

## THE FUTURE OF THE LIGHT DRAGOONS' MUSEUMS

A Paper for the Board of Regimental Trustees by a sub-committee composed of:

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In attendance:

Maj (retd) Mel Tazey (Regimental Secretary/OC Home HQ)  
Capt (retd) Dicky Bird (Assistant Regimental Secretary)

Consulted:

Lynn Dunning (Manager, Barnsley Arts, Archives and Museums)  
Iain Watson (Director, Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums)  
Hazel Edwards (Manager, Newcastle Discovery)  
Roberta Goldwater (Curatorial Assistant, *A Soldier's Life*)

References: A. Army Museums Study 2011.

### BACKGROUND

1. The regiment has two museums, each publically funded: *Charge! The Museum of the 13th/18th Royal Hussars (Queen Mary's Own)* and *The Light Dragoons*, at Cannon Hall, Cawthorne near Barnsley; and *A Soldier's Life: The Museum of The Light Dragoons and the 15th/19th The King's Royal Hussars* at the Discovery Museum, Newcastle (in which there is also a small representative display of the Northumberland Hussars). Each operates as a gallery within the larger museum, benefitting from common services including admission. Both Cannon Hall and the Discovery Museum are municipally owned, administered respectively by Barnsley Arts, Museums and Archives, and Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums. The Regiment is, in effect, a lodger in each, though the "tenancy" terms differ significantly. At Newcastle there is no "rent": the MoD directly employs a curator, currently Ms Roberta Goldwater, who works solely on the regimental collection and is not involved in the day-to-day running of the Discovery Museum. At Cannon Hall the MoD (through the agency of the Army Museums (Ogilby) Trust) pays c. £16,000 (currently £16,311) annually as part-wages for a caretaker. Each museum has a board of trustees composed of former officers of the antecedent regiments.

2. From 2017, as a result of government austerity measures, and in line with the recommendations of Reference A to limit funding to one museum per capbadge, the MoD will end the direct cash grant to Barnsley and will substitute a grant in lieu for the civil service post at Newcastle. The continuing uncertainty over the economy generally, with declining LD Trust income from low interest rates, and the reduction of income from the serving regiment as the establishment is reduced, together with the management difficulties associated with two sites, suggest that a fundamental look at the museums is now necessary. The Regiment's "coming of age" in December 2013 (21 years since amalgamation) and the impending move to Catterick also make a review opportune.

3. The Terms of Reference issued by the Colonel of the Regiment are at Annex.

#### **AIM**

4. To assess the future viability of the Regiment's two museums and to make recommendations for the Board of Trustees to consider on 7 November 2013.

#### **ASSUMPTIONS**

5. The broad shape of the army until 2030 will be as outlined in "Army 2020".

6. From 2016 the regiment will be stationed indefinitely at Catterick.

7. Although further amalgamations cannot be ruled out, they cannot be a consideration because there are too many variable and unpredictable factors.

8. Despite "One-Army Recruiting" the Regiment will continue to regard its recruiting area as the North-East, South Yorkshire and the East Riding.

9. Home HQ will remain as currently constituted, and at Newcastle.

## DISCUSSION

### WHAT ARE THE MUSEUMS FOR?

10. MoD's objectives. As stated in Reference A, the MoD's purpose in subsidizing military museums can be summed up by the old acronym "KAPE" (Keeping the Army in the Public Eye). The specific objectives are:

- a. To maintain and enhance the Army's connections with society especially in those areas outside the representational footprint of the Regular Army or TA.
- b. To present the country's military heritage and provide an academic research resource to promote military scholarship.
- c. To contribute to the education of children and adults to make new generations aware of the Army and its achievements.
- d. To make a substantive contribution, directly or indirectly, to Army recruiting.
- e. To educate, train and inspire the current generation of soldiers, particularly during initial training and development.
- f. To underpin the Army's values and standards in attracting, retaining and sustaining soldiers.
- g. To provide a crucial contribution to the role of the Regimental/Corps home and provide a focal point for both serving and retired members, and their successors.
- h. To assist museums in adopting a current acquisitions and disposals policy.

11. Regimental Obligations. Since the Regiment's museum(s) will retain some MoD funding, decisions must take account of these objectives.

12. Regimental Purpose for its Museums. In extrapolation, the Regiment's objectives are:

- a. To maintain and enhance the Regiment's connections with its recruiting area – the North-East, South Yorkshire and the East Riding.
- b. To present the regiment's military heritage and provide a research resource.
- c. To contribute to the education of children and adults in the recruiting areas to make new generations aware of the regiment and its achievements.
- d. To make a substantive contribution, directly or indirectly, to regimental recruiting.
- e. To educate, train and inspire the current generation of Light Dragoons, during initial training and during development at regimental duty.
- f. To underpin the regiment's values and standards in attracting, retaining and sustaining soldiers.
- g. To provide a crucial contribution to the role of the regimental home (ie its recruiting areas) and provide a focal point for both serving and retired members.

13. Comment. In terms of recruiting, it is difficult to assess what is implied by the MoD's decision to reduce funding to one museum per current capbadge while not specifying in which area that museum is to be. For example, there will be four MoD-funded museums in Winchester but none in the West Country, which does not suggest a strong correlation in the MoD's mind between recruiting and museum presence. Perhaps it is merely recognition that MoD would have scorched fingers if it tried to dictate to regiments. It is not possible to discern what impact the Light Dragoons' two museums have on *regimental* recruiting: even market research would not provide a complete answer (road signage alone, for example, may have a subliminal impact). And there is no museum in the East Riding. But it seems unlikely that recruits in any significant numbers are motivated to join the regiment because of a museum visit. Nevertheless the current arrangements meet all the MoD's objectives; and likewise the regiment's, save possibly in objectives (e) and (f), which would imply that a closer engagement with the serving regiment is needed than

hitherto. Although Catterick will make both museums more accessible to the serving regiment, a further effort to enhance "heritage" in barracks might be desirable.

#### **AFFORDABILITY.**

14. MoD Funds. From 2017 the £16,000 annual cash subsidy to Cannon Hall (CH) will cease. LD will receive an annual £20,000 "grant in aid" in lieu of the Civil Service E1 post at Newcastle Discovery (ND). This figure will be some £6,000 short of the true capitation cost, taking into account NI and pension contributions etc (in FY 2012/13: £5,241). If the present arrangements were to continue, LD would therefore have to find £22,000, not the £16,000 previously supposed. MoD (Army Heritage Branch) has also warned of the possibility of further cuts, and no commitment has been given to index-link the grants to inflation. Indeed, there would routinely be Treasury pressure to reduce the overall sum in the annual spending review.

15. Freedom of Action. MoD's removal of the £16,000 direct grant does not imply that CH is the preferred option for closure if it comes to a choice between one museum or the other. Under current guidelines LD may use the £20,000 grant in lieu of the E1 post at Newcastle as it sees fit in support of one or more of its museums providing it is spent on "staff remuneration" or "other operating costs", to which the chairman of the committee(s) must certify annually. There is a question whether this loose arrangement will survive scrutiny in the longer term, but the advice of the Ogilby Trust, which was one of the principal advisers in the Museums Study, is to assume the arrangement will endure.

16. Barnsley. Like all local authorities, Barnsley is having to make economies, with emergency savings to be implemented in FY 2014/15 and 50% cuts projected over the next three years. It has not been possible in the time available to establish whether the Council would be prepared to accept the withdrawal of the grant while letting *Charge!* remain at CH. However, the Council's Corporate Plan includes two objectives in which there are grounds for optimism:

- a. Develop a vibrant Town Centre.
- b. Significantly strengthen our visitor economy by further developing our key cultural assets and events.

As there is no other military presence in Barnsley, the Regiment is in a good position to press its credentials as part of the corporate plan.

17. Alternative site to CH. Barnsley Town Hall, a regional landmark situated prominently in the town centre, is being redeveloped: "Over the lower floors, an exciting new facility [has been] created thanks to the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund [HLF]. *Experience Barnsley...* incorporate[s] museum galleries, an archives centre, learning centre, workshops, a café and much more" (from *Barnsley Council Online*). *Experience Barnsley* (EB) was opened on 26 June 2013, with high visitor numbers since. It is a strikingly imaginative, state-of-the art venture, evidently to be something of a flagship for the town's regeneration. A second development phase, though yet to be discussed, is an aspiration of the museums service. Lynn Dunning, curator at CH and the Council's Museums and Archives Manager of its five museums (CH, the Cooper Gallery, EB, Elsecar Heritage Centre and Worsbrough Mill) advises that space might be available for the *Charge!* collection during a second phase. But even in the best case there would be considerably less space than at CH (though a smaller display would also be easier to manage and cheaper to refresh). Ms Dunning says that CH would be able to use any vacated space to display more of its own collection, but equally, from a display point of view (she could not speak for the financial side), CH remains pleased to host *Charge!* Barnsley Council has yet to be sounded on the feasibility of relocation, but the chairman of the CH (*Charge!*) Museum Committee, Lieutenant-Colonel Robert French-Blake, wrote last year to inform the chief executive of the MoD's intention to withdraw funding. The Council has not yet expressed a view in reply.

18. Comparison of Sites. CH is situated four miles from Barnsley in a country park on the north-west edge of the populous Barnsley Metropolitan Borough and of the Sheffield-Doncaster-Barnsley triangle which forms the South Yorkshire recruiting area. It is prominently brown-signed on the trans-Pennines A635. However, it opens only between Easter and the end of October, Monday to Wednesday, and Saturday. Admission is free. Its annual footfall is 130,000. EB is open year-round, admission free, with a projected footfall of 100,000 (though visitors in the first two months have numbered 30,000). However, there could be a perception in the 13/18H side of the LD Association that a downsizing move from CH signals some sort of withdrawal from South Yorkshire. This would need careful handling, not least because the regiment's museum objectives are indeed to maintain and enhance its connections with the recruiting areas. The centrality, accessibility and quality of EB ought to be able to carry the argument.

19. Newcastle Discovery. ND is open seven days a week throughout the year, admission free. It is centrally situated in a populous city and region, with an annual footfall of 434,000. The Regiment lodges, in effect, rent-free. The proximity of Home HQ and the full-time employment of a curator makes for a high standard of

presentation and development, and for on-hand research assistance to Home HQ. With some rationalization there would be space for additional display.

20. Additional Sources of Funding. It is unlikely that any other source of funding could be found to make up the annual shortfall in running costs (£22,000: £16k plus £6k). However, for specific projects, especially if 1914-18 related, or for setting-up costs, HLF funding could be available, as well as regional tourism funds, and trusts such as The Whitbread Foundation. There might be some latitude in rewriting job descriptions within existing E1 and E2 appointments in Home HQ in order to retain a curator, but this would raise questions of propriety that would need further examination.

21. LD Trust. Although museum funding accords with the terms of the Regimental trust, the trust is not a rich one, and the demands of the serving regiment, and of welfare, are many. Only relatively small amounts could reasonably be anticipated therefore, and for specific projects, rather a continuing major commitment to running costs. The two museum funds have little capital, but the museums own an excess of property, which could be sold subject to Charity Commission regulations and benefactors' conditions.

## RELEVANCE.

22. LD Focus. Both CH and ND are primarily antecedent-regiment museums. Both MoD and regimental objectives suggest that a more definite Light Dragoon image be adopted, projecting the key events of the Regiment's history. To do this well would mean a new design approach rather than simply mixing the exhibits. A primary museum – "The Museum of The Light Dragoons" – and a secondary "Collection" would be a workable solution. There is an argument for a 'clean sheet of paper' approach: a single, new museum in a central, 'neutral' location, perhaps collocated at Catterick. The advantages are obvious, not least to the serving regiment. The disadvantages are, however, considerable. Locating the museum in the 'no-mansland' between the two recruiting areas would not satisfy regimental objectives a, c, d and g. Space at Catterick is also limited, to the extent that at present the regiment is not even assured of having its own exclusive messes. And although one of the assumptions of this paper is that from 2016 the regiment will be stationed indefinitely at Catterick, this is not the same as being permanently stationed there. In the event of a move, the museum would be left high and dry, or else it would have to be relocated, with all the associated expense. Nor are there obvious alternatives

in the no-mansland that would give the desired and relevant footfall. Nor would detaching the museum from Home HQ assist with administration. In such a radical move there might also be implications for previous HLF funding. For all these reasons the option is not considered further.

23. Quality. The current museums are "good but tired" (Colonel of the Regiment). Neither CH nor ND is up to date in LD terms, nor are they "state of the art". Indeed, there are real concerns that *Charge!* in particular is falling well behind the quality of the non-regimental galleries at CH, and that this may soon become a bone of contention. Current museum practice assumes a refreshing of displays every ten years. Any solution must bear in mind the future financial and administrative demands of keeping fresh.

## GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

24. CH and ND are managed by separate committees reflecting the antecedent regiments. OC Home HQ is secretary and de facto curator of CH, which can extend to routine maintenance such as light-bulb changing. The Assistant OC Home HQ is secretary of the ND committee. These arrangements do not best make for a comprehensive approach; nor are they as efficient as might be. A single committee, once the particulars of the two sites are resolved, would improve presentation and management significantly.

25. Although the move to Catterick places the Regiment closer to its museums, the circumstances of the barrack plot and garrison life may require a stronger day-to-day emphasis on regimental heritage in addition to that of the officers', and the warrant officers' & serjeants', messes. In due course, there would be merit in the property trustee's being a member of a single museum committee.

## CONCLUSIONS

26. A museum presence should be preserved in both Newcastle and Barnsley. A further representative presence in the East Riding, at no cost, would be valuable.

27. There is no realistic prospect of making up the annual shortfall of £22,000 after withdrawal of MoD funding in 2017. There is, however, the possibility of HLF

funding, and that of other grant-making bodies, for specific projects. There might be leeway to include museum matters in the future job descriptions of Home Headquarters clerical assistants.

28. Financial and administrative pressure suggests the need for consolidation and downsizing, including the actual collections, which might realize considerable savings and capital. Closing the two existing museums and reopening at a single, 'neutral' site is not viable, and is discounted.

29. There may be opportunity to relocate from Cannon Hall to a better site at Barnsley Town Hall on a no-cost basis.

30. The collections need to be reorganized and rebranded as those of The Light Dragoons, displaying the history of all the antecedent regiments.

31. The collections need to be managed as a whole, including property in possession of the serving regiment.

32. Urgent action is needed to refresh both collections, but particularly Barnsley's.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

33. *A Soldier's Life* (Newcastle) should become the principal regimental museum and home of the entire collection: "The Museum of The Light Dragoons".

34. *Charge!* (Cannon Hall) should be significantly reduced in size, and permission of Barnsley Council sought for its relocation to the Town Hall (*Experience Barnsley*) on a "rent-free" basis as "The Light Dragoons' Collection (Barnsley)".

35. The feasibility of a similar, smaller, collection in Beverley (the county town) or Hull, should be examined.

36. The post of curator, currently E1 and filled by Ms Roberta Goldwater, should be retained but expanded to include responsibility for the entire collection, at both (or all three) sites. The funding shortfall (£6,000) should initially be underwritten by

the LD Trust while other solutions based on the Home HQ clerical assistant posts are pursued.

37. A programme to transform and refresh the displays should be drawn up urgently.

38. A survey should be carried out at once to assess what museum assets could be disposed of, and their value, in order to provide capital for moves and refurbishment.

39. A single committee should **in due course** replace the current two autonomous committees to supervise all aspects of regimental heritage, operating as a sub-committee of the Board of Trustees.

Annex: Terms of Reference.