press, 2006), Williamson Murray and Richard Hart Sinnreich (eds.), pp. 170-94, considers that lessons seemingly apparent were either contradictory, such as the value of cavalry, or peculiar to the theatre or dependent on the opposing armies' military cultures.

<sup>224</sup> *The Times*, 23 August 1905; Count Gustav Wrangel, *The Cavalry in the Russo-Japanese War* (London: Hugh Rees, 1907), p.1.

<sup>225</sup> TNA WO 33 / 350 Reports on the campaign in Manchuria.

force<sup>226</sup> despite its doctrine of mobility enabling deep raiding, outflanking and penetration of enemy defences.<sup>227</sup> Colonel Waters with the British Military Mission attached to the Russian Army, considered that the Cossacks were 'valueless' and, in practice, functioned as 'an untrained yeomanry'.<sup>228</sup> A similar deprecation was reported by Ian Hamilton attached to the Japanese Army.<sup>229</sup>

Although mainly dismounted, Russian Cossack attacks were generally successful if the metrics of ground captured is considered but the Cossacks' slowness in remounting was so poor that Japanese troops, including its cavalry which also favoured dismounted defensive tactics,<sup>230</sup> had time to assume further defensive positions. Thus Russian cavalry were never able to convert dismounted breakthrough into pursuit and potential rout. This led Brigadier General Bethune, in his lecture reported in the *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, to predict that cavalry and Mounted Infantry needed to co-exist, cooperate tactically and that 'Mounted Infantry should be

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<sup>226</sup> General Kuropatkin, *The Russian Army and the Japanese War* (London: John Murray, 1909), p.271, complained that the Cossacks more resembled infantry soldiers on horseback than cavalry.

<sup>227</sup> Bruce W. Menning, *Bayonets before Bullets: the Imperial Russian Army 1861 – 1914* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), p.277; Colonel H.C. Wylly, 'Some Russian Views in the Employment of Cavalry', *Cavalry Journal*, 5, 1910, pp.83-86.

<sup>228</sup> TNA WO 33 / 350 Reports on the campaign in Manchuria, although there were minor mitigating factors such as the poor standard of remounts and the inhospitable terrain largely unsuitable for traditional cavalry tactics.

<sup>229</sup> TNA, *Kitchener Papers*, PRO 30/57/37, Hamilton to Kitchener, 4 April 1904; Hamilton, *A Staff Officer's Scrap-Book*, p.25, quoted Major General Fukushima's pithy assessment of the Cossack as 'a yokel living on the Napoleonic legend'.

<sup>230</sup> Wrangel, *The Cavalry in the Russo-Japanese War*, p.17.

a source of strength to the cavalry'.<sup>231</sup> Obviously such a prediction failed to anticipate cavalry reform in terms of improved dismounted firepower but, nevertheless, the point was well made that mobility and firepower were interlinked co-factors particularly in attack. In the subsequent post-lecture discussion, Hutton agreed with Bethune's opinion and counselled against encouraging alternative European views adversely influencing the British doctrine of retaining cavalry and Mounted Infantry.<sup>232</sup> As Count Wrangel succinctly, if erroneously, claimed: 'sword and carbine are such different masters that the cavalryman simply cannot serve both with the same love'.<sup>233</sup> It was a view that had been shared two decades previously by Wolseley.<sup>234</sup> In addition, *The Times*' correspondent felt that the conflict did not clarify whether cavalry or Mounted Infantry was superior though he retained his most acerbic criticism for the Russian Cossacks as 'truly an absurdity', with its peacetime training focussed on edged weapons but its wartime reliance on firearms.<sup>235</sup> Irrespectively, the Cossacks were not trained officially as Mounted Infantry<sup>236</sup> and although there was evidence of sporadic extemporised experiments with Mounted Infantry on both sides, mounted

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<sup>231</sup> Bethune, 'The uses of Cavalry and Mounted Infantry in Modern Warfare', pp.619-36.

<sup>232</sup> Bethune, 'The uses of Cavalry and Mounted Infantry in Modern Warfare', pp.619-36

<sup>233</sup> Wrangel, *The Cavalry in the Russo-Japanese War*, p.55.

<sup>234</sup> Wolseley, *The Soldier's Pocket Book*, pp. 363-64.

<sup>235</sup> *The Times*, 23 August 1905.

<sup>236</sup> Kuropatkin, *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, p.153, the Trans-Baikal Cossacks were described as looking like Mounted Infantry mounted on their 'shaggy little ponies'; TNA WO 33 /350 Reports from the campaign in Manchuria 1905.

troops remained untrained as *bona fide* Mounted Infantry.<sup>237</sup> Captain Seki of the Imperial Japanese Army, as an infantry officer perhaps risking the accusation of institutional prejudice, claimed that the war had proved that the sword, and by extrapolation the *arme blanche*, was defunct,<sup>238</sup> at a time when this was still a view not universally shared across Europe.<sup>239</sup> Nevertheless, the inconsistencies of these conclusions meant that there was no abandoning of the *arme blanche* in the European, including British, cavalries.<sup>240</sup> It is perhaps this consequent retention of the *arme blanche* rather than a wholesale transition to Mounted Infantry that was the chief outcome of the Russo-Japanese war affecting British mounted doctrine in the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>241</sup>

Returning to the research question defining this chapter, can the factors implicated in the abolition of the Mounted Infantry be better understood in their comparative importance and can the Mounted Infantry's apparently precipitous implosion whilst remaining a recognised and officially sanctioned arm, replete with a designated role at mobilisation, be explained? Current

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<sup>237</sup> Wrangel, *The Cavalry in the Russo-Japanese War*, p.17.

<sup>238</sup> Captain T. Seki, 'The value of the *Arme Blanche* with illustrations from the recent campaign', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 55, 1911, pp. 885-906

<sup>239</sup> Anon, 'What cavalry should learn from the late campaign in Manchuria', pp.360-63, balanced evolving firepower with maintaining shock tactics; Major Immanuel, 'The importance of fighting dismounted for cavalry and the place to be assigned to it in action and instruction', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 52, 1908, pp. 1273-280, encouraged musketry training but not at the expense of reconnaissance and pursuit.

<sup>240</sup> Wrangel, *The Cavalry in the Russo-Japanese War*, p.54; Bailey, 'Military history and the pathology of lessons learned: the Russo-Japanese War', pp. 170-94.

<sup>241</sup> Bulkeley Johnson, 'Cavalry organisation', pp.338-46, the author, an officer in the Royal Scots Greys, promoted an organisation retaining both cavalry and Mounted Infantry with the former as a *corps d'élite* for reconnaissance and *arme blanche* but with the latter numerically expanded to provide firepower.

orthodoxy, with Badsey as a leading proponent,<sup>242</sup> has postulated a multi-factorial explanation for the Mounted Infantry's demise, indicating a gradual decline rather than implosion that included lack of senior army patronage, lack of loyalty to the arm from its commanders through regimental allegiances, institutional failure to train a numerically adequate force, the cavalry's renaissance, closure of the Mounted Infantry schools and the replacement of the Mounted Infantry as divisional troops by repatriated cavalry regiments and the nascent cyclist companies.<sup>243</sup> Some of these factors can be discounted as major determinant factors based on previous discussion in this thesis. Although Roberts had been removed from his post in 1904, there remained enough senior officers with Mounted Infantry experience as supporters (as shown previously in the numbers who attained senior army rank in the years post-1902) including protagonists such as Hutton, Alderson and Godley but, importantly, also Ian Hamilton and Kitchener, the latter showing no obvious favouritism to either camp.<sup>244</sup> Furthermore, despite Haig's trenchant views, French was considered by Godley as favourable to the Mounted Infantry even though a cavalryman, writing that: 'Sir John French was one of the many cavalry soldiers who were very good friends to the Mounted Infantry'.<sup>245</sup> The allegation of disloyalty of Mounted Infantry officers to the arm has been disproven in a previous

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<sup>242</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.217.

<sup>243</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.217.

<sup>244</sup> TNA, *Kitchener Papers*, PRO 30/57/29, Kitchener to Roberts, 10 June 1903, Kitchener proposed training cavalrymen in both 'shooting and swordsmanship'.

<sup>245</sup> Godley, *Life of an Irish Soldier*, p.105.



chapter. Cavalry reform had certainly yielded variable improvements in dismounted musketry yet this in itself was insufficient evidence for the abolition of the Mounted Infantry as shown by the prevailing opinions of both infantry and cavalry officers such as Bethune and Bulkeley Johnson.<sup>246</sup>

True, cyclists were proving, at least during peacetime manoeuvres, to be promising mobile troops who could perform many of the orderly duties of divisional mounted troops yet their limitations off metalled roads remained a weakness. Even so, their deployment was not mutually exclusive to that of Mounted Infantry as shown by their joint presence in manoeuvres and inspections of 1904, 1905, 1906, 1909, 1912 and the Cavalry Division's training exercise in 1912. Yet there was a lack of integration, or at least defined cooperation, in terms of training and thus, by extension, doctrine.<sup>247</sup>

This then leaves the Mounted Infantry's numerical weakness, inextricably linked to abstraction and the politics around the closure of the Mounted Infantry schools, as critical factors implicated in the abolition of the Mounted Infantry.

Certainly the pseudonymous 'Ikona', writing shortly after the arm's abolition, blamed the process of abstraction for the loss of the Mounted Infantry though the irony of this explanation was not lost:

It may appear paradoxical that the very reason that had enabled the

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<sup>246</sup> Bethune, 'The uses of Cavalry and Mounted Infantry in Modern Warfare', pp.619-36; Bulkeley Johnson, 'Cavalry organisation', pp.338-46.

<sup>247</sup> TNA WO 27 / 503 Army Manoeuvres 1904; TNA WO 27 / 502 Inspection of the Mounted Infantry 1905; TNA WO 27 / 505 Inspection of the Mounted Infantry 1906; TNA WO 163 / 15 Annual Report of the Inspector General of Forces 1909, Inspection of the School of Instruction for Mounted Infantry 25 May 1909; *The Times*, 21 September 1912, 'Army Manoeuvres 1912'; Hogg, 'The Cavalry Division Training 1912', pp.109-16.

Mounted Infantry in the past to attain such high honour in war is now used by the War Secretary for its abolition – that those in the Mounted Infantry were a loss to their infantry battalions.<sup>248</sup>

The paper acknowledged the generosity of spirit that had permitted successful abstraction in the first place but overlooked the benefits accrued by battalions, at least in earlier times, when a readily accessible mounted force from within the battalion proved attractive to its commanders. Repington of *The Times*, never a supporter of the Mounted Infantry concept, questioned the viability of the Mounted Infantry because of abstraction's alleged weakening of the infantry battalion.<sup>249</sup> What had been considered previously to be one of the Mounted Infantry's strengths, that all infantry regiments contributed to the Mounted Infantry through abstraction and hence could call upon officers and men trained for these duties, was now depicted as a fundamental weakness and one which could be fatal to the effectiveness of the army.<sup>250</sup> *The Times* concluded that 'the effect of these arrangements upon the infantry of the line is perfectly deplorable' and that abandoning the model would yield more benefit, both organisationally and financially, than any deficit occurring.<sup>251</sup> The Army Council's decision to reorganise the cavalry of the British Expeditionary Force in 1913 and discard

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<sup>248</sup> 'Ikona', 'The Passing of the Old MI', pp. 209-13.

<sup>249</sup> *The Times*, 18 May 1912.

<sup>250</sup> *The Times*, 16 February 1912, considered that Mounted Infantry are 'troops of inferior worth'.

<sup>251</sup> *The Times*, 16 February 1912.

the Mounted Infantry<sup>252</sup> was based on a predicted inability to muster the required number of Mounted Infantry companies at mobilisation due to inadequate abstraction which, in any case, weakened infantry battalions numerically thus requiring returning reservists to make-up the shortfall.<sup>253</sup> This argument, whilst factually correct, appears disingenuous as even without the pressure of abstraction, most home infantry battalions required a significant injection of reservists to bring them to full establishment on mobilisation in 1914.<sup>254</sup> For example, almost 40 per cent of the 4<sup>th</sup> Royal Fusiliers in August 1914 were recalled reservists.<sup>255</sup> Considering this numerical quantum of reliance on reservists, the additional burden of another 40 men abstracted for Mounted Infantry duties would hardly have destabilised the organisational integrity of the infantry battalion. The Army Council considered that presence of reservists in the ranks of the Mounted Infantry would 'undoubtedly be a source of danger'<sup>256</sup> although the rationale is not specified. It can only be presumed that the fear was that reservists would have become de-skilled in equitation and thus be at the mercy of enemy cavalry although this was not considered a similar problem for cavalry reservists. Thus this particular argument seems untenable as a definitive cause for the abolition of the Mounted Infantry. Additional logistical factors

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<sup>252</sup> TNA WO 163 / 18 Minutes of the Proceedings of the Army Council 1913.

<sup>253</sup> TNA WO 163 / 18 *ibid.*

<sup>254</sup> Ikona, 'The Passing of the old MI', pp. 209-13.

<sup>255</sup> TNA WO 95 / 1431 War Diary of 4<sup>th</sup> Royal Fusiliers 1914-19.

<sup>256</sup> TNA WO 163 / 18 Minutes of the Proceedings of the Army Council 1913.

were cited by *The Times* in its criticism of the Mounted Infantry,<sup>257</sup> including the need to identify mounts for both the Mounted Infantry and the cavalry being an extra burden, creating problems of identifying remounts for the latter. This argument, an old recycled *canard* dredged up from experiences in the Boer War, failed to acknowledge that the cobs used by the Mounted Infantry would be unlikely remounts for the cavalry who required larger horses. Previous estimates suggested that only five per cent of the Mounted Infantry's cobs used in peacetime would be suitable as cavalry remounts.<sup>258</sup>

If there was any numerical shortfall, it was the falling number of infantrymen receiving Mounted Infantry training as a result of the closure of the Mounted Infantry schools. In the years immediately after 1902, Mounted Infantry training had been undertaken at schools in the United Kingdom, Egypt, South Africa and India. The closure of the Mounted Infantry schools in India from 1908 resulted from a realisation of cost savings and an awareness of the role of Mounted Infantry in India being limited as the only likely operational theatre for deployment was the mountainous North West Frontier which was not best suited to Mounted Infantry.<sup>259</sup> The political influence of Haig, Inspector General of Cavalry in India between 1903 and 1906,<sup>260</sup> in this decision remains conjecture but his outspoken views regarding the primacy

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<sup>257</sup> *The Times*, 30 January 1913.

<sup>258</sup> A.B.B., 'A Defence of Mounted Infantry: an answer to 'Lancer'', pp. 398-99.

<sup>259</sup> BL, India Office Records, IOR/L/MIL/7/13275, Closure of Mounted Infantry Schools in India.

<sup>260</sup> Scott, *Douglas Haig: The Preparatory Prologue*, pp. 226-51.

of cavalry as mounted troops, encapsulated in *Cavalry Studies*<sup>261</sup> written during his time as the primary trainer of cavalry in India, leaves little doubt that he would not have been supportive of the continued existence of Mounted Infantry training. The closure of the remaining Indian schools accelerated in 1909, ironically at a time when an Indian cavalry school on the lines of the UK school at Netheravon was proposed. Haig's subsequent appointment as Director of Military Training at home,<sup>262</sup> a position of pre-eminence in influencing the direction of military training, raises the possibility of his involvement in the closure of domestic Mounted Infantry schools although a causal relationship remains uncertain. Certainly Godley explicitly blamed Haig, rather than French, for the abolition of the Mounted Infantry, claiming that: 'Douglas Haig [who] never rested till shortly before the Great War, when he succeeded in getting the [Mounted Infantry] schools broken up and the whole idea of Mounted Infantry training abandoned'.<sup>263</sup> Hutton was less forgiving about French, blaming him and Jack Seely, the Secretary of State for War until resigning in 1914 over the Curragh affair, as the prime movers in the Mounted Infantry's demise.<sup>264</sup> Hutton and French had clashed previously, most notably during the Boer War, and Hutton's opinion of French's complicity may have been tainted by further acrimony with French over Hutton's alleged public insubordination in 1906 that threatened to end

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<sup>261</sup> Haig, *Cavalry Studies*, p.8.

<sup>262</sup> Scott, *Douglas Haig: The Preparatory Prologue*, p. 251.

<sup>263</sup> Godley, *Life of an Irish Soldier*, p.105.

<sup>264</sup> LHCMA, *Hamilton Papers*, 14/5/1, Hutton to Hamilton, 17 July 1914.

Hutton's career.<sup>265</sup> However, most pertinently, the omission of any mention of Mounted Infantry in *Cavalry Training 1907*, co-authored by Haig, appears to be an indirect statement of intent for a future without Mounted Infantry.<sup>266</sup> Thus, as an avowed opponent of Mounted Infantry throughout his professional career, it is difficult not to implicate Haig in the decision to close down the Mounted Infantry schools, including Longmoor, which as recently as 1909, had received excellent training reports.<sup>267</sup> Regardless of Haig's personal complicity, the closure of the schools effectively severed the supply of trained Mounted Infantry and, in David French's construct of factors necessary for the survival of a culture,<sup>268</sup> asphyxiated the Mounted Infantry's ability to propagate its functional identity, contributing materially towards its numerical weakness which, in turn, was implicated in the arm's abolition. Despite Hutton's suspicions, there is no express evidence indicting French, although his predilection for political machination was well-known, having been implicated in the sackings of several cavalry commanders during the Boer War and possibly obstructing the promotion of at least one Mounted Infantry commander.<sup>269</sup> Despite peacetime cooperation, the underlying

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<sup>265</sup> TNA WO 138 / 31 Personal File: Lieutenant General Sir E.T.H. Hutton 1907 – 1915.

<sup>266</sup> *Cavalry Training 1907*, p.196.

<sup>267</sup> TNA WO 163 / 15 Annual Report of the Inspector General of Forces 1909, Inspection of the School of Instruction for Mounted Infantry 25 May 1909.

<sup>268</sup> French, *Military Identities*, p.334.

<sup>269</sup> TNA WO 105 / 25 Field Marshal Lord Roberts: confidential reports, letter from French to Roberts 27 February 1900; TNA WO 108 / 409, Field Marshal Lord Roberts' home and overseas correspondence 12<sup>th</sup> December 1899 - 4<sup>th</sup> June 1900, letter from Roberts to Lansdowne 16 March 1900 regarding French's reports indicating the need to remove Major General John Brabazon from command; Rodney Atwood, 'Sackings in the South African War', *Soldiers of the Queen*, 2012, 150, pp. 24-32, outlines other cases where French may have influenced actions against brother officers although Atwood supports Roberts and Kitchener in affirming the cavalry commanders'

tensions between the two mounted arms, born of professional jealousy and magnified by experiences on the veldt, never resolved completely and it is difficult to exonerate senior cavalry officers from complicit involvement in the decision to abolish the Mounted Infantry.

The Mounted Infantry's impermanence, seemingly both its strength through ease of expansion and cost effectiveness, also became its weakness.<sup>270</sup> Yet it is difficult to agree with Badsey's assessment that the Mounted Infantry manifested a slow decline in the face of of cavalry reform as even in 1912, the semi-official publication *Army Review* promoted non-cavalry mounted troops for their speed, mobility and combination of firepower and manoeuvrability.<sup>271</sup> As late as 1910, the General Staff anticipated a written policy encompassing all mounted troops including Mounted Infantry.<sup>272</sup> Although the cavalry reformed, a similar option in the Mounted Infantry was non-existent. This underlines the view that the Mounted Infantry was not an organisational entity but rather a functional identity and as such its transformation into non-cavalry divisional mounted troops was ill-advised as replacing cavalry in an independent Mounted Brigade was seemingly a doctrinal step too far. When reformed cavalry supported by cyclists became a viable alternative, the Mounted Infantry discovered itself bereft of a functional role. Thus, at the moment when the Mounted Infantry's quest for a

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incompetence; NAM, *Alderson Papers*, 2009 – 65 – 42, Alderson was convinced his promotion was blocked by French.

<sup>270</sup> *The Times*, 18 May 1912; TNA WO 163 / 18 Minutes of the Army Council 1913.

<sup>271</sup> 'New Training Regulations', *Army Review*, II (2), 1912, pp.380-84.

<sup>272</sup> TNA WO 279 / 496 Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College under the direction of CIGS 1910.

discrete military function was attained, its new role, an explicit threat to the cavalry, exposed it to denigration, replacement and redundancy. Irrespective of capability, its impermanence and the alleged injury inflicted by abstraction on infantry battalions effectively doomed its survival.<sup>273</sup>

With the formal abolition of the Mounted Infantry occurring a mere 12 months before the BEF embarked for France, it is tempting to speculate how the Mounted Infantry would have fared on the Western Front. Although it is important not to stray ill-advisedly into the realms of counterfactual history, the relative immediacy of the onset of hostilities to the Mounted Infantry's abolition legitimises the question whether or not Mounted Infantry would have found a role during the war, both during the mobile operations of 1914 and late 1918 but also during the intervening trench-based warfare. Badsey recognises the difficulty in answering this question<sup>274</sup> but quotes Anglesey who recounted sporadic episodes of ex-Mounted Infantrymen obtaining horses during the retreat from Mons and attaching themselves to the cavalry.<sup>275</sup> Such episodes were unplanned and incidental as there was no organised attempt to either replace cavalry losses with Mounted Infantry or to extemporise mounted troops in this way.<sup>276</sup> Historically, the cavalry has

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<sup>273</sup> *The Times*, 18 May 1912.

<sup>274</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.218.

<sup>275</sup> Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry 1816-1919*, 7, The Curragh Incident and the Western Front, 1914 (London: Leo Cooper, 1996), p.131.

<sup>276</sup> Lieutenant General Sir Tom Bridges, *Alarms & Excursions* (London: Longmans Green and Co., 1938); Smith-Dorrien, *Memories of Forty-Eight Years' Service*; Gough, *Soldiering On*; Haldane, *A Brigade of the Old Army 1914*; Vaughan, *Cavalry and Sporting Memories*; Home, *The Diary of a World War 1 Cavalry Officer*, none of the above mention extemporised Mounted Infantry in their memoirs.



received much criticism, verging on derision, for its lack of success in the First World War with approbation reserved largely for the mounted troops in the Middle East in 1917 and 1918.<sup>277</sup> This traditional view has concluded that cavalry was a force unable to cross the deadlocked trench system through machine gun fire and across shell-pocked terrain<sup>278</sup> and which exhausted immense resources of forage and horseflesh. The cavalry was also considered the source of senior generals, destitute of innovation and impervious to the tribulations of their troops.<sup>279</sup> Such orthodoxy relating to the cavalry has been largely replaced by the revisionism of historians such as John Terraine, Anglesey, Badsey, Phillips, and, most recently, David Kenyon. Terraine concluded that, realistically, the cavalry had been the only force capable of exploiting success or breakthrough of any scale despite the eventual introduction of tanks and mechanised vehicles.<sup>280</sup> Attempting to reverse previous decades of denigration, Badsey considers that 'the cavalry may be reasonably said to have succeeded in the War beyond expectation'.<sup>281</sup> Both Badsey and Kenyon base their enthusiastic defence of the cavalry on a number of themes particularly the cavalry's mobility on the battlefield during the periods of mobile warfare and also on a smaller scale

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<sup>277</sup> Badsey, *The British Army in Battle and Its Image*, p.55 & p.73.

<sup>278</sup> David Kenyon, 'British Cavalry on the Western Front 1916-1918', unpublished PhD thesis, 2007, Cranfield University, UK, p.289, concludes that barbed wire and shell holes rendered the battlefield problematic for horses but did not reflect insurmountable obstacles.

<sup>279</sup> Gary Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory* (London: Headline, 2001), pp.2-5; Brian Bond, *The Unquiet Western Front* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 51-73, examines the evolution and tenacity of these misperceptions.

<sup>280</sup> John Terraine, 'Cavalry General and the 'Gee' in Gap' in *The Smoke and the Fire: Myths and Anti-Myths of War 1861 – 1945* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1980), p.164.

<sup>281</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.241.

during the years of trench warfare where it was able to penetrate defences, when feasible, to a greater depth than possible by foot infantry.<sup>282</sup> This largely took the form of rapid mounted advance followed by dismounted attack, supported by machine gun firepower, subsequently defending captured territory using its firepower and supporting artillery. John Vaughan, Chief Staff Officer Cavalry Division, described how the 5<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards executed in August 1914, in his opinion, 'one of the best-timed cavalry rifle attacks' that he had ever seen<sup>283</sup> whilst later complimenting the 16<sup>th</sup> Lancers for their use of machine gun fire in its offensive attack on Mont des Cats, north east of Hazebrouck, which facilitated the regiment's galloping advance and subsequent capture of the enemy's trenches suffering minimal casualties.<sup>284</sup> Archibald Home, a staff officer with the Cavalry Division, was less convinced, recording in his diary on 27<sup>th</sup> September 1914 that: 'cavalry charging a trench or crawling up with a rifle in the hand and sword between the teeth like the pirate pictures one sees – this is infantry work and not Cavalry'.<sup>285</sup>

Kenyon suggests that, rather than the derided anticipation of an exploitative gallop through a breach in defences by the whole Cavalry Division or Corps, the cavalry used its mobility to exploit smaller breaches of defences, fighting

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<sup>282</sup> Kenyon, 'British Cavalry on the Western Front 1916-1918', p.295, assesses the maximum depth of an infantry assault to have been 4.5 km, which in the context of the depths of later German defence systems of 9km or more mitigated against the possibility of an infantry breakthrough in an initial assault.

<sup>283</sup> Vaughan, *Cavalry and Sporting Memories*, p.160.

<sup>284</sup> Vaughan, *Cavalry and Sporting Memories*, pp.170-71.

<sup>285</sup> Home, *The Diary of a World War 1 Cavalry Officer*, p.25.

within the confines of enemy defensive systems, or advancing rapidly using small unit tactics of between squadron and regiment size, occasionally extending to full brigade as at High Wood on the Somme in July 1916.<sup>286</sup> In addition to its mobility, the cavalry fought dismounted alongside infantry, most prominently at Ypres in 1914, thus fulfilling the role of a mobile infantry reserve that had been one of the major roles expected of Mounted Infantry. Although Home complained that the Cavalry Division's numerical weakness in firepower in comparison to an infantry division compromised its role as the only available mobile reserve, he qualified his criticism with the supposition that the cavalry's added mobility in both attack and defence acted as a force multiplier compared to the infantry whose mobility and deployment was slower.<sup>287</sup> Nevertheless, Home rightly praises the desperate effectiveness of using the cavalry as a mobile dismounted reserve, citing its successful deployment on the Aisne, at Messines and at Ypres.<sup>288</sup> Yet the question arises – was this not precisely the role previously envisaged for the Mounted Infantry?<sup>289</sup>

Not only was the cavalry used frequently in a dismounted role rather than in its traditional cavalry functionality, unlike the infantry there was no numerical wartime increase either in the number of regiments or their relative strengths with losses replaced from reserves or from the domestic Yeomanry. The

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<sup>286</sup> Kenyon, 'British Cavalry on the Western Front 1916-1918', p.37.

<sup>287</sup> Home, *The Diary of a World War 1 Cavalry Officer*, p.45.

<sup>288</sup> Home, *The Diary of a World War 1 Cavalry Officer*, *ibid.*

<sup>289</sup> *Combined Training 1902*, p.31.

latter also resumed responsibility as divisional cavalry.<sup>290</sup> Arguably this is yet another example of where a functioning Mounted Infantry, trained for this role and with the ability to expand numerically could have demonstrated its worth. The lack of robust expansion of cavalry and Yeomanry numbers, unlike the potential of Mounted Infantry expansion commensurate with the growing number of infantry battalions, contributed to the statistics that, as the army increased in size, the proportion of mounted troops fell in relative terms from 6.6 per cent of total army numbers in 1914 to 1.01 per cent by November 1918.<sup>291</sup> The comparative strength of divisional mounted troops also decreased and despite a centralised reconfiguration into Corps Cavalry Regiments from May 1916, further reductions ensued with the dismounting of all but three regiments from October 1917.<sup>292</sup> Consequently, the deficiency in divisional cavalry hampered the chances of rapid cavalry exploitation,<sup>293</sup> which Badsey considers impacted adversely on operations.<sup>294</sup> Therefore, a number of roles expected of the cavalry and military cyclists in the First World War, particularly being a mobile reserve of firepower, and rapid small-scale tactical exploitation reflected the pre-war roles of the Mounted Infantry.

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<sup>290</sup> Smith-Dorrien, *Memories of Forty-Eight Years' Service*, pp.378-79, the divisional troops in II Corps' 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Divisions were squadrons from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Hussars and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Cyclist Companies; for the divisions comprising I Corps, the supports were from 15<sup>th</sup> Hussars, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Cyclist Companies; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.249.

<sup>291</sup> Terraine, 'Cavalry General and the 'Gee' in Gap', p.162; Kenyon, 'British Cavalry on the Western Front 1916-1918', p.9 & p.279.

<sup>292</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.249.

<sup>293</sup> Kenyon, 'British Cavalry on the Western Front 1916-1918', p.293.

<sup>294</sup> Stephen Badsey, book review [David Kenyon, *Horseman in No-Man's Land, British Cavalry and Trench Warfare 1914 – 1918*, (Barnsley, Pen & Sword, 2011)], *Journal of the Society of Army Historical Research*, 91, 2013, pp.150-51.

Indeed, the Mounted Infantry had not only been instrumental in the development of such roles, learned through its experiences in the Boer War, but the Mounted Infantry had equal, if not more, peacetime training for such tasks than cavalry and Yeomanry.<sup>295</sup> Ironically, Terraine considered that even later in the conflict, the cavalry gained credit during the German offensives of March 1918 by fighting again as a mobile reserve, very much as expected of pre-war Mounted Infantry.<sup>296</sup> It was the cavalry's ability to combine mobility and dismounted firepower in defence, rather than its *arme blanche* functionality, that was important during the spring crisis. Kenyon adds to this sense of the cavalry performing functions other than its traditional *arme blanche* roles by observing that the regiments of cavalry, dispersed as corps troops in August 1918, undertook reconnaissance but also despatch riding and prisoner control, functions arguably more suited to Mounted Infantry.<sup>297</sup> Clearly these had been responsibilities allocated to the Mounted Infantry as divisional mounted troops before 1913. Even Haig referred, without intentional irony, to the ghosts of the pre-war Mounted Infantry when, in fighting a political rearguard action for the very existence of the cavalry arm in the War Cabinet in January 1918,<sup>298</sup> he claimed that the cavalry now resembled highly trained mobile infantry rather than the old

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<sup>295</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7094 Mounted Infantry as Divisional Cavalry 1908; TNA WO 32 / 7093 Replacement of Imperial Yeomanry by Mounted Infantry as Divisional Cavalry on Mobilisation 1907; WO 27 / 505 Inspection of the Mounted Infantry 1906.

<sup>296</sup> John Terraine, *White Heat: the New Warfare 1914 – 1918* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1982) p.290.

<sup>297</sup> Kenyon, 'British Cavalry on the Western Front 1916-1918', p.269.

<sup>298</sup> TNA CAB 23 / 13 / 35 War Cabinet Minutes, 7 January 1918.

cavalry arm - surely a most significant admission by the Mounted Infantry's most arch-critic? Thus, not only did Haig validate the concept of mobile infantry, he expressly accepted the blueprint that had been forged in South Africa in 1901-02 with, retrospectively, the primacy of firepower superseding the *arme blanche*. A similar dissembling assertion was made by Lieutenant General Sir Philip Chetwode, ex-Hussar and previously commander of both the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade and 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Division on the Western Front, regarding his mounted troops in the Middle East theatre comprising Dominion cavalry and British Yeomanry which he likened to 'high-class mounted rifles rather than traditional cavalry'.<sup>299</sup> As Anglesey has pointed out, the Australasian component of Chetwode's division had indeed elected to remain Mounted Rifles, armed with the rifle, rather than adopt the *arme blanche*.<sup>300</sup> If cavalry and other mounted troops were thus lauded for their non-*arme blanche* functionality, a functionality for which the pre-war Mounted Infantry was also trained to deliver, then a theoretical case can be made postulating that employment of *bona fide* Mounted Infantry during the conflict would have been equally, if not more, successful. However, Kenyon in his recent doctoral thesis disagrees, concluding that 'simply putting infantry on horses was never a satisfactory solution',<sup>301</sup> which perpetuates the erroneous view of Mounted Infantry equitation and tactics as not having evolved since the days of the precipitately extemporised Mounted Infantry of

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<sup>299</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.285.

<sup>300</sup> Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry 1816-1919*, 5, 1914 – 1919 Egypt, Palestine & Syria (London: Leo Cooper, 1994), p.223.

<sup>301</sup> Kenyon, 'British Cavalry on the Western Front 1916-1918', p.13.

early 1900. This viewpoint ignores the professional improvements in Mounted Infantry training achieved in the latter stages of the Boer War and subsequent post-war years.<sup>302</sup>

As indicated above, if the Mounted Infantry had survived, organisationally configured on mobilisation and deployed in action in the First World War as divisional mounted troops to support the infantry, its inherent ability to expand numerically may have been advantageous and would overall have mitigated against the reduction in divisional cavalry detailed previously. Of course the challenge of procuring adequate numbers of remounts and the logistics of providing enough forage for an expanding mounted force remains speculative but nevertheless, at least from a manpower perspective, regular abstraction for Mounted Infantry training without destabilising infantry battalions through excessive loss of the best trained officers and men could have continued throughout the First World War in a manner similar to secondment for other specialist training such as mortar and trench bombing training. Furthermore, the Mounted Infantry's historical precedence of abstraction and comparative brevity of training compared to the cavalry could have conferred an organisational advantage previously unsuspected. After all, if abstraction was the accepted process then its continuation would merely confirm tradition, whilst the size of the Mounted Infantry force could expand and shrink at the behest of operational planning and the wishes of the senior army commanders. However, even if the Mounted Infantry had

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<sup>302</sup>TNA WO 27 / 505 Inspection of the Mounted Infantry 1906; TNA WO 163 / 15 Army Council 1910: Inspection of the School of Instruction for Mounted Infantry, Longmoor, 25 May 1909; Godley, 'The Development of Mounted Infantry training at home', pp. 52-55; Godley, 'Mounted Infantry as Divisional Mounted Troops and with the Mounted Brigade', pp. 140-45.

survived into the First World War, its doctrinal interface with its cavalry counterpart and with the military cyclists would have remained, although whether the exigencies of the conflict would have induced tolerance and clarity of function remains conjecture. Certainly the pivotal question of whether the retention of the *arme blanche* capability by the cavalry conferred additional benefit or whether the Mounted Infantry's lack of this functionality would have diminished its military usefulness in operations on the Western Front is difficult to answer with any degree of exactitude. Kenyon makes a case for the importance of the cavalry's retention of the *arme blanche*, a view shared by Badsey, by citing a minimum of twenty actions, often small-scale, where British cavalry charged with drawn sabres between 1916 and 1918.<sup>303</sup> He considers the dual psychological effects on the morale of the enemy seeing mounted men approaching at the gallop and the beneficial effect on the infantry of witnessing horsed colleagues charging as evidence of preferment of cavalry rather than Mounted Infantry. If the benefit is from the visual spectacle of horsed men at the gallop rather than the flourishing of edged weapons, this ignores the possibility that Mounted Infantry could gallop into action albeit with subsequent dismounting and continuation of the offensive on foot as occurred in the Boer War. Even if mounted charges were considered useful tactically, these actions were rarely decisive in determining the outcome of battle. Despite Kenyon's contention that these episodes were relatively commonplace,<sup>304</sup> their lack of operational impact does not sustain

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<sup>303</sup> Kenyon, 'British Cavalry on the Western Front 1916-1918', pp.289-92; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.275, Badsey remains convinced of the tactical value of the charge during the First World War.

<sup>304</sup> Kenyon, 'British Cavalry on the Western Front 1916-1918', p.291.



the argument for an overwhelming benefit from the retention of the *arme blanche*. Therefore, the roles required of mounted troops in the First World War on the Western Front, the conundrum of identifying adequate manpower requirements, the absence of major opportunities for wielding the *arme blanche* and the lack of massed horsed collisions that could, arguably, have been deleterious to Mounted Infantry, makes a strong case, albeit hypothetical, in favour of the retention of the Mounted Infantry. Its expertise would not have been redundant during the First World War, either during mobile operations or the years of trench warfare, but surprisingly appropriate considering the demands of the campaigns. Pragmatically, with the Mounted Infantry only differing from the cavalry in the matter of the *arme blanche*, retention of the Mounted Infantry would have provided senior army commanders with a flexible mounted force functioning in the roles originally planned after the Boer War.

In answering the research question underpinning this chapter, the demise of the Mounted Infantry can be understood in terms of a series of overlapping internal and external factors set against a changing strategic and political landscape.<sup>305</sup> Perhaps the Mounted Infantry outlived its usefulness in an age of reformed cavalymen and egalitarian cyclists and despite belated formalisation of its tactical role and its military organisation, the army considered, rightly or wrongly, that the Mounted Infantry was now merely a vestige of Victorian colonial warfare. However, as illustrated above, this might not have been the end of the story and, even without the benefit of

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<sup>305</sup> 'Ikona', 'The Passing of the old MI', pp. 209-13.

doctrinal adaptation, the Mounted Infantry could have fulfilled important roles in the First World War - even on the Western Front. Clearly there were many factors implicated in the abolition of the Mounted Infantry. Reprising French's criteria for organisational survival, the closure of the Mounted Infantry schools dealt a severe blow to the chances of survival for the Mounted Infantry as further Mounted Infantry could not be trained and renew its ranks. Numerical inadequacy, coupled with the problem of identifying enough reservists for the infantry, as well as the increased availability of cavalry regiments repatriated from South Africa along with the growing popularity of military cyclists, created an environment whereby the Mounted Infantry became redundant having been doctrinally trapped in a cavalry-substitute role. Nevertheless, the decision to close the Mounted Infantry schools seems less than transparent with Haig's role remaining suspect. Although Badsey has accused the Mounted Infantry of being instrumental in its own downfall through officers' disloyalty, this seems unlikely as officers' allegiances were by necessity retained with their parent regiments and there was no expectation of stronger bonds within the Mounted Infantry's temporary organisation. In the final analysis, the multi-factorial causation of the Mounted Infantry's demise owes much to personality, politics and institutional friction. Whilst the military impact of Mounted Infantry, if still in existence, between 1914 and 1918 cannot be ascertained reliably, circumstantial evidence suggests a useful niche for the Mounted Infantry and perhaps it is not too fanciful to imagine that its abolition was detrimental to the army.

## Chapter Six

### Europe, Empire and Beyond

In his lecture to the Royal United Services Institute on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1906, Brigadier General E.C. Bethune claimed that Britain was alone among the Continental Powers in possessing Mounted Infantry as a branch of the army<sup>1</sup> despite earlier predictions of the advantages inherent in the deployment of Mounted Infantry.<sup>2</sup> This assertion has remained seemingly incontrovertible ever since with the uniqueness of the British regular Mounted Infantry as a peculiar adjunct to the cavalry re-asserted recently in an analysis of the reforms between the Boer War and First World War in the British Army.<sup>3</sup> If the inception of the regular Mounted Infantry occurred in response to a number of military requirements, particularly the need for improved mobility across the greater lethality of the modern battlefield, a numerically inadequate cavalry force reluctant doctrinally to embrace dismounted tactics and both distant and disparate imperial commitments, then how did other military powers balance similar demands? Surely other armies faced the

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<sup>1</sup> Bethune, 'The uses of Cavalry and Mounted Infantry in modern warfare', pp. 619-36; General F.R. von Bernhardt, 'A Consideration of Opposite Views concerning Cavalry', *Cavalry Journal*, 5, 1910, pp. 466-83, held an even more uncompromising view that the Mounted Infantry movement was 'entirely wrong'.

<sup>2</sup> Hamilton, 'Mounted Marksmen and the Dismounted Service of Cavalry', pp. 261-87, 'Military authorities of leading European nations agree that an army possessing a large number of mounted men capable of being used as infantry has an incalculable advantage over one that has them not'.

<sup>3</sup> Jones, *From Boer War to World War*, p.190.

same difficulty and, although details might differ, the fundamental requirements to deliver firepower and mobility remained?

Edward Hutton considered European cavalry deficient in both delivering dismounted firepower and combating enemy infantry<sup>4</sup> as he considered that modern ballistics must 'materially modify if not revolutionise the tactics of the field of battle' in future conflicts. However, did his concerns transpose to imperial forces?<sup>5</sup> Here, across the Empire both immediately before the Boer War and with a gathering impetus thereafter, the self-governing colonies and future Dominions deliberated the sharing of both financial and military burdens of local defence and defence of the Empire.<sup>6</sup> Would the Mounted Infantry concept, conceived ironically to defend imperial frontiers, transmute easily into the emerging Dominion military forces and their defence strategies? Therefore, this chapter analyses the solutions developed to deliver mobile fire support both in the British Empire but also Continental Europe and beyond. As the strategic focus of the British Army started to swing from being centred on colonial policing to the possibility of European

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<sup>4</sup> E.T.H. Hutton, *Mounted Service Manual for Australian Light Horse and Mounted Infantry etc.* (Sydney: F. Cunninghame & Co., 1902), p.xiv.

<sup>5</sup> Hutton, *Mounted Service Manual for Australian Light Horse and Mounted Infantry*, p.xi.

<sup>6</sup> Major General Sir Edward T.H. Hutton, *The Organisation of the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia*, 7<sup>th</sup> April 1902, Melbourne, pp.1-2; TNA WO 106 /6293 Imperial Conference on the subject of the Defence of the Empire 1909; G.R Parkin, *Imperial Federation & the Defence of the Empire*, Lecture 9 October 1890, Aldershot Military Series, (Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1890), pp.2-23; E.T.H. Hutton, *Our Comrades of Greater Britain, Lecture at the Aldershot Military Society 24<sup>th</sup> November 1896* (London: Edward Stanford, 1896), p.14, Hutton calculated that the colonies spent 2s 9d per person on defence compared to Britain where the expenditure was almost quadruple at an average cost of 9s 1d; Richard Lehane, *'Lieutenant General Edward Hutton and 'Greater Britain': Late-Victorian Imperialism, Imperial Defence and the Self-Governing Colonies'*, unpublished PhD thesis, 2005, University of Sydney, Australia.

expeditionary warfare,<sup>7</sup> the deliberations of European armies and their impact on British military thinking illuminated the apparent exceptionality of the British Mounted Infantry. Consequently, the chapter's first research question asks whether troops with a similar function to Mounted Infantry developed in other armies in Europe, the wider British Empire and beyond. A subsidiary question considers the conundrum of how armies that did not adopt the Mounted Infantry paradigm at a time of increasing technological modernity managed the pressing requirement for mobile firepower. Clearly, the influences that had encouraged the inception of the regular Mounted Infantry included its varied imperial responsibilities distant from home, the challenges and cost of deploying a comparatively small cavalry force across the Empire, the requirement to match the mobility of rebellious insurgent tribes and the logistics of frontier security. Similarly, the solutions arrived at in all other armies were influenced by variables that warrant analysis to explain their doctrines.

Although the experiential value of Britain's extensive colonial campaigning was acknowledged by Continental Powers such as France, the relevance of colonial warfare to a future European conflict remained questionable.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, although the British Empire was the most extensive of

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<sup>7</sup> TNA CAB 16/2 The Military Requirements of the Empire as affected by the Defence of India, 1907, clearly pronounced that "In peace, Indian needs govern the normal size of our home army" this inextricably linked the strategic planning of the army with the requirement to maintain British forces at full strength on the sub-continent yet within four years, the Committee for Imperial Defence would be debating the comparative military strengths of potential European combatants and the pre-requisites for the army's expeditionary force; TNA CAB 38 /19 /49 The Military Aspect of the Continental problem, Committee for Imperial Defence 1911; TNA CAB 37 / 86 / 1 Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany 1907; Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, p.148.

<sup>8</sup> Captain Hector France, *John Bull's Army: from a French perspective* (London: Whittaker & Co., 1888), pp. 184-85.

contemporaneous empires, other countries demonstrated increasing imperial pretensions<sup>9</sup> and a desire to extend their political and military influences distantly,<sup>10</sup> each with inherent obligations to provide security in their overseas possessions and diluting the focus of military strategy from solely preparing for a future European crisis. For the French Empire, the answer lay in the development of a Colonial Army distinct from its homeland Metropolitan army.<sup>11</sup> For Imperial Germany, the answer lay predominantly in the development of local forces (*Schutztruppe*) reinforced by disembarked expeditionary forces should the need arise.<sup>12</sup> Conversely, the Austro-Hungarian Empire,<sup>13</sup> an empire devoid of overseas aspirations yet with imperial expansion in the Balkans, ethno-linguistic diversity, religious plurality, political instability and topographic extremes from the mountainous Tyrol to Galician marshes, created similar challenges in army organisation, planning and doctrine as for those with imperial possessions on distant

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<sup>9</sup> Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, p.139.

<sup>10</sup> TNA FO 800 / 72 Foreign Office: private papers, Sir E. Grey 1905 – 1907, with the contemporary example of the pernicious influence of Germany into the Ottoman Empire and Persia through trade, the construction of the Berlin – Baghdad railway and the deployment of military advisers; Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, pp. 339-41, Britain also contributed in a similar manner with the Royal Navy's Admiral Arthur Limpus seconded to the Ottoman Navy in a training role in 1912.

<sup>11</sup> TNA WO 106 / 6200 Handbook of the French Army 1906; Douglas Porch, *The March to the Marne: the French Army 1871 – 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p.41.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Carow, *Die Kaiserliche Schutztruppe in Deutsch-Südwest-Afrika unter Major Leutwein* (Leipzig:Berlag von Freund, 1898), p.80; French General Staff, 'A German Colonial Campaign: the operations against the Bondelszwarts and Hereros', pp. 87-97, 207-14 and 326-34.

<sup>13</sup> The Austrian Empire became the Austro-Hungarian Empire after the inception of the Dual Monarchy on 17 February 1867; James Lucas, *Fighting Troops of the Austro-Hungarian Army 1868 – 1914* (Tunbridge Wells: Spellmount, 1987), p.12, the reorganisation of the army, precipitated by its defeat by Prussia in 1866, resulted in a complex arrangement of three imperial and national armies, each of equal standing, within the Empire, namely Imperial and Royal, Austrian *Landwehr*, Hungarian *Honved*, all of which held equal status, and the territorial *Landstürm*.

continents. Likewise, the Russian Empire, seeking imperial expansion in central and eastern Asia, encountered geographical, climatic and logistical problems that influenced its army, particularly its dependence on Cossack recruits. Although progressing by contiguous extension rather than, in general, through overseas acquisition, the westward spread of the United States, supported by the post-Civil War United States Army, encountered markedly quasi-imperial challenges in terms of ensuring civilian security, quelling sporadic insurgency and logistical challenges, all mirroring those of expeditionary warfare elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> However eventually, America would also acquire a limited overseas empire fighting Spain in Cuba in 1898 and subsequently acquiring the Philippines where an insurgency was quelled in the years of 1899 – 1902.<sup>15</sup> Thus each empire needed to solve the requirement for mobile firepower, both at home and in its empire, with the latter usually constraining the military options through distance, difficulty of logistical supply and difficult terrain.

For many parts of the British Empire, particularly Canada, Australia and New Zealand, the withdrawal of British Army garrisons in the 1870s handed the responsibility for land-based defence to these colonies and their citizen inhabitants, a process that continued up to the First World War.<sup>16</sup> The

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<sup>14</sup> Nathaniel Philbrick, *The Last Stand: Custer, Sitting Bull and the Battle of the Little Bighorn* (London: Vintage Books, 2011), p. xx.

<sup>15</sup> Showalter, 'The US Cavalry', pp. 6-23.

<sup>16</sup> TNA WO 106 / 6344 Handbook of the Land Forces of British Dominions, Colonies and Protectorates (other than India), Part II: the Commonwealth of Australia, 1909; Hutton, *Our Comrades of Greater Britain, Lecture at the Aldershot Military Society 24<sup>th</sup> November 1896*, pp.12-14. TNA WO 106 / 6293 Imperial Conference on the subject of the Defence of the Empire 1909, with the objective of 'each portion of the Empire to provide, organise and render efficient such means of defence as will form a serious deterrent to the most probable and feasible form of attack'.

citizenry and their governments subsequently determined the nature of their military forces for territorial and, eventually, imperial defence, giving rise to issues of nascent national identity and, closely linked, the heroic iconography of the mounted citizen soldier.<sup>17</sup> Elsewhere, local inhabitants throughout empires influenced army composition, such as Russian Cossacks who comprised more than half of all Russian cavalry and whose reputation, in Ian Hamilton's opinion, exceeded their military effectiveness.<sup>18</sup> The cultivated myth of the fearsome Cossack, forever loyal to the Tsar, remained a powerful, if ultimately inaccurate, premise in the Russian Army until the First World War.<sup>19</sup> The British Raj encouraged, as a matter of policy, the recruitment of inhabitants of the North West Frontier of India for local irregular levies such as the Khyber Rifles and both the regiments of the Indian Army and the élite troops of the Punjab Frontier Force (PFF) and Corps of Guides (Guides).<sup>20</sup> Identical solutions involving local or indigenous inhabitants were introduced elsewhere, usually as auxiliaries, including the

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<sup>17</sup> Donal Lowry, (ed.), *The South African War Reappraised* (Manchester: University Press, 2000) p.193; Carman Miller, *The Boer War: Army, Nation and Empire* (Canberra: Army History Unit, 2000), Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey (eds.), p.86; Carman Miller, *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War 1899 – 1902*, Canadian War Museum Historical Publication No. 28 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's & University of Natal, 1993, paperback ed., 1998), p.xiv, although Miller is reluctant to attribute the war as a 'crucible of Canadian nationalism'.

<sup>18</sup> TNA, *Kitchener Papers*, PRO 30 / 57 / 37, letter from Ian Hamilton to Kitchener, 4 April 1904, concluding that 'the Cossack is a historical personage...I do not think he is as dangerous as he is believed to be'; *The Times*, 23 August 1905, cited the Cossacks as 'truly an absurdity' practising in peacetime with lance and sabre but deployed in war with rifle and bayonet; TNA WO 106 / 6216 Report on the Russian Army 1886, Colonel Chevenix-Trench, military attaché in St. Petersburg, highlighted internal differences in whether Cossacks were of 'exuberant spirit' and thus the best irregular cavalry or whether their deficiencies and ill-discipline, compounded by an apparent aversion to being under fire, undermined their reputation.

<sup>19</sup> Robert H. McNeal, *Tsar and Cossack 1855 – 1914* (London: Macmillan in association with St Antony's College, Oxford, 1987), pp.1-5.

<sup>20</sup> Jules Stewart, *The Khyber Rifles* (Stroud: Sutton, 2005), p.31.



French Saharan Oasis force,<sup>21</sup> Native American scouts attached to the US cavalry and the multitude of local Mounted Rifle units raised in South Africa during the Boer War.<sup>22</sup> The benefits of such arrangements were multiple including: knowledge of terrain; local intelligence particularly for scouting purposes; immediacy of deployment without needing extensive transfer often overseas; harnessing of vested interests or extant feuds between tribes; lower costs as in the *sillidar* system in the Indian cavalry; minimisation of logistical requirements with a hardiness or resilience not necessarily identified in regular troops and a release of resources through replacement of regular forces, as shown by the preferential use of Indian rather than British cavalry regiments on the North West Frontier.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, such arrangements were not always positive with irregular troops often eschewing formal discipline and, at times, being of questionable loyalty, although, as noted by Ian Hamilton, 'with well-trained officers and non-commissioned officers even comparatively untrained men can rapidly be made into good troops'.<sup>24</sup>

However, it was not only the army's composition that influenced its organisational development and doctrine but also lessons construed from previous conflicts and predictions of future wars. For the Continental Powers,

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<sup>21</sup> TNA WO 106 / 6200 Handbook of the French Army 1906.

<sup>22</sup> TNA WO 108 / 405 Anglo – Boer War correspondence, there were 42 irregular horse units serving in South Africa with 20 eponymously bearing the names of their founding officers; Clayton K.S. Chun, *US Army in the Plains Indian Wars 1865 – 91* (Oxford: Osprey, 2004), p.33.

<sup>23</sup> Baden-Powell, *Sport in War*, p.94, fictionalises the discontent of British cavalry officers for their lack of active service utilisation in the punitive expeditions of the late Victorian years.

<sup>24</sup> Lieutenant H.B.C. Arthur, 'The Comparative Value for War of Regular and Irregular Troops', *Selected Winter Essays 1906 – 07* (London: HMSO, 1907), pp. 31-44.

the war of 1866 between Austria and Prussia and the Franco-German War of 1870 – 71 featured prominently in the reform of their armies.<sup>25</sup> Different conclusions distilled from these conflicts contributed to the decisions of whether or not to adopt Mounted Infantry at a time of a pan-European cavalry revival.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, study and discussion of the Franco-German War was an educational staple of the British Staff College curriculum and in military circles for many years<sup>27</sup> yet its interpretation, like that of the American Civil War, Boer War and the Russo-Japanese War, differed between armies, allowing partisan argument and encouraging polarity of opinion and subsequent policy.<sup>28</sup> As Yigal Sheffy has remarked regarding the Russo-Japanese War, ‘observers and armies alike found whatever they were seeking in their analyses and they used it to further establish their approach’.<sup>29</sup> As Gary Cox has noted in his comparison of British and German Official Histories of the Russo-Japanese War, there was broad agreement on operational level lessons but different conclusions were reached around the use of technology, logistics and the morale of the two

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<sup>25</sup> James R. Osgood, *The Armies of Today* (London: McIlvaine & Co., 1893), p.99 & p.263.

<sup>26</sup> Phillips, “Who Shall Say That the Days of Cavalry Are Over?” pp. 5-32.

<sup>27</sup> Joint Services Command and Staff College CR/1903/2, Staff College Curriculum, 1903; Colonel J.F. Maurice, *How far the lessons of the Franco-German War are now out of date*, Aldershot Military Society, Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1895 (Aldershot: Gale and Polden, 1895).

<sup>28</sup> TNA WO 106 / 181 Lessons of the Russo-Japanese War 1905; Wrangel, *The Cavalry in the Russo-Japanese War* (London: Hugh Rees, 1907); Major Balck, General German Staff, ‘The Lessons of the Boer War and the battle-working of the three arms’, *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 48, 1904, pp. 1393 – 1409; Walters & Du Cane, *The German Official Account of the War in South Africa*, are such examples.

<sup>29</sup> Sheffy, ‘A model not to follow’, pp. 253-68.

combatants.<sup>30</sup> Even when there was general agreement, such as the effective mobility of Boer forces in 1899 – 1902, the recognition of lessons remained questionable with few armies, in this example, truly understanding the consummate skill of the Boer insurgency and, ultimately, its exhaustion through Kitchener's strategies from 1901 onwards.<sup>31</sup> The memory of experience of war should not be underestimated. It was the fear of French *franc-tireur* insurgents, originally encountered in the Franco-German War that encouraged the use of light infantry for cavalry fire support becoming integral to German cavalry doctrine.<sup>32</sup> Such memories and their implications were transferable as Kitchener described the Boers in 1900 as 'more like mounted *Franc-Tireurs* than anything else',<sup>33</sup> indicating their elusiveness and ability to melt away into the general population and thus encapsulating the persisting difficulty of coping militarily with an insurgency where combatants may be indistinguishable from non-combatants in the population.<sup>34</sup> Mirroring the importance of analysing past wars were the predictions of the likely nature of future wars by General Staffs and by

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<sup>30</sup> Gary P. Cox, 'Of Aphorisms, Lessons and Paradigms: Comparing the British and German Official Histories of the Russo-Japanese War', *Contributions in Military Studies*, 171, 1999, pp. 41-54.

<sup>31</sup> Major General Sir George Younghusband, *Forty Years a Soldier* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1923), p.214, 'Brother Boer was as delicate about his rear as is our old friend the Turk'; Arthur, 'The Comparative Value for War of Regular and Irregular Troops', pp. 31-44.

<sup>32</sup> Dorondo, *Riders of the Apocalypse*, p.35.

<sup>33</sup> André Wessels (ed.), *Lord Kitchener and the War in South Africa 1899 – 1902* (Stroud: Army Records Society, 2006), p.31, letter from Kitchener to Queen Victoria, 26 April 1900.

<sup>34</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, pp. 148-49; Gregory A. Daddis, 'The Problem of Metrics: assessing progress and effectiveness in the Vietnam War', *War in History*, 19(1), 2012, pp. 73-98.

military commentators<sup>35</sup>. Although a lack of opportunity for edged weapons in close combat, a disappointment for the cavalry, had occurred both on veldt and Plains, relegating the usefulness of the *arme blanche* and its shock tactics, the cavalry *mêlée* predicted to characterise the opening operations of a major European conflagration<sup>36</sup> and meant an orthodoxy that ensured retention of traditional cavalry functionality.<sup>37</sup> Such orthodoxy was underpinned by scrutiny of both allies' and potential adversaries' cavalries on manoeuvre.<sup>38</sup> Thus a dichotomy over the relevance and lessons of colonial campaigning versus the probable exigencies of a European war developed influencing the debate how to optimally deliver mobile firepower. The lack of written doctrine in the British Army, personalisation of command<sup>39</sup> and the breadth of the army's imperial remit,<sup>40</sup> were broadly similar to the problems

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<sup>35</sup> TNA CAB 38 /19 /49 The Military Aspect of the Continental problem, Committee for Imperial Defence 1911; TNA WO 279 / 496 Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College 1910, where the deployment of a discrete Mounted Infantry Division in a future European campaign was considered; Lieutenant General F. von Bernhardt, *Reiterdienst Kritische Betrachtungen über Kriegstätigkeit, Taktik, Ausbildung und Organisation unserer Kavallerie* [Cavalry: critical observations on its use in war, tactics, training and organisation of our cavalry] (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1910); General von Pelet-Narbonne, 'Primary conditions for the success of cavalry in the next European War', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 50, 1906, pp. 326-34.

<sup>36</sup> Major Viscount Fincastle, VC, MVO, 'The Strategical and Tactical Employment of Cavalry in War', *Selected Winter Essays 1906 – 07* (London: HMSO, 1907) pp. 19-30; Erskine Childers, *German Influence on British Cavalry* (London: Edward Arnold, 1911) p.47, although Childers countered that any cavalry versus cavalry action was likely to be a small-scale affair rather than the large clash so often predicted.

<sup>37</sup> TNA WO 106 / 6311 French Cavalry Manoeuvres 1892, claimed that the French retention of the lance was predicated on the need to match that of the German cavalry.

<sup>38</sup> TNA WO 27 / 507 *Manoeuvres du 2<sup>o</sup> Corps d' Armée en 1906*; Lowther, *From Pillar to Post*, p.221, the author calculated that he had attended ten foreign manoeuvres in five years.

<sup>39</sup> Travers, 'The Hidden Army', pp. 523-44.

<sup>40</sup> I.F.W. Beckett, *Command in the late Victorian Army*, Leadership and Command (London: Brassey's, 2002) G.D. Sheffield (ed), pp. 3-56.

affecting the US army. Here campaigning ranged across markedly different terrain and was pitched against the Native American tribes' tactical heterogeneity that demanded of the US Army a flexibility and initiative which defied the constraints of a restrictive doctrine.<sup>41</sup> Germany, with its much-vaunted Great General Staff, possessed a more defined doctrine which conferred the benefits of uniformity of training, the development of *auftragstaktik* mission-centred tactics and contributed to the adoption of the German / Prussian model in several other armies, most notably those of Japan and Turkey plus a general sense, internationally among cavalry officers, of German superior military thinking relating to cavalry.<sup>42</sup> If Germany was considered a major influence on the mounted arm, cultural generalisations, beset with racial overtones, such as the stolidity of the Russian soldier or the fanaticism of Japanese soldier,<sup>43</sup> the latter allegedly physically unsuited to equestrian warfare,<sup>44</sup> also played their part. Moreover, the popular image, however questionable, of the superiority of the Dominions' rural farmer in all matters equine,<sup>45</sup> influenced the perception of

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<sup>41</sup> Chun, *US Army in the Plains Indian Wars*, p.16.

<sup>42</sup> TNA WO 279 / 18 Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College 1908; Rimington, *Our Cavalry*, p.17; C. Battine, 'The German Cavalry Manoeuvres of 1911', *Cavalry Journal*, 7, 1912, pp. 47-52, considered the German cavalry to be the best mounted in Europe.

<sup>43</sup> Anon, 'Infantry Combat in the Russo-Japanese War', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 50, 1906, pp. 1273-80.

<sup>44</sup> Wrangel, *The Cavalry in the Russo-Japanese War*, p.40.

<sup>45</sup> Iain G. Spence, 'To shoot and ride: mobility and firepower in Mounted Warfare', *The Boer War: Army, Nation and Empire*, (Canberra: Army History Unit, 2000), Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey (eds.), pp.115-28; Cosby Jackson, *A Soldier's Diary*, p.296.

colonial Mounted Rifles in the higher echelons of the British Army.<sup>46</sup> Overall, this tendency towards organisational and doctrinal ‘Germanisation’ in cavalries internationally<sup>47</sup> promoted traditional edged weapons for shock tactics, most visibly manifest as the retention of the cavalry lance, with dismounted firepower relegated or largely banished by delegating fire support to infantry temporarily assigned to the cavalry.<sup>48</sup> Naturally, this trend played into the hands of the cavalry commanders who frequently, though not universally, predicated their arm’s existence and identity on both mounted shock tactics and the socio-cultural distinction of being horsed.<sup>49</sup> With innate traditions and deeply-held conservatism, the cavalry’s response to the need for mobile firepower depended on a number of factors including prevailing morale, recent performance, relative size, institutional and numerical comparative importance in relation to infantry<sup>50</sup> and its leadership’s political

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<sup>46</sup> Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, p.159; Craig Wilcox, ‘Looking back on the Boer War’, *The Boer War: Army, Nation and Empire* (Canberra: Army History Unit, 2000) Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey (eds.), p.10.

<sup>47</sup> Childers, *German Influence on British Cavalry*, p.45; Hamilton, *A Staff Officer’s Scrap-Book*, p.36, called the Germanic influence on the Japanese as ‘unexpected and decidedly unpleasant’; Lieutenant George W. Van Deusen, ‘The Tactical Use of Mounted Troops in Future Campaigns, with comments on the recent rehabilitation of the Lance in European Armies’, *Journal of the United States Cavalry Association*, 5, 1892, pp. 225-49, observed that Germany favoured the lance so all European cavalry would copy; Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, p. 339, notes the influence of German military advisors in Turkey from the 1880s.

<sup>48</sup> J. E. Edmonds, *Handbook of the German Army (Home and Colonial)* (London: HMSO, 1900, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.), p.147; Rimington, *Our Cavalry*, p.17.

<sup>49</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6782 Debate regarding the abolition of the lance 1903; Damian O’Connor, ‘Dragoons and Commandos: the development of Mounted Infantry in Southern Africa 1654 – 1899’, *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 153 (1), 2008, pp. 90-94.

<sup>50</sup> TNA WO 279 / 496 Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College under the direction of CIGS, 1910, concluded that there remained a significant shortfall in British cavalry. The equivalent of one cavalry squadron per 2.4 infantry battalions in the British Army was in poor comparison to the one cavalry squadron per 1.2 infantry battalions in the Germany Army and one cavalry squadron per 1.7 infantry battalions in the French Army.

influence. Political influence, at times manipulated by aristocratic interests or even the monarchy,<sup>51</sup> frequently prejudiced important debate and decision.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, a third research question, addressed in this chapter, will be which external and internal factors determined the existence of Mounted Infantry outside of British shores? Finally, a fourth subsidiary research question asks why, if all other countries seemingly forsook a model which appeared to be a workable solution of balancing mobility with dismounted firepower, was this a popular stance? Or, phrased another way - if not Mounted Infantry, then why not?

Several different archival approaches investigate these four questions, including the use of official documentation and correspondence relating to the European nations, Imperial armies, including self-governing colonies, and of course British India, as well as memoirs, letters and articles published in military journals such as the *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, *Army Review* and, after the Boer War, the *Cavalry Journal*. Official Histories, handbooks, drill manuals and reports submitted by military attachés and senior army officers invited to attend the numerous annual European manoeuvres, together with direct first hand analysis from observers embedded with combatant armies, permit an understanding of foreign military thinking. Clearly, reliance on observers' evidence can be flawed as

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<sup>51</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6782 Debate regarding the abolition of the lance 1903, provides evidence of King Edward VII's involvement in the debate resulting in the retention of the lance in the British cavalry.

<sup>52</sup> Eric Dorn Brose, *The Kaiser's Army: the politics of military technology in Germany during the machine age 1870 – 1918* (Oxford: University Press, 2001), pp. 116-17; Lieutenant General Sir Robert Baden-Powell, *Indian Memories* (London: Herbert Jenkins Ltd., 1915), p.30, recounted the Kaiser's preference for equipping cavalry with a long lance to enhance morale.

embedded observers' reports were subject to the permission of their hosts,<sup>53</sup> whilst official histories risked bias towards emphasising lessons compatible with a specific army's prevailing orthodoxy.<sup>54</sup> However the relevance of such conclusions may be triangulated against foreign commentators' opinions contained in articles and monographs published either privately or semi-officially. Arguably, as important as the official position of other countries, was the informed insight into foreign military thinking perceived by the British Army. This was achieved through the writing of personal appreciations of exchange visits to foreign regiments, military establishments such as staff colleges and, with particular relevance to issues explored in this thesis, training schools, especially cavalry schools in Neustadt, Pinerolo, Saumur and Hanover,<sup>55</sup> which contributed to the broader picture of military doctrine relating to mounted troops. Translations of articles published in foreign military periodicals, whilst acknowledging the risk of personal bias, featured frequently in contemporaneous publications and provide metaphorically a barometer of contemporary thinking and debate. Therefore, using official documents, unofficial intelligence and personal review, the four research questions exploring the alleged uniqueness of the regular Mounted Infantry, alternative solutions to the application of mobile firepower in Europe and Empire and their determining factors will be answered.

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<sup>53</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7561 General Sir Ian Hamilton's book on the Russo-Japanese War 1906, Hamilton transgressed by reporting sensitive opinions attributed to senior Japanese commanders.

<sup>54</sup> Cox, 'Of Aphorisms, Lessons and Paradigms', pp. 41-54.

<sup>55</sup> Anon, 'The Royal Military Riding Establishment at Hanover', *Cavalry Journal*, 8, 1913, pp. 79-85.



In considering the British Empire, the defence of India as the pre-eminent colonial possession remained of paramount importance in imperial strategy.<sup>56</sup> Since garrison duties were shared between British regiments on rotation from Britain and the Indian army,<sup>57</sup> it would be surprising if the Mounted Infantry model, imported by British battalions, eluded the sub-continent entirely, especially as historically the Mounted Infantry's foundations originated in the expediencies of colonial campaigning. Clearly, although the duration of garrison duty was lengthy,<sup>58</sup> the frequency of rotation of regiments to India meant that many disembarking battalions had received prior Mounted Infantry instruction back in Britain, an advantage that prompted the War Office's suggestion,<sup>59</sup> unsurprisingly rebuffed, that a proportion of the costs incurred in training Mounted Infantry should be borne by the Indian Government.<sup>60</sup> British battalions were rarely called upon to contribute men to abstracted Mounted Infantry units in India, unlike in other parts of the Empire, especially Africa. This anomaly arose from a number of factors particularly the characteristics of campaigning in India, the numerical adequacy of cavalry and, most importantly, the distinctive attributes of the Indian Army itself.

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<sup>56</sup> TNA CAB 16 /2 The Military Requirement of the Empire as affected by the Defence of India 1907.

<sup>57</sup> Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, p.319, the British Army was considered a strategic reserve for the Indian Army.

<sup>58</sup> T.R. Moreman, 'The British and Indian Armies and North West Frontier Warfare 1849 – 1914', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 20 (1), 1992, pp. 35-64, this was not restricted to infantry battalions which could spend up to 16 years continuously in India.

<sup>59</sup> TNA WO 108 / 308 Proceedings of the Army Board June 1901 – March 1902; 'Ikona', 'The Passing of the old MI', pp. 209-13, indicated that the Indian Government considered that there was no task that the Mounted Infantry could do which well-trained Indian cavalry could not do equally well.

<sup>60</sup> BL IOR/L/MIL/7/13275 Organisation of Mounted Infantry in India.

The preponderance of active service post-Indian Mutiny occurred on the mountainous North West Frontier.<sup>61</sup> This 'hill fighting', belatedly recognised as requiring specialised operational and tactical techniques<sup>62</sup> suited foot infantry, preferably skirmishing mobile light infantryman with individual musketry skills such as the Gurkhas, rather than regular Mounted Infantry. Whilst up to a fifth of British infantry battalions were posted along the North West Frontier, the frequent rotation of battalions through garrisons diminished their opportunities to assimilate the lessons of hill fighting.<sup>63</sup> Although training in 'hill warfare' was advocated unsuccessfully by Sir William Gatacre as early as 1899, such training only became part of the Staff College curriculum after the Boer War.<sup>64</sup> Undoubtedly a role in pursuit did exist for mounted troops as fleeing tribesmen were unaccustomed to the speed of mounted pursuit thus inducing a terror of being 'ridden down'.<sup>65</sup> But, naturally, this task of pursuit was the preserve of cavalry rather than Mounted Infantry.<sup>66</sup> Although India offered one of the few overseas garrison opportunities for the British cavalry with a maximum of ten British cavalry

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<sup>61</sup> Moreman, 'The British and Indian Armies and North West Frontier Warfare', pp. 35-64, there were over 50 punitive expeditions in the region between 1849 and 1914.

<sup>62</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, pp. 286-347, the tactics of hill-fighting eventually featured in this third edition.

<sup>63</sup> Moreman, 'The British and Indian Armies and North West Frontier Warfare', pp. 35-64.

<sup>64</sup> Moreman, 'The British and Indian Armies and North West Frontier Warfare', pp. 35-64, Gatacre suggested such specialised training could be undertaken around Aldershot - a surprising suggestion in view of its surrounding rolling heath land; Joint Services Command and Staff College CR/1903/2, Staff College Curriculum, 1903; Ian F.W. Beckett, *Johnnie Gough, V.C.* (London: Tom Donovan, 1989), p.114.

<sup>65</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.208

<sup>66</sup> BL IOR/L/MIL/7/13275 Curzon & Kitchener to Lord Hamilton (Secretary of State for India), 12 March 1903.

regiments stationed in India in 1904,<sup>67</sup> few British cavalry regiments participated in punitive expeditions. Preference appears to have been for the more numerous and less costly Indian cavalry regiments<sup>68</sup> - a policy derided by Robert Baden-Powell, a future Inspector General of Cavalry, who lamented the 'careful bottling up of British cavalry'.<sup>69</sup> Consequently, neither British cavalry nor regular Mounted Infantry were deployed consistently or in any quantity to the North West Frontier<sup>70</sup> although the latter's employment as a mobile infantry reserve was not impossible if Russian imperial ambitions, believed to threaten British India, erupted into war. This provided military planners with a double challenge that of preparing for ongoing colonial conflict against tribesmen but also war between two European armies set against the backdrop of non-European terrain such as the Hindu Kush. In the latter scenario, with no guarantee of prompt reinforcements from Britain by a circumspect Admiralty,<sup>71</sup> the combined forces in India needed contingencies for a European-style conflict against an enemy with a 'Westernised' army that included trained cavalry. This is where the mobility of Mounted Infantry could have been of value with the abstraction of Mounted

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<sup>67</sup> *Army Lists*, 1904.

<sup>68</sup> Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, p.325.

<sup>69</sup> Baden-Powell, *Sport in War*, p.94; Churchill, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force*, p.181, Churchill blamed Government parsimony despite, in his opinion, the training benefits; Major F.W.P. Angelo, *Handbook for Indian Cavalry* (Allahabad: Pioneer Press, 1898), p.31, noted though that both British and Indian regiments failed to devote enough time to dismounted tactics.

<sup>70</sup> Sir Bindon Blood, *Four Score Years and Ten* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1933), pp.328-29, recounted that efficient Mounted Infantry were abstracted occasionally from regular infantry battalions, convincing him of the value of Mounted Infantry.

<sup>71</sup> TNA WO 105 / 42 Military Defence of India, 1902, without guaranteed maritime supremacy, India would be expected to provide all land forces for the initial 6 -12 months of war.

Infantry from non-mobilised British garrisons and Indian battalions furnishing up to three British and six Indian Mounted Infantry regiments.<sup>72</sup>

The third factor prejudicing the deployment of Mounted Infantry in India was the inherent attributes of the Indian Army in the maintenance of tribal borderland security.<sup>73</sup> As the Indian Army evolved an informal doctrine to counter tribal insurgency, specialist units of both infantry and cavalry, particularly the Punjab Field Force (PFF)<sup>74</sup> and the Corps of Guides,<sup>75</sup> were formed.<sup>76</sup> Lieutenant General Sir Bindon Blood reflected glowingly on these units, remarking particularly on the excellent dismounted work performed by the Guides' cavalry deployed tactically in a Mounted Infantry role.<sup>77</sup> As specialist units permanently based on the frontier, the PFF and Guides developed their own tactical approaches. Unfortunately such lessons were not disseminated systematically to other Indian or British battalions who were less likely to be employed for extended periods on the frontier and who might have benefitted from such experiential instruction. In part this reflected both the lack of a British General Staff, in the context of an absence of updated formal written doctrine, and the complexity inherent in separate command

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<sup>72</sup> TNA CAB 38 /6/ 107 Cavalry, artillery and infantry reinforcements for India, Committee for Imperial Defence, 1904.

<sup>73</sup> Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, p.337, other roles comprised the overall defence of India; internal civil security and contributing to punitive expeditions.

<sup>74</sup> Peter Duckers, *The British-Indian Army 1860-1914* (Princes Risborough: Shire Publications, 2003), p.8, the PFF included five cavalry regiments and nine infantry.

<sup>75</sup> Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, p.329, the Guides were developed initially for mobility.

<sup>76</sup> TNA WO 105 / 42 The Military Defence of India, 1902, the rebellions on the North West Frontier in 1897 – 98 required the deployment of 70,000 British and Indian troops.

<sup>77</sup> Blood, *Four Score Years and Ten*, pp.328-29.

structures for the Indian Army and the British Army in India.<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, the Indian Army, far from ignoring Mounted Infantry, not only adopted the model but its origins on the sub-continent represents a parallel phenomenon rather than mere passive osmosis of informal cross-fertilisation from British infantry garrisons. In the immediate wake of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Afghan War, Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Roberts considered establishing a Corps of Mounted Infantry within the Kabul Field Force.<sup>79</sup> Brigadier General Thomas Baker presciently proposed a self-sufficient corps, by abstraction, of 60 non-commissioned officers and men per infantry battalion for the purposes of ‘rapid convergence to any important point’.<sup>80</sup> Importantly, this crossed the racial and army divides by including both British and Indian battalions.<sup>81</sup> Despite proposals for a state of permanency rather than abstraction, the latter principle was retained.<sup>82</sup> With strikingly similar proposals appearing in advance of the domestic Intelligence Department’s 1881 précis,<sup>83</sup> Roberts’ initiative confirms him as a founder of the Mounted Infantry, at least in India,

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<sup>78</sup> TNA WO 105 / 42 The Military Defence of India, précis of a scheme for the preparation of the Army in India for War, 1904.

<sup>79</sup> BL *Baker Papers*, MSS EUR/D567/178: Letters and private papers of Brigadier-General Thomas Baker relating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Afghan War 1879 – 1880: ‘Proceedings of a Committee at Sherepore cantonment, Cabul, by order of Lieutenant-General Sir F. Roberts for the purpose of considering the establishment and training of Mounted Infantry in the several corps comprising the Cabul Field Force’.

<sup>80</sup> BL *Baker Papers*, MSS EUR/D567/178.

<sup>81</sup> BL, *Baker Papers*, MSS EUR/D567/183: Notes for the training of Mounted Infantry 1880.

<sup>82</sup> BL IOR/L/MIL/7/13275: Report of the Committee on the Organisation, Equipment and Mobilisation of Mounted Infantry in time of War, July 1902; TNA WO 105 / 42 The Military Defence of India, the proposed permanency posed insuperable organisational challenges and was abandoned.

<sup>83</sup> TNA WO 33 / 37 Précis on Mounted Infantry 1881.

quite as much as his political adversary, Wolseley, back home. Thus, Roberts' early espousal of the Mounted Infantry concept, overlooked by his previous biographers, and his subsequent vociferous support for Mounted Infantry in South Africa, England and India,<sup>84</sup> can be placed in its correct context. Moreover, his founding enthusiasm for Mounted Infantry may be considered juxtaposed against his long-standing antipathetic relationship with the cavalry, as a contributory factor in the post-Boer War firepower versus *arme blanche* debate.<sup>85</sup>

Nonetheless, the Mounted Infantry's lack of utility on the North West Frontier and the preferential deployment of Indian cavalry were to be factors implicated in the Mounted Infantry's demise in India. Previously, in keeping with the prevailing vogue for Mounted Infantry at the turn of the century, five Mounted Infantry schools of instruction had opened across India. However, as early as 1908, the Indian Government proposed the closure of three schools and a cessation of the training of Indian infantry as Mounted Infantry.<sup>86</sup> This was despite the fact that there were extant proposals for

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<sup>84</sup> BL IOR/L/MIL/7/13275 War Office to India Office, 26 September 1902, expressed Roberts' post-war disappointment at the diminished emphasis on Mounted Infantry in India - 'it is scarcely possible to have too many well-trained Mounted Infantry'; TNA, *Kitchener Papers*, PRO 30 / 57 / 22, even Kitchener questioned the need to restore to pre-war cavalry numbers in India as the wartime reduction in the cavalry regiments by five regiments had not been detrimental.

<sup>85</sup> Phillips, 'Scapegoat Arm', pp. 37-74; Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.148; Roberts, *Forty-One Years in India*, p.176, Roberts preference for native rather than British cavalry on a night march during the Indian Mutiny was predicated on the former being 'better able to look after themselves'.

<sup>86</sup> BL IOR/L/MIL/7/13275 Closure of Mounted Infantry Schools in India, the schools had been based at Poona, Amballa, Bangalore, Sialkot and Fatehgarh with the training of British infantry during the cold season and Indian troops during the hotter summer months.

closer organisational ties between the British and Indian armies<sup>87</sup> with the former still training Mounted Infantry in England and Ireland. Ostensibly, the closures were predicated on the Mounted Infantry's lack of utility in the most likely operational theatre of the North West Frontier,<sup>88</sup> though its participation in expeditions on the North East Frontier<sup>89</sup> and Tibet<sup>90</sup> had been successful. The Government of India's argument was that any role suitable for Mounted Infantry could be superseded by deployment of Indian cavalry<sup>91</sup>. Undoubtedly there was a monetary aspect to the decision as British troops could only be trained in the schools for half the year due to the climate, with Indian troops undergoing training in the same facilities at other times. The Indian Government declined to defray any part of the Mounted Infantry costs, despite formal sharing of the facilities, whilst the forecasted savings from the proposed closures would help reduce the cost of the proposed cavalry school.<sup>92</sup> Although the decision to establish a cavalry school in India may have merely reflected current trends such as the recently established cavalry school at Netheravon in England, the potentially pernicious influence of Haig,

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<sup>87</sup> TNA CAB 38 /8 /27 The possibility of bringing the Indian Army into closer touch with the British Army, Committee for Imperial Defence, 1905.

<sup>88</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, p.423, generally indifferent to the Mounted Infantry cause, Callwell thought that it could do as well as cavalry in terms of its psychological impact against hill tribesmen; BL IOR/L/MIL/7/13275, cavalry were considered likely to be more effective in offensive operations against Russian cavalry and, in the unlikely scenario that the Mounted Infantry was opposed by cavalry, the old prejudices decrying the Mounted Infantry's ability to withstand European cavalry in open country re-surfaced; Rimington, *Our Cavalry*, p.56.

<sup>89</sup> Major General Sir Frederick Maurice, *The Life of General Lord Rawlinson of Trent from his Journals and Letters* (London: Cassell and Co., 1928), p.15.

<sup>90</sup> Ottley, *With the Mounted Infantry in Tibet*, pp.vii – viii.

<sup>91</sup> 'Ikona', 'The Passing of the old MI', pp. 209-13.

<sup>92</sup> BL IOR/L/MIL/7/13275 the savings of closing all five schools were estimated at almost Rs 800k.

who had only recently returned to England in 1906 after serving as the Inspector General of Cavalry in India since 1903, must remain speculative. Reflecting similar justifications later in England, the maintenance of Mounted Infantry was also considered to be an unnecessary drain of equine resource as well as an unwelcome burden on infantry battalions undergoing abstraction. Conversely, from a strategic perspective, the fear of an ignominious defeat of the Mounted Infantry by marauding Cossack *sotnia*<sup>93</sup> seems intentionally overplayed as the growing tension between Germany and Russia resulting in a general shift of Russian troops to the German border from 1895 diminished the risk of Russian imperial aggression towards the North West Frontier, a situation further clarified following Russia's defeat by Japan in 1905.<sup>94</sup>

In conclusion, the demise of the Mounted Infantry in India owed more to a lack of a foreseeable role and cost pressures than from political machination or the British cavalry's renaissance. However, any impression that regular Mounted Infantry had been an irrelevant or wasteful experiment in India is wrong. The Mounted Infantry acquitted itself well in Burma in a terrain not obviously suited to mobile warfare but where their local Burmese ponies conferred welcome mobility and agility thus garnering a reputation that saw the Burma Mounted Infantry dispatched to the veldt in the early stages of the

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<sup>93</sup> McNeal, *Tsar and Cossack*, p.52, the *sotnia* (meaning '100') was the basic organisational unit of the Cossacks although this numerical value was not necessarily a guide to unit composition.

<sup>94</sup> WO 106 / 6279 Twenty Years of Russian Army Reform 1893; TNA CAB 38/2/16 The Military Defence of India 1907; TNA, *Kitchener Papers*, PRO 30 / 57 / 28, Kitchener correctly surmised that the 1905 defeat signalled the end of Russian ambitions in the region.



Boer War.<sup>95</sup> North East India was also well-served by a substantial number of volunteer Mounted Rifle units. These were enlisted from European or Eurasian volunteers rather than native levies and were recruited by locality or through specific employment such as the railway companies, with units bolstered by a small number of professional adjutants and instructors.<sup>96</sup> Tracing their origins back to volunteer forces raised during the Mutiny, the units functioned as Mounted Rifles despite their confusing nomenclature. An attempt was made in 1888 to distinguish between units with two-thirds classified as 'light horse' i.e. cavalry, with the remaining third as Mounted Infantry with differentiation by size of pony and armaments, with carbine and sword or rifle and sword-bayonet respectively.<sup>97</sup> This forced delineation appears arbitrary and without functional benefit with the generalisation that these units were, in fact, all amateur Mounted Rifles in ethos. Although primarily for local defence, volunteer Light Horse and Mounted Infantry saw active service with the Indian Mounted Infantry Corps (Lumsden's Horse) in the Boer War in Ian Hamilton's mixed mounted brigade.<sup>98</sup> Similarly, the Assam Valley Light Horse, comprising tea planters, merchants and civil

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<sup>95</sup> BL IOR/L/MIL/7/15657 Dispatch of Mounted Infantry from Burma to South Africa 1899 – 1900; Maurice, *The Life of General Lord Rawlinson of Trent*, p.15; Repington, *Vestigia*, p.81, claimed that 'The Mounted Infantry (in Burma) was the favourite arm'.

<sup>96</sup> Chris Kempton, *The Regiments & Corps of the H.E.I.C & Indian Armies: Volunteer Forces* (Dunstable: The Military Press, 2012), p.19, the overall ethnic composition of the Volunteer Forces was 50.4 per cent European and 44 per cent Eurasian.

<sup>97</sup> BL IOR/L/MIL/17/5/228 Indian Army Circulars: Clause 195, December 1888, 'Regulations for the Equipment and Organisation of Mounted Volunteer Corps in India'; Kempton, *The Regiments & Corps of the H.E.I.C & Indian Armies*, pp.19-20.

<sup>98</sup> Kempton, *The Regiments & Corps of the H.E.I.C & Indian Armies*, pp.53-54, it incorporated volunteers from other units such as the Behar Light Horse and a Maxim detachment supplied by the East India Railway Volunteer Rifle Corps.

servants, participated in the Abor Expedition of 1911-12 alongside Gurkhas and Sikh pioneers.<sup>99</sup> Therefore, Mounted Infantry in India existed in several forms including as components of British and Indian battalions, as specialist Indian frontier regiments and as Indian volunteer mounted corps, emphasising the parallelism of the evolution of Mounted Infantry in India. This plurality of the Mounted Infantry functionality, particularly the specialist hill-fighting mobile infantry and its sister cavalry, delivered an Indian solution to a colonial frontier problem. In its analogous evolution, the Indian forces served the Empire well, tentatively releasing the British Army to gradually re-focus towards the prospect of a European-centred conflict.

If India offered a parallel solution to the problem of mobile firepower, the other major self-governing colonies faced a different set of challenges. Devoid of British Army garrisons, their defence, by necessity, comprised a citizen militia that was screened by the protective maritime dominance of the Royal Navy, and was reliant on the embarkation of regular army reinforcements from England at times of crisis.<sup>100</sup> The result, in both Canada and the Australian colonies, was the evolution of loosely-organised amateur militias supported by small permanent military cadres of instructors and technical staff.<sup>101</sup> Superficially this situation mimicked that of the domestic British Yeomanry in terms of volunteer enlistment strengthened by professional adjutants and non-commissioned cavalry instructors. Later, in

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<sup>99</sup> Kempton, *The Regiments & Corps of the H.E.I.C & Indian Armies*, p.39.

<sup>100</sup> Anon, 'The Principles of Imperial Defence', *Army Review*, 1, 1911, pp.6-14; TNA WO 106 / 6293 Imperial Conference on the subject of the Defence of the Empire 1909.

<sup>101</sup> TNA WO 106 / 6293 Imperial Conference on the subject of the Defence of the Empire 1909.

light of the perceived effectiveness of colonial Mounted Rifles during the Boer War, there would be encouragement for the re-named Imperial Yeomanry to re-develop along the lines of these colonial mounted troops.<sup>102</sup> Yet the Yeomanry differed crucially as, despite its novel if transient, nomenclature of 'Imperial Yeomanry' with Mounted Infantry connotations, the domestic British Yeomanry still considered itself resolutely a sabre-wielding cavalry. Its historic antecedents, aristocratic leadership and cavalry influences, inculcated a cavalry ethos resistant to the concept of the more egalitarian Mounted Rifles or Light Horse.<sup>103</sup> In the colonies, it took the organisational flair of Hutton<sup>104</sup> and the advent of the Boer War to galvanise these militias into formally organised military units, based on the concept of Mounted Rifles or Light Horse.<sup>105</sup> Arguably, the success of the Mounted Rifleman contributed to both the subsequent espousal of a non-cavalry style

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<sup>102</sup> BL, *Alderson Papers*, 50088, letter from Hutton to Alderson, 3 June 1904, Hutton urged Alderson to seek a role in re-organising Imperial Yeomanry into Light Horse as Hutton had no faith in the abilities of any cavalry commanders to do so except John French.

<sup>103</sup> *Army List*, August 1914 (War Office, HMSO), in 1914 only nine per cent of Yeomanry regiments included the non-cavalry terms of dragoon, carabineer, mounted rifles or 'sharpshooters' in their official titles thus underlining their unshakeable belief in their role as domestic cavalry.

<sup>104</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers* 50078, interview with Lord Lansdowne, 26 February 1900 – 'no officer has ever done so much for the Canadian militia in such a short period of time'; TNA, *Ardagh Papers*, PRO 30/40.3, letter from Hutton to Ardagh, 14 May 1899, indicated Hutton's hopes that his work organising the Canadian militia would facilitate Canadian participation in the wider defence of the Empire; Bou, *Light Horse*, p.86, considers that, arguably, the formalisation of the Australian Light Horse was Hutton's greatest achievement; Bou, *Modern Cavalry: Mounted Rifles, the Boer War and the Doctrinal Debate*, p.113.

<sup>105</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6868 Canadian and Imperial Defence 1899, the possibility of re-badging 1<sup>st</sup> Leinster Regiment as 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Canadian Regiment was abandoned in case of an adverse impact on recruitment; TNA WO 32 / 6365 Colonial Troops for Imperial Defence in War 1900, Lord Brassey Governor of Victoria, unsuccessfully proposed the formation of an Australian Imperial Corps of Mounted Infantry, quickly rejected as prohibitively expensive; Bou, *Light Horse*, p.70, & p.82, Hutton emphasised that the capabilities of Light Horse exceeded that of Mounted Infantry and, by definition, Mounted Infantry were fully-trained infantry, first and foremost.

of mounted arm in the new Dominions<sup>106</sup> and, as a heroic icon of martial vigour inextricably linked with the growing concepts of national identity, political independence and self defence.<sup>107</sup> In Canada, Hutton had helped organise the militia since 1898 which had facilitated the embarkation of an infantry battalion then two regiments of Mounted Rifles, the Royal Canadian Dragoons (RCD) and Canadian Mounted Rifles (CMR) in 1899 and 1900. Initial political reticence had been matched by civilian apathy, particularly in rural Canada, for military involvement in the Boer War.<sup>108</sup> The RCD did not conform completely to the stereotype of the rugged rural recruit as natural mounted soldier,<sup>109</sup> as its ranks were filled by volunteers predominantly from east Canada<sup>110</sup> although the CMR contained many from the North West Mounted Police (NWMP).<sup>111</sup> The NWMP furnished 40 per cent all ranks in the CMR and nearly 70 per cent of officers but only 0.6 per cent in the RCD, largely as a result of different geographical recruiting grounds. The CMR<sup>112</sup> was considered particularly suitable for scouting duties on the veldt due to a

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<sup>106</sup> BL, *Hutton Papers* 50086, memorandum by General Sir Evelyn Wood.

<sup>107</sup> A. Morris, (ed.), *A Canadian Mounted Rifleman at War 1899 – 1902: the reminiscences of A.E. Hilder* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 2000), p.xxi, 'Canada at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a country looking for an identity; Anon, 'The Principles of Imperial Defence', *Army Review*, I (I), 1911, pp. 6-14.

<sup>108</sup> Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, p.32 & p.16.

<sup>109</sup> T.G. Marquis, *Canada's Sons on Kopje and Veldt* (Toronto: Canada's Sons Publishing, 1900), p.174, claimed controversially that the 'Canadian troops taught British Generals how to fight in South Africa'.

<sup>110</sup> H. Robertson, 'The Royal Canadian Dragoons and the Anglo-Boer War 1900', unpublished MA thesis, 1983, University of Ottawa, Canada, p.16.

<sup>111</sup> Marquis, *Canada's Sons*, p.337; Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, p.157 & p.162.

<sup>112</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7598 Badges of the Permanent Forces of Canada 1903, eventually after much wrangling the prefix "Royal" was conferred on the CMR; RCD received the royal prefix in 1893.

preponderance of recruits from rural Canada.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, the orthodoxy, if at times uncomfortably stereotypical, of the rural farming recruit of Australia's Mounted Rifles, later the Light Horse, was similar to that of the CMR. Although citizen militia recruited from town and farm often had pre-existing equestrian ability, increasingly unlike recruits in the British cavalry,<sup>114</sup> it was uncertain whether military training would be able to produce soldiers adept with both rifle and sabre. The compromise of Mounted Rifles was the successful option with Hutton's replacement claiming that 'we can turn out Mounted Riflemen in their thousands'.<sup>115</sup> In fact Mounted Rifles were a particularly suitable defence force for the lengthy coastlines of Australia and New Zealand,<sup>116</sup> combining mobility and infantry firepower,<sup>117</sup> particularly as

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<sup>113</sup> BL *Hutton Papers*, 50078, letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Hutton, 31 October 1901; Marquis, *Canada's Sons*, p.174; Elgin Commission, Cd. 1790, I, evidence from Wolseley (Q9370, p.395).

<sup>114</sup> Rimington, *Our Cavalry*, p.208.

<sup>115</sup> TNA WO 32 / 6365 Colonial Troops for Imperial Defence in War 1898; Dundonald, *My Army Life*, pp.252-53.

<sup>116</sup> Major General E. Hutton, 'The Cavalry of Greater Britain', *Cavalry Journal*, 1, 1906, pp.24-28, considered this a particular problem for New Zealand that was magnified by the scattered and disjointed military forces pre-Boer war; Bou, 'Modern Cavalry: Mounted Rifles, the Boer War and the Doctrinal Debate', pp.99-114, notes that even before 1885, a mounted gendarmerie had been formed to police the colonies of New South Wales and South Australia, both externally on 'frontier' coastline duty but also internally against the indigenous population, whilst the terrain of Tasmania had contributed to the development of its Mounted Rifles rather than cavalry; Bou, *Light Horse*, p.22; Colonel A. Bauchop, 'The Mounted men of New Zealand', *Cavalry Journal*, 3, 1908, pp.56-59, suggested that Mounted Rifles would be particularly useful in locating, engaging and constraining any invading party until less mobile troops could arrive in force; Hutton, *The Organisation of the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia*, 7<sup>th</sup> April 1902, Melbourne, p.4, in this formal statement of the new Dominion army, Hutton acknowledged that the needs of Australia required a larger proportion of mounted troops that would inevitably require conversion of some Australian infantry to Light Horse, underpinned by the perception of value of the Australian mounted troops in South Africa held by officers such as Hutton and Roberts.

<sup>117</sup> Hutton, 'The Cavalry of Greater Britain', pp.24-28, proposed that Australia was endowed by nature with a military instinct and particularly men of the mounted branch. Clearly Hutton's espousal of an embryonic Light Horse in Australia also contributed to his promotion of the principle of Mounted Infantry and arguably helped Hutton refine his proposals for the post-Boer War Mounted Infantry; Major Warren Perry, 'The Military Reforms of General Sir Edward Hutton in the

any enemy incursion was likely to be small-scale, devoid of trained cavalry, and thus negating the anxiety that Mounted Rifles could be overwhelmed in open country by seasoned cavalry.<sup>118</sup> Furthermore, it was considered incontestable by the Committee for Imperial Defence that any threatening large scale invasion force, which might conceivably include cavalry, would be intercepted by the Royal Navy.<sup>119</sup> During his earlier posting to New South Wales as General Officer Commanding from 1893 to 1896, Hutton had again organised its disparate forces and had advocated a defence policy, not only for New South Wales, but for all Australian colonies, which was eventually realised in the newly federated Australia. However this was not without incurring unwelcome political interference similar to that encountered subsequently by Earl Dundonald in Canada after the Boer War, which culminated in Dundonald's removal.<sup>120</sup> If the success of the Mounted Rifle paradigm in these colonies<sup>121</sup> was confirmed by their performance on the veldt, opinions were polarised over their abilities as horsemasters<sup>122</sup> and as

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Commonwealth of Australia 1902 – 04', *The Victorian Historical Magazine: Journal of the Proceedings of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria*, 29, 1959, pp. 34-57.

<sup>118</sup> TNA WO 106 / 6293 Imperial Conference on the subject of the Defence of the Empire 1909.

<sup>119</sup> TNA WO 106 / 6293 *ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> Perry, 'The Military Reforms of General Sir Edward Hutton', pp. 34-57, Hutton had to negotiate with four different administrations, four prime ministers and six ministers of defence in his three years' posting; Dundonald, *My Army Life*, pp.261-70; TNA WO 138 / 28 Personal File: Major General Earl of Dundonald 1904-05; TNA WO 32 / 11220 Papers relating to the dismissal of Earl Dundonald 1904.

<sup>121</sup> TNA WO 279 / 496 Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College under the direction of CIGS 1910, the Inspector-General of New Zealand Forces emphasised his mounted troops as Mounted Rifles and not Mounted Infantry; Hutton, *The Organisation of the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia*, 7 April 1902, Melbourne, p.5.

<sup>122</sup> Smith, *A Veterinary History*, p.237, criticised all mounted troops for their woeful horsemanship except some of the colonial South African irregular horse; Bou, *Light Horse*, pp.54-55; Robertson,

troops incapable of both general discipline<sup>123</sup> and fire discipline when compared to British cavalry and regular Mounted Infantry.<sup>124</sup> Therefore, whilst certainly not cavalry in the true European sense, the Light Horse was more than just a transposed Mounted Infantry concept from Britain but represented a colonial adaptation of the Mounted Infantry precept in line with available resources and requirements.

If the colonies of the British Empire evolved Mounted Rifles as their solution, European armies faced different and, arguably, more complex challenges. Unlike the colonies of the British Empire, all European armies cherished the traditions of cavalry, mounted shock tactics and the *arme blanche* yet recent European wars had demonstrated the increased lethality of modern firepower over edged weapons.<sup>125</sup> Therefore, whilst the challenge was how to balance the competing demands of firepower, battlefield mobility and the retention of traditionally armed cavalry to match their enemy's capabilities, the deliberations were heavily influenced by the cavalry lobby. In this

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'The Royal Canadian Dragoons and the Anglo-Boer War 1900', pp. 135-36, quotes a 95 per cent equine wastage from all causes for the RCD; Corporal F. Twisleton, *With the New Zealanders at the Front: a story of twelve months campaigning in South Africa* (Skipton: Edmondson and Co., n.d.), p.22, even New Zealand forces were not exclusively farmers which contributed to problems with horsemastership; Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Thorneycroft (Q.12423, p.19), indicated that colonial troops were not always good horsemasters.

<sup>123</sup> Crozier, *Angels on Horseback*, p.122

<sup>124</sup> Black Watch Museum, *Grant Duff Papers*, diary entry, 12 March 1902, 16, Grant Duff was highly critical of the fire discipline of colonial troops particularly South African Imperial Light Horse; Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Plumer (Q.17991, p.336), 'shooting of the Colonials was very disappointing'.

<sup>125</sup> Jay Luvaas, *The Military Legacy of the Civil War: the European Inheritance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), p.156, only 218 of 65,000 (0.3 per cent) of German casualties in the Franco-German War had been wounded by edged weapons, reflecting poorly on both the efficacy of edged weapons and the performance of the French cavalry.

respect, without a major distracting colonial politico-military focus, the armies of France, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia, particularly those with well-established General Staffs contributing to co-ordinated planning and development of doctrine, confronted this dilemma earlier than the British Army. Their seemingly advanced solutions produced a consequent, if rather erroneous, perception of a comparative tactical superiority<sup>126</sup> of these nations' cavalries over the British cavalry that persisted until the eve of the First World War.

Whilst it is true that no other European army developed an exact replica of the British regular Mounted Infantry, abstracted at times of crisis from its main infantry force, a process of 'dragoonisation' occurred in several cavalries whereby the principle of increased training in dismounted fire support tactics was instituted. This was effectively a limited conversion to the functionality of Mounted Infantry or Mounted Rifles but without a change of nomenclature or designation.<sup>127</sup> The usual rationale for not formally developing Mounted Infantry in these armies reflected similar British cavalry's predictions of Mounted Infantry degenerating into inferior cavalry, devoid of equestrian skills, bereft of the ability to administer the mounted charge and unable to protect themselves against more highly trained enemy

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<sup>126</sup> TNA CAB 38 /19 /49 The Military Aspect of the Continental problem, Committee for Imperial Defence 1911, stated that "our cavalry (was) hardly equal to either French or German".

<sup>127</sup> France, *John Bull's Army*, p.79, commended the Duke of Cambridge for resisting such changes in the British cavalry particularly the merging of infantry and cavalry. Clearly antipathetic to Mounted Infantry, the author decried the 'half foot and half horseman which practical merits had long since rejected'.



cavalry.<sup>128</sup> Although, as the French author Picard noted, the perceived benefits accrued from the deployment of Mounted Infantry were undeniably attractive to army commanders in terms of mobility and firepower, remarking that '*l'idée de l'infanterie montée, présentée ainsi sous ces différents aspects avantageux, est incontestablement séduisante*'.<sup>129</sup> The disputed ability of large European conscript armies to train their cavalry in both mounted and dismounted skills mirrored the debate in Australia and New Zealand with the default position being prioritisation of mounted drill and with the infantry escaping the unwelcome distraction of abstraction for Mounted Infantry instruction.<sup>130</sup> By way of example, Russian cavalry in the 1870s were, in effect, all converted functionally to Mounted Infantry with the exception being the Cossack irregular cavalry who equally began to be incorporated into the regular army<sup>131</sup> despite a polarity of opinion internationally regarding their military value.<sup>132</sup> Similarly the Austro-Hungarian cavalry, historically the most

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<sup>128</sup> Bernhardt, *Reiterdienst Kritische Betrachtungen über Kriegstätigkeit*, pp. 124-26; Le Commandant Picard, *Cavalerie ou Infanterie Montée?*, (Paris: Librairie Militaire, R. Chapelot et C<sup>e</sup>, 1901), p.10; Rimington, *Our Cavalry*, p.56, reported the dismissive view of the German Army that Mounted Infantry could not 'hold the field against trained cavalry'; Anon, 'German Views of Mounted Infantry', *Cavalry Journal*, 2, 1907, pp.347-51, [translations from *Militär Wochenblatte*].

<sup>129</sup> Picard, *Cavalerie ou Infanterie Montée*, p.5.

<sup>130</sup> TNA WO 279 / 42 Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College 1911; TNA WO 279 / 496 Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College under the direction of CIGS 1910, similar sentiments regarding the aptitude of short service British infantry to learn both foot and mounted drill were expressed.

<sup>131</sup> TNA WO 106 / 6222 Handbook of the Russian Army 1908; TNA WO 106 / 6279 Twenty Years of Russian Army Reform 1893.

<sup>132</sup> TNA WO 106 / 6216 Report on the Russian Army 1886, asserted confidently that any Indian cavalry regiment could easily surpass Cossack cavalry, an assertion repeatedly frequently during the Russo-Japanese War.

favoured arm of the army,<sup>133</sup> reluctantly lost its differentiation of light and heavy cavalry in all but name<sup>134</sup> and became dragoons with Mounted Infantry functionality,<sup>135</sup> although there were later moves to re-designate back to more traditional cavalry.<sup>136</sup> Indeed, these trends towards making the cavalry responsible for dismounted fire support would be reversed in other armies to some degree later in the century, in part predicated on a pan-European cavalry revival, but also consistent with the emerging doctrine of the offensive.<sup>137</sup>

Key to moving away from cavalry being responsible solely for mobile firepower was the doctrine of the German cavalry that became an exemplar elsewhere.<sup>138</sup> After a poor performance in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866,<sup>139</sup> the Prussian cavalry reformed,<sup>140</sup> becoming more functional than ceremonial, emphasising reconnaissance and raiding without relinquishing

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<sup>133</sup> TNA WO 33 / 54 Progress in the Austro-Hungarian, Bulgarian, French and German armies 1893; TNA WO 33 / 56 Foreign Military Manoeuvres 1895.

<sup>134</sup> 'The Armed Forces of Austro – Hungary', *Army Review*, 1912, II (I), pp. 336-45, the Austro-Hungarian cavalry comprised eight different types in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century but had reduced to just Hussars, Dragoons and *Uhlans* by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>135</sup> Colonel Valentine Baker, 'Organization and Employment of Cavalry', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 17, 1873, pp. 375-98; Jay Stone and Erwin Schmidl, *The Boer War and Military Reforms* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1988), p.282.

<sup>136</sup> Rittmeister von Mengerssen, 'Austrian Cavalry Journal extracts', *Cavalry Journal*, 2, 1907, p. 241, suggested that, conversely, Mounted Infantry should convert to sabre-wielding cavalry.

<sup>137</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.111-15, this doctrine is summarised later in the text of this chapter.

<sup>138</sup> TNA WO 279 /18 Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College 1906; Childers, *German Influence on British Cavalry*, p.45, Childers considered the adoption of the Teutonic cavalry model as fallacious.

<sup>139</sup> Denison, *A History of Cavalry*, pp.400-12; Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War*, p.290.

<sup>140</sup> Dorondo, *Riders of the Apocalypse*, p.17 & p.26.

its capacity for shock tactics against enemy cavalry or infantry. It was not that firepower was ignored but it was however subjugated in importance to mobility, a strategic choice that paid dividends against the more indolent French cavalry in 1870.<sup>141</sup> The German answer to the needs of fire support was its delegation of the role to companies of attached light infantry (*Jägers*) converted *de facto* into Mounted Infantry with their mobility enhanced by transport in wheeled carts, occasionally mounted on cobs or, latterly, as cyclists.<sup>142</sup> Historically, German cavalry did not have a tradition of dismounted work<sup>143</sup> even during peacetime manoeuvres<sup>144</sup> but it had flirted with the Mounted Infantry concept in 1870 when mounted *Jägers* had assumed patrol duties and functioned as reinforcement for cavalry embroiled in fire fights.<sup>145</sup> This contributed to German cavalry tactics in August 1914 where German cavalry mobility was hampered by a reliance on its slower moving *Jägers* for fire support.<sup>146</sup> Such tactical reliance on mobile infantry

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<sup>141</sup> General von Pelet-Narbonne, *Cavalry on Service illustrated by the advance of the German Cavalry across the Mosel in 1870* (London: Hugh Rees Ltd, 1906), p.119 (translation); Lieutenant Colonel Bonie, *La Cavalerie Française en 1870 avec ses resultants tactiques* (London: W. Mitchell & Co, 1873), p.120; Fincastle, 'The Strategical and Tactical Employment of Cavalry in War', pp. 19-30; Dorondo, *Riders of the Apocalypse*, pp.18-19.

<sup>142</sup> BHaStA(K) / Abt.IV. MKR 1201, *Kriegsministerium, Armee-Abteilung I, Verwendung von Jägerbataillonen bei der Heereskavallerie, München* 25 February 1914; James R. Osgood, *The Armies of Today* (London: McIlvaine & Co., 1893), p. 118, *Jägers* were an élite constituting 3.5 per cent of all German infantry and recruited almost exclusively from Prussia.

<sup>143</sup> *Drill Regulations for the Cavalry of the German Army* (HMSO 1909), p.viii, stated that whilst "dismounted action is to be practised in proportion to its importance", its *arme blanche* doctrine remained for 'the carbine will only be resorted to when the lance can no longer be used'.

<sup>144</sup> Anon, 'The Kaiser-Manöver in Germany September 1905', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 50, 1906, pp. 181-99, where German cavalry was caustically described as 'seeking opportunities for heroic self-immolation'.

<sup>145</sup> Pelet-Narbonne, *Cavalry on Service*, p.24.

<sup>146</sup> Richard Holmes, *Riding the Retreat* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), pp. 112-13.

support, combined with the cavalry's historical aversion to dismounted work, had been predicted by Bernhardt who wrote: 'I fear that the cavalry will cry out for infantry the moment an attack on foot has to be carried out'.<sup>147</sup>

If the German cavalry frittered away its advantage in mobility then the French cavalry appeared to be neither adventurously mobile nor bristling with firepower.<sup>148</sup> Roundly criticised following the French defeat in 1870-71 for its lack of initiative,<sup>149</sup> disregard of scouting and its wasteful self-sacrifice in futile mounted charges, French cavalry diminished its mobility by poor horsemanship<sup>150</sup> and failed to address its inferior firepower. Certainly the French cavalry did not desire either re-development as Mounted Infantry nor evolution of its dismounted doctrine,<sup>151</sup> dismissively rejecting the idea as being suitable only '*pour les cavaliers timides, âges ou fatigués qui ne galopent plus!*'<sup>152</sup>. However this does not mean that the potential for Mounted Infantry was ignored or dismissed out of hand with debate occurring in the French military literature<sup>153</sup> concluding that mobile firepower either required enhancement in the cavalry's dismounted expertise as skirmishers or the

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<sup>147</sup> Bernhardt, *Reiterdienst. Kritische Betrachtungen über Kriegstätigkeit*, p.126.

<sup>148</sup> Anon, 'Cavalry in France and Germany 1909', *Cavalry Journal*, 5, 1910, pp. 220-27.

<sup>149</sup> Fincastle, 'The Strategical and Tactical Employment of Cavalry in War', pp. 19-30.

<sup>150</sup> TNA WO 33 / 56 Foreign Manoeuvres 1895.

<sup>151</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Lowther, 'The French Cavalry', *Cavalry Journal*, 4, 1907, pp. 195-207, reported that there was 'no doubt that on the Continent the power of the rifle has not yet been recognised'.

<sup>152</sup> Anon, '*Revue de Cavalerie*', *Cavalry Journal*, 8, 1913, p.94

<sup>153</sup> General De Negrier, *Lessons of the Russo-Japanese War* (London: Hugh Rees Ltd., 1906) (translation), p.77, advocated the creation of companies of mounted men in every infantry division at mobilisation in a Gallic version of British abstraction.

attachment of cyclists to cavalry units.<sup>154</sup> The general European tendency to attach light infantry to cavalry units was replicated in the Russian army of 1914 where, despite training with the rifle, Russian hussars were preceded by 'chasseurs' on foot<sup>155</sup> although, at other times, the hussars continued to cherish the *arme blanche* by considering to 'charge anything that could be taken by surprise'.<sup>156</sup> It had been only a mere seven years earlier, in the wake of the slump in morale in the Russian army caused by its defeat in the Russo-Japanese War<sup>157</sup> followed by the disruption caused by the 1905 revolution<sup>158</sup> and the army's subsequent failure to reform at any meaningful pace,<sup>159</sup> that the cosmetic differentiation into types of cavalry was

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<sup>154</sup> Picard, *Cavalerie ou Infanterie Montée?*, p.11, stating that 'L'idée juste n'est pas de remplacer la cavalerie par de l'infanterie montée, mais de transformer la tactiques de la cavalerie en développant son aptitude au combat par le feu'; *Règlement sur Les Exercices de la Cavalerie* (Paris: Librairie Militaire de J. Dumaine, 1875), p.31, 12 Juillet 1875, 'Les cavaliers disperses prennent le nom de tirailleurs lorsqu'ils doivent combatte avec l'arme de feu', thus indicating the French cavalry might be required tactically as dismounted riflemen; .Lieutenant H. Gérard, *Le problème de l'infanterie montée resolu par l'emploi de la bicyclette* (Paris: Librairie Militaire, L. Baudoin, 1894), is a contemporary monograph devoted to this solution.

<sup>155</sup> Vladimir Littauer, *Russian Hussar* (London: J.A. Allen & Co., 1965, republished The Long Riders' Guild Press, 2007), p.134, complained that the Russian cavalry, like German and French, became psychologically dependent on the accompanying light infantry.

<sup>156</sup> Littauer, *Russian Hussar*, p.4 & p.105, remarked that the spirit of the mounted charge with drawn sabre was paramount and the fact that they had been trained previously and designated as Mounted Infantry-type dragoons was largely forgotten.

<sup>157</sup> Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: the Russian Revolution 1891 – 1924* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1996), p.58, considers that inadequate attention to modernisation, amplified by fiscal constraints, and a deeply conservative officer corps left the Russian army largely 'ornamental'.

<sup>158</sup> John Bushnell, *Mutiny amid Repression: the Russian Soldier in the Revolution of 1905 – 1906* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p.vii, calculated that 211 mutinies occurred in the Russian Army over a two month period in 1905.

<sup>159</sup> 'The Reorganisation of the Russian Army', *Army Review*, I (I), 1911, pp. 163-66, the most obvious reform was the apparent expansion of the army with a transfer of men from reserve into active units; General A.A. Brussilov, *A Soldier's Note-book 1914 – 1918* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd, 1930) (translation), pp.10-14, criticised the post-1905 reforms that abolished branches of the army such as garrison troops whilst leaving the army over-supplied with Cossack cavalry. The reforms effectively paralysed the Russian Army, which in his opinion, would have been powerless if war had broken out over the Austrian annexation of Bosnia in 1908.

reintroduced into the Russian army with hussars, dragoons and lancers identifiable by uniform if not by armaments or tactics.<sup>160</sup> A similar limited re-differentiation occurred in the Austro-Hungarian cavalry, which previously had been comparatively forward-thinking, removing lances from its cavalry as early as 1884.<sup>161</sup> Nevertheless, its cavalry remained deeply conservative, fiercely retaining its uniform, traditions and sense of social exclusivity<sup>162</sup> in comparison to other branches of the army including the otherwise élite *Jägers*.<sup>163</sup> A tendency for innate arrogance was not an unusual trait of European cavalry regiments.<sup>164</sup> However in America, there was no deep-rooted tradition of social superiority or 'repressive military tradition'<sup>165</sup> in the US cavalry, a force that had only developed from volunteer units as recently as the American Civil War. In many respects the US cavalry of the mid-1870s until the end of the century was to fight a quasi-colonial war as the westward spread of settlers moved into Native American land. Thus,

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<sup>160</sup> Littauer, *Russian Hussar*, p.3.

<sup>161</sup> Osgood, *The Armies of Today*, p.284.

<sup>162</sup> TNA WO 33 / 54 Progress in the Austro-Hungarian, Bulgarian, French and German armies 1893; Anon, 'The Armed Forces of Austro – Hungary', *Army Review*, II (I), 1912, pp. 336-45, notes that the Austrian cavalry always enjoyed the highest reputation within the Austro-Hungarian armed forces.

<sup>163</sup> Anon, 'Austrian Views on Cavalry Work', *Cavalry Journal*, 2, 1907, pp. 214-16, accepted the development of firepower but denounced the ongoing trend for Mounted Infantry; Dorothea Gerard, *The Austrian Officer at Work and at Play* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1913), p.169, Gerard, an Englishwoman married to an Austrian Officer, noted the prestige of the *Jägers* stating that '*Jägers are never tired. There is no line of retreat*'; Joseph Roth, *The Radetzky March*, (London: Granta, 2002), although only fiction, the protagonist faces censure bordering on disgrace when he resigns from the Dragoons and swaps into the *Jägers* with their functional uniforms and effectively 'exile' garrisoning the Russian border.

<sup>164</sup> Eric Dorn Brose, *The Kaiser's Army: the politics of military technology in Germany during the machine age 1870 – 1918* (Oxford: University Press, 2001), p.155 quotes the German Inspector-General of Cavalry in January 1907: that 'God and the German Kaiser forbid that this role [Mounted Infantry] will ever be expected of the German Cavalry'.

<sup>165</sup> Goodenough, and Dalton, *The Army Book for the British Empire*, pp.170-77; Gene Smith, *Mounted Warriors* (New Jersey: Wiley, 2009), p.103.

although not 'overseas', the US cavalry faced the same operational challenges and logistical problems common to all colonial expeditions, particularly facing a mobile adversary versed in a variety of tactics including, like the Boers, a reluctance for close combat that negated the cavalry's *arme blanche*, preferring the raid and ambush of the insurgent. In response, the US army<sup>166</sup> built on its experiences during the Civil War of combining dismounted firepower, admittedly with disappointing fire discipline,<sup>167</sup> and, less often, the attenuated shock tactics of the saddle-fired revolver and rifle.<sup>168</sup> Therefore it can be concluded that the US cavalry also developed a dragoon-like tactical approach, a conclusion underlined by a contemporary observation that the US cavalry deployed to China in 1901 were 'much more of the nature of Mounted Infantry than cavalry'.<sup>169</sup> Nevertheless, in the early part of the twentieth century, American cavalry too changed doctrinal direction becoming more traditionally cavalry in a European sense with a heightened prominence given to the sabre and the defining attributes of the

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<sup>166</sup> Lieutenant W.E. Shipp,, 'Mounted Infantry', *Journal of the United States Cavalry Association*, 5, 1892, pp. 76-80, reflected the 'too great a tendency in our cavalry towards fighting on foot' from an aspiring cavalry officer's perspective; Henderson, *The Science of War*, p.55.

<sup>167</sup> Brevet Major E.S. Godfrey, 'Cavalry Fire Discipline', *Journal of the Military Service Institute*, 19, 1896, pp. 252-59, criticised Major Reno's rapid and almost total expenditure of ammunition within 20 minutes at Little Bighorn; Philbrick, *The Last Stand*, p.94, calculates the expenditure of 250 rounds for every Native American casualty.

<sup>168</sup> Showalter, 'The US Cavalry', pp.6-23, dates the tendency to use pistol fire from the saddle to the Texan Rangers whose martial skill with edged weapons was inferior to that of regular Mexican troops and indigenous tribes; Philbrick, *The Last Stand*, p.83, the US 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry relinquished their sabres on campaign in 1876.

<sup>169</sup> *New York Times*, 18 April 1903, 'Our Cavalry', claimed for the US Army the appellation of the 'best mounted infantry in the world' and stated prematurely that 'the lance and sabre are as obsolete as the catapult and the javelin'; TNA WO 33 / 184 French, German and American Cavalry in China 1901.

*arme blanche*.<sup>170</sup> Even so, *ad hoc* Mounted Infantry units, without any pretence to a cavalry pedigree, also evolved mainly in response to the need for more mobile troops in the American Civil War<sup>171</sup> to counter the roaming bands of irregular horsemen, particularly in Tennessee,<sup>172</sup> and the subsequent campaign against the Sioux in 1866-77,<sup>173</sup> appearing falsely to offer a more cost-effective alternative to cavalry.<sup>174</sup> However, even such an egalitarian society was not without institutional friction with similar arguments made regarding the limitations of Mounted Infantry in comparison to cavalry, noting that: 'arguments for Mounted Infantry utterly fail to show why there should be formed a permanent mounted force capable of performing only one half the duties of mounted troops'.<sup>175</sup> Cavalry officers expounded that the Mounted Infantry would be a force 'officered by men whose business it is to

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<sup>170</sup> Cavalry Service Regulations (US Army) [experimental] 1914, p.233, 'good cavalry must be able to charge repeatedly' and 'mounted action is the main role of the cavalry'.

<sup>171</sup> *New York Times*, 13 August 1863, 'Mounted Infantry Warfare in the West', which called Mounted Infantry a 'hermaphrodite arm' with characteristics of infantry and enhanced mobility thus describing the extemporised mounted Infantry in terms directly comparable to Hutton's later criteria. *New York Times*, 7 April 1889, reflected that the US Army was one of the first armies with Mounted Infantry although acknowledging the use of Mounted Infantry during the American War of Independence had occurred when still a colony of Great Britain so technically the Mounted Infantry were still British.

<sup>172</sup> *New York Times*, 13 August 1863, 'Mounted Infantry Warfare in the West'.

<sup>173</sup> Paul Hedren, *The Great Sioux War Order of Battle: how the US Army waged war on the Northern Plains 1876 – 1877* (Norman: The Arthur H Clark Co., 2011), p.31, although the US Cavalry remained the premier combat arm predicated on mobility and its ability to fight both mounted and, most frequently, dismounted.

<sup>174</sup> Ron Field, *US Infantry in the Indian Wars 1865-91* (Oxford: Osprey, 2007), pp.8-9, elements of the US 18<sup>th</sup> Infantry were mounted on cavalry horses loaned from the US 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> cavalry regiments plus captured ponies. Used predominantly for patrolling, the Mounted Infantry suffered the predictable problems associated with inadequate equestrian training which quickly undermined any pretence of superior mobility.

<sup>175</sup> Shipp, 'Mounted Infantry', pp. 76-80.



walk'.<sup>176</sup> However, without tenaciously-held traditions and in the absence of overt doctrinal competition, the longevity and bitterness of argument and obfuscation that marred the relationship between British cavalry and regular Mounted Infantry was less apparent in the similar US military debates.

Nonetheless, it should not be concluded that forms of Mounted Infantry were unknown in European armies. However their existence seems predicated on either specific environmental challenges occurring through the acquisition of imperial possessions in harsher climates<sup>177</sup> or as a cavalry-sparing inception performing some of that arm's least popular tasks.<sup>178</sup> In support of its North African empire, a French colonial army was formed and mirroring the British Army's response to its own colonial challenges, developed the camel-borne *méharistes* of the Saharan Oasis Force that comprised volunteer French officers and native Arabs in frontier units deployed in small mobile columns also incorporating *chasseurs à pied* and mobile artillery.<sup>179</sup> Camel-borne troops were also employed in French West Africa and elsewhere in its

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<sup>176</sup> Shipp, 'Mounted Infantry', *ibid*, predicted that failure to oppose this novel force might endanger the cavalry's very existence – fearful predictions seemingly more in keeping with the dire warning of their transatlantic cavalry colleagues in Britain.

<sup>177</sup> *Bundesarchiv* Berlin, (hereafter BArch) R43 / 931, Dr von Wissmann, *Afrika*, (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1895), p.40, asserted that 'we cannot use cavalry in our equatorial colonies because the climate quickly brings death to the horses and because the dense vegetation makes a useful deployment impossible'.

<sup>178</sup> BHaStA(K) / Abt.IV. GenKdo I b.A.K. (F) 290, *Dienstordnung für die Eskadrons Jäger zu Pferde*, 28 May 1900, the Mounted Infantry were to relieve the cavalry of guard duties and from needing to provide dispatch riders.

<sup>179</sup> TNA WO 106 / 6200 Handbook of the French Army 1906, irregular cavalry ('*Goumiers*') were formed for service in French Morocco.

overseas empire.<sup>180</sup> Moreover, the French colonial army evolved still further in the guise of the *Armée d'Afrique* that included the élite European *Chasseurs d'Afrique* and *zouaves*,<sup>181</sup> native Arab mounted *Spahis* and the locally recruited native Algerian *Tirailleurs (Turcos)* and *Troupe Coloniales* that were locally raised companies such as the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais*.<sup>182</sup> Although wedded through natural inclination to cavalry tactics and with poor standards of musketry, French colonial cavalry was capable of dismounted action and, arguably, should be considered Francophone Mounted Rifles.<sup>183</sup> Elsewhere, reflecting Alpine and Balkan topography, the Austro-Hungarian army converted local troops from the Tyrol and Dalmatia into Mounted Rifles. The Tirolean Mounted Rifles, colloquially known as the 'Glacier Hussars'<sup>184</sup> were mounted on local ponies, whilst in Dalmatia specially bred small ponies were used to enhance the mobility of Mounted Rifles' patrols.<sup>185</sup> During the 1893 Manoeuvres, the Austro-Hungarian armies briefly experimented with the German-style attachment of two rifle battalions to each cavalry division, which unfortunately both retarded cavalry mobility and encouraged the

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<sup>180</sup> Moll, *Infanterie Montée à Chameau*, p. 10; Anthony Clayton, *France, Soldiers and Africa* (London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1988), pp.281-82.

<sup>181</sup> Hew Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), pp. 84-85.

<sup>182</sup> Clayton, *France, Soldiers and Africa*, p.6.

<sup>183</sup> Colonel D.F. Lewis, 'French Cavalry – regular and irregular – in Morocco', *Cavalry Journal*, 3, 1908, pp. 370-79; Holmes, *Riding the Retreat*, pp. 242-43.

<sup>184</sup> TNA WO 33 / 56 Foreign Military Manoeuvres 1895, although the Mounted Rifles were designated for reconnaissance duties in war, they curiously featured in mounted cavalry charges during peacetime manoeuvres; Lucas, *Fighting Troops of the Austro-Hungarian Army*, p.116.

<sup>185</sup> Osgood, *The Armies of Today*, p.280.

cavalry to remain mounted at all times to the detriment of their horses.<sup>186</sup> Similarly, due to natural geography, locally recruited irregular Mounted Infantry were attached to the Turkish Army's VII Corps in Yemen - the only example of Mounted Infantry in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>187</sup> The similarities of timing in the inception of these mounted rifles in the 1870 – 1880s<sup>188</sup> suggests a development in parallel to that of the British Mounted Infantry with contemporaneous military literature indicating international debate regarding the value of the Mounted Infantry / Mounted Rifles paradigm.<sup>189</sup>

Conversely, the utility of irregular Russian Cossack horsemen, who comprised 60 per cent of the Russian cavalry,<sup>190</sup> as an additional Russian solution to the provision of mobile firepower alongside the 'dragoonisation' of regular Russian cavalry,<sup>191</sup> largely unravelled during the Russo-Japanese War. Although previously much-vaunted for their horsemanship,<sup>192</sup> the

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<sup>186</sup> TNA WO 33 / 54 Progress in the Austro-Hungarian, Bulgarian, French and German armies 1893.

<sup>187</sup> TNA WO 106 / 6285 Report on the Turkish Army 1891, irregular cavalry (Kurds, Circassians and Arab Bedouin) did exist, all of whom were considered of little use and notoriously bad horsemasters.

<sup>188</sup> Lucas, *Fighting Troops of the Austro-Hungarian Army*, p.116, Tirolean Mounted Rifles were raised in 1871 and the Dalmatian Mounted Rifles in 1874.

<sup>189</sup> Major General George B. McClellan, US Army, *European Cavalry including details of the organisation of the Cavalry Service among the principle nations of Europe* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co, 1861); Picard, *Cavalerie ou Infanterie Montée?*, pp.1-5; C. von Hutier, 'The Fighting Value of Modern Cavalry' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 55, 1911, pp. 352-56, expressed the German view that 'modern cavalry must be something more [than mounted Infantry]'.

<sup>190</sup> Lieutenant Colonel E. Gunter, 'The Von Löbell Annual Report in changes and progress in military matters, 1902', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 47, 1903, pp. 1116-60.

<sup>191</sup> Littauer, *Russian Hussar*, pp. 34-35; Bruce W. Menning, *Bayonets before Bullets: the Imperial Russian Army 1861 – 1914* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), p.28.

<sup>192</sup> Osgood, *The Armies of Today*, p.238, quoted a Russian aphorism that 'a hundred Cossacks make less noise than a single regular cavalry soldier'.

Cossack cavalry's poor mounted and dismounted actions with paucity of initiative, dearth of reconnaissance and worrying aversion to contact with the enemy, largely shattered the myth of the marauding invincible Cossack.<sup>193</sup> Urgent cavalry reform through improved training and restoration of morale was a key conclusion of analysis of the Russian cavalry's war effort.<sup>194</sup> However, the poor performance of both Russian and Japanese cavalries in 1904 should have come as no surprise as their performances during the earlier Boxer Rebellion in China had been dismissed by British officers who noted reassuringly, that neither cavalry would be a match for Indian cavalry, an observation that would be made again in Manchuria in 1904 – 05.<sup>195</sup> Despite an absence of a recognised Mounted Infantry,<sup>196</sup> the Russian Army developed Mounted Infantry Scouts (*Okhotniki*) that were well-regarded, being of superior intellect and initiative, but which were frittered away unfortunately on non-scouting duties in Manchuria.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Kuropatkin, *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, II, pp.151-53; Bailey, *'Military history and the pathology of lessons learned: the Russo-Japanese War*, p. 173, quotes the wildly incorrect and arrogantly presumptive assessment held by Russian commanders that a single Russian was equivalent to three Japanese soldiers.

<sup>194</sup> Kuropatkin, *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, II, pp. 101-03 & p.151; David van der Oye Schimmelpenninck and Bruce W. Menning, (eds.), *Reforming the Tsar's Army: military innovation in Imperial Russia from Peter the Great to the Revolution* (Cambridge and Washington: Cambridge University Press & Woodrow Wilson Center, 2004), pp. 217-19.

<sup>195</sup> TNA WO 106 / 39 Reports of attachés with the Russian Army 1904-05, considered that Indian cavalry would have not be deterred by the cultivated fields unlike the Cossacks; TNA, *Kitchener Papers*, PRO 30 / 57 / 37, letter from Hamilton to Kitchener, 5 September 1904; Maurice, *The Life of General Lord Rawlinson of Trent*, p.93, as late as 1909, Rawlinson compared regular Mounted Infantry most favourably to Cossack cavalry.

<sup>196</sup> TNA WO 33 / 350 Reports on the campaign in Manchuria in 1904, considered the absence of trained Mounted Infantry (despite Cossacks, dragoons and *Okhotniki*) as deleterious and a missed opportunity.

<sup>197</sup> Osgood, *The Armies of Today*, p.227; Kuropatkin, *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, Vol. II, p. 117 prior to 1904 these scouts had been found exclusively from the well-regarded East Siberian Rifle Regiments which finished the war in 1905 with their reputations enhanced.

Even in Imperial Germany, despite an official assertion that ‘Mounted Infantry is unknown in the German Army’,<sup>198</sup> Mounted Infantry developed but did so in order to fulfil a more niche role than in the British Army.<sup>199</sup> Originally conceived in 1895 as despatch riders attached to cavalry regiments, *Meldreiter* units evolved into *Jäger zu Pferde* (Mounted Rifles) in 1897,<sup>200</sup> eventually furnishing thirteen regiments by 1913 each with their own distinctive permanent organisation, uniform and insignia. The *Jäger zu Pferde* became assimilated into the permanent organisation of the Imperial Army in a manner never an option for the British regular Mounted Infantry with a correspondingly clearer military identity. However, armed with sabres and revolvers and with unquestionable cavalry origins, *Jäger zu Pferde* officers were considered members of the cavalry regiment to which they were attached,<sup>201</sup> and undertook specific cavalry-sparing orderly roles, centred primarily on communications, and if required, independent reconnaissance. Thus *Jäger zu Pferde* were a breed distinct from the British regular Mounted Infantry with a different organisation, method of formation and role that was significantly less extensive than ascribed to their British

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<sup>198</sup> Edmonds, *Handbook of the German Army (Home and Colonial)*, p.147.

<sup>199</sup> BHaStA(K) / Abt.IV. GenKdo I b.A.K. (F) 290, *Dienstordnung für die Eskadrons Jäger zu Pferde*, 28 May 1900.

<sup>200</sup> BHaStA(K) / Abt.IV. GenKdo I b.A.K. (F) 290, *Dienstordnung für die Eskadrons Jäger zu Pferde*, *ibid*; D.H. Hagger, *Hussars and Mounted Rifles: uniforms of the Imperial German Cavalry 1900 – 1914* (New Malden: Almark, 1974), p.78 & p.82.

<sup>201</sup> BHaStA(K) / Abt.IV. GenKdo I b.A.K. (F) 290, *Dienstordnung für die Eskadrons Jäger zu Pferde*, 28 May 1900, noting also that they were mounted not on cobs but cavalry chargers/ troop horses.

namesakes.<sup>202</sup> *Jäger zu Pferde* never functioned as a mobile infantry reserve as a source of firepower nor formally as a cavalry substitute,<sup>203</sup> being distributed among cavalry regiments and larger formations in small numbers.<sup>204</sup> Nevertheless, the importance of *Jäger zu Pferde* to German military units was recognised by military planners who included companies of Mounted Infantry in a putative overseas Expeditionary Force comprising 20,000 – 25,000 men for future colonial emergencies.<sup>205</sup>

It is perhaps opportune to contrast the international response to the need for mobile firepower and how the various incarnations of Mounted Infantry compare. Despite the overarching generic concept of Mounted Infantry, the solutions found by individual armies were markedly different. Whilst no other country except Britain attempted to deliver mobile firepower with abstracted regular Mounted Infantry, other armies developed alternative approaches largely relying on Mounted Rifles, ‘dragoonisation’ of existing cavalry or the delegation of mobile fire support to *Jägers* and *Chasseurs à pied*. It is important to note however that in most armies, the solutions adopted were not mutually exclusive with the majority of cavalries recognising the

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<sup>202</sup> Edmonds, *Handbook of the German Army (Home and Colonial)*, p.145; Dorondo, *Riders of the Apocalypse*, p.47.

<sup>203</sup> BHaStA(K) / Abt.IV. GenKdo I b.A.K. (F) 290, *Dienstordnung für die Eskadrons Jäger zu Pferde*, 28 May 1900, although advance guard duties might fall to them if no cavalry were available and they may even replace cyclists depending upon terrain; Dorondo, *Riders of the Apocalypse*, p.47.

<sup>204</sup> BHaStA(K) / Abt.IV. GenKdo I b.A.K. (F) 290, *Dienstordnung für die Eskadrons Jäger zu Pferde*, *ibid*, with allocations varying between four or five men per Brigade or Divisional staff.

<sup>205</sup> BHaStA (K)/Abt. IV MKr 814, *Kriegsgliederung eines Expeditionskorps von 20 – 25000 mann, Reichs Kolonialamt Kommando der Schutztruppen, Überblick über die bei der Entfendung von Verftärtungen für die Schutztruppe in Südwestafrika gesammelten Erfahrungen und die in den Kommissions-beratungen zu erörternden Fragen*.

importance to varying degrees of improved musketry and dismounted work even if evolving alternative units to supply firepower.<sup>206</sup> In many cases, a secondary desire was to reduce the amount of additional work no longer perceived (at least by the cavalry lobby in those countries) to be the core workload for these increasingly specialised cavalry regiments, particularly traditional roles as divisional cavalry.<sup>207</sup> The lengthy duration of training,<sup>208</sup> expense and, by extrapolation, the inability to improvise or expand the cavalry force, contributed to the challenge of identifying non-cavalry mounted troops that whilst not cavalry substitutes, could release the cavalry for more independent roles. Whether infantry or cavalry were utilised to form the novel Mounted Infantry / Mounted Rifles units differed between countries. In the US Army in particular, US infantry and cavalry were interchangeable with both delivering this generic role at times. This was summarised officially as ‘the Cavalry, from the nature of the arm serves equally mounted and on foot; while the Infantry is frequently called up to serve as Artillery and to perform

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<sup>206</sup> BHaStA(K) / Abt.IV. Vol.15, *Inspector der Kavallerie, München*, 8 June 1905; Major Leutwein, *Kämpfe der Kaiserlichen Schutztruppe in Deutsch Südwestafrika 1894 – 1896* (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1899), p.116; Lieutenant Julius A. Penn, ‘Mounted Infantry’, *Journal of the Military Service Institute*, 12, 1891, pp. 1125-48.

<sup>207</sup> BHaStA(K) / Abt.IV. MKR 1201, *Kriegsministerium, Armee-Abteilung I, Verwendung von Jägerbataillonen bei der Heereskavallerie, München* 25 February 1914 ; *Ministre de la Guerre, ‘Instruction Pratique sur le service de la Cavalerie en champagne approuvé par le Ministre de la Guerre 17 Février 1875* (Paris: I M Primerie de J. Dumaine, 1875), p.159.

<sup>208</sup> *Cavalry Training 1907*, pp.12-13, indicated that the annual cycle of training should include at least six months’ individual, troop and squadron training. that included equitation, horse management, scouting, distant patrolling, musketry, musketry practice on the ranges, judging distances, skill-at-arms, drill, dismounted action, reconnaissance, field engineering and night work; Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, p.106, cavalry officers on joining their regiments as subalterns underwent a further six months of riding instruction and dismounted drill; *Mounted Infantry Training 1906* still indicated that the Mounted Infantry training for both officers and men of three months’ duration was predicated on their possession of prior infantry training

duty as cavalry'.<sup>209</sup> Where Mounted Infantry was developed, the drivers for their evolution appear a response to the exigencies of patrolling imperial frontiers,<sup>210</sup> whether in Europe or elsewhere without burdening the cavalry.

With imperial expansion prevalent in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, only Austria-Hungary, almost uniquely among the Great Powers of Europe, did not contemplate seeking opportunities for an overseas empire, preferring to consolidate her empire in Central Europe and the Balkans following its Bosnian campaign in 1878.<sup>211</sup> Few other European nations had colonial possessions so distant from their home as Britain, thus permitting the majority of European armies to retain a continental focus, which, despite its territories in Africa and recent acquisitions in the Pacific, profited Germany's military strategy.<sup>212</sup> Nevertheless, colonial crises still arose such as the indigenous Herero rebellion in German South West Africa in 1908, which necessitated the embarkation of a Marine Expeditionary Force in support of the local *Schutztruppe*.<sup>213</sup> Needing to counter the tribesmen's mobility,

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<sup>209</sup> *US Army Infantry Tactics* [by Authority] (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1874), p.vii.

<sup>210</sup> *Annual Report of the Secretary of War 1871: Annual report of the General of the Army, HQ US Army, Washington; Report by Lieutenant Colonel Crook, 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry, 28 September 1871, p.78, 'the great difficulty in operating against the Apaches is the inaccessibility and extent of his country'.*

<sup>211</sup> Jay Stone and Erwin Schmidl, *The Boer War and Military Reforms* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1988), p.167, the Austro-Hungarian army thus lacked the experiential 'melting pot' of colonial warfare resulting in its predilection for analysis of conflicts involving other countries.

<sup>212</sup> 'The Military System of Germany', *Army Review*, I (I), 1911, pp. 152-62, this appreciation concluded that 'political ambitions for expansion overseas have not yet touched, at all events, her [German] army.

<sup>213</sup> French General Staff, 'A German Colonial Campaign: the operations against the Bondelszwarts and Hereros', pp. 87-97, 207-14 & 326-34, comprising volunteers from the gunboat '*Habicht*' and the naval bases of Kiel and Wilhelmshaven; David Olusoga and Casper W. Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust: Germany's Forgotten Genocide* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), p.120.



experimental local Mounted Infantry were formed from existing troops and disembarked *Jäger*s mounted on cobs<sup>214</sup>. Not only does this reflect approvingly the British solutions identified in South Africa almost a century before<sup>215</sup> but also interestingly, problems such as deficient equitation impairing mobility, lack of equine resource in theatre, dilatoriness of oxen-pulled wagons and unimpressive musketry, dilemmas previously encountered by the British Army, re-surfaced to trouble the Imperial German Army.<sup>216</sup> Demonstrating that the German General Staff had not necessarily understood the nature of similar lessons arising from the British experience in South Africa despite their voluminous study of the Boer War,<sup>217</sup> the *ad hoc* German Mounted Infantry suffered repeated ambushes with their supply convoys raided at increasing monetary, political and human cost.<sup>218</sup> Even though the paradigm of Mounted Infantry was recognised by the Imperial Colonial Office, the potential for abstraction of specially trained *Jäger zu Pferde*, expert in ‘snap shooting and navigation’, to serve in the Imperial *Schutztruppe* was blocked. This was ostensibly due to potential conflict with

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<sup>214</sup> General von Pelet-Narbonne, ‘Primary conditions for the success of cavalry in the next European War’, *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 50, 1906, pp. 326-34, recommended that this system be considered in a future European conflict although his advocacy of Mounted Infantry was comparatively brief and solitary.

<sup>215</sup> O’Connor, ‘Dragoons and Commandos’, pp. 90-94.

<sup>216</sup> BHaStA(K) /Abt. IV MKr 814), M 1184/08 A1, *Überblick über die bei der Entfendung von Verftärkungen für die Schutztruppe in Südwestafrika*, Kommando der Schutztruppen, Berlin, 1 November 1908; French General Staff, ‘A German Colonial Campaign: the operations against the Bondelszwarts and Hereros’, pp. 87-97, 207-14 & 326-34.

<sup>217</sup> Walters & Du Cane, *The German Official Account of the War in South Africa*, 2 volumes.

<sup>218</sup> French General Staff, ‘A German Colonial Campaign: the operations against the Bondelszwarts and Hereros’, pp. 87-97, 207-14 and 326-34, eventually it was questioned whether the financial cost of the campaign exceeded the inherent value of the colony to the German Empire.

the cavalry whose lobbying limited the availability of peacetime riding tuition.<sup>219</sup> This resulted in a reliance on training when on overseas duties, which, as already seen with the British regular Mounted Infantry, was of questionable tactical value.

Clearly, logistical challenges accompanied all forms of colonial warfare reflecting extremes of terrain and weather, uncertain availability of natural resources, inadequacy of ammunition supply, availability of forage and the length of lines of communication and re-supply requiring protection. Whilst these have been considered in terms of their influence on the military effectiveness of the British Mounted Infantry in a preceding chapter, other nations laboured under these and similar campaign stresses. Russian strategic planning for the campaign in Manchuria in 1904 was predicated on the cavalry finding local forage - both a false premise and a woeful indictment of Russian intelligence, memorably phrased in official British documents as 'the idea of feeding an army from the local resources of Northern Korea is about as practical as trying to decorate St. Paul's with flowers from Clerkenwell Green'.<sup>220</sup> Similarly the mobility of the US cavalry on the western Plains was a balance between its numerical paucity,<sup>221</sup> vast distances encountered, terrain, weather and the logistics of supplying multiple mobile columns. Attempting to enhance mobility by using pack

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<sup>219</sup> BHaStA(K) /Abt. IV MKr 814), M 1184/08 A1, *Überblick über die bei der Entsendung von Verftärkungen für die Schutztruppe in Südwestafrika, Kommando der Schutztruppen*, Berlin, 1 November 1908.

<sup>220</sup> TNA WO 106 / 181 Lessons of the Russo-Japanese War 1905.

<sup>221</sup> Field, *US Infantry in the Indian Wars*, p.3, by 1876, the size of the US Army was a half of that of 1866.

animals in preference to loaded wagons,<sup>222</sup> the US cavalry also developed the tactics of winter warfare using climatic factors to reduce its adversary's mobility. Native Americans' nomadic movements were limited in winter by snow, mud and exhaustion of local forage, which helped the US cavalry in scouting, identification of the enemy and a greater chance of surprise.<sup>223</sup>

Although campaigns against the Apaches in the South Western states meant desert terrain, heat and a lack of water creating their own logistical problems, the northern campaigns ranged widely thus diminishing the cavalry's mobility through equine loss with up to 10 per cent of the US cavalry completing expeditions on foot. Fiscal constraints added to the problems of procuring remounts with up to one-third of US cavalrymen dismounted in the garrisons of the Department of Colorado.<sup>224</sup> Fortunately, the nature of warfare on the Great Plains favoured endurance over speed as tribes moved slowly *en masse* thus permitting foot infantry to be as useful as cavalry over a prolonged expedition.<sup>225</sup> Nevertheless, this degree of equine wastage pales in comparison to the British and Imperial losses encountered on the veldt. Logistically, the US army was fortunate in having established widespread military forts, which functioned as effective supply depots unlike the smaller British blockhouse system crisscrossing the veldt, and a river system that

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<sup>222</sup> Philbrick, *The Last Stand*, p.73, this pre-dates the same lesson learned during the insurgency phase of the Boer War when oxen-pulled carts were abandoned in aid of the mobility of 'flying' columns.

<sup>223</sup> Chun, *US Army in the Plains Indian Wars*, pp.16-17, winter campaigning became part of the unofficial US Army doctrine.

<sup>224</sup> *Annual Report of the Secretary of War 1871*: Annual report of the General of the Army, HQ US Army, Washington, report by Lieutenant Colonel Crook, 28 September 1871, pp.77-78.

<sup>225</sup> Field, *US Infantry in the Indian Wars*, p.6.

permitted re-supply using modified paddle steamers.<sup>226</sup> Despite the apparent usefulness of the fort network, their scattered distribution and numerical abundance, which had been based on earlier *ad hoc* requirements, caused problems in garrisoning them leading to repeated attempts to withdraw from a proportion of forts by the Adjutant General, not least because small isolated garrisons were unable to furnish adequately-sized punitive expeditions whilst still ensuring their forts' ongoing security.<sup>227</sup> The issue of re-supply was an exacerbating factor contributing to the poor performance of the Russian Army in the Russo-Japanese War. The relatively new Trans-Siberian Railway only offered limited freight capacity<sup>228</sup> although failures in military strategy, particularly inadequate transfer of better-trained regular Russian army formations from the Empire's western frontier to Manchuria, also contributed to defeat.<sup>229</sup> Dismissive of his Cossack cavalry, General Kuropatkin singled out the Trans-Baikal Cossacks, mounted on small shaggy ponies, for denigration, noting that they reminded him more of 'Mounted Infantry than cavalry'.<sup>230</sup> Such disparagement was symptomatic, not only of

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<sup>226</sup> Philbrick, *The Last Stand*, p.3, modifications permitted paddle steamers to negotiate shallow water allowing access further into the hinterland than ordinarily possible by boat.

<sup>227</sup> *Annual Report of the Secretary of War 1871: Annual Report of the General of the Army*, HQ US Army, Washington: report from Brigadier General B.G. Pope, 2 October 1871, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, pp.34-47.

<sup>228</sup> Kuropatkin, *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, I, p.249; Menning, *Bayonets before Bullets*, p.274.

<sup>229</sup> Kuropatkin, *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, I, *ibid*; Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, p.169.

<sup>230</sup> Kuropatkin, *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, II, p.153.

the gulf between Russian army commanders and their troops, but a general vilification of the status of Mounted Infantry in Europe.<sup>231</sup>

Although the deduction of lessons from wars was often complex and, at times, inconclusive, among the conclusions arising from study of conflict between the years 1866 and 1914 was the lethality of modern firepower. In 1866, the Austrian infantry's muzzle-loading firearms had been outperformed by the Prussians' breech-loaded rifles.<sup>232</sup> Despite the importance of firepower, this was not enough to guarantee victory as demonstrated in the Franco-German War of 1870 – 71 where the superiority of the French *chassepot* rifle and *mitrailleuse* prototypic machine gun compared to the German *Dreyse* needle gun, did not prevent France's defeat.<sup>233</sup>

Notwithstanding this anomaly, the importance of modern firearms could not be ignored even if the true capability of modern ballistics went undervalued.<sup>234</sup> Certainly, the key attribute of British Mounted Infantry on the veldt had been its possession of the infantry rifle as the cavalry's carbine could not compete with the Boers' Mausers at long range, ultimately contributing to the re-arming of British cavalry with the infantry's Lee-Enfield rifle. A mismatch in quantity and performance occurred between the newer models of Winchester repeating rifles possessed by some Native American

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<sup>231</sup> Menning, *Bayonets before Bullets*, p.146, opposition to a Mounted Infantry school in Russia in the 1890s was another expression of Russian distaste for the concept as well as a reaction to the previous 'dragoonisation' of all Russian cavalry two decades before.

<sup>232</sup> Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War*, p.51

<sup>233</sup> Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War*, p.52.

<sup>234</sup> Dorondo, *Riders of the Apocalypse*, p.21, for instance, the difference in casualties between German *uhlans* and cuirassiers during this War was misinterpreted by the German General Staff as indicating a protective value of the breastplate against modern ammunition.

tribes and the US cavalry's single-shot Springfield carbine,<sup>235</sup> a weapon that like the Martini-Henry was notoriously prone to jamming.<sup>236</sup> This mismatch in armaments had been an important factor in perpetuating the Plains wars.<sup>237</sup> Re-arming with magazine-loaded rifles thus became standard practice in most armies. Yet whether the possession of such weapons should extend to the cavalry remained surprisingly controversial. Certainly Russian and Austro-Hungarian cavalry re-armed with rifles rather than carbines as part of their 'dragoonisation',<sup>238</sup> whereas German and French cavalries retained their carbines,<sup>239</sup> the latter being derided for their tenacious hold on this 'pop gun' by Brigadier General Sir Archibald Home and General Haig in 1914.<sup>240</sup> This underlined the backward nature of musketry in the French cavalry, subjugated to the doctrine of the offensive, which for French cavalry meant

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<sup>235</sup> Chun, *US Army in the Plains Indian Wars*, p.13.

<sup>236</sup> Chun, *US Army in the Plains Indian Wars*, p.69, jamming occurred due to fouling of the carbine's breech due to the interaction between copper cartridge casings and the tannic acid-treated leather ammunition pouches.

<sup>237</sup> John P. Langellien, *Sound the Charge: the US Cavalry in the American West 1866 – 1916* (London: Greenhill, 1998), p.5, Native American tribesmen, with their innate mobility, were described as the 'best light cavalry in the world'. The carbines' comparative slow rates of fire coupled with indiscipline in fire control and limited ammunition contributed to the US 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry's disaster at Little Big Horn and is reminiscent of the near-miss that befell the British square at Abu Klea in 1885.

<sup>238</sup> Osgood, *The Armies of Today*, p.283; Littauer, *Russian Hussar*, p.35; Childers, *German Influence on British Cavalry*, p.145, suggested that the Russian defeat in Manchuria resulted not from its adoption of dismounted Mounted Infantry tactics but from incompetence in musketry.

<sup>239</sup> Hutier, 'The Fighting Value of Modern Cavalry', pp. 211-16, in this translation of a German cavalry article, the author recommended that German cavalry needed a firearm *superior* to the infantry rifle, cavalry carbine and, unrealistically, the machine-gun, with the increased weight of this weapon seemingly of minimal concern as it would be horse-borne, thus ignoring a lesson of the Boer War of needing to lessen the weight on horses; Lieutenant General F. von Bernhardt, *Cavalry in Future Wars* (London: John Murray, 1906), p.253.

<sup>240</sup> Home, *The Diary of a World War 1 Cavalry Officer*, p.36; Gary Sheffield and John Bourne, (eds.), *Douglas Haig: War Diaries and Letters 1914 – 1918* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005), p.77, Haig likened it to 'not much better than an ordinary rook gun'.

simply mounted *arme blanche* tactics.<sup>241</sup> Again overlooking lessons from previous wars, the value of Russian cavalry rifle power outranging Turkish guns in the Russo-Turkish War had been remarked upon contemporaneously by *The Times*, which had also highlighted the comparative uselessness of the cavalry's lances in comparison to its rifles.<sup>242</sup> The corollary of cavalries' failures to adopt the rifle was their tacit admission that dismounted fire tactics remained a low priority and that fire support would need to be sourced elsewhere. It is no surprise therefore that the default position remained light infantry. Proposals for *Jägers* functioning as Mounted Infantry<sup>243</sup> or Mounted Infantry scouts in the German Army were accepted with preferential selection of foresters and hunters from Prussia and Bavaria whereas similar suggestions in the Austro-Hungarian army foundered on grounds of fiscal restriction.<sup>244</sup> In societies where a cavalry of panache, drawn sabre and couched lance was unknown then arming mounted troops with a rifle was obvious in its logic and resulted in the evolution of Mounted Rifles or Light Horse. Clearly this is a broad generalisation yet it remains essentially true that recruiting men with preceding experience of horses and firearms permitted the inception of mounted troops capable of delivering firepower that traditional cavalries generally did or would not countenance.

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<sup>241</sup> TNA WO 106 / 6200 Handbook of the French Army 1906, the French cavalry's mantra was 'Cavalry is made for action - everything is excusable except inaction'.

<sup>242</sup> *The Times*, 8 September 1881.

<sup>243</sup> Bernhardt, *Reiterdienst. Kritische Betrachtungen über Kriegstätigkeit*, p.125.

<sup>244</sup> Major C. Regenspursky, 'Mounted infantry patrols the necessary results of our present system of fighting', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 35, 1891, pp. 1313-25.

Another significant deficit in the mounted arm that had an influence on conclusions drawn from contemporary conflicts was a failure of reconnaissance.<sup>245</sup> The emphasis of the German cavalry on ceaseless scouting was a product of its failure to do so in the Austro-Prussian War that had precipitated doctrinal reform.<sup>246</sup> The gulf between the ever-ranging German cavalry and the indolent French cavalry in 1870 had been an important factor in determining the outcome of the war.<sup>247</sup> Similarly, failure in reconnaissance during the Transvaal campaign of 1880 – 81 and repeated failures subsequently during the initial months of the war in South Africa in 1899 contributed to a number of high profile failures including Ingogo River in the Transvaal campaign and Stormberg, Magersfontein and Colenso in the Boer War.<sup>248</sup> Reconnaissance now ranged over much greater distances due to accurate long-range musketry and thus tested both equine resilience and horsemanship, the latter deficient in British cavalry in South Africa and also in the French cavalry in 1914.<sup>249</sup> In its favour, whilst not conceived for reconnaissance,<sup>250</sup> the British Mounted Infantry had learned this skill

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<sup>245</sup> TNA WO 33 / 350 Reports on the campaign in Manchuria in 1904; Major the Honourable W. P. Ruthven,, 'The employment of cavalry in combination with the other arms', *Army Review*, II (II), 1912, pp. 110-20; *The Times*, 23 August 1905, 'The Cavalry Lessons of the War'; Richard Holmes, *The Road to Sedan: the French Army 1866 – 70* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1984), p.225; Jones, 'Scouting for Soldiers', pp. 495-513; Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War*, p.94.

<sup>246</sup> Dorondo, *Riders of the Apocalypse*, p.17 & p.26, equally it is noted that, in 1866, Prussian cavalry advanced *behind* Prussian infantry thus paralysing its own mobility; Phillips, "Who Shall Say That the Days of Cavalry Are Over?" pp. 5-32.

<sup>247</sup> Fincastle, 'The Strategical and Tactical Employment of Cavalry in War', pp. 19-30.

<sup>248</sup> C.S Goldman, 'Cavalry: its true functions in modern war', *Cavalry Journal*, 1, 1906, pp. 65-79.

<sup>249</sup> Home, *The Diary of a World War 1 Cavalry Officer*, p.19, diary entry, 6 September 1914.

<sup>250</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Four, 20 April 1891, pp.1-27.



painfully on the veldt and that it might be required to scout again in future campaigns.<sup>251</sup> The use of local experts such as Boer scouts attached to mobile columns in South Africa, the *ad hoc* employment of Native American scouts with the US cavalry<sup>252</sup> or, for a brief period in 1891, the formalised Native American 'L' troops of the first eight US cavalry regiments, was widespread.<sup>253</sup> Another solution, particularly on the metalled roads of Europe, was the tentative extension of the communications role of cyclists to include the reconnaissance function of scouts.<sup>254</sup> The French Army experimented with cyclists (*vélocipédistes*) armed with machine guns on Manoeuvres in 1910 but more in the role of mobile infantry offering fire support rather than scouts replacing cavalry.<sup>255</sup> Nevertheless, this experiment mimicked the functionality of Mounted Infantry. Virtually all armies experimented with cyclists, concluding that their speed, comparative silence and marked endurance compared favourably with horsed reconnaissance.<sup>256</sup> Indeed, the Belgian Army claimed unrealistically that there was nowhere that a cyclist could not travel<sup>257</sup> apart from across

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<sup>251</sup> LHCMA, *Godley Papers*, 3 / 56, letter to Julian Byng, 16 February 1905, 'if they [Mounted Infantry] are part of this [Mounted Brigade] they must bear their share of all its duties i.e. reconnaissance .... they must be trained in reconnaissance like cavalry'.

<sup>252</sup> Chun, *US Army in the Plains Indian Wars*, p.52, also had the benefit of exploiting inter-tribe rivalry and feud.

<sup>253</sup> Langellien, *Sound the Charge*, p.7.

<sup>254</sup> TNA WO 279 / 42 Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College 1911.

<sup>255</sup> TNA WO 279 / 42 *ibid.*

<sup>256</sup> Trapman, 'Cyclists in conjunction with Cavalry', pp. 353-64.

<sup>257</sup> TNA WO 279 / 42 Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College 1911.

ploughed fields, although overall, European military cyclists would remain a minor component of the infantry, confined predominantly to western and central Europe with its viable road systems.<sup>258</sup> Of course, the additional benefit of infantry-origin cyclists, for all cavalries disdained the prospect of becoming wheeled chevaliers, was both their possession of the standard infantry rifle for firepower, and its infantry origins, innocent of any transgression into the politically-sensitive minefield of the horsed arm, thus equally appeasing the cavalry<sup>259</sup> who remained, quoted at least in the Imperial Russian Army, to be the 'arm of the gods'.<sup>260</sup> Therefore the value of scouting and reconnaissance was re-affirmed during these European and colonial wars of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, influencing the perception of army commanders for the preservation of traditional cavalry.

Notwithstanding differing interpretations of the War in Manchuria,<sup>261</sup> a surprising conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War was the apparent advantage conferred by the doctrine of the offensive.<sup>262</sup> Briefly summarised, this concept attempted to circumvent the increased lethality of the battlefield resulting from enhanced firepower through technological advances and the

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<sup>258</sup> TNA WO 106 / 6222 Handbook of the Russian Army 1908, the poor road system in Russia was one reason for the Russian Army's negligible experimentation in cyclists in the; Bernhardt, *Cavalry in Future Wars*, p.22.

<sup>259</sup> TNA WO 279 / 42 Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College 1911, called for the establishment a Cyclist School of Instruction, eventually scotched on the grounds that this training should be undertaken at the Mounted Infantry schools.

<sup>260</sup> 'The Future of Cavalry', *Cavalry Journal*, 5, 1910, pp. 399-401, [translation of article by V. Novitski in *Ruski Invalid*].

<sup>261</sup> Cox, 'Of Aphorisms, Lessons and Paradigms', pp. 41-54.

<sup>262</sup> Cox, 'Of Aphorisms, Lessons and Paradigms', *ibid*.

increased numerical size of late 19<sup>th</sup> century armies, by encouraging a psychological and moral strength in soldiers to attack despite defenders' firepower<sup>263</sup> and their inherent advantages accrued from entrenchment and barbed wire.<sup>264</sup> Whilst acknowledging that this concept was a reaction against modern firepower, Travers also considers that it was a reaction reflecting army commanders' pessimistic views of their recruits' abilities and the orthodoxy that specific military actions could be decisive, equating to a conclusion that the army with the strongest offensive spirit would win a decisive victory.<sup>265</sup> Despite heavy losses pursuing this doctrine, the Teutonic-inspired Japanese army overcame Russian defences through its infantry's mobility and the dynamism of its offensive operations,<sup>266</sup> helped by the lack of Russian initiative. Although, as Gary Cox has noted, both British and German analyses of the war identified the importance of technology, each weighted its importance differently.<sup>267</sup> Both also assessed the psychological profiles of the combatant armies differently,<sup>268</sup> which, by contemporary

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<sup>263</sup> Freedman, *Strategy*, pp.111-15.

<sup>264</sup> Bidwell and Graham, *Firepower*, pp.1-2; Wrangel, *The Cavalry in the Russo-Japanese War*, p.17; Bruce W Menning, 'The Offensive Revisited: Russian Preparations for Future War 1906 – 1914', *Reforming the Tsar's Army*, p.217.

<sup>265</sup> Travers, *The Killing Ground*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>266</sup> TNA WO 33 / 425 Extracts from the diaries of officers attached to the Japanese Army 1906, noted however that Japanese infantry ignored the 'fire and movement' tactics, a lesson manifest during the Boer War, being afraid that small units manoeuvring on the battlefield would show diminished vigour in attack required to traverse the lethal fire zone.

<sup>267</sup> Cox, 'Of Aphorisms, Lessons and Paradigms', pp. 41-54.

<sup>268</sup> Major M.M. Macomb, 'The Russian Infantry Soldier', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 50, 1906, pp. 1013 -22, praised the Russian infantryman as 'splendid fighting material'; Anon, 'Infantry Combat in the Russo-Japanese War', pp. 1273-80, probably authored by a Russian officer, reflected perhaps erroneously that Russian officers 'led' whilst Japanese officers 'coerced'.

standards, appear redolent of cultural bias and racial prejudice.<sup>269</sup> Against this canvas of military mediocrity and cultural stereotyping, the reasons for the failure of both cavalries was much debated although a lack of universally agreed lessons prompted the Austro-Hungarians to conclude dismissively that 'our cavalry beliefs are in no way altered owing to the experiences of the war in the Far East'<sup>270</sup> and denounced the Mounted Infantry-style of Russian cavalry as a feeble half-measure.<sup>271</sup> Clearly, the possibility of contact with Cossacks marauding through Galicia in the opening moves of a future European war seemed to hold no fear for the Austro-Hungarian cavalry. In the Far East, the Japanese Army had little or no tradition of cavalry as a major branch of their army, not least because of its samurai tradition, but also through a paucity of equine resource, minimal military equestrianism and adverse mountainous terrain lacking in forage.<sup>272</sup> The Russians, whilst enjoying a numerical superiority of mounted troops of three to one, had, as already noted, delegated its cavalry role almost exclusively to its Cossacks whose reputation consequently imploded.<sup>273</sup> Neither cavalry delivered the

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<sup>269</sup> Anon, 'Infantry Combat in the Russo-Japanese War', *ibid*, noting the fanaticism of the Japanese infantryman whilst 'Siberian *Tirailleurs*' reportedly did not take prisoners; Figs, *A People's Tragedy*, p.18, recounts how Tsar Nicholas II sustained his racist dislike of the Japanese after surviving an assassination attempt in Japan following which he referred to them all as 'monkeys'.

<sup>270</sup> Wrangel, *The Cavalry in the Russo-Japanese War*, p.54.

<sup>271</sup> Anon, 'Austrian Views on Cavalry Work', pp. 214-16.

<sup>272</sup> TNA WO 33 / 425 Extracts from the diaries of officers attached to the Japanese Army 1906; Colonel W.H. Birkbeck, 'Russo-Japanese War – II', *Cavalry Journal*, 4, 1909, pp. 32- 46.

<sup>273</sup> Anon, 'German Cavalry and the Lessons of the Russo-Japanese War', *Cavalry Journal*, 2, 1907, pp. 220-34, although Russian apologists, reflecting similar comments after the Boer War, considered the Russo-Japanese War 'unusual' both in terms of terrain and adversary with little relevance to any future European conflict – an exculpation devoid of historical merit; TNA WO 33 / 350 Reports on the campaign in Manchuria in 1904, concluded that Cossack cavalry were 'pretty well valueless for war purposes'.

'holy grail' of mobility in reconnaissance duties, *arme blanche*-style pursuit or effective fire support. With a degree of 'malicious satisfaction',<sup>274</sup> Ian Hamilton, military observer attached to the Japanese Army, reiterated his opinion about the utility of Mounted Infantry,<sup>275</sup> irrespective of the Japanese commanders' indifference after a brief experiment with Mounted Infantry by the Japanese VII Division.<sup>276</sup> Surprisingly, a lesson of the war drawn by the Japanese cavalry, perhaps opportunistically, was to expand if not double in size,<sup>277</sup> which was a deduction made all the more incongruous by the lack of utility of the 'idle' Japanese Divisional Cavalry before the battle of Liaoyang, which resulted in their employment as cooks and transport for the infantry before battle.<sup>278</sup>

Nonetheless, the apparent success of the doctrine of the offensive found favour with other armies, proffering a solution to the potentially paralysing effects of artillery bombardment, machine-gun fire, barbed wire and defensive entrenchment.<sup>279</sup> Its international adoption would be tested in late 1914. Even during peacetime manoeuvres in England, a lack of visible

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<sup>274</sup> Hamilton, *A Staff Officer's Scrap-Book*, p.306.

<sup>275</sup> Hamilton, *A Staff Officer's Scrap-Book*, p.87; John Philip Jones, *Johnny: the Legend and Tragedy of General Sir Ian Hamilton* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2012), p.225.

<sup>276</sup> TNA WO 33 / 473 Handbook of the Japanese Army 1908; Hamilton, *A Staff Officer's Scrap-Book*, p.340, Japanese cavalry, dismounted and carrying rifles, had fought as Mounted Infantry at the battle of Motienling.

<sup>277</sup> Wrangel, *The Cavalry in the Russo-Japanese War*, p.2.

<sup>278</sup> Wrangel, *The Cavalry in the Russo-Japanese War*, p.71.

<sup>279</sup> Freedman, *Strategy*, p.111; TNA WO 106 / 6200 Handbook of the French Army 1906, French infantry tactics emphasised that the fire tactics of '*rafales*', rapid and specified number of rounds fired individually, was only preparatory to resuming the forward offensive.

offensive spirit by units and commanders alike frequently drew criticism. In the manoeuvres in consecutive pre-war years, the British regular Mounted Infantry were alternately accused of excessive caution, showing too little 'offensive spirit', or excessive enthusiasm, ignoring their role and risking their mobility by unnecessary exposure of their held horses to enemy fire.<sup>280</sup> Of course, the corollary of the doctrine of the offensive from a cavalry perspective was approbation and retention (or even re-introduction) of the *arme blanche* and, in terms of speed of movement and inculcation of morale, the so-called 'cavalry spirit'. The US cavalry, erstwhile functional Light Horse,<sup>281</sup> re-introduced cavalry mounted sabre drill in 1911<sup>282</sup> whilst Russian cavalry were re-issued with lances in 1912, partly reversing the previous 'dragoonisation' of more than three decades.<sup>283</sup> The premium placed on the offensive also demanded better reconnaissance with the power to disrupt enemy forces and their lines of communication by deep penetration raids, as exemplified by the Confederate cavalry officer J.E.B Stuart during the American Civil War,<sup>284</sup> a lesson that had influenced German cavalry tactics in

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<sup>280</sup> TNA WO 279 / 496 Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College under the direction of CIGS 1910, although Godley tried correctly to dispel the misleading orthodoxy that the primary objective of enemy forces, particularly their cavalry, would be to attack the held horses of Mounted Infantry; TNA WO 27 / 505 Inspection of the Mounted Infantry 1906; TNA WO 27 / 508 Inspector General of Forces' Annual Report 1904.

<sup>281</sup> Major D'Arcy Legard, 'Confederate Cavalry in Virginia', *Cavalry Journal*, 2, 1907, pp. 40-52, during the Civil War, designated Mounted Rifles had been formed in the Confederate cavalry in Virginia with their carbines replaced by long infantry rifle for improved firepower.

<sup>282</sup> Langellien, *Sound the Charge*, p.7.

<sup>283</sup> Menning, *Bayonets before Bullets*, p.264.

<sup>284</sup> Eques, 'American Cavalry', *Cavalry Journal*, 2, 1907, pp. 295-301

1870.<sup>285</sup> Similarly, the Russian cavalry experimented with specialist long distance horsed raiding parties (*Razvyedchiki*)<sup>286</sup> prior to 1914 although there would be precious little opportunity for such activities other than cautious patrols on the East German plain at the outbreak of the First World War.<sup>287</sup>

Therefore, as a counterpoint to the cavalry's renaissance across Europe, any enthusiasm for Mounted Infantry began to wane quickly. Although General von Pelet-Narbonne lauded the German cavalry's dismounted firepower that facilitated its crossing of the Mosel in 1870, equal accolade had been given to the use of the lance in the skirmish at Bolchen in that August.<sup>288</sup> German analyses of the Boer War, whilst notably critical of the British cavalry with the singular exception of the Cavalry Division's mounted charge at Klip Drift,<sup>289</sup> had been particularly dismissive of the Mounted Infantry, although the German Official History grudgingly admitted that the Mounted Infantry had, by the end of the campaign, become a 'most effective and valuable force'.<sup>290</sup> Identical views, born of the institutional prejudices in the French Army, particularly in the cavalry, encompassing religious bigotry, political

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<sup>285</sup> Luvaas, *The Military Legacy of the Civil War*, p.116.

<sup>286</sup> TNA WO 106 / 6223 Handbook of the Russian Army 1914.

<sup>287</sup> Littauer, *Russian Hussar*, p.134.

<sup>288</sup> Pelet-Narbonne, *Cavalry on Service*, p.27, also noted the use of wagon-borne Bavarian *Jägers* as mobile infantry.

<sup>289</sup> Walters and Du Cane, *The German Official Account of the War in South Africa*, I, p.147.

<sup>290</sup> Major Balck, 'The Lessons of the Boer War and the battle-working of the three arms', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 48, 1904, pp. 1393-1409; Goltz, 'Military Lessons of the South African War', pp. 371-94; Walters & Du Cane, *The German Official Account of the War in South Africa*, I, p.129.

discrimination, anti-Semitism<sup>291</sup> and profound professional myopia, ensured that any value of dismounted small arms fire, even when shock tactics were inappropriate or futile, was disregarded.<sup>292</sup> Thus, as instructional messages were frequently either misinterpreted or obscured by institutional prejudice, it is hardly surprising that the possibility of developing and formalising Mounted Infantry, a potential solution for the requirements of mobile firepower, reconnaissance and raiding, was actively overlooked, leading to the conclusion that 'there seems no urgent need for the establishment of Mounted Infantry units in continental armies'.<sup>293</sup>

Thus, in conclusion to this chapter, if the lesson of continental conflict from as early as 1866 had been the increasing power of modern rifles and artillery, the resulting conundrum for the attacker was how best to traverse the fire zone, extend the attacking line to outflank defences replete with more effective reconnaissance predicated on better horsemanship, whilst ensuring the application of maximum firepower at the point of attack. For the British Army, the solution lay for nearly three decades with the transposition of the *ad hoc* abstracted Mounted Infantry from its colonial origins to the wider army with the model featuring, albeit transiently, in the strategic planning of an expeditionary force for a future European conflict. Until called upon to support the mother country during the Boer War, other imperial countries had maintained only citizen militia for defence but the inception of

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<sup>291</sup> Ruth Harris, *The Man on Devil's Island: Alfred Dreyfus and the affair that divided France* (London: Allen Lane, 2010).

<sup>292</sup> Lowther, 'The French Cavalry', pp. 195-207.

<sup>293</sup> Anon, 'German Views on Mounted Infantry', *Cavalry Journal*, 2, 1907, pp. 347-51.



Mounted Rifles, superficially resembling domestic Yeomanry but with a greatly attenuated or absent cavalry ethos, had been a key component of these forces. The often well-regarded performance of colonial Mounted Rifles leading to the establishment of Light Horse regiments, immortalised the Mounted Rifleman as a heroic icon at a time of burgeoning nationalism. India was different, not least due to the persistence of British Army garrisons but also by specific organisational parallels in the Indian Army with its enhanced opportunities for active service on the North West Frontier. Whilst embarked British regiments took their Mounted Infantry capability with them, the inception of Mounted Infantry in India was as much a congruent phenomenon as a product of cross-fertilisation from Britain. Yet despite the provision of five mounted Infantry schools for both British and Indian regiments, the Mounted Infantry model waned faster than in Britain. Although the needs of mobile firepower and reconnaissance were no less pressing in India, the realisation that hill fighting on the North West Frontier demanded a different solution undermined the usefulness of Mounted Infantry. The formation of specialist frontier troops, particularly the PFF and the Guides, both all-arms units of infantry and cavalry capable of dismounted action and supported by mountain batteries and local levies, effectively dealt a mortal blow to the value and existence of Mounted Infantry in India. The concurrent demise of the Mounted Infantry at home negated any objection to the phasing out of Mounted Infantry training in India but did not, in its self, precipitate the closure of the Mounted Infantry schools. Despite other countries' imperial pretensions, none developed Mounted Infantry strictly along British precepts. Nevertheless, both French and German forces

resorted to extemporised Mounted Infantry in their African territories when exigencies demanded. Neither country routinely ensured tactical Mounted Infantry training for their infantry and both relied on either locally raised troops or volunteers from local garrisons in a manner similar to British policy pre-1880. In Europe however, the general solution to the delivery of enhanced firepower evolved dually, namely the re-focussing of cavalry training and tactics away from being solely *arme blanche* or, conversely, a delegation of firepower support to another arm, most frequently light infantry. Neither solution was mutually exclusive. A wholesale change in the cavalry to the dismounted fire tactics of traditional dragoons not only diminished traditional differentiation into hussar, lancer and dragoon, now seemingly mere historical anachronisms, but, as feared, damaged morale and the ability to deliver the panache required of cavalry in the offensive. Such orthodoxy was a false premise as these considerations, despite vigorous debate in military literature, did not blight the US cavalry whose tactics resembled that of Mounted Infantry, or perhaps more accurately, Mounted Rifles / Light Horse. The alternative approach, that of delegation of fire support, necessitated the attachment of light infantry, *Jägers* and *Chasseurs à pied*, to the cavalry with varying approaches aiding the infantry to keep pace with the cavalry.<sup>294</sup> Neither doctrine seemed to bestow both mobility and fire support. German cavalry relinquished fire power in favour of mobility, although this was lost in needing to maintain contact with its *Jägers*, whilst French cavalry disregarded fire power by retaining its carbine and had a

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<sup>294</sup> Luvaas, *The Military Legacy of the Civil War*, p.164.

questionable record of horsemastership undermining its mobility. The rare occurrence of Mounted Rifles in European armies, such as the Tirolean Mounted Rifles, was usually a product of challenging terrain or in niche roles, such as the German *Jägers zu Pferde*. In any case, these were cavalry in origin rather than abstracted infantry and did not intend delivering the roles assigned to the British regular Mounted Infantry, of either fire support or as a mobile infantry reserve.

With regards to the other important lesson of scouting and reconnaissance, an absence of which had been deficient in 1866, 1870, 1899 and 1904, these functions would remain preferentially the preserve of the cavalry. Despite good examples of reconnaissance in South Africa by the Mounted Infantry, only the Russian *Okhotniki* and the irregular Native American scouts were anything other than cavalry-based. The majority of cavalries rejected sharing reconnaissance duties with other branches of the army on grounds that the role demanded superior horsemanship, except with that of the embryonic cyclist forces,<sup>295</sup> which were mainly limited to regions with comprehensive road systems.<sup>296</sup> The cyclist units were no threat to the future of cavalry as their mobility was limited and they were neither horsed nor, at least in the British Army, social equals in the military organisation.

Returning to the research questions framing this chapter, Brigadier General Bethune's bold statement of the uniqueness of British regular Mounted Infantry, with the caveat of the Indian Army, holds firm in its strictest sense of

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<sup>295</sup> TNA WO 279 / 42 Report of a Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College 1911.

<sup>296</sup> Bernhardt, *Cavalry in Future Wars*, p.22.

a formalised, albeit extemporised, infantry-origin organisation abstracted in peacetime for training. Yet it is incorrect too as countries resorted to Mounted Infantry when colonial imperatives demanded, thus validating the original concept. The factors determining resolution of the demands of mobility and firepower were multiple including extent of imperial pretensions, pre-existing military organisation, predicted future conflict and lessons derived from other conflicts. Ultimately the decision whether to develop Mounted Infantry or not appears to have rested on the reaction of the army, particularly the cavalry, which, with its innate conservatism and staunchly-held traditions, was unlikely to welcome the interloper that was the Mounted Infantry and therefore effectively suffocated its development. The following sentiment, neatly encapsulating the fundamental objection to Mounted Infantry leading to its stifling across Europe, was expressed by Lieutenant Colonel Lowther, the British military attaché in Paris before the First World War, when he wrote that 'in France, as in England, the cavalryman's nightmare of being turned into Mounted Infantry prevails'.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Lowther, 'The French Cavalry', pp. 195-207.

## Chapter Seven

### Conclusions

*'To the unlearned civilian accustomed to regard horse-soldiers as cavalry and foot-soldiers as infantry, "mounted infantry" may very possibly appear as contradiction in terms, but it is not so.'*<sup>1</sup>

The Introduction to this thesis highlighted the previous fragmentary treatment of the Mounted Infantry in the historiography of the late Victorian and Edwardian army. Acknowledging the consequent challenges inherent in collating widely dispersed primary and secondary sources, the purpose of this thesis has been a re-appraisal of the British Army's regular Mounted Infantry concept by answering six principal thematic research questions:

- What was the Mounted Infantry's position in prevailing army doctrine and did the concept fulfil an identifiable need or was it an impecunious substitute for an inadequate cavalry?
- Did the Mounted Infantry evolve a specific organisational identity underpinned by *esprit de corps*?
- Did Mounted Infantry training successfully produce a 'fit for purpose' force and did command in the Mounted Infantry enhance future officer promotion prospects?
- Was the Mounted Infantry militarily effective?
- Was the Mounted Infantry model successfully transposed throughout the forces of the British Empire and did other nations' armies adopt

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<sup>1</sup> *The Graphic*, 5 August 1882.

the model or evolve alternative solutions to the problem of achieving mobile firepower in their military forces?

- Among the numerous possible factors implicated in the Mounted Infantry's demise, can a definitive cause precipitating its abolition be identified?

The time period covered by the thesis is 1880 to 1913 and encompasses the formal inception of the regular Mounted Infantry following the Intelligence Department's 1881 précis and its years of development until its abolition in 1913.<sup>2</sup> Of course, the history of extemporised informal Mounted Infantry predates this arbitrary span of thirty-three years yet the preceding *ad hoc* mounting of overseas infantry companies at times of emergency, through its haphazardness, sheds little light on the impact of Mounted Infantry doctrine, its projected roles, the interface with the cavalry and the effect on the wider army organisation and thus, whilst acknowledged, is largely excluded from this analysis. This is not to dismiss the benefits accrued from transiently mounted troops in 'small wars' but reflects that, in comparison to the formalised regular Mounted Infantry that from 1888 underwent peacetime training, the impact of such *ad hoc* Mounted Infantry on the army's thinking was inconsistent and imprecise.

In order to understand the impact of the regular Mounted Infantry's organisation and doctrine on both the army and the arm itself, four campaigns have been selected for analysis including the 1881 Transvaal War that highlighted the problems of *ad hoc* configuration just before

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<sup>2</sup> TNA WO 33 / 37 Précis on Mounted Infantry 1881.

formalisation of the regular Mounted Infantry, the 1882 Egyptian Campaign that confirmed the beneficial value of prior experience or training, the 1885 Nile Campaign that exposed the folly of abstraction of soldiers to whom Mounted Infantry tasks were at best foreign and, at worst, anathema, and finally the 1899 – 1902 Boer War when arguably the Mounted Infantry model attained maturity.<sup>3</sup>

The thread connecting all of the research questions has been the fundamental purpose of the Mounted Infantry, that of bringing mobile firepower to the battlefield. For the colonially-focussed British Army largely dependent on infantry to garrison its imperial frontiers, the cavalry was numerically inadequate, hampered by the logistics of mobilisation for overseas conflict, and doctrinally disinclined to fight dismounted for much of the time period covered by the thesis. Hence, only the Mounted Infantry combined the two required attributes. The frequent absence of cavalry in colonial theatres also meant that the Mounted Infantry would be called upon for rudimentary reconnaissance, communications and security duties by virtue of its enhanced mobility. When this occurred distantly in the corners of Empire, the exigencies of an overseas campaign rationalised any concerns that the cavalry might have felt towards the Mounted Infantry regarding the latter assuming traditional cavalry roles and hence, the Mounted Infantry effectively could be sidelined. However the formal inception of Mounted Infantry and its nascent inclusion in the army's organisation, albeit only on active service, resulted in the cavalry's realisation that the Mounted Infantry

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<sup>3</sup> Tylden, 'Mounted Infantry', pp. 176-9; Robinson, 'The search for mobility during the Second Boer War', pp. 140-57.

was a potential threat, centred on an erosion of the cavalry's mounted roles and, if the cavalry was to be forcibly converted to Mounted Infantry, to its way of life as well. The resulting distrust bordering on overt hostility marred the interface between the two mounted arms for the subsequent decades, contributing directly to the Mounted Infantry's demise just prior to the First World War.

The institutional friction between both groups of protagonists reflected the cavalry's struggle for existential survival whilst conversely the Mounted Infantry, born out of necessity and manifesting a utilitarian attitude when on active service, strove for doctrinal clarity and ultimately, a definitive function within the army's organisation. The lack of army doctrine and the absence of a General Staff for much of the lifetime of the Mounted infantry model permitted such institutional friction to persist with personal opinion and prejudice holding sway. The establishment of the General Staff occurred at a time when the popularity of the Mounted Infantry with senior army commanders had begun to wane and was thus of little influence overall despite its apportioning of a clearer role to the Mounted Infantry from 1906 until 1913. When strategic military planning turned towards the possibility of a European war, the question arose whether the Mounted Infantry could function as more than a colonial force and if so, how best to deploy it in the evolving mobilisation plans. The Mounted Infantry's detractors had always predicted bloody annihilation if the Mounted Infantry was surprised by hostile *arme blanche*-trained cavalry before it could dismount. This unproven axiom, one of the mainstays of the cavalry protagonists' deprecations, revealed



more about the psyche of the cavalry officers than it did about identifying a fundamental flaw in the Mounted Infantry's doctrine. If Mounted Officers had already recognised this risk, they did not seriously contemplate their companies becoming isolated through working alone in the field. Instead they postulated elementary inter-arm cooperation with cavalry and horse artillery. Hutton recognised the mutual benefits of such inter-arm cooperation as early as the Cavalry Manoeuvres of 1890.<sup>4</sup> Rather it was the reforming cavalry whose zeal was for unilateral action as shown by Haig's competitive assertion at the Elgin Commission that there were no tasks that the Mounted Infantry could do that the cavalry could not undertake and exceed.<sup>5</sup>

If domestic military politics invoked competition not cooperation, the situation was somewhat different elsewhere in the Empire including India. Here British cavalry regiments rarely deployed on the North West Frontier through issues of cost and the inhospitable terrain not being conducive to *arme blanche* tactics. While both British and Indian army infantry battalions did undergo abstraction for Mounted Infantry training, this process would be abolished eventually, similar to domestic Mounted Infantry training, although the rationale for this decision in India appears more logical and transparent than at home. Like British cavalry, regular Mounted Infantry risked not finding the North West Frontier an auspicious environment for deployment although their reversion to foot infantry would be a logical conclusion. More importantly, the bespoke frontier forces of the Guides and Punjab Frontier Force regiments,

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<sup>4</sup> Hutton, *Five Lectures on Mounted Infantry*, Lecture Four, 20 April 1891, pp.1-27.

<sup>5</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1791, II, evidence from Haig (Q.19507, p.412 & Q.19509, p.412).

which contained both infantry and cavalry elements, were adept at dismounted fighting like Mounted Infantry thus achieving fusion of mobility with firepower.<sup>6</sup> Through constant active service on the Frontier, these Indian regiments developed an informal military doctrine for 'hill fighting', which despite a chapter bearing the same name in Callwell's *'Small Wars'*,<sup>7</sup> was less easily mastered by British battalions who undertook limited tours of duty along the frontier periodically on rotation. With such specialised Indian forces constantly available for active service, the need for Mounted Infantry in theatre was diminished.

No such rationale exculpated the decision to close the domestic Mounted Infantry schools, a decision that effectively strangled the Mounted Infantry movement by preventing further training of new Mounted Infantry cadres and refreshing of the ranks of men with Mounted Infantry skills. Thus the Mounted Infantry was abolished by the Army Council in 1913 as a result of several contributory factors ranging from imposed financial constraints, withering of numbers of trained Mounted Infantrymen, reformed dismounted cavalry tactics and, importantly in the political sphere, overt senior officer animosity most probably influenced by Haig.<sup>8</sup> Through an exploration of the factors usually implicated in this decision, the thesis concludes that there was a more political explanation for abolition than previously considered by historians. This is at variance with Badsey, who considers the process a

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<sup>6</sup> Blood, *Four Score Years and Ten*, p.328, although Blood acknowledged that regular Mounted Infantry had also 'done good work' on the Frontier.

<sup>7</sup> Callwell, *Small Wars*, pp.286-346.

<sup>8</sup> TNA WO 163 / 18 Minutes of the Proceedings of the Army Council 1913.

gradual decline to extinction predicated predominantly on Mounted Infantry failings comparing unfavourably with cavalry reform,<sup>9</sup> and Jones who blames the Mounted Infantry for its 'unresolved tactical flaws and structural weaknesses'.<sup>10</sup> In refuting these arguments, this thesis argues that the structural organisation of the Mounted Infantry had been remarkably consistent since its inception whilst reconstituted Mounted Infantry companies, either with prior training or extensive experience, provided a 'fit for purpose' force. Abstraction had always had its critics yet despite its pre-1899 tardiness in training adequate numbers of Mounted Infantry, abstraction still held many attractions to the army and War Office. Clearly decisions about how to deploy the Mounted Infantry once reconfigured in crisis changed over the years. Yet in its final duality of role, whether as divisional mounted troops or alongside cavalry in mixed Mounted Brigades, the Mounted Infantry's organisational structure does not appear overly weak. With regards to possible tactical flaws, trenchant criticism persisted. This centred on the Mounted Infantry's assumed axiomatic inferiority in combat against enemy cavalry and its historical legacy of poor equitation. If there was evidence of tactical flaws, this arose largely from a lack of clarity as to what army commanders required from the Mounted Infantry which could then be incorporated into an evolving curriculum of instruction. As has been noted earlier in the thesis, in South Africa most army commanders clamoured for Mounted Infantry to be included in their forces for most operations. However, when the European war finally arrived, the British cavalry's effectiveness, for

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<sup>9</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p.217.

<sup>10</sup> Jones, *From Boer War to World War*, p.195.

which it has most recently received plaudits, was largely for non-*arme blanche* activity, particularly delivery of dismounted firepower, functioning as a mobile reserve and for utilitarian work that previously had been the remit of the pre-war Mounted Infantry. An oblique acknowledgement of both how the cavalry's role had changed and that the new role was more reflective of Mounted Infantry doctrine came unexpectedly from Haig, arguably the Mounted Infantry's most tenacious detractor, in his submission to the War Cabinet on 7 January 1918 in which he claimed:

The value and importance of the Cavalry to be very great not only in offensive but also defensive operations. This was due to their superior mobility and the ease with which cavalry could be moved from one sector to another and then used dismounted. He pointed out that British cavalry resembled highly-trained mobile infantry rather than the old cavalry arm.<sup>11</sup>

Although it would be unfair to criticise Haig for any failure of predictive insight before 1914, Haig's subsequent admission is nonetheless startling. Although Haig was clearly fighting a rearguard defence against further diminution of his cavalry force in the face of political pressure rather than proposing a resurrection of the previously abolished regular Mounted Infantry, Haig's approbation of mobile infantry fatally undermines the shibboleth of the Mounted Infantry's supposed tactical uselessness on the European battlefield.

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<sup>11</sup> TNA CAB 23 /13 /35 War Cabinet Minutes, 7 January 1918.

Of course such assertions concerning the Mounted Infantry's military effectiveness during the First World War are mere speculation, particularly as the military effectiveness of the Mounted Infantry in the campaigns used in the thesis as case studies was inconsistent if not outright contradictory. However such discrepancies must be understood in the context of the Mounted Infantry's evolution in organisation and its military function. For instance, the two failings in the Transvaal War from the Mounted Infantry's perspective arose firstly from the mounted detachment's inexperience magnified by an absence of appropriate training and secondly, the error of deploying extemporised Mounted Infantry in a traditional cavalry role. Nevertheless, these lessons of the Transvaal War were addressed in the proposals contained in the subsequent Intelligence Department's précis, which became the foundation for the regular Mounted Infantry. Although the Nile campaign was a strategic failure and operationally the Camel Corps did not live up to its promise, the comparative success of the Mounted Infantry and Guards Camel Regiments, at least in terms of delivering firepower, indicated the importance of appropriate abstraction and that in certain scenarios of colonial warfare where the adversary relied on shock tactics, concerted firepower remained a critical asset for force protection. For the small Mounted Infantry contingent, the earlier Egyptian campaign has been considered a success as its firepower permitted protection against Egyptian incursion around the defensive perimeter of Alexandria and, by anchoring Wolseley's desert flank, against the possibility of being outflanked by Egyptian cavalry or Bedouin warriors. Moreover, although the Mounted Infantry in Burma had been considered a success in the counterinsurgency

duties required in the jungle habitat,<sup>12</sup> it was in Africa where the Mounted Infantry came to prominence and it was the Boer War in particular, that showcased the strengths and weaknesses of the Mounted Infantry model, ultimately resulting in it becoming the colonial army's blueprint on the veldt. Although evidence for the transposition of the lessons learned in this campaign to future army doctrine and organisation remain contentious,<sup>13</sup> there were a number of factors that made the War eminently suitable for the Mounted Infantry. Despite a poor start through Roberts' unrealistic expectations of the capability of untrained and poorly horsed Mounted Infantry, the force began to garner plaudits through its firepower and improving mobility at a time of criticism of the cavalry's lacklustre performance. However the major factor conferring preferment on the Mounted Infantry was the nature of the war after the fall of Pretoria in mid 1900. For twenty-three of the thirty-two months of war, British forces conducted a counterinsurgency campaign, the 'war of running evasion',<sup>14</sup> against a decentralised, highly dispersed and mobile adversary rather than the more orthodox military operations of late 1899 and the first half of 1900.<sup>15</sup> Counterinsurgency tactics of ambush and raid, underpinned by a requirement for optimal mobility, manifest as a focus on armed policing rather than traditional infantry and cavalry tactics, especially the *arme blanche*, were essential and suited the Mounted Infantry in both its

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<sup>12</sup> Maurice, *The Life of General Lord Rawlinson of Trent*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>13</sup> Elgin Commission, Cd. 1789, p.49, summary of opinion.

<sup>14</sup> Nasson, *The War for South Africa*, p.31.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, *The Utility of Force*, pp. 160-63.

organisation and function. It is unsurprising therefore that for this conflict at least, the Mounted Infantry played a key role. Although fulfilling a fundamental requirement in South Africa, the model neither remained ubiquitous in the post-war British Army nor did it translate wholesale to other nations' armies. Despite limited Mounted Infantry being present in India and the evidence of attenuated versions of the paradigm manifest as Mounted Rifles in countries destined to become self-governing dominions, the Mounted Infantry concept was largely disregarded elsewhere. The conundrum of merging mobility with firepower on the battlefield was addressed in different ways: by utilising military cyclists; combining light infantry with cavalry units; the 'dragoonisation' of existing cavalry and the development of light cavalry capable of dismounted fighting. This doctrinal aversion to a separate Mounted Infantry reflected a number of issues including the predictions that future wars would usually be European, with railways and metalled roads contributing to mobility, rather than insurrections along wild colonial borders. Nevertheless, as has been shown, both France and Germany improvised Mounted Infantry in their overseas territories particularly at times of crisis, including the inception of camelry, with such doctrinal solutions effectively replicating the British approach that had spawned both regular Mounted Infantry and Camel Corps.<sup>16</sup> If the pre-eminent focus of strategic planning for France and Germany had been colonial rather than continental, the Mounted Infantry paradigm might have evolved further in their armies than it did, although this remains speculation. The Russian Empire attempted to solve the problem differently relying as a

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<sup>16</sup> Moll, *Infanterie Montée à Chameau*, pp.9-28.

matter of policy on indigenous people, the Cossacks, for border protection. The Cossacks, superficially resembling the functionality of the Guides and the Punjab Frontier Force, combined mobility and firepower as *de facto* Mounted Infantry. Their poor showing in the Russo-Japanese War notwithstanding, the Cossacks' military reputation remained almost mythical,<sup>17</sup> whilst not obviating the need for *bona fide* cavalry that too also vacillated between the tactics and doctrine of Mounted Infantry and traditional cavalry. Conversely, the US army's plentiful cavalry regiments already functioned largely as Mounted Infantry with dismounted firepower tactics tempered with occasional shock tactics of a mounted charge, not solely predicated on *arme blanche* but also on firepower delivered from the saddle.<sup>18</sup> During the Plains Wars, reflecting logistical shortages and fiscal constraint, the US cavalry's deficiency in equine numbers resulted in a significant number of dismounted cavalymen which surprisingly was not considered particularly disadvantageous as operations were predicated on dismounted firepower and endurance more than speed.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the British Army regular Mounted Infantry's inception and further development, when no other nations' armies adopted the same model, reflects other nations' military strategic planning, their anticipation of the nature of future conflicts and their appraisals of their future adversaries rather than the fact that the Mounted Infantry concept was derided in its entirety.

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<sup>17</sup> McNeal, *Tsar and Cossack*, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> *The New York Times*, 18 April 1903, 'Our Cavalry'; Van Deusen, 'The tactical use of Mounted Troops in future campaigns, pp.225-49; Chun, *US Army in the Plains Indian Wars*, pp. 6-9.

<sup>19</sup> Showalter, 'The US Cavalry', pp. 6-23.



Even so, the regular Mounted Infantry remained a defined, albeit transitory, formalised part of the British Army trained in peacetime and configured for active service. As previously indicated, its basic organisation remained consistent and it was at this level that its identity was apparent.

Unsurprisingly, identity reflected the traditions and cultures of their parent battalions rather than a novel identity predicated on 'being Mounted Infantry'. Naturally, as the troops abstracted into the Mounted Infantry were only temporarily seconded and would return to their parent battalions as planned until mobilisation, there was no imperative to evolve a new organisational identity based on being horsed troops. Moreover, there is no evidence that a novel identity was anticipated by army commanders arising from the Mounted Infantry model or its counterpart, the Camel Corps, despite the latter's originality. The exception to this lack of a specific cultural Mounted Infantry identity occurred during the Boer War where pride and loyalty evolved over the extended duration of the conflict within Mounted Infantry battalions as illustrated by Kipling's verse. However, its true identity was functional arising from being mobile infantrymen. Such a functional identity was independent of emblematic traditions and would transpose to military cyclists and eventually mechanised infantry. Thus, rather than music, emblems or uniforms, it was the Mounted Infantry's functionality that conferred its identity. During the Boer War, as only a minority of Mounted Infantry had pre-war training, the experiential learning of practical wartime lessons, disseminated by unit commanders and by publication of personal notes and manuals, modified the Mounted Infantry's drill and informal

doctrine<sup>20</sup> and, in turn, added to its image summed up as the ‘chronic ikonas’. Conversely, the problems of peacetime training, particularly trying to match training to the arm’s shifting roles, against a backdrop of fiscal constraint and institutional rivalry with the cavalry, was never satisfactorily resolved. Although originally training had been predominantly to teach basic equitation, the final incarnation of the peacetime training programme had expanded in content and complexity. Nevertheless, the reputational damage incurred by the Mounted Infantry through its execrable equitation following its enforced precipitate expansion in 1900, remained a memory that could not be easily dispelled. Such a legacy was difficult to eradicate despite evidence of substantial improvements in its equestrian and tactical skills during the later years of the Boer War and in the subsequent years of peace.<sup>21</sup>

It is a valid question to ask whether the Mounted Infantry paradigm illustrates any wider themes of relevance to the British Army, modern warfare and military history in general. Clearly the Mounted Infantry’s origins, founded through imperial necessity, were inherently opportunistic, as have been an eclectic array of other temporary improvisations within the British Army, for example, the ‘mounted torpedo corps’ in Pretoria during the Transvaal War of 1880 – 81,<sup>22</sup> the Nile Expedition’s Camel Corps in 1885 and, more recently, the Chindits of the Second World War. Yet the benefits to the army

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<sup>20</sup> Saunderson, *Notes on Mounted Infantrymen*, pp. 68-69.

<sup>21</sup> TNA WO 27 / 505 Inspection of the Mounted Infantry 1906; TNA WO 163 / 15 Army Council 1910: Inspection of the School of Instruction for Mounted Infantry, Longmoor, 25 May 1909.

<sup>22</sup> TNA WO 32 / 7825 South Africa: statements concerning the attack on the 94<sup>th</sup> Regiment at Bronkers Spruit and actions in the Transvaal.

of the Mounted Infantry paradigm, at least those benefits advocated by the arm's protagonists, were diminished by the retarding effect of army tribalism rooted in arm, corps and regiment. As already identified in this thesis, this friction was not purely a British phenomenon. Such tribalism, an off-shoot of loyalty and identity, has many beneficial effects, not least in promoting *esprit de corps*, but equally it can exert a deleterious effect through magnifying innate institutional conservatism. Although not the only factor, such tribalism did not provide a favourable context for either inter-arm cooperation or integration, deficits that impacted directly on the functionality of the Mounted Infantry. Thus innovation and experimentation may founder and fail to evolve into a permanent organisation as seen with the Mounted Infantry.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, tribalism, a theme persisting into the current era and frequently magnified by financial constraints, may transcend mere competitive rivalry into political conflict upon which a service's survival may be deemed at stake and where strategic planning decisions may go awry.<sup>24</sup> Certainly protagonists in the Mounted Infantry versus cavalry debate would have recognised this scenario. The association of such debate with potentially seismic changes in way of life, so apparent in the cavalry's defiant retention of the *arme blanche* as a proxy marker for a defence of its lifestyle, was re-visited in the 1920s with the mechanisation of the cavalry and the friction between mechanised

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<sup>23</sup> Although as noted in Chapters Two and Three, a lack of permanence cannot be ascribed solely to the actions of the Mounted Infantry's opponents.

<sup>24</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 24 July 2010, 'Battle Royal as Forces' chiefs clash over cuts'; Hew Strachan, 'British Generals in Blair's Wars: Conclusion', *British Generals in Blair's Wars* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), Jonathan Bailey, Richard Iron and Hew Strachan (eds.), p.332.

cavalry and their armoured regiment counterparts.<sup>25</sup> The component of such friction, based on the theme of technology, whether this was ‘firepower versus edged weapons’ or ‘mechanised vehicle versus horse’, appears to be both a symbol of threatened institutional survival and also an issue of operational and tactical planning. At the tactical level, the conundrum of combining firepower with mobility that was the *sine qua non* of the Mounted Infantry’s existence remains extant today in our modern versions of ‘expeditionary’ warfare in Central Asia and elsewhere.<sup>26</sup> As previously indicated, as the late Victorian age wore on, the differences between the cavalry officers’ views regarding doctrine and those espoused by the Mounted Infantry officers were, surprisingly in view of the vitriol expended during the firepower versus *arme blanche* debate, not always of diametric polarity, despite contemporaneous beliefs. Yet this theme of perception, particularly erroneous understanding, remains true today as demonstrated by the attitudes of senior Naval, Royal Marine and Naval aviation officers during the Falklands Campaign in 1982.<sup>27</sup> This thesis recognises that during the late Victorian period, the ability to learn lessons from imperial conflicts was decidedly limited through inadequate processes for recognising lessons from conflict, their validation by senior army officers, their subsequent embedding in training and doctrine and, finally, translation into tactics for future military operations. Nonetheless, a recent publication has argued cogently that

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<sup>25</sup> French, ‘The Mechanization of the British Cavalry’, pp. 296-320.

<sup>26</sup> *Army Times*, 7 September 2010, ‘Ft. Carson Special Forces train on horseback’.

<sup>27</sup> Admiral Sandy Woodward, *One Hundred Days: the memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander* (London: Harper Press, 2012, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), pp. xxiv-xxxv.

lesson learning in the army remains imperfect and challenging for the British High Command.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, although an admittedly broad generalisation, the Mounted Infantry paradigm represents a microcosm of the organisational and doctrinal problems affecting the British Army across the centuries into the modern era.

The Introduction posed the question whether the Mounted Infantry was a Victorian paradigm or merely the 'cavalry of poverty'. In answering the six principal research questions, it is concluded that, for much of its existence, the Mounted Infantry did not behave as an impecunious makeshift cavalry but a mounted force replete with its own drill and embryonic doctrine and, contentiously perhaps, an understanding of its tactical limitations. Even when latterly its assigned functions trespassed into traditional cavalry territory, the Mounted Infantry neither portrayed itself nor considered itself, simply a cavalry-substitute. In its ability to provide mobile firepower on the colonial battlefield at a time when such functionality was absent from any other arm except horse artillery, the Mounted Infantry can indeed be regarded as a Victorian paradigm, or in other words, a necessary force for its time.

However this raises the question: was the model only fit for colonial warfare, particularly in Africa, or could the paradigm have translated to other military arenas? Although its efficacy on a future European battlefield can only be surmised, it is not unreasonable to infer that the arm could have shown value away from imperial 'small wars' and thus transcend this paradigmatic limitation. If such predictions of future utility appear fanciful, Brigadier

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<sup>28</sup> Paul Newton, 'Adapt or Fail: The Challenge for the Armed Forces After Blair's Wars', *British Generals in Blair's Wars* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), Jonathan Bailey, Richard Iron and Hew Strachan (eds.), pp.297-325.

General Thorneycroft, writing about the Mounted Infantry's worth four years after its triumph in the Boer War, remarked that 'Mounted Infantry are a necessity for the varied requirements of our Army throughout the world', and noted that this 'is assured fact'.<sup>29</sup> This thesis concludes that there is no reason why the Mounted Infantry could not have also met 'the varied requirements of our Army' in 1914. The Mounted Infantry rightly deserves recognition for its participation on active service and, re-visiting a quote from this thesis' Introduction:

To the Mounted Infantry as a whole belongs a very large share of the honour of saving the Empire in its most trying hour and it is, no doubt, only an oversight that this has never been fully appreciated by the public.<sup>30</sup>

It is hoped that this re-appraisal of the Mounted Infantry, a force born out of necessity but whose memory, outliving the arm's abolition, has been preserved in the functional identities of first military cyclists and then modern mechanised infantry, has to a modest degree, helped redress the Mounted Infantry's previous historical obscurity.

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<sup>29</sup> Thorneycroft, 'Some Notes on Mounted Infantry', pp.161-66.

<sup>30</sup> Ikona, 'The Passing of the Old MI', pp. 209-13.

## **Appendix 1**     Biographies of Senior Mounted Infantry Officers

### **Lieutenant General Sir E.T.H. Hutton:**

Born 1848, Ensign 60<sup>th</sup> Foot 6 August 1867, Lieutenant 60<sup>th</sup> Foot 9 August 1871, Musketry Instructor 1 February 1873, Captain KRRC 14 July 1879, active service Zulu War 1879, Staff College 1880-82; active service Transvaal 1881, Brevet Major 18 November 1882, Assistant Military Secretary to GOC Egypt active service Egypt 1882, Major 24 January 1883, Brigade Major (Aldershot) 19 August 1883, DAAQG active service Nile Expedition 1884-85, DAAG (Aldershot) 1 October 1887, Lieutenant Colonel 29 May 1889, Commandant Mounted Infantry School (Aldershot) until 31 August 1892, Colonel 21 December 1892, CO New South Wales 1893 until 26 November 1896, AAG Dublin 26 November 1896, GOC Canadian Militia August 1898, CO 1<sup>st</sup> Mounted Infantry Brigade March 1900 active service South Africa, Major General 26 December 1901, CO Australian Forces until 25 December 1904, Lieutenant General 7 November 1907, appointed KCB 1912, CO 21 Division, 3<sup>rd</sup> Army, retired 1915

### **Lieutenant General Sir E.A.H. Alderson:**

Born 1859, Norfolk Artillery (militia) 1876, gazetted Lieutenant 97<sup>th</sup> Foot 1878, active service Mounted Infantry, Transvaal 1881, active service Mounted Infantry Egypt 1882, active service Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment 1884 – 85, Captain 1886, Adjutant Mounted Infantry School (Aldershot) 1888, Adjutant Royal West Kent Regiment 1890, Staff College 1894-95, Major 1896 active service Matabele and Mashonaland, Brevet Lieutenant Colonel 1896, CO Mounted Infantry School (Aldershot) 1896, active service South Africa 1899, Brevet Colonel 1900, Inspector-General of Mounted Infantry (Brigadier General rank), appointed CB 1900, CO Mounted Infantry Division 1901 – 02, Colonel 1903, Brigadier General CO 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade 1903 – 07, Major General 1907, India 1908 – 1912 CO 6<sup>th</sup> Division (Poona), CO 1<sup>st</sup> Mounted Division 1914, CO 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division October 1914, CO Canadian Army Corps 1915, Inspector General Canadian Forces May 1916 – 1918, appointed KCB 1916, retired 1920

**General Sir H. De Beauvoir De Lisle:**

Born 1864, gazetted 2<sup>nd</sup> Durham Light Infantry 1883, active service Mounted Infantry Egypt 1885-86 and awarded DSO, Captain 1891, Staff College 1898-99, active service South Africa CO 6<sup>th</sup> Mounted Infantry, appointed CB 1900, Major 1902, transferred 5<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards 1902, 1<sup>st</sup> (Royal) Dragoons 1903, Lieutenant Colonel 1906, GSO 1 2<sup>nd</sup> Division Aldershot 1910, Brigadier General 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Brigade 1911, Major General CO 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division October 1914, CO 29<sup>th</sup> Division Gallipoli June 1915, acting Lieutenant General CO 13 Corps, March 1918, then 15 Corps, April 1918, appointed KCMG 1919, Lieutenant General 1919 GOC Western Command, General 1926, retired 1926

**Lieutenant General the Earl of Dundonald:**

Born 1852, gazetted Cornet and Sub-Lieutenant 2<sup>nd</sup> Life Guards 1870, active service Nile Expedition 2<sup>nd</sup> Life Guards detachment Heavy Camel Regiment 1884-85 Captain, Major 1885, Brevet Lieutenant Colonel 1885, Brevet Colonel 15 June 1889, CO 2<sup>nd</sup> Life Guards 1895, appointed MVO 1897, CO Mounted Brigade Natal Field Force 1899, CO 2nd Cavalry Brigade 1900, appointed CVO 1900, Major General 7 March 1900, appointed KCB, GOC Canadian Militia 1902-04, Lieutenant General 1907, appointed KCVO 1907, retired 1907

**General Sir A Godley:**

Born 1867, Lieutenant 1<sup>st</sup> Dublin Fusiliers 1886, Adjutant and Captain 1889, Adjutant Mounted Infantry 1894, active service Mashonaland 1896, Brevet Major 1897, Staff College 1898-99, Adjutant Mounted Infantry (Protectorate Regiment) 1899-1901, Brevet Lieutenant Colonel 1900, transferred to Irish Guards 1900, DAAG Mounted Infantry 1901-03, Commandant Mounted Infantry School (Longmoor) 1903-06, Brevet Colonel 1905, Colonel 1906, AAG and GSO 1 2nd Division Aldershot 1906, temporary Major General GOC New Zealand Forces 1910, Major General 1914 GOC New Zealand Forces 1914-18, temporary Lieutenant General ANZAC (Gallipoli and Middle



East) 1915, GOC 22 Corps and 3 Corps, Lieutenant General 1918, CO 4 Corps British Army of Occupation 1919, Secretary to the Secretary of State for War 1920-22, Commander-in-Chief (C-i-C) British Army of Occupation 1922-24, General 1923, Governor of Gibraltar 1928-33, retired 1933

**General Sir I Hamilton:**

Born 1852, gazetted 12<sup>th</sup> Foot 1872, transferred 92<sup>nd</sup> Foot 1873, active service in India, 2<sup>nd</sup> Afghan War and Transvaal Rebellion 1873 – 1881, Captain 1882, Brevet Major 1882, active service Nile Expedition 1884-85, Brevet Lieutenant Colonel 1886, active service Burma Expedition 1886-87, Colonel 1891, awarded DSO 1891, AAG Musketry 1890-93; Military Secretary to C-i-C East Indies 1893-95; active service AAG and AQMG Chitral Relief Force 1895, appointed CB 1896, DQMG India 1895-98, CO 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigades Tirah Expeditionary Force 1897-98, Commandant School of Musketry (Hythe) 1898-99, AG and Chief of Staff Natal Field Force 1899, Major General 1900, appointed CB then GCB 1900, CO 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade 1900-01, CO Mounted Infantry Division 1900, Military Secretary to War Office 1901, Chief of Staff (South Africa) 1901-02, Military Secretary to War Office 1902-03, QMG 1903-04, military observer Russo-Japanese War 1904-05, GOC Southern Command 1905-08, AG 1909-10, GOC Mediterranean & Inspector-General of Overseas Forces 1910-14, General Central (Home) Forces 1914-15, GOC Mediterranean Expeditionary Force (Gallipoli) 1915, Lieutenant of the Tower of London 1915-20, appointed GCMG 1919, retired 1920

Glossary of Additional Abbreviations:

AG-Adjutant General, AAG-Assistant Adjutant General, DAAG-Deputy Assistant Adjutant General, ANZAC- Australian & New Zealand Army Corps, AQMG-Assistant Quartermaster General, DAAQG-Deputy Assistant Adjutant & Quartermaster General, DQMG-Deputy Quartermaster General, QMG-Quartermaster General, DSO-Distinguished Service Order, GSO-General Staff Officer, CVO & KCVO-awards of the Victorian Order, CB, KCB & GCB-awards of the Order of the Bath, GCMG-award of the Order of St Michael and St George.

## Appendix 2 Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment 1884-85: Composition

Commanding Officer: Lieutenant Colonel E.T.H Hutton (until Nov.1884)

Bt. Major. Hon. G Gough [14<sup>th</sup> Hussars] (until 17.1.1885)

Major C Barrow (from 17.1.85)

Other Headquarters: Major T Phipps, Captain J Sewell (Adjutant)

Lieutenant R Grant (Quartermaster)

**A Company:** CO: Capt. C Payne (Gordon Highlanders)

Section No.	1	2	3	4
Parent regiment	1 <sup>st</sup> South Staffords	1 <sup>st</sup> Black Watch	3 <sup>rd</sup> KRRC	1 <sup>st</sup> Gordons
Officer Commanding	Lt. C Hore	Lt. C Livingstone	Lt. P Marling, VC and Lt. R Bower	Lt. H Stewart

**B Company:** CO: Capt. H Walsh (Somerset Light Infantry)

Section No.	1	2	3	4
Parent Regiment	2 <sup>nd</sup> Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry	1 <sup>st</sup> Sussex	2 <sup>nd</sup> Essex	1 <sup>st</sup> Queen's Own (Royal West Kent)
Officer Commanding	Lt. C Martyr	Lt. F Todd-Thornton	Lt. R Tudway	Capt. A Morse

**C Company:** CO: Capt. R Fetherstonhaugh (KRRC)

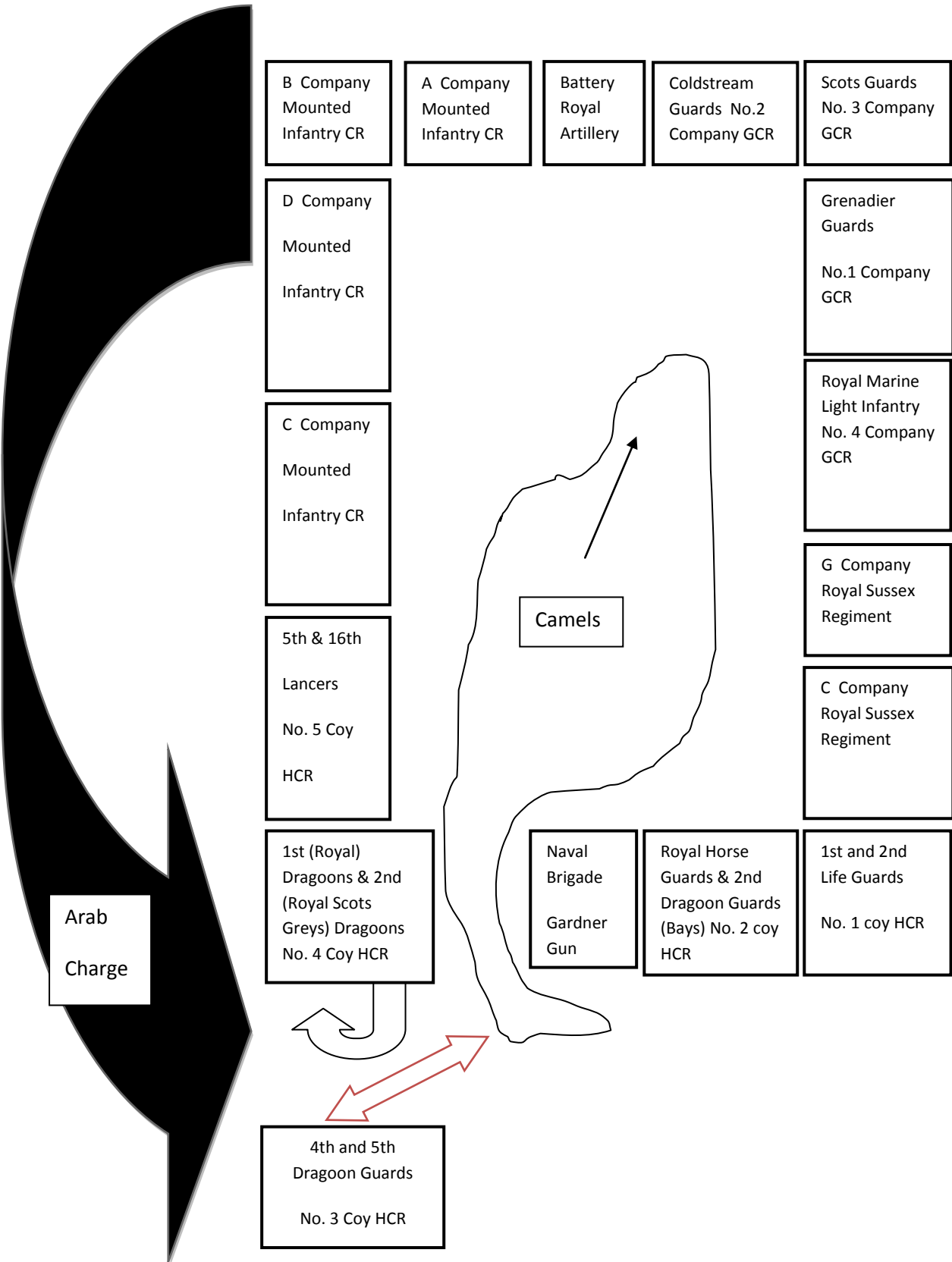
Section No.	1	2	3	4
Parent Regiment	1 <sup>st</sup> KRRC	2 <sup>nd</sup> KRRC	2 <sup>nd</sup> Rifle Brigade	3 <sup>rd</sup> Rifle Brigade
Officer Commanding	Lt. W Campbell	Lt. A Miles	Lt. W Sherston	Capt. Hon H Hardinge

**D Company:** CO: Capt. C Piggott [21<sup>st</sup> Hussars]

Section No.	1	2	3	4
Parent Regiment	1 <sup>st</sup> Somerset Light Infantry	1 <sup>st</sup> Royal Scots Fusiliers	2 <sup>nd</sup> Queen's Own (Royal West Kent)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Connaught Rangers
Officer Commanding	Lt. T Snow	Lt. H Stanwell	Lt. E Alderson	Lt. C Carden

Ref: Edward Gleichen, *With the Camel Corps up the Nile 1885* (London: Chapman and Hall 1888, Leonaur reprint paperback ed.), p.192

**Appendix 3** The Square at Abu Klea January 1885



Ref: Lieutenant Colonel R Talbot, 'The Battle of Abu Klea', *The Nineteenth Century*, 1886, XIX, pp.154-59

## Appendix Four

### Distribution of Titles among Officers of the Regiments contributing to the Camel Corps & actual numbers serving in the Camel Corps 1884-85

Camel Regiment	Earl	Viscount or Count	Other Peer	Baronet	Son of Peer	Number (% of Officers)	Number in CR (% of Officers)
<b>HCR</b>	0	3	6	5	9	23 (9%) <i>but if Household Cavalry only included:</i> 19 (28%)	8 (35%)
<b>GCR</b>	2	2	7	3	32	46 (21%)	4 (23.5%)
<b>MICR</b>	0	0	3	4	9	16 (1.8%) <i>but if KRRC and Rifle Brigade battalions only included:</i> 13 (5%)	2 (8%)*
<b>LCR</b>	1	0	0	3	14	18 (7.5%)	2 (9.5%)

Note: \* small numbers skews analysis

#### Abbreviations:

HCR: Heavy Camel Regiment

GCR: Guards Camel Regiment

MICR: Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment

LCR: Light Camel Regiment

Ref: *Army Lists 1885* (London: HMSO, 1885)

## Appendix Five

### The Development of the Regular Mounted Infantry in South Africa 1899-1902

#### **Autumn 1899**

##### Buller's Natal Field Force

##### *Composite Mounted Infantry Regiment:*

2<sup>nd</sup> Dublin Fusiliers 2<sup>nd</sup> KRRC Imperial Light Horse Natal Carbineers  
Natal Police (and part of 2<sup>nd</sup> Mounted Brigade [CO Dundonald] that included  
Thornycroft's Mounted Infantry, Bethune's Mounted Infantry, South African Light Horse)

##### Cape Colony

##### *Mounted Infantry companies:*

Southern / Aldershot, South East / Cork, Northern / Western, Dublin /  
Eastern

#### **February 1900**

##### Roberts' Field Army

##### *1<sup>st</sup> Mounted Brigade [CO Hannay]:*

1<sup>st</sup> Mounted Infantry 3<sup>rd</sup> Mounted Infantry 5<sup>th</sup> Mounted Infantry 7<sup>th</sup>  
Mounted Infantry New South Wales Mounted Rifles Roberts' Horse  
Kitchener's Horse Grahamstown Volunteer Mounted Infantry City  
Imperial Volunteers (CIV) Mounted Infantry

##### *2<sup>nd</sup> Mounted Brigade [CO Ridley]:*

2<sup>nd</sup> Mounted Infantry 4<sup>th</sup> Mounted Infantry 6<sup>th</sup> Mounted Infantry 8<sup>th</sup>  
Mounted Infantry CIV Mounted Infantry 1<sup>st</sup> Queensland Mounted  
Infantry Nesbitt's Horse New Zealand Mounted Rifles Rimington's  
Guides ('Tigers')

##### Buller's Natal Field Force

2<sup>nd</sup> Mounted Brigade (as above)

Colonial Mounted Rifles at Ladysmith and Greytown

#### **December 1900**

##### *Mounted Infantry Brigade*

Corps	Corps Commander	MI Battalions	MI Commander	Parent Regiment of MI CO
1	Shekelton	11	Maj. G Williams	South Staffs
		12	Maj. N Thomson	Seaforths

2	De Lisle	6 NSW MR West Austral MI Qu'land MI	Maj. Pennefather Lt. G. Knight Capt. S Harris Capt. H Harris	Welsh - - -
3	E. Williams	9 10	Maj. Pine Coffin Maj. W Marshall	Loyal N Lancs Derby
4	St. G. Henry	3 4	Maj N Anley Maj. H Walker	Essex Duke of Cornwall's LI
5	Jenner	13 14	Maj. E Pratt Maj. C Heighan	Durham LI West Yorks
6	Cookson	2 Roberts' H. Kitchener's H Ceylon MI Victorian MI Marshall's H.	Maj. Vandeleur Maj. Carrington Smith Maj. Robertson Maj. Murray- Mengiel Maj. Umpleby -	Irish Guards Dublin Fusiliers Connaught R - -
7	Taylor	5 7 Composite Burmese MI Nesbitt's H. MG section (2 <sup>nd</sup> Liverpool)	Maj. K Lean Maj. E Lloyd Maj. H Gough Maj. Copeman - -	Warwicks Lincolns 16 <sup>th</sup> Lancers Essex - -
8	Hickie	8	Maj. A Gosset	Cheshires

		15	Maj. H Holmes	Yorkshire
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*Abstracted Infantry Regiments*

<b>MI Number</b>	<b>Abstracted Infantry Detachments</b>
2	2/Leicester, 1/York & Lancaster, 1/Connaught Rangers, 1/Dublin Fusiliers, 2/Royal Welsh, 1/Worcester, 2/South Wales Borderers, 2/Wiltshire, 2/Lincoln, 2/Bedford, 1/Yorkshire, 2/Hampshire, 1/Royal Scots, 2/Dorset, 2/Scottish Rifles, 1/Argyll & Sutherland
3	1/Northumberland Fusiliers, 1/Loyal N Lancashire, 2/Northants, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, 2/Dublin Fusiliers
4	2/Royal Warwick, 1/Yorkshire, 2/Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, 2/Shropshire Light Infantry
5	2/Buffs, 2/East Yorkshire, 1/Royal Irish, 2/Worcester
6	2/Bedford, 1/Welsh, 1/Essex, 2/Wiltshire, 1/Gordon Highlanders
7	2/Northants, 2/Lincoln, 1/King's Own Scottish Borderers, 2/Hampshire
8	2/Cheshire, 1/Oxs & Bucks Light Infantry, 1/East Lancashire, 2/North Stafford
9	1/Derby, 2/Royal Irish Rifles, 1/Royal Munster Fusiliers, Malta MI, 2/Derby, 2/Loyal N Lancashire, 3/ Royal Warwick, 3/Lancashire Fusiliers
10	1/Royal Scots, 2/Northumberland Fusiliers, 1/Derby, 2/Royal Berkshire
11	1/South Stafford, 1/Worcester, 2/Royal Irish Fusiliers, 2/Dublin Fusiliers, 1/Royal Irish Regiment, 1/Inniskilling Fusiliers, 1/Leicester, 1/Royal Munster Fusiliers
12	1/Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, 2/Seaforth Highlanders, 2/Gordon Highlanders, 2/Black Watch, 1/High Light Infantry, 1/Cameron Highlanders, 1/Royal Scots, 2/Royal Scottish Fusiliers
13	1/Royal Sussex, 2/Bedford, 1/King's Liverpool, 1/Border, 2/Royal West Kent, 1/KRRC, 2/Rifle Brigade, 1/Rifle Brigade, 2/Royal Fusiliers, 2/Somerset Light Infantry
14	2/West Yorkshire, 2/East Yorkshire, 2/Middlesex, 1/Manchester, 2/Manchester, 1/Devon, 2/Gloucester, 2/Lancashire Fusiliers, 1/Essex
15	1/Suffolk, 1/West Riding, 2/South Wales Borderers, 2/Royal Berkshire

Composite	2/Leicester, 1/Royal Berkshire, 1/King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, 2/Manchester
Burma	2/West Riding, 2/Essex, 2/Durham Light Infantry

NB:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Mounted Infantry (Rifle, South Eastern, South, Cork companies) functioned as Brigade troops
- Some battalions contributed detachments to more than one Mounted Infantry battalion

### December 1901:

#### *Mounted Infantry Corps:*

Battalion	Commander	Parent Regiment
1	Maj. ( <i>local Lt-Col</i> ) Taylor	Gloucester
2	Bt Maj. Brooke	King's Own Yorkshire LI
3	Bt. Maj. Anley	Essex
4	Bt. Maj. Walker	Duke of Cornwall LI
5	Bt. Lt-Col. Lean	Royal Warwicks
6	Bt Lt-Col. Sladen	Yorkshire
7	Maj. Lloyd	Lincoln
8	Bt. Maj. Gosset	Cheshire
9	Bt. Maj. Pine-Coffin	Loyal N Lancashire
10	Bt. Maj. Marshall	Derby
11	-	-
12	Capt. ( <i>local Maj.</i> ) Thomson	Seaforths
13	Bt. Maj. Pratt	Durham LI
14	Capt. ( <i>local Maj.</i> ) Bridgford	Manchester
15	Capt. ( <i>local Maj.</i> ) Holmes	Yorkshire
16	Capt. ( <i>local Maj.</i> ) Going	South Stafford
17	Capt. ( <i>local Maj.</i> ) Duncan	Royal Scots
18	Maj. Macan	Scottish Rifles



19	Maj. Lawford	Royal Fusiliers
20	Maj. Du Maurier	Royal Fusiliers
21	-	-
22	Bt. Lt-Col. Sitwell	Northumberland Fusiliers
23	Maj. Ramsay	Rifle Brigade
24	Capt. ( <i>local Maj.</i> ) Gough	16 <sup>th</sup> Lancers
25	Capt. ( <i>local Maj.</i> ) Eustace	KRRC
26	Bt. Maj. Wiggin	13 <sup>th</sup> Hussars
Burma	Maj. Copeman	Essex

Refs.

TNA WO 108 / 80 Forces in South Africa October 1899 – December 1901

Colonel W.H.H Walters & Colonel H. Du Cane (trans.), *The German Official Account of the War in South Africa* (London: John Murray, 1906), Vol. 2, pp.350-53

TNA WO 105 / 29 Mounted Brigade December 1900

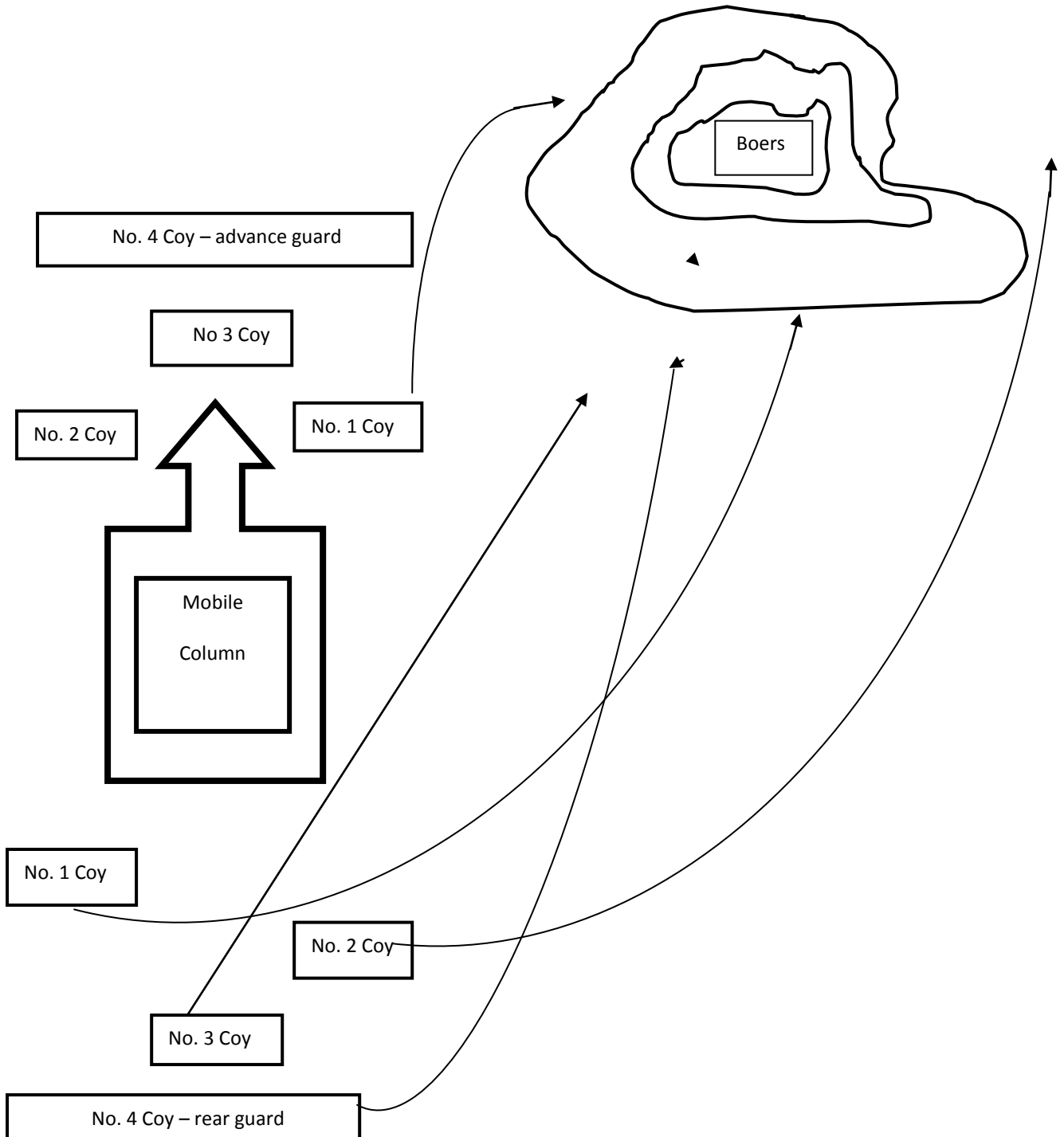
*Army List* December 1901 (London: HMSO, 1901)

## Appendix Six

### Evolution of Mounted Infantry Tactics in South Africa 1899 – 1902: 'the Galloping Charge'

Ref:

Capt. L. Saunderson, *Notes on Mounted Infantrymen* (London: Gale & Polden, 1904), p.41



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