

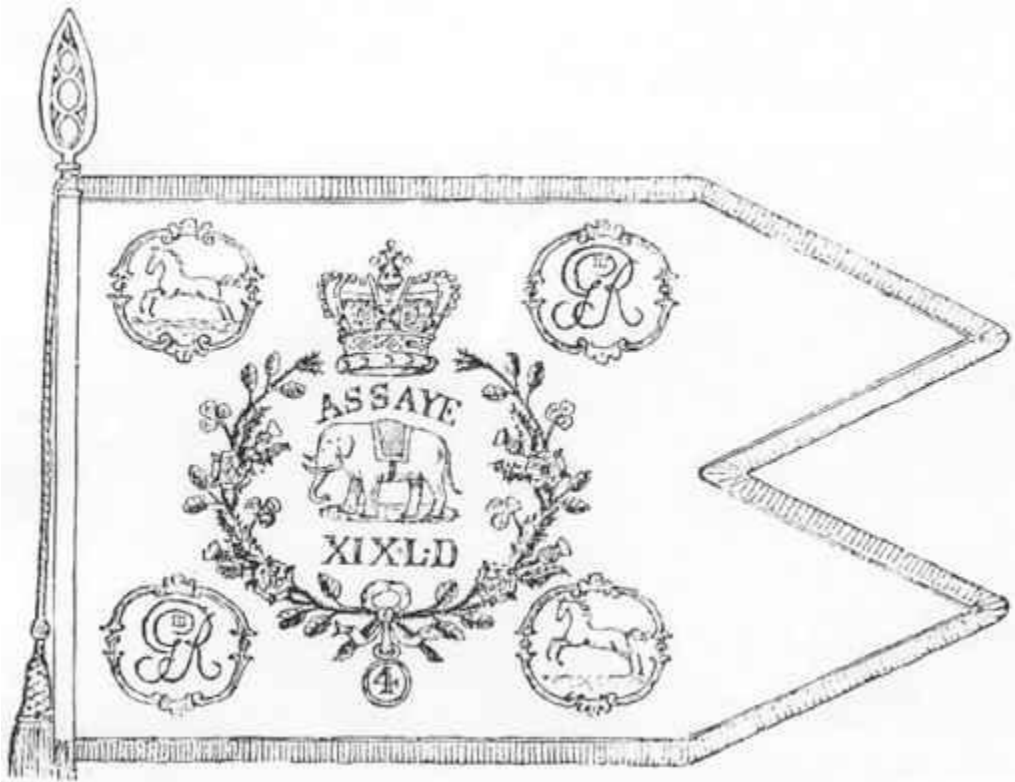
# 19<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons Handbook



By Troop Sgt Major Brian Luscombe  
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1<sup>st</sup> edition

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# Introduction

This handbook is not the final authority on the 19<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons. It is an evolving document that serves as a set of guidelines for Unit members in order to present the best portrayal of a regular British Cavalryman during the War of 1812. Please utilize this handbook and refer to it often for guidance in order to present the best impression you can.

Cheers! Troop Sgt Major Luscombe



# History of the 19<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons 1786-1821

The original Regiment was founded in 1781 as the 23<sup>rd</sup> Light Dragoons originally destined for Indian Service. In 1786, the Regiment was renumbered the 19<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons while in India. During this stay, the Regiment earned high honours in India at such battles as Seringapatnam, The Vellore Mutiny and Wellington's famous victory, Assaye.



In 1806 the Regiment returned to England where it did not take part in the Peninsular campaign against Napoleon, and in May 1813, arrived in Canada as the only regular British Cavalry unit to see action in the Canadas and Upstate New York during the War of 1812.

After the Regiment arrived in Canada in the spring of 1813, a Squadron consisting of two Troops was sent to the Niagara frontier to take part in the fighting. Due to a lack of suitable mounts, members of the 19<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons fought dismounted and also acted as mounted vedettes and dispatch riders. During battles such as Fort Erie and Lundy's Lane, members of the 19<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons proved their worth time and time again. Although small in numbers, the 19<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons made a difference during the War of 1812.



# Structure

We represent A Troop of the 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron of the 19<sup>th</sup> Light Dragons and thusly carry both the King's Guidon and the Squadron Guidon.



The rank structure of the Unit encompasses both Commissioned and Non-Commissioned members.

The Officers of the Unit represent both the Squadron Commander as a Major, and the Troop Commander as a Captain. These Gentlemen would have come from the upper classes in England, Scotland or Ireland and would have been educated and excellent horsemen. They would have purchased their commissions and ranks and would move up the hierarchy through purchase or death of a higher-ranking officer in battle.

The Non-Commissioned officers are the Troop Sergeant Major, who carries the King's Guidon and a Sergeant who carries the Squadron Guidon. These men would have started in the Regiment as regular Dragoons and through hard work, intelligence and experience, worked their way up the ranks to their hard earned positions. In the Infantry, young Junior Lieutenants carried the Regimental Colours, where a Colour Guard of Senior NCOs would protect them. In the Cavalry, the only one protected the Guidons were their bearers and the NCOs had to be brave and tough.

The remaining members of the Unit are Dragoons. In the infantry they would be called Privates. They are highly trained cavalymen, both in the saddle and dismounted and are able to fight on horseback with sabre and on foot with carbine and musket if called upon. When dismounted the Dragoon fights as a light infantryman, fighting in pairs, one partner firing while the other remains loaded, ready to protect his partner. While mounted, the Dragoon conducts reconnaissance, acts as scouts or vedettes and also performs dispatch riding, along with the regular cavalry maneuvers of the charge!



# Activity

We portray both mounted and dismounted impressions with members expected to have both mounted and dismounted uniforms and those who will ride to have their own saddles and tack in the prescribed pattern.

Members of the Unit have traveled as far as Puerto Rico for events.



They have also attended Old Bedford Village, Pennsylvania to the battlefields of Crysler's Farm in Eastern Ontario and the Niagara area. Historic sites such as Fort George welcome our mounted impression as does Crysler's Farm and other places cannot have horses due to the size of the events. Either way, the 19<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons fulfill their role to the best of their abilities.



# Uniforms

We wear the pre-1812 Light Dragoon uniform consisting of a Tarleton helmet, white wool braided dark blue dress jacket with yellow collar and cuffs called a dolman, white pantaloons and boots. When mounted we wear Hessian riding boots and when dismounted, ankle boots with black wool knee gaiters. When not in battle, members wear stable dress, a plain dark blue jacket with yellow collar tabs and cuffs and a soft dark blue cap with yellow headband and pompom and white trousers. Stable dress is worn for fatigue duties and gives the dress uniform a chance to breathe after seeing action.

The Tarleton helmet is made of a leather shell with a bearskin crest on top, a leather visor edged in brass and a white and red feather on one side with a white metal cap badge on the other and a chain encrusted turban wrapped around the helmet. Brass chinscales protect the wearer's face from sabre cuts and hold the helmet on the wearer's head during the charge. A white metal brow plate above the visor finishes off the splendid helmet with XIX Light Dragoons on it.



The Dolman is a Hussar styled braided jacket, cut short and tight. Rows of braided white wool decorate the chest and the back seams and false pockets are also decorated with white wool braid. Three rows of white metal buttons adorn the chest as well.

The white cotton pantaloons are tight fitting on the legs and serve as excellent riding pants and are also comfortable for dismounted fighting.

In colder weather, members wear dark blue, sleeved caped cloaks and grey wool leather reinforced trousers called overalls, decorated with a yellow stripe up the outer seam of the legs



# Accoutrements

Members are expected to obtain the accoutrements and weapons of a Light Dragoon which consist of a 1796 light cavalry sabre, sword belt and sabretache, a cartouche box and sling with carbine clip, haversack and canteen of the approved pattern and a 1796 heavy dragoon carbine for participation in battles.

1796 Light Cavalry Sabre:



We recommend purchasing a reproduction sabre in the beginning. A white leather sword knot attaches to the sabre knuckle guard to prevent the rider from losing his sabre during battle.

1796 Heavy Cavalry Carbine:



Although the 19<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons carried Paget and Baker carbines, these firearms are difficult to acquire and are cost prohibitive. In lieu of these, the unit carries the 1796 Heavy Cavalry carbine instead. They have a carbine sling bar on them and are easy to use and safe to fire.

The sword belt is made of white buff leather and attached to it is a black leather sabretache attached by two white buff straps. The sabretache was the attaché case of the period and could be used as a writing desk on horseback.

The cartouche box held the ammunition for the carbine and carbine sling attached the carbine to the rider for ease of carriage with a clip.

The haversack was made of grey linen and was designed to carry the soldier's rations. Members are also expected to have a musket tool, extra flints and a cleaning rag in their haversack for battles.



The canteen was a blue painted wooden canteen held by a brown leather strap. Regimental markings were not in use in Canada as the haversacks and canteens were issued by the Ordinance Dept upon arrival unlike the Peninsular campaign against Napoleon.



A common mistake re-enactors make is to have their accoutrements hang too low on their hips. In reality the haversack and canteen were worn high on the body so as not to interfere with the drawing of the sabre or riding. The haversack and canteen were worn on the left side of the body and the cartouche box on the right.

The sequence of donning accoutrements for battle was cartouche box, haversack, then canteen last as it was easiest to remove to drink and refill.

# Orders of Dress

Stable Dress	Stable cap
	Stable jacket
	White duck trousers
	Ankle boots
Field Dress	Tarleton helmet
	Dolman
	White duck trousers
	Gaiters (dismounted)
	Ankle boots (dismounted)
	Hessian boots (mounted)
	Field gear (haversack, canteen)
	Sword belt and sabretache (mounted only)
Cartouche belt	
Parade Dress	Tarleton helmet
	Dolman
	White duck trousers
	Hessian boots
	Sword belt and sabretache
	Cartouche belt
Mess Dress	Dolman
	Waistcoat
	White duck trousers
	Frilled shirt with white neck stock
	Ankle boots



# The Mess



The Mess of the 19<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons is where the King's and Squadron Guidons are housed when not on the field.

It is a place where all members are equals and affords everyone the ability to come together for dining, drinking and relaxation. It is a place of dignity and the home of all members of the Regiment. The Mess is where guests are entertained and the appellation of Gentlemen and Ladies assigned to all who enter.

All members are expected to contribute to the Mess through donations of fine wines, port and Madeira, hardware such as plates, bowls, silverware and glasses or any other items of good taste that brings refinement and dignity to the Mess.

A member of the Unit is appointed the President of the Mess Committee and as such will be responsible for events in the Mess from time to time as the Command sees fit to institute. Special events call for Mess Dress as per the Orders of Dress.

# Traditions

The 19<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoon's traditions have been lost to us in the fog of history. With that being said, we can still look to the traditions of the British Cavalry to assist us in recreating Regimental traditions that we can still celebrate.

The Elephant of Assaye has been a battle honours device for the 19<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons ever since participating in that fateful day in 1803. The Unit holds a silver elephant that accompanies the Regiment to all reenactments and sits on the Mess dining table for all events.



While in India, the 19<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons obtained the nickname "The Terrors of the East" for their ferocious reputation in battle. This saying is the response to the toast to the Regiment. The proposer of the toast will say, "The 19<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons", the response of all members of the Unit will be, "The Terrors of the East".

The Unit hosts a Regimental Dinner every winter in late January to early February in Ingersol, Ontario at the renowned Elmhurst Inn.

When passing the port at a Mess Dinner, the decanter or bottle shall be passed sitting down from member to member beginning with the senior officer present to the most junior member. The port is not to touch the table, but to be passed from hand to hand. When the last glass is filled, then it can be set down. Members will fill their own glasses and not pour for someone else. All toasts are to be drunk with port.

All beverages are to be drunk out of a glass, and not the container they came in.

Headdress is not to be worn inside the Mess unless the member is on duty as the Officer of the Day, or duty NCO and on official business.

The Guidons are not to be touched by anyone who is not a member of the Regiment. The Troop Sgt Major is to carry the King's Guidon and the Senior Sgt is to carry the Squadron Guidon. When not at a reenactment, the Guidons are to be deposited with the Senior Sgt.

From time to time, new traditions will be acquired and added to this book.

## Safety

Safety is the responsibility of everyone in the Unit. If they see a situation in battle or in camp that potentially presents a hazard to themselves or others, they are to address it immediately by their own action or notifying the chain of command.

All firearms are to be treated as loaded and not pointed at anyone except for in battle situations and then only when a safe distance is between the firer and his opponent. When at close proximity, the barrel of the firearm will be elevated.

Sabres are to remain sheathed unless ordered to be drawn by a ranking officer or NCO. Battle with sabres will be scripted when mounted.

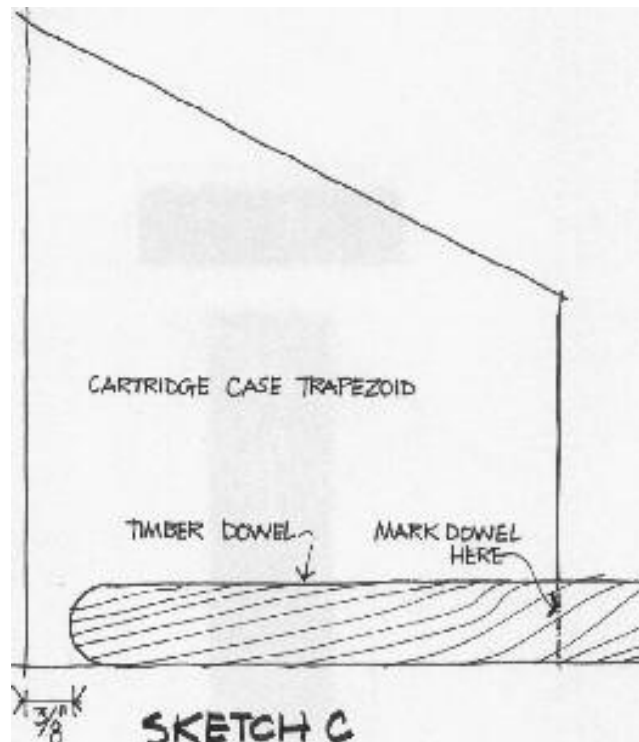


# Cartridge Making

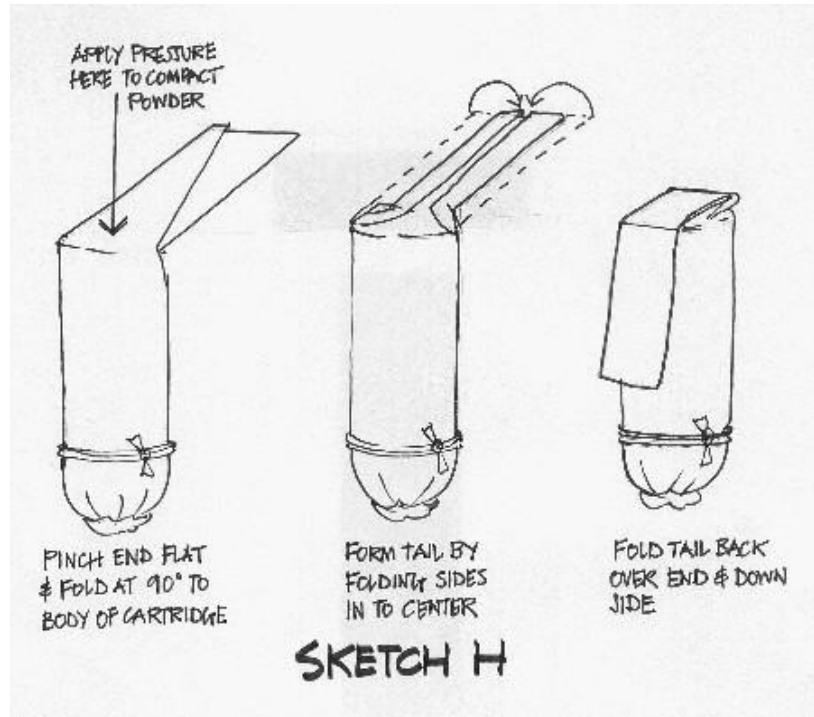
Cartridges are essential for battle during re-enactments and as such are required to be made by the participants. The basic ingredients of cartridges are a trapezoid shape of paper, and black powder, either ff or fff grade.

The tools required for rolling the cartridge are a piece of  $\frac{5}{8}$  " dowel, about 6 inches in length and rounded off at one end, a glue stick, and an abundant supply of paper cut into trapezoid shapes of uniform dimension of  $4" \times 4" \times 2\frac{1}{2}"$ .

The paper is laid flat with the roller (dowel) lain lengthwise on the base of the paper. At the same time a strip of glue is laid onto the top of the paper prior to rolling so that when the roller is removed, the paper is glued into a tube and the overhanging end is folded in on itself and likewise glued, allowing one end open to introduce the powder charge. Allow the glue to dry prior to filling with powder.



A charge of no more than 100 grains of powder is then poured into the paper tube and the paper folded in on itself and then the tail is folded in three lengthwise creating a tail to grasp once the cartridge is in the cartouche box.



For ease of making a lot of cartridges, it helps to get a block of wood and pre-drill holes in order to get the paper tubes to stand upright for filling of black powder. One can also use the wood block from their cartouche box.

Use a brass powder measure for accurate loading and ensure that cartridge making and powder handling is never done near anyone smoking or an open flame. A thin paper is best as regular office paper is too thick. Brown wrapping paper works well.

Since cartridges are ammunition they must be stored properly in a legal container at home. Avoid using a metal box in the field and it is highly recommended to purchase an ammunition box from the Regimental box sutler Highland Trading Company.

# Carbine Drill

Taken from the papers of Robert Long in the National Army Museum

1. Fall In: The Dragoon Falls in, in the Carry position, with arms supported from the advance, left hand brought across the right.
2. Attention: The right hand brought smartly down to the side – right foot up – the piece remaining at the support, the barrel resting in the hollow of the arm.
3. Carry Arms: The piece is brought perpendicular in the right side the back of the butt advanced as far as the right knee – the left hand at the same time brought smartly across the body the fingers of the left hand striking the top of the brass pipe near the muzzle – the hand to be brought away by signal.
4. Present Arms: 1<sup>st</sup> strike the piece smartly with the left hand – at the same time bringing the thumb and finger of the right hand behind the lock  
  
2<sup>nd</sup> Bring the piece to the poise, the lock to the front and the fingers of the left hand as high as the left eye.  
  
3<sup>rd</sup> drop the piece to the position of the rest, to the extent of the right arm, standing well up and head true to the front taking care the body is perfectly square.
5. Advance Arms: 1<sup>st</sup> Turn the piece smartly into the right side the fingers of the left hand pressing the brass pipe near to the muzzle.  
  
2<sup>nd</sup> Quit the piece with the left hand.
6. Port Arms: The piece to be brought up in one motion – the forefinger of the left hand upon the upper screw of the bar – the thumb of the right hand on the breach pointing along the barrel.



7. Advance Arms: 1<sup>st</sup> bring the carbine in to the right side, the fingers of the left hand at the same time pressing the brass pipe – care to be taken that the left arm is straight across the body that the man stands up with the head square to the front.

2<sup>nd</sup> Quit the left hand after three pauses of the ordinary time.

8. Recover Arms: The piece is brought up at one motion – the forefinger of the left hand as high as the upper crook of the bar – the left elbow close to the piece.

9. Shoulder Arms: The same as from the port.

10. Secure Arms: 1<sup>st</sup> bring the carbine to the rest at one motion.

2<sup>nd</sup> Turn the butt under the left arm, the left hand grasping the piece at the upper part of the bar, the finger of the right hand pointing to the left elbow.

3<sup>rd</sup> Quit the right hand.

11. Advance Arms: 1<sup>st</sup> Seize the piece with the forefinger and thumb of the right hand close to the guard.

2<sup>nd</sup> Turn the piece down to the rest – the foot in this case does not move.

3<sup>rd</sup> Bring the piece to the advance the fingers of the left hand pressing the pipe.

4<sup>th</sup> Bring the hand away.

12. Support Arms: This is done in one motion, the butt thrown forward nearly in line with the right toe – the barrel falling into the hollow of the right arm