

Regimental History

3rd The King's Own Hussars

Originally formed in 1685 as the Queen Consort's Regiment of Dragoons, The 3rd Hussars won their first Battle Honour at Dettingen in 1743. They suffered heavy losses charging French Cavalry, which outnumbered the regiment by ten to one, but finally overcame to drive the enemy from the field and at the same time capture two silver kettle drums, replicas of which are still held by the Regiment.

The 3rd Hussars were active in all the major battles of the Napoleonic Wars, including those of the decisive Peninsular Campaign from 1808-1814. At Salamanca, Vittoria and Toulouse, the Regiment won further Battle Honours.

In 1837, The 3rd Hussars moved to India where the Regiment earned fame and admiration as 'the finest Cavalry in the sub-continent'. At Moodkee, The 3rd Hussars charged a vastly superior Sikh cavalry force and anxious watchers feared the Regiment had been completely destroyed, but a few moments later, the Sikhs wavered, then fled in disarray. The Regiment charged on, rode through the enemy guns and lead the way for the pursuit to be taken up by the rest of the British force.

In 1900 The 3rd Hussars were ordered to South Africa where they distinguished themselves against the mounted infantry of the Boer Commandos.

During the Great War (1914-1918) the Regiment formed part of the 2nd Cavalry Division. In appalling conditions, the Regiment fought in the bloody trenches of France and Flanders and the twenty-five Battle Honours awarded testify to the monumental courage and sacrifice of these years.

In 1936, The 3rd Hussars was the first Cavalry Regiment to be chosen to be reequipped with tanks, and in 1940 the Regiment had its first opportunity to use them in anger.

As the original 'Desert Rats', the 3rd Hussars joined a force of only 30,000 to defeat the Italian Army at Buq Buq and inflict 120,000 casualties. Later, in October 1942, the Regiment was chosen to spearhead the attack on the German Africa Korps at El Alamein. The enemy positions were protected by thick minefields and a heavy concentration of anti-tank guns, but the Regiment had orders to break through at any cost.

After four days of continuous desperate fighting at very close quarters – often muzzle to muzzle with the German guns, a breach was made and the whole Eighth Army was able to pour through the gap. Of the 51 tanks which had been taken into action, 47 had been destroyed and 21 officers and 96 men had been killed or wounded. The Regiment left North Africa and embarked for Italy where it remained until the end of the War, when it then led the advance guard of the Allied forces during their final march to victory.

After the war, The 3rd Hussars served in Palestine as the airborne reconnaissance regiment and in Germany, until amalgamation with the 7th Hussars in 1958.



The 4th Queen's Own Hussars

The 4th Queen's Own Hussars were raised in 1685 as Berkeley's Dragoons and like The 3rd Hussars gained their first Battle Honour at Dettingen. They too fought in Wellington's Peninsula Campaign and won six Battle Honours fighting alongside The 3rd Hussars at Salamanca, Vittoria and Toulouse. After the fall of Napoleon, they won further distinction in the Afghan War.

Next came one of the most glorious days in the history of the 4th Hussars, indeed one of the best remembered of all cavalry actions, the Charge of the Light Brigade. It was The 4th Light Dragoons who silenced the Russian guns and, supporting them in the next line were The 8th Hussars. "Balaklava" is one of the many Battle Honours which both regiments have, and Balaklava Day was celebrated by both every year. Private Samuel Parkes of the Regiment was awarded the Victoria Cross for his courageous defence of the Trumpet-Major after the charge.

The Regiment now entered a period of Home and Imperial service until the outbreak of the Great War. It was at this time that Winston Churchill served in The 4th Hussars. He became Colonel of the Regiment during the last World War and remained so until his death.

In 1914, the Regiment sailed for France and almost immediately saw action, never leaving the area until the Armistice in 1918. The 4th Hussars won 21 Battle Honours and nearly 100 awards for gallantry – but at a high price, losing 500 men killed or wounded.

After mechanisation in 1936 the Regiment saw extensive action during the Second World War in Greece, the Western Desert and Italy. In spite of a spirited defence, Greece was a disaster and The 4th Hussars had to be reformed in Cairo in 1941. In 1942, the Regiment reversed its fortunes at the Battle of Alam El Halfa acting this time in conjunction with The 8th Hussars, and then followed up the success by helping to pursue the defeated Afrika Korps after the decisive action of The 3rd Hussars at El Alamein.

After the end of the war, The 4th Hussars were involved in the Malayan Campaign before being sent to Germany and amalgamating with The 8th Hussars in 1958.



The 7th Queen's Own Hussars

Cunningham's Dragoons, the first title for The 7th Hussars, were raised in Scotland originally in 1689. Again, Dettingen was their first Battle Honour.

During the Peninsula War, the Regiment fought with great distinction and shares many of the same Battle Honours as The 3rd and The 4th Hussars. After this campaign, Napoleon was forced into exile and peace returned to Europe. However, The 7th Hussars found themselves at war again when he escaped from Elba.

It was only on the field of Waterloo that Napoleon was finally defeated. The 7th Hussars charged time after time to protect the British Infantry and routed the French Imperial Guard – the elite of the French Army. Wellington singled out The 7th Hussars for special commendation after this famous and closely contested battle.

The 7th Hussars were then sent to Canada, first helping to eject an American invasion and then staying on in a protective role. In 1900 the Regiment was sent, along with The 3rd and 8th Hussars, to the Boer War.

When the Great War broke out, The 7th Hussars were in India but quickly moved to Mesopotamia to fight the Turkish forces there. During a long and arduous campaign, the Regiment achieved major successes and was awarded the Battle Honours of Sharquat and Khan Baghdadi.

The Regiment exchanged its horses for light tanks and found itself in the Middle East again at the outbreak of the Second World War. As part of the famous 7th Armoured Brigade Desert Rats, The 7th Hussars fought in the important battle of Fort Capuzzo and Beda Fomm. At the bitter struggle of Sidi Rezegh, the Regiment was ordered to stop the advance of 200 German tanks. It succeeded in this herculean task, though all but three of its 51 tanks had been destroyed at the end of the battle.

In 1942, the Regiment was sent to Burma where it covered the long retreat to India. Fierce fighting along the jungle tracks took a terrible toll, but the Regiment never failed to do all that was asked of it, and fought tooth and nail to save the Army. General Alexander said of The 7th Hussars –“Without them we should never have got the Army out of Burma; no praise can be too high for them”.

After the Second World War, the Regiment was engaged in a period of service in England before amalgamating with The 3rd Hussars in 1958.



The 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars

In 1693 Colonel Conyngham raised a Regiment of Dragoons in Ireland. The first active service of these 8th Hussars was during the War of Spanish Succession where they defeated a Spanish Cavalry Corps and to add insult to injury, stole their crossbelts and killed them with their own swords. They were afterwards known as the “Crossbelt Dragoons”, and the Regimental Journal is still called “The Crossbelts”.

After service in England which saw extensive action to suppress the 1745 Rebellion, The 8th Hussars enjoyed a quieter period until the start of the Napoleonic Wars. The Regiment distinguished itself in the 1794 Flanders Campaign although at a very high price and then continued with active duty in South Africa and Egypt.

In 1803, The 8th Hussars gained their first Battle Honour “Leswarree”, during the Meratha War in India.

The 8th Hussars served alongside The 4th in the Crimea, and also charged with the fateful Light Brigade, successfully breaking up the Russian Counter-attack which followed.

The Regiment was then sent to India to help with the murderous Bengal Sepoy Mutiny. In 1858, a Squadron of The 8th Hussars charged a vastly superior enemy force of Gwalior winning four Victoria Crosses in the process. A fifth Victoria Cross was added at the Battle of Beejapore a few months later. Central India 1857–58 became a Battle Honour for the Regiment.

The 8th Hussars were stationed once more in India when the Great War broke out. Like The 3rd and 4th Hussars, they spent the duration of the war winning the bitter struggle on the Western Front. For almost all of the war, the Regiment was confined to the trenches, however at Villiers-Faucon, D Squadron managed to mount the last heroic charge of The 8th Hussars in 1917. The last mounted parade of the Regiment was on Armistice Day in 1938.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, the Regiment found itself fighting alongside The 3rd, 4th, and 7th Hussars in all the great battle of the Desert Rats. In addition The 8th Hussars landed in Normandy in June 1944 and fought all the way across Europe to Hamburg with the Allied advance.

In 1950 the Regiment was sent to the aid of the UN forces in Korea, only to find them in full retreat before the more numerous Chinese forces. The UN forces gradually took up the offensive again and the Regiment fought gallantly in the Battle of Imjin river and the actions around Seoul and Kowant-San before returning to Germany in 1952.

In 1958, The 8th Hussars amalgamated with The 4th Hussars.



The Queen's Own Hussars

The Queen's Own Hussars were formed from the amalgamation of The 3rd Hussars and the 7th Hussars in Tidworth in 1958.

The Regiment remained in England until 1960 with one Squadron detached to Aden for a period until it was reunited as the Armoured Regiment of The 6th Infantry Brigade Group in Munster, Germany. Further service in Germany and England was followed by active duty in Aden in 1967 where the Regiment distinguished itself by winning one MC and being awarded six Mentions in Despatches.

The Queen's Own Hussars returned very briefly to England until 1968 when one Squadron was sent to Singapore, another to United Nations duty in Cyprus and a third to Hong Kong.

In 1970, the Regiment was reunited once more and sent to Hohn, Germany, to take charge of the new Chieftain tank. A very busy period followed for The Queen's Own Hussars with

the tours in Northern Ireland (both in the mounted and dismounted role) in 1972, 1973, 1977 and 1979, a period as RAC Training Regiment in England, and a move to Detmold, Germany.

In 1983, the Regiment found itself in England again as the Royal Armoured Corp (RAC) Training Regiment before it returned to Hohne in 1985 where it was stationed as part of 1 Armoured Division. After 1985 The Queen's Own Hussars remained as active as ever and were sent to Cyprus as part of the United Nations' force.

In 1993 the Regiment had one Independent Squadron in Cyprus and another on tour in Northern Ireland.



The Queen's Royal Irish Hussars

On 24th October, 1958, amalgamation of The 4th Hussars and The 8th Hussars took place at Hohne. The Regiment served in Germany as part of The 7th Armoured Brigade until June 1961, when it left for England in preparation for its move to Aden.

Following a year in Aden the Regiment was dispatched to Malaya for its emergency, and fought a short campaign in Borneo. It returned to Germany in 1964 as an Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment stationed in Wolfenbuttel.

The Regiment moved back to England in early 1968, converting from their armoured car role to that of an Armoured Regiment; later that year the Regiment moved from Perham Down to Bovington to take up its new role as the RAC Centre Regiment.

After two years at Bovington the Regiment returned to Germany as a Chieftain Armoured Regiment located at Paderborn. In 1974 the Regiment moved to Cyprus to work with the United Nations in the aftermath of the Greek Coup and Turkish invasion.

In 1982 the Regiment returned again to Germany to form part of The 4th Armoured Brigade stationed in Munster; from here in 1983, it provided the Prison Guard Force for the Maze Prison in Northern Ireland for a 5 month period. In May 1985 the Regiment celebrated its Tercentenary with a presentation of a new Guidon by the Colonel-in-Chief.

In 1987 the Regiment converted from Chieftain to the Challenger tank, before moving back to England in 1988 as the new split RAC Training Regiment.

The Regiment moved to Fallingbommel in March 1990 and once again became part of The 7th Armoured Brigade. It was one of the two armoured regiments of the famous Desert Rats and took part in Operation GRANBY and led the 1st (British) Armoured Division into Iraq and subsequently on to Kuwait. During the One Hundred Hours war Kuwait was liberated and much of the Iraqi army was destroyed.

During 1993, the Regiment served on United Nations Duty in Cyprus.