



A full-page background image showing a ceremonial rider on a dark horse at night. The rider is wearing a highly ornate, gold-colored helmet with a plume and a red and black uniform with white sashes. The horse is also decorated with gold chains. In the background, another rider in similar attire is visible, and a crowd of spectators can be seen in the distance under warm, ambient lighting.

THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD CAVALRY IN ABU DHABI

CEREMONIAL MOUNTED LEGENDS

By Nada H. Abdelmoniem



SEPTEMBER 30TH 2009 WAS THE OPENING FOR THE ABU DHABI INTERNATIONAL HUNTING AND EQUESTRIAN EXHIBITION (ADIHEX). HELD UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF HIS HIGHNESS SHEIKH HAMDAN BIN ZAYED AL NAHYAN, CHAIRMAN OF THE EMIRATES FALCONERS' CLUB, THE NATIONAL EVENT ENJOYED CAMEL AND HORSE AUCTIONS, SALUKI BEAUTY CONTESTS, ART COMPETITIONS AND TRADITIONAL HUNTING ACTIVITIES. VISITORS HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO PURCHASE THE LATEST CAMPING, HUNTING, EQUESTRIAN AND WEAPONRY EQUIPMENT; AS WELL AS SEE A DESIGNATED HERITAGE AREA TO ACQUAINT THEM WITH THE DEEP-ROOTED TRADITIONS OF ABU DHABI AND THE UAE.

AS IT IS PART OF CULTURE AND TRADITION, FALCONS AND SALUKI DOGS ALWAYS CAPTURE THE INTEREST OF VISITORS, AND NEVER THE LEAST, THE ARABIAN HORSE COMPETITIONS ALSO PROVED TO BE A BIG SUCCESS. EXCEPT THIS YEAR AT ADIHEX, THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE 4 DAY EVENT WAS THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD CAVALRY MUSICAL RIDE WHICH CARRIED THE AUDIENCE AWAY WITH GENUINE APPLAUSE.

FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND AWAY FROM HOME AND EUROPE, THE UNITED KINGDOM EQUINE MUSICAL DISPLAY TEAM OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II'S HOUSEHOLD CAVALRY PERFORMED TWICE A DAY THROUGHOUT THE 4 DAY EVENT TO DAILY ENTHUSIASTIC SPECTATORS, WHILE FLAMBOYANTLY CAPTURING THE INTEREST OF MANY MEDIA OUTLETS, FROM TELEVISION TO PUBLICATIONS. THE HORSES AND SOLDIERS THAT MAKE UP THE HOUSEHOLD CAVALRY MOUNTED REGIMENT'S TEAM OF HORSE RIDERS CALLED 'THE MUSICAL RIDE' EXHIBITED THEIR TRADITIONAL EQUINE SKILLS IN ATTRACTIVE ICONIC BRITISH CEREMONIAL UNIFORM SET TO MUSIC.

HORSE TIMES MAGAZINE WISHED TO HIGHLIGHT THE CONCEPT BEHIND TRANSPORTING THE WHOLE REGIMENT FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM TO ABU DHABI AND THE EFFORTS EXERTED BETWEEN THEM AND THE ORGANISERS FROM ABU DHABI AUTHORITY FOR CULTURE & HERITAGE (ADACH), THEREFORE HAD THE CHANCE TO INTERVIEW THE ADJUTANT OF THE HOUSEHOLD CAVALRY MOUNTED REGIMENT (BASED AT HYDE PARK BARRACKS IN KNIGHTSBRIDGE LONDON) CAPTAIN EDWARD OLVER LG, WHO CONFERRED HIS THOUGHTS ON THE WHOLE EXPERIENCE.

How long have you been part of the Household Cavalry Musical Ride, and to your personal perspective, what can you tell us about it?

I have been at The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment (HCMR) for 2 years and prior to that I was at the Household Cavalry Armoured Regiment based in Windsor for 5 years. The Household Cavalry is a remarkable regiment; it is the oldest and most senior in the British Army. We have the unique privilege of escorting HM the Queen on Ceremonial occasions and yet also deploy on operations around the world (without our horses).

The HCMR dates back to 16th century; how was this legacy maintained and what kind of challenges are faced when it comes to training, discipline, order & organisation?

The disciplines on display with the Musical Ride have been around since the foundation of the Household Cavalry in 1660. The manoeuvres on display in Abu Dhabi were first performed as a routine in 1882. Of course the music and production values have changed but the soldiers and horses train in the same way they always have. Discipline is a central tenet of any army and the reason The Musical Ride exists today is to train the soldiers in a disciplined environment. Furthermore, the soldiers who have been to Abu Dhabi have had such a parameter busting experience that they will no longer worry about when we take the Musical Ride to a domestic show. Nothing can bring confidence more than wide experience. I am personally delighted to have seen our soldiers building bridges across cultures and developing an understanding of Islam and Arab culture and heritage. The Household Cavalry is a most recognisable part of Great Britain and so maintaining our culture and heritage is an integral part of our function.

This is the first time ever for the HCMR to perform in a country besides Great Britain, and the first time to perform in an Arab country; how did the idea come about? How many horses came to Abu Dhabi?

We perform overseas from time to time but we have never performed outside Europe. When I was appointed as the Musical Ride Officer I decided to investigate taking the Musical Ride to a new audience. The Arab world has an affinity for the horse that cannot be matched. I found a very inspiring and committed partner in the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage (ADACH) and together we crafted this unique project to bring the majesty of ceremonial Britain to celebrate culture and heritage in Abu Dhabi. We had a wonderful time in the Emirates and performed to a very receptive audience both local and expatriate. The team that travelled to Abu Dhabi consisted of 46 men and 30 horses, with 28 performing at any one time.

Were any technical challenges faced upon agreeing that the HCMR will perform in Abu Dhabi?

We had a fabulous team with the very best provision for horse welfare. We worked hard for up to 12 months before the event so actually we gave ourselves the best chance of success and thankfully there were no incidents. Of course flying 30 horses and 46 men and planning for any outcome is a challenge, but it is also fun to overcome, especially with so many new friends in Abu Dhabi to liaise with.

What can you tell us about ADIHEX organisers and their support to transporting the regiment to the Emirates?

The organisers of ADIHEX and ADACH in particular were the most fantastic hosts and promoted the Household Cavalry extremely well! There was not a single spare seat during the performances and ADACH gave us the greatest gift by inviting us and giving us the opportunity to perform in front of a new and receptive audience. They thought of everything and made our visit to the Emirates great fun and a memory for all to cherish.

The Musical Ride performed twice a day for the duration of 4 days; what can you tell us about the efforts exerted in practice/rehearsals and maintaining order having been in an alien country?

We did 7 performances over a 5 day period. Each performance lasts no more than 20 minutes for the horses so actually it is quite a short period of exercise for them. We had a 2 week period of acclimatisation before the performances and so our horses and men were comfortable with the conditions. It is however important to note that all training and performances were conducted inside and so acclimatising to the air-conditioning was more important than acclimatising to the desert heat.



▲ Henry Dallal, who has photographed the HCMR for 10 years, spent 6 years trying to perfect this shot; only once a year does the HCMR cross the Serpentine Bridge of Hyde Park, London



▲ Captain Edward Oliver

"I AM PERSONALLY DELIGHTED TO HAVE SEEN OUR SOLDIERS BUILDING BRIDGES ACROSS CULTURES AND DEVELOPING AN UNDERSTANDING OF ISLAM AND ARAB CULTURE AND HERITAGE"

Does the Musical Ride usually perform outdoors or indoors? The indoor arena was crowded with spectators and the music was loud which may have caused difficulties to the horses; have there been any incidents in this regard?

Our horses are the most photographed in the world. Everyday the horses are ridden through the streets of London with the daily glamour of urban life; air brakes from buses, pneumatic drills, sirens etc. Music played in a closed auditorium is positively soothing compared to their existence in London! It is also very important for us to train hard so that when we are on parade with HM the Queen with thousands of people waving flags and cheering our horses are inoculated against it. The cheering of 2,000 people for the Musical Ride is important training for the Ride itself, but pales into insignificance when compared to what they face on a large ceremonial parade like HM the Queen's birthday parade.

Would there be any interest in having the HHCMR perform again in Abu Dhabi, or even in another Arab country?

The Musical Ride is a display team and enjoys performing wherever it is invited. The soldiers in the team loved The UAE and I am sure would be very excited by the opportunity to visit another Arab country. **HT**

REGIMENTAL HISTORY:

The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment provides the Queen's Life Guard daily and Sovereign's Escort on State occasions, mounted on horseback. They maintain their world-famous traditions dating back to 1660.

MUSICAL RIDE OVERVIEW:

The Household Cavalry Musical Ride consists of 28 horses and 36 soldiers. An Officer of the Rank of Captain commands the Ride and The Riding Master to HM the Queen, is responsible for the equitation training at the Regiment and he consequently trains and choreographs the Ride. The senior Non-Commissioned Officer (the Household Cavalry Rank is a Corporal of the Horse) is responsible

for the day to day running of the Ride and its administration. The Musical Ride is viewed by the UK Armed forces to be the pinnacle of military equitation. The Ride demonstrates its skills by performing a series of routines during the display. Members of the ride receive 4 weeks training prior to their first show of the season and this training is continued throughout the year. The majority of the soldiers have been in the army for less than 2 years and have all reached the level of excellence required by the Riding Master to perform on the Ride. The full ride on display is made up of the Musical Ride Officer, the Drum Horse, four trumpeters, four rough riders and sixteen outriders. Other requirements might be to announce the start of a polo match or to present prizes after a show jumping competition. The Ride can be accompanied by a Mounted or dismounted band or it may perform to music played over loud speakers. The Ride will perform equally well to military music or depending on the environment it may perform to more modern music.