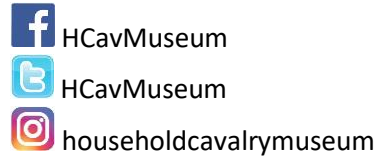




THE  
**HOUSEHOLD**  
Cavalry  
MUSEUM

Horse Guards, Whitehall, London, SW1A 2AX



## **HOUSEHOLD CAVALRY MUSEUM COLLECTION**

**No: 1**

### **WILLIAM IV GUIDON**

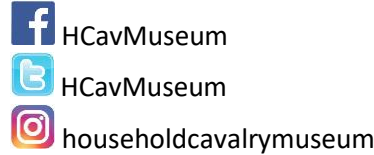
Hello and welcome back to a new series of the Household Cavalry Museum's video podcasts. In this weekly series, I am going to be looking at some of the extraordinary and often rare items in the museum's collection that are on display in London, or are in the reserve collection at Windsor. However, in this podcast I have to start by dispelling a myth.

There is a commonly held belief that one of the ways to distinguish British cavalry regiments is by the type of Colours that they carry on parade: the belief being that Household Cavalry regiments carry rectangular Standards and Line Cavalry have Guidons with their distinctive split tail. This explains why, following the amalgamation of the Royal Horse Guards (The Blues) and the Royal Dragoons (The Royals) in 1969, in 1972 The Blues & Royals added a Guidon to their four Standards, a unique addition to a Household Cavalry regiment. Sadly, neither the belief nor the explanation is true.



THE  
**HOUSEHOLD**  
Cavalry  
MUSEUM

Horse Guards, Whitehall, London, SW1A 2AX



When regimental Colours were first standardised in the early 1700s, the Horse Guards carried two Standards, Horse Grenadier Guards and Dragoon Guards each had a Standard and a Guidon, while Dragoons and Light Dragoons had just two Guidons. Subsequent re-organisations and re-designations in the 18<sup>th</sup> century meant that, by the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was no such uniformity. This was a situation that was further complicated by regimental amalgamations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

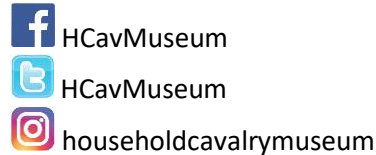
Nonetheless, it explains why the two regiments of Life Guards were each issued with two Guidons, in addition to their Standards, when the four Troops of Horse Guards and Horse Grenadier Guards were formed into the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Life Guards in 1788, albeit that by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Life Guards had abandoned their Guidons.

It also explains why the Royal Horse Guards, which was in effect a Dragoon Guards regiment until it was elevated to the status of Household Cavalry in 1820, was presented with a new Guidon by King William IV in 1832. This Guidon was carried on mounted parades until 1887, and had its final outing in 1911 at the unveiling by King George V and Kaiser Wilhelm II, then Colonel of the Royals, of



THE  
HOUSEHOLD  
Cavalry  
MUSEUM

Horse Guards, Whitehall, London, SW1A 2AX



the Queen Victoria Memorial. The march past following the unveiling, which would normally have been by mounted detachments, was on foot because of an outbreak of strangles in the 1<sup>st</sup> Life Guards stables.

At some point thereafter, The Blues' Guidon was transferred to the Royal United Services Institute's Museum in the Banqueting House, Whitehall, where it remained until 1962. When the RUSI museum was closed in that year, the Guidon was consigned to the Household Cavalry's museum then in Windsor. There, with its finial, tassels and belt, it remained in a box until it was unearthed recently by one of the museum's volunteers, the former Blue & Royal, Ivor Slade.

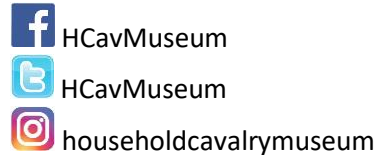
Although the Guidon and its belt were in good condition, the finial of St George slaying the dragon that topped the pole was a sorry sight and looked as though most of the gilding had been worn away, leaving just the base metal beneath. Nevertheless, careful and gentle cleaning by Ivor revealed that, beneath the surface dirt, the gilding was intact and had in fact been laid over a solid silver casting.

Further examination of the silver hallmarks showed that this extraordinarily beautiful finial was made in 1832 by a renowned



THE  
HOUSEHOLD  
Cavalry  
MUSEUM

Horse Guards, Whitehall, London, SW1A 2AX



silversmith. He was James Charles Eddington, whose workshop was in Soho.

Quite why this very valuable piece of silverware was hidden from sight for nearly sixty years is a mystery, but the silver-gilt finial is now on display in the Household Cavalry Museum's reserve collection at Combermere Barracks, Windsor – and the belt, tassels and the Guidon itself, can be viewed on request.

One further mystery surrounds this important object in the museum's collection: there are two battle honours on the right that should not be there. Whilst it is true that The Blues were present at Minden in 1759, 'Minden' is not one of the regiment's battle honours. Even more curiously, whilst 'Cateau' *is* a Blues battle honour, or at least 'Le Cateau' is – that battle honour refers to the action fought on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1914, eighty-two years after the Guidon was made and twenty-seven years after it was taken out of service. So why are these battle honours on the Guidon? No one knows.

I hope you have enjoyed this brief look at one of the Household Cavalry's recently rediscovered treasures. Next week I will be talking about a rather unusual skull. Until then, stay safe...