

THE ROYAL (DICK) VETERINARY COLLEGE CONTINGENT OF THE OFFICERS TRAINING CORPS

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INTRODUCTION

The involvement of educational institutes in voluntary military units of the British Army has a history that dates back to the early 19th Century when a corps of Rifle Volunteers was formed by Cambridge undergraduates to meet the growing threat of French Invasion¹. The tradition of military volunteering grew through the later years of the 19th century with various universities contributing detachments to established volunteer units on local arrangements. By 1860 undergraduates of Edinburgh University had formed No. 4 Company of the Queen's Edinburgh Rifles and in 1872 they also supplied recruits to the 1st Edinburgh City Royal Garrison Artillery Volunteers. In 1890 a medical detachment was also established.

The Officers Training Corps (OTC) was formally established as a distinct unit of the British Army in October 1908 as part of the Haldane reforms of the Army Reserve². It was given the specific remit of keeping up a supply of officers for the Special Reserve and the Territorial Force. It was formed with a Junior Division composed of units from public schools and a Senior Division with units provided from the Universities and other Higher Education establishments. The OTC was to be part of the official Army Establishment and came under the direct control of the War Office with the advantages of central organisation and financing. Established university volunteer units became contingents of the new OTC and in the years following the creation of the OTC the formation of new contingents were actively encouraged. Generally it was assumed that any established educational institute would be allowed to raise an OTC unit so long as it could provide a minimum of one officer and thirty cadets and reasonable facilities for training. Once established it was then up to the unit to prove its ongoing efficiency.

FORMATION OF DICK VET OTC

It is against this backdrop that the Royal (Dick) Veterinary College (known locally as the 'Dick Vet') Contingent of the Senior Division of the Officers

Training Corps was raised in September 1912. The contingent was formed by Ainsworth Wilson FRCVS, an 1894 graduate of the Dick Vet, who had returned to the college in June 1911 as Professor of Obstetrics and Surgery³. The contingent was formed as a Cavalry unit – albeit with a strong influence from the Army Veterinary Corps (AVC) – which distinguished it from the Infantry, Artillery and Medical units of the Edinburgh University Contingent of the OTC. Wilson became commanding officer with the rank of Major and two Lieutenants were also appointed. A regular officer with the rank of Captain was appointed as adjutant in November 1913, an appointment that was shared with the Edinburgh University and the St Andrew's University OTC Contingents. In addition a Sergeant-Instructor from a regular army unit was also attached. The body of the contingent was made up of Officer Cadets, as recruits to the OTC were known, who were drawn from the undergraduate population of the college.

EARLY YEARS

No account of the activity of the contingent prior to the Great War has so far been found; however, this was presumably largely concerned with the prescribed instruction in drill, tactics, musketry and military law². In 1913 and 1914 annual camps were held in July after the College's professional examinations which saw the contingent travel to Rushmoor Camp at Aldershot where it was attached to the Station Veterinary Hospital. Photographs taken during these camps show the contingent to have a complement of around 50 Officer-Cadets plus four Officers and a Sergeant-Instructor (Fig. 1)⁴. Cadets wore service dress uniform with a white lanyard on the left shoulder and leather gaiters. In addition each cadet was armed with a 1908 pattern cavalry sword. On the 4 August 1914, only a few weeks after the July 1914 camp, the Great War broke out. The contingent dissolved with many men of the original Dick Vet OTC leaving the college for service in the war. At least three men from the contingent are known to have been killed in the Great War and they are commemorated on the college war memorial⁵.

The Dick Vet was not unique among the veterinary colleges in forming an OTC in the years prior to the Great War. The Royal Veterinary College of Ireland in Dublin had also formed a contingent of the OTC in July 1911 with the Principal of the College Professor Albert Edward Mettam, an 1889 graduate of the Dick Vet, in command. The Dublin College OTC differed from the Dick Vet OTC in the respect that it was formed as a dedicated Veterinary unit, composed of four Veterinary Sections, as opposed to the Cavalry unit of the Dick Vet OTC. The Dublin College OTC also dissolved with the outbreak of war in 1914 but does not appear to have been revived in the post-war years, perhaps in part due to the death of Professor Mettam in 1917.

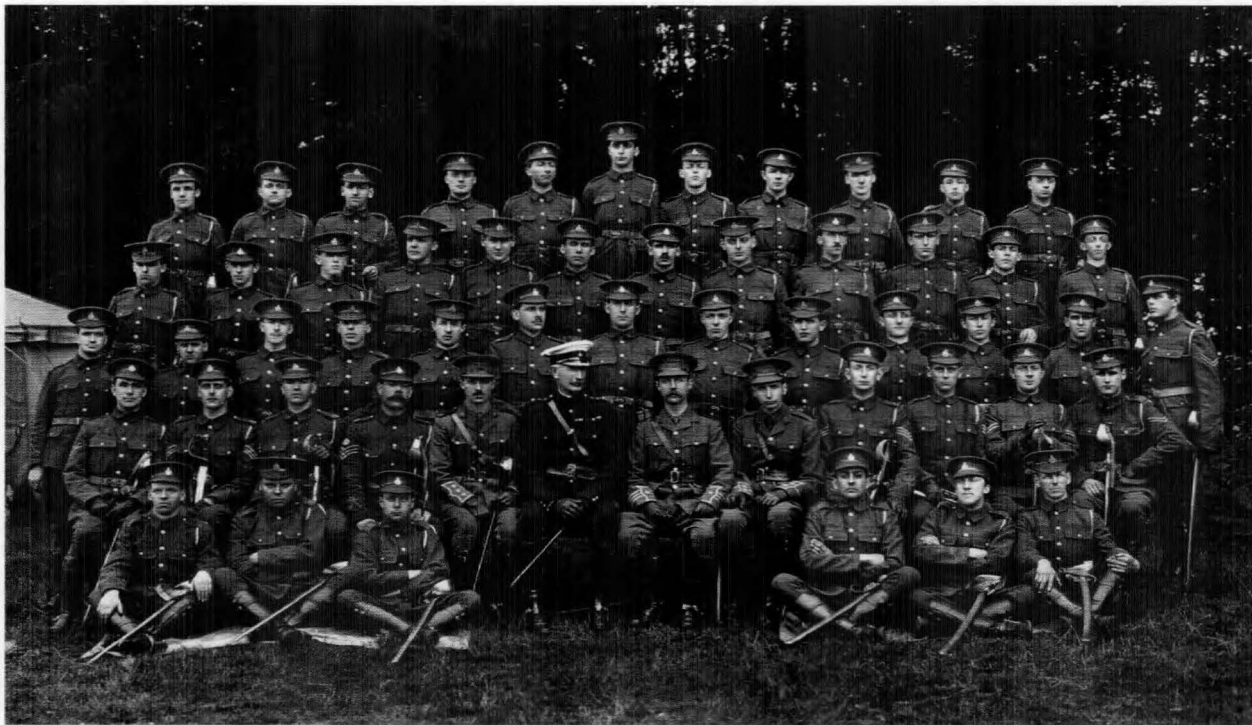


Fig. 1. Royal (Dick) Veterinary Contingent OTC, Summer Camp, Aldershot, 1913. Major Wilson is Seated in the Second Row Sixth from the Right. Seated to his Left is Lieutenant (later Major) Mitchell.⁴

Professor Wilson had left the Dick Vet in 1919 to return to veterinary practice. The post-war resurrection of the college OTC contingent therefore fell to William McGregor Mitchell who had been one of the contingent's original Lieutenants in 1912 while he was an Assistant in Comparative Anatomy at the College. Mitchell had received a commission in the Army Veterinary Corps in September 1914 and embarked for France in the same month where he took part in the early campaigns of the war, eventually serving with the Guards Division⁶. He had a distinguished war record; he was promoted to Captain in 1915, was twice mentioned in dispatches and was awarded the Military Cross in June 1917. He returned to the vacant position of Professor of Surgery and Obstetrics at the Dick Vet in 1919 and reformed the OTC contingent in April 1920⁷. At this time the college included a high percentage of ex-servicemen who had returned from the Great War and many can be seen wearing medal ribbons on their uniforms in photographs of the OTC taken in the early 1920's (Fig. 2)⁸.

THE INTER WAR PERIOD

The post war years saw the contingent settle into a routine of training, parades and social functions. Although each contingent of the OTC was considered an independent unit the structure and activities of each OTC was strictly controlled by the War Office as dictated in the text *Regulations for the Officers Training Corps*². A stipulation of these regulations was that a Committee of Military Education be formed that was officially recognised by the college authorities. This committee was chaired by Mr Harry Rawson and was designed to represent the interests of the OTC to the college. It appears that the OTC enjoyed continual good relations with the college, with Dr O. Charnock Bradley, Principal of the College, regularly attending OTC parades, camps, sports-days and dinners^{8,9}. William McGregor Mitchell remained in command of the contingent with a regular officer and non-commissioned officer again attached to the contingent as Adjutant and Sergeant-Instructor respectively. The contingent was formed into three Troops, numbered I-III, each with a junior officer nominally in command. Each Troop was composed of up to thirty Officer-Cadets with an Officer-Cadet Sergeant and Officer-Cadet Corporal promoted from within the troop. In addition an Officer-Cadet Sergeant-Major and a Quartermaster Sergeant were appointed. Cadets joined the OTC initially for a period of two years with the option of rejoining in subsequent years. They were required to attend a minimum of thirty drills in their first year and fifteen in subsequent years and attendance at the annual Summer Camp was considered compulsory, except in exceptional circumstances¹⁰. A change from the pre-war years was that – much to their delight – cadets were permitted to wear the open neck service dress of officers, although without any badges of officer rank. Uniforms were distinguished by cap, shoulder and collar badges which were



Fig. 2. Royal (Dick) Veterinary College OTC, Summer Camp, Dreghorn, c. 1922. Major Mitchell is Seated in the Second Row Seventh from the Right. O. Charnock Bradley, Principal of the College is Seated in the Second Row Third from the Left.

unique to the Dick Vet OTC (Figs. 3a-c)^{11,12}. Riding breeches and puttees 'with three lace holes showing' were worn and until 1930 a leather bandolier was also carried which further helped to identify cadets as cavalrymen. Some lessons seemed to have been learned from the Great War as the swords of the pre-war days had by now disappeared. Instead, the contingent was issued with the shortened cavalry version of the 0.303 Lee Enfield rifle¹³. The OTC found its home in the college buildings at Summerhall with parts of the central and southern basement floor given over to it. Its premises comprised an orderly office, a common room complete with its own library (Fig. 3d)¹⁴, an armoury and a miniature rifle range^{7,15}.

Training comprised of lectures in areas such as military tactics, law and animal husbandry as well as regular parades held in the clinical yard in Summerhall (Figs. 4a and 4b)^{16,17}. Instruction was given in subjects such as grooming, saddling a horse, examining parts of a rifle and squad and arms drill. In addition voluntary shooting classes were held on weeknight evenings. By 1930 an arrangement had also been made with the commanding officer of a regular Cavalry Regiment stationed at Redford Barracks in Edinburgh whereby the OTC held riding parades using the Regiment's horses on a Saturday¹⁸. These proved to be very popular with recruits. Although formed as a cavalry unit, the purpose of the OTC remained to supply officers for the Veterinary branch of the Territorial Army and to a lesser extent the Colonial Veterinary Service⁷. In common with other OTC units recruits studied for formal examinations that qualified them for the OTC's 'A' and 'B' Certificates; these conferred certain advantages upon holders who later applied for commissions in the Regular or Territorial Army. The Dick Vet OTC differed from other OTC's in the respect that candidates were exempt from examination on subjects concerned with other branches of military service and were examined solely on veterinary subjects considered relevant to the military. The examination consisted of two written papers on subjects described below, which was then followed by an oral examination². First paper:

The organization of a division and its working in the field in so far as it concerns veterinary officers attached to units. This will include a knowledge of veterinary work as carried on by the administrative veterinary officer of a division in conjunction with the veterinary officers attached to units.

As regards the units to which veterinary officers are attached, cadets will be required to have such a knowledge as would be necessary to a veterinary officer : —

(a) Of their organisation.

- (b) Of their administration and working in quarters, on the march, and in action.
- (c) Of the veterinary equipment and stores in their charge,
- (a) Of the personnel at the disposal of veterinary officers.

2nd Paper:

Animal management with special reference to the treatment and disposal of animals with a division in the field, including diseases and injuries incidental to field service, contagious and infectious diseases, with the measures to be adopted for their prevention and eradication, and army shoeing.

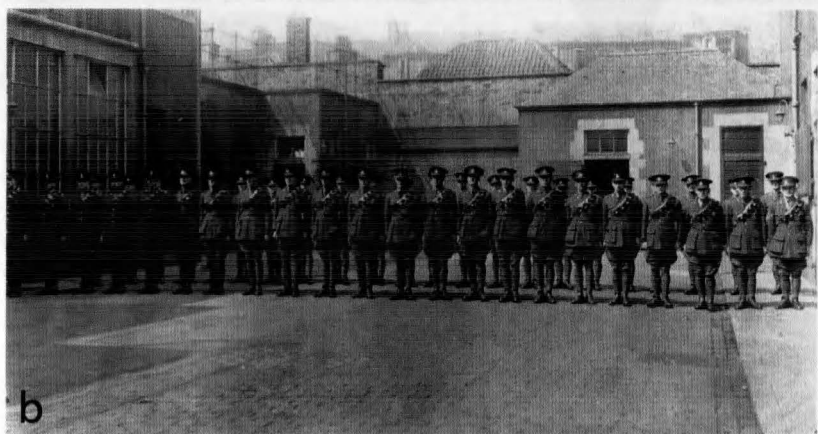
Cadets who held the 'A' certificate were entitled to wear a red four-pointed star on their right arm and holders of the 'B' certificate wore the same star in gold. Contemporary accounts of the OTC invariably congratulate the contingent on its high pass rates, a fact attributed to the time spent by regular officers of the Royal Army Veterinary Corps (RAVC) in tutoring the candidates.



**Fig. 3a: Royal (Dick) Veterinary College Contingent OTC Cap Badge¹¹
 Fig. 3b: Shoulder Title¹² Fig. 3c: Collar Badge¹² Fig. 3d: Library Stamp¹⁴**



a



b

**Fig. 4a: The Royal (Dick) Veterinary College Contingent OTC Marching Past the Entrance to the College Buildings at Summerhall, c1927. The Contingent is led by Major Mitchell and Lieutenant (later Major) Ritchie.¹⁶
Fig. 4b: The Contingent on Parade in the Clinical Yard at Summerhall, c1927.¹⁷**

In addition to regular training and preparation for examinations an annual musketry course was undertaken at which the University of Edinburgh OTC contingents (Artillery, Infantry, Medical and the newly formed Engineer Unit) were also represented. Pride appears to have been taken in the Dick Vet contingent's ability to hold its own on the rifle range. Cadets who passed this course were entitled to wear a worsted rifle emblem on the left forearm of their uniforms. Another regular feature in the OTC calendar was the annual Church Parade held at St Giles Cathedral during the Summer Term. Additional ceremonial duties were also carried out including a Royal occasion when the Dick Vet OTC was invited to join the University OTCs in providing a guard of honour for Queen Elizabeth (later to become The Queen Mother) when she was awarded the degree of Doctor of Laws by the University in July 1937¹⁹.

ANNUAL CAMPS

The highlights of the OTC year were undoubtedly the two annual camps. Spring Camp was held for five days usually over the Victoria weekend in May. Horses were not provided for the Spring Camp and it was usual for the contingent to be accommodated alongside units of the Edinburgh University OTC. At least one early Spring Camp was held near Montrose and was most notable for a running feud with the Medical Detachment, which is alluded to in several accounts, some apparently written several years after the event. For many years Peebles was used as a venue for the Spring Camp and the cadets were billeted in the local drill hall while the officers allowed themselves the luxury of making use of the nearby Peebles Hydro as their mess. Peebles was a popular venue due to it being close to the amenities of the town and cadets made use of the Public Baths and attended local dances in their off-duty time. Later the Spring Camp was held for several years under canvas near the small Borders village of Stow. The annual musketry course was usually fired at the Spring Camp and training comprised rifle and dismounted squadron drills, fatigues, and physical education. However, the real benefit of the Spring Camp was recognised to be the opportunity it afforded for recruits to learn many of the duties expected of them at the Summer Camp²⁰.

The Summer Camp (Figs. 5a-d)^{21,22} was held after the professional exams at the end of the Summer Term. It lasted for 15 days and was always held under canvas. From when the contingent was reformed in 1920 until it broke with tradition in 1936 the Summer Camp was held at Dreghorn Castle Camp outside Edinburgh (other than 1932 when all OTC camps were cancelled by order of the War Office, much to the disappointment of the contingent). This led to some sentimentality on the part of long standing members who referred to the campsite at Dreghorn as 'the old place' and 'our field'²⁰; indeed in 1931 when

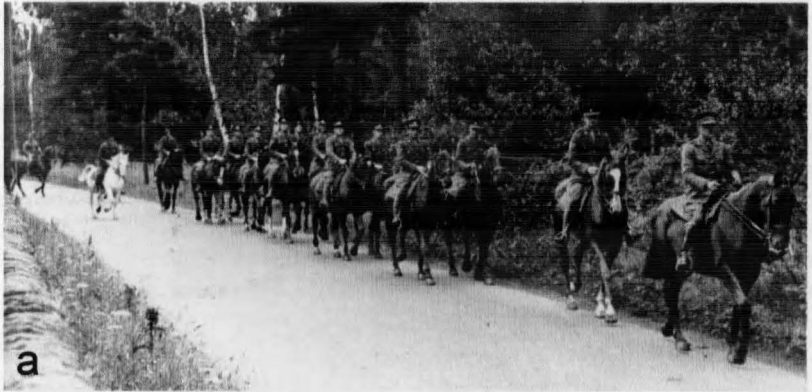


Fig. 5a: Royal (Dick) Veterinary College Contingent OTC, Summer Camp: Route March, c1937.²¹ Fig. 5b: Pole Fight, 1937.²² Fig. 5c: Obstacle Race, 1937.²² Fig. 5d: Horse Lines, c1937.²¹

the campsite at Dreghorn had to be moved as the traditional site had been taken over by a nearby school it was remarked by one member that 'we'll never sleep soundly in another field'²³. Horses were provided at the Summer Camp which allowed for mounted drills and general instruction in the management of horses such as feeding, grooming and stable management. Much was said about the quality of the mounts and, when available, trained military horses were much preferred to hired horses with which attempting mounted drills was distinctly difficult. Some indication of the unmilitary appearance of these horses is given by the remark made by a child of a corporal who was riding a skewbald horse as the contingent rode through the village of Roslin: 'Oh! Look at the sodger on the coo!'²⁴. The weather too could play a role in the success or otherwise of the Summer Camp and accounts describe everything from glorious sunshine to a fortnight of constant rain which could curtail the activities of the camp. Light relief was however provided by adverse weather in 1933 when the tent serving as the Officers Mess blew down, no doubt to the mirth of the cadets²⁵. As well as drills and instruction in horse management camp activities included mounted route marches, on occasion extending for up to three days, and the annual sports contests. Photographs taken during various Summer Camps show events such as pole fighting, obstacle races and the distinctly unmilitary 'eating sticky bun' competition²². Less conventional sports included 'Mounted Wrestling' and the popular 'Musical Chairs, Mounted'. An idea of the routine of camp life was given in *The Centaur* of December 1936²⁶:

'Up at 6am. Gunfire. Water, groom and feed the horses- wash yourself (if time), then breakfast. Kits out of tents – clean uniform and equipment (generally only get half this done). Parade at 9am. Saddle up the horses. Half the contingent go out riding – remainder clean up the horse lines. That finished and expecting to have a break – Staff arrives and says he has lots of jobs. Carry the rifles from all of the tents and place them in one tent. Why? Don't ask, as the next day the rifles are handed out again. Any spare time is used up doing foot drill, or perhaps we receive a lecture. Ride returns – horses watered – unsaddled and fed. Then to dinner - snatch a rest of ten minutes if you are lucky. Parade at 2pm. Saddle up again. Those who haven't ridden do so – the rest do what they missed in the morning. Ride returns – watered – feed. Then, on being dismissed and with thoughts of perhaps a game of tennis that evening, we are informed that all saddles must be watered and cleaned. Recreation, even a little, was out of the question; apparently the army does not recognise certain physiological theories dealing with the input and output of the human machine.'

Despite this statement, time does appear to have been found for recreation and generally a convivial atmosphere appears to have been maintained with much use being made of the canteen in the evenings. The continued interest in the activities of the contingent by regular officers of the RAVC was shown by their attendance at the camp. The culmination of the camp was the annual inspection parade, which was carried out by a senior officer of the RAVC. Some indication of the level of support for the contingent by the RAVC is given by the fact that the 1931 inspection was carried out by Major-General William Samuel Anthony CB CMG, Director General of the Army Veterinary Services – the most senior Veterinary Officer in the Army. He was reported to be much pleased with the rifle and foot drills but appeared disappointed with the relatively small amount of actual veterinary work included in Orders²⁷.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Competition was encouraged both within the Dick Vet contingent and with other OTC units. A Recruits Cup was awarded to the recruit who showed the most promise in his first year with the contingent although there was some grumbling in 1936 when the cup was awarded to a 'recruit' with several years of previous service in the regular army²⁴. Rivalry between the contingent's three Troops was said to be keen. Although inter-troop sports competitions had been held since the early days of the contingent an Inter-Troop Cup was presented by the Officers of the RAVC Club in 1930 and was awarded to the Troop with the highest aggregated marks in general efficiency, shooting and sports¹⁸. Individual cups were also awarded at the annual sports day during Summer Camp for Horse Jumping and Shooting and other competitions were instituted for which silver spoons were awarded. The Dick Vet contingent also competed with the Edinburgh University OTC contingents for the Inter-Unit MacDougall Cup, which had been presented by Dr R. Stewart MacDougall who was Professor of Biology at the Dick Vet⁷. A regular Inter-Unit shooting league was established and keenly contested. The contingent also competed for the Wellfield Cup in an annual shooting competition with local Territorial Army units¹⁸. It is recorded in *The Journal of the RAVC* that in August 1931 the commanding officer, John Ritchie, had been awarded Lord Aberdeen's Cup for competition among OTC units at the 'wapinschaw' (weapons-show) at Aberdeen and that this was the second time the contingent had won this award²⁸.

As might be expected from an organization that attracted a significant proportion of the undergraduate population of the college, the social side of the OTC was well developed. The OTC reported that it had 'perhaps the most interesting social side of college life, a wonderful spirit of camaraderie is maintained' and that within the OTC 'that unsociableness which is shown

towards their juniors by the men in the more advanced classes tends to disappear'⁷. Regular 'Smokers' were held in the OTC common room, sometimes held in conjunction with the dialectic society, and later an annual dance was also established. Singing and poetry were well received and it was said that 'this tendency to spontaneous concert-giving is characteristic'⁷. For many years a piano was taken along to the annual camps and 'many a glass of beer has been poured into the inwards [sic] of this cheerful friend'²³. However, by 1931 it was recorded that the piano could only register 40 per cent of her notes and its eventual demise was much lamented by the contingent. The annual contingent dinner was another highlight of the OTC calendar with invited guests including the Principal and professorial staff of the College as well as officers of the other Edinburgh OTC contingents and locally based RAVC officers. Toasting was enthusiastic and included 'the contingent', 'the ex-members', 'the invited guests', 'the sister contingent' and, of course, 'the King'. Speeches and musical items were also delivered. It was noted in 1933 that one senior RAVC officer could reply to two toasts: 'the guests' and 'the ex-members', he having been an original pre-great war cadet in the contingent²⁹; this in itself was surely a small measure of the success of the contingent.

CONTINGENT MANPOWER

The strength of the Dick Vet OTC grew throughout the inter-war years. Photographs of the OTC taken in the early 1920's show the contingent to have then mustered around 40 cadets and officers⁸. This steadily increased as the number of students who attended the college expanded. In 1930 it was reported that 18 'freshers' had joined which represented about 70 per cent of those available³⁰. The high water mark, in terms of recruitment, came in 1936 when the contingent reported a strength of over 100 all ranks, having had to seek permission to recruit over and above its maximum establishment of 90³¹. In addition a waiting list of 20 was reported. To accommodate this, the contingent was paraded in four Troops in place of the usual three.

Major Mitchell departed as commanding officer in 1929. However, he maintained a close interest in the contingent and in 1931 he took over as chairman of the Military Education Committee after the untimely death of Harry Rawson^{9,32}. Mitchell was replaced as commanding officer by John Neish Ritchie³³. Ritchie was a product of the contingent having joined as an Officer-Cadet in 1922 and been promoted to Officer-Cadet Corporal in 1924. He gained his MRCVS in July 1925 and remained at the college for a further six months as a house surgeon. He was commissioned as a Lieutenant in the OTC in October 1925 and although he left the college shortly after this to work as an Assistant Veterinary Inspector for the Edinburgh Public Health Department he remained

with the contingent. He was promoted to the rank of Captain on assuming command in 1929 and then to Major in 1938.

A significant change came between 1936 and 1937 when the contingent was mechanised; henceforth the contingent would be referred to as a unit of Mechanised Cavalry^{13,34}. In a nod back to the contingent's early history the 1938 Summer Camp – which proved to be the last the contingent would ever attend – was held once again at Aldershot^{13,35} (Fig. 6)³⁶. A game of cricket was held against the personnel of the Station Veterinary Hospital where the OTC had been stationed in the summer of 1913 (the Dick Vet won). During this Summer Camp the contingent received instruction in technologies unknown a quarter of a century earlier. Cadets were trained in the use of short wave radio and in the driving of tanks; 2- and 3-man light tanks (which were referred to as 'death traps') and open, 3-man, Bren-gun carriers. Driving tanks, which were steered with two levers, one for each caterpillar track, proved difficult for some cadets, especially when travelling downhill. A more acute problem was the difficulty in seeing where they were heading^{13!} The pros and cons of tanks were described in an article in *The Centaur* from November 1938³⁷:

Pro.

- *If you leave the ----- thing alone it ought to go straight by itself (although don't kid yourself!).*
- *If you hit anything you almost always come off best. This is a most comforting thought.*
- *They are nice and cosy inside in cold weather. They would make excellent moveable huts for night-watchmen.*
- *Though moderately comfortable for the driver, they are a definite liver tonic for the bloke up top.*
- *The ----- thing's not your property anyway (so the next time it won't go into gear first shot, try giving the gear lever a good kick!).*

Con.

- *The bloke up top can be most deucedly impertinent to you over the voice tube and you can't answer back. What you can do is to go over the next bump on full bore (that should give him something to think about).*
- *The atmosphere within a tank becomes definitely fetid on a summers day. To the driver it is a mixture of B.O., hot engine oil and the tank commander's feet. However, one hears rumours that next year's model is to have Findlay's system of ventilation fitted to it, so there is still hope. After all, it behoves all of us to conduct our wars upon the most hygienic lines possible!*

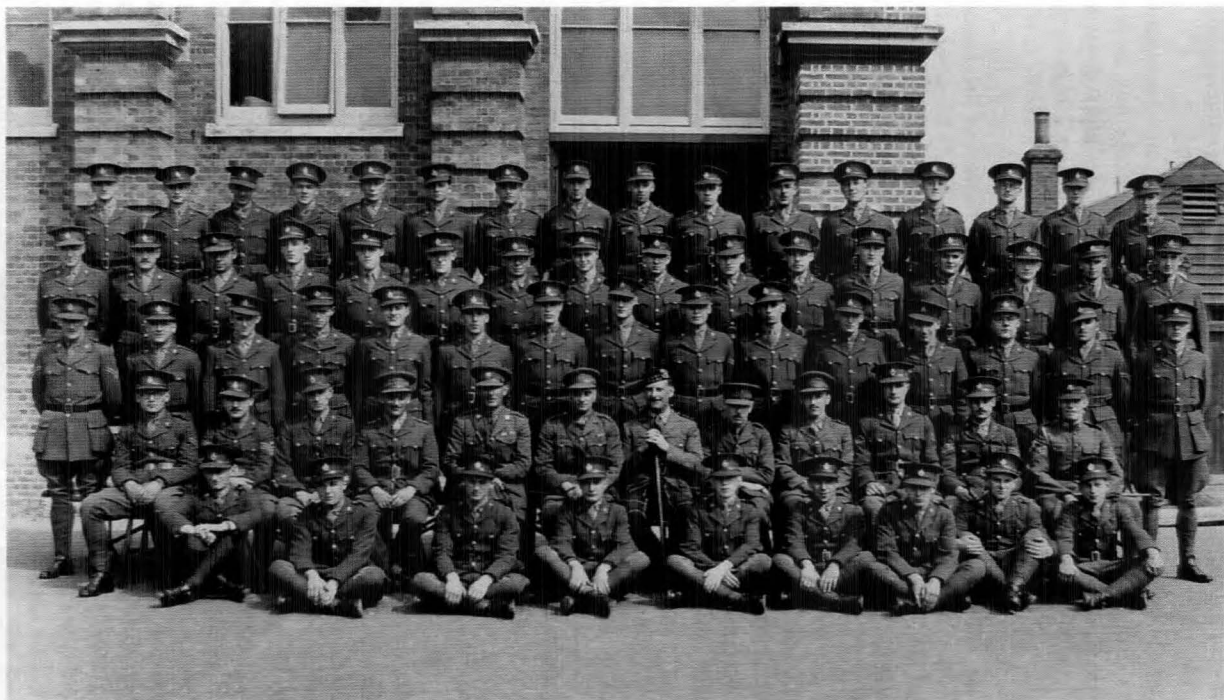


Fig. 6. Royal (Dick) Veterinary College Contingent OTC, Summer Camp, Aldershot, 1938. Major Ritchie is Seated in the Second Row Sixth from the Left. This is the Last Known Photograph of the Contingent before it Dissolved in the Following Year.³⁶

- *Some tanks seem to take an almost inhuman glee in shoveling vast quantities of sand straight at your face, and others have equally playful habits. These are especially noticeable when going downhill.*
- *When you enter the dust cloud kicked up by another tank, navigation becomes completely stellar, by voice tube from the mizzen top, such as 'Left, you B.F., Left!!' This is most amusing. But when there is no voice tube the only guidance you receive is by means of sundry kicks at your back. This is funnier still (for the tank commander).*

The mechanisation of the contingent might be seen as a symptom of the disquiet in Europe in the final years of the 1930's. While at the 1938 camp the contingent received a lecture by a 'brass-hat' from the Foreign Office on the developing situation on the continent¹³. The Dick Vet OTC did not escape the growing effect of that situation. In November 1938 the regular weekend riding parades at Redford Barracks were cancelled when the resident Cavalry Regiment, the Scots Greys were ordered to Palestine. During the 1938-39 session the OTC's premises in the basement of Summerhall were requisitioned and reinforced to provide protection for staff and students in the event of an air-raid¹⁵. The 1939 Spring Camp, held in familiar surroundings at Dreghorn, had a very full, if ominous, training programme featuring 'tactical exercises, gas training, map-reading, machine gun, revolver and foot drill and wireless training'³⁸ – a far cry from the 'eating sticky buns' competition of previous camps. The annual church parade, which saw the contingent resplendent in newly issued uniforms, was held on the 4 June in tropical conditions; however the summer camp in July was cancelled as the crisis deepened³⁸.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The Second World War was declared on 4th September 1939. The outbreak of war once again saw the dissolution of the Dick Vet OTC, this time permanently. The final official mention of the contingent appears to be a note in the London Gazette in March 1941 to the effect that Major Ritchie had ceased to serve in the contingent from October 1940³⁹. There was some movement of Dick Vet students to join up in the early stages of the war, however, veterinary students, including former members of the OTC, were 'reserved' and therefore ineligible for military service much to the chagrin of some¹³. Instead a Home Guard unit was formed at the Dick Vet that constituted a mobile reinforcing body in association with the Edinburgh University O.T.C. (which became 9th Battalion City of Edinburgh [University Senior Training Corps] Home Guard for the duration of the war). It eventually numbered around 250 students and was commanded by Professor Tom Grahame, a former officer of the Dick Vet OTC¹⁵. As with the Great War, the Second World War also took its toll of

former members of the Dick Vet OTC, with at least five former members known to have died during the war⁵.

Although the Dick Vet OTC was not reformed in the aftermath of the war, the College became incorporated into the University of Edinburgh in 1951 and Dick Vet men (and now women) could, and continue to be able to, join the reorganised Edinburgh and Heriot-Watt Universities OTC. Most notable to do so was Colonel Gordon Ferguson, William Dick Professor of Animal Health at the Dick Vet, who served variously as Staff Captain, Squadron Officer and Second-in-Command of the new OTC between 1963 and 1975⁴⁰.

OTC ALUMNI

Many of the officers (see appendix 1)⁴¹ and men of the Dick Vet OTC went on to have distinguished careers in the veterinary profession and beyond. William Mitchell became Principal of the Dick Vet in 1947 and during his tenure he oversaw the incorporation of the College into the University of Edinburgh⁶. John Ritchie held appointments as Chief Veterinary Officer, President of the RCVS and Principal of the Royal Veterinary College, London; he was knighted in the 1961 New Years Honours list³³. Thomas Wright Moir Cameron, after serving in the RAVC, emigrated to Canada where he became Professor of Parasitology at McGill University. An illustrious career followed which included a term as President of the Royal Society of Canada in 1957. Cameron has been described as 'the most outstanding Canadian veterinary scientist of the twentieth Century'⁴². Another officer of the contingent, Andrew George Heveningham, who had joined the AVC in 1914 with the lowest rank of Private, left the contingent in 1927 to serve in the RAVC and rose to become Director of the Army Veterinary and Remount Services with the rank of Brigadier. William Lee Weipers, who was an officer of the contingent between 1929 and 1933 went on to become Dean of the Glasgow Veterinary School and was also knighted. Another of the contingent's officers, William McGregor Henderson, after a distinguished career in veterinary research, became President of the Zoological Society of London and was also knighted. His obituary described his experience in the Dick Vet OTC as 'one of the most enjoyable of his young life, both for the camaraderie and for the opportunity of working with the Corps' horses'⁴³.

Photographs taken of the OTC during the summer camps provide a fantastic resource for those interested in the history of the Dick Vet College and the wider veterinary profession⁴³. Several men who would spend their careers as lecturers at the college and would be familiar to a later generation of Dick Vet alumni can be identified as cadets in the contingent. John Judge, an original member of the pre-Great War OTC, returned to the college in 1949 and was a

lecturer in Animal Management until he retired in 1959. Charles Davidson, after whom a Seminar Room in the College's new Pre-Clinical buildings at Easter Bush is named, was a member of the OTC as an undergraduate and he later helped to found the department of Clinical Veterinary Medicine at the Dick Vet, working at the College for over 30 years. James Spreull and James Grant Speed were contemporary members of the OTC who both returned in the post war years to lecture at the College in Surgery and Anatomy respectively. 'Jimmy' Speed is famed for the endowment of a fund to support student clubs and societies within the Dick Vet which is used to this day. Arthur Olver, Principal of the college during the years of the Second World War, features in the 1927 camp photograph as a visiting RAVC officer. Among the many undergraduates in the photographs are Donald and Brian Sinclair who achieved fame as the inspiration for the characters Siegfried and Tristan Farnon in the James Herriot books by Alf Wight.

CONCLUSION

Although the Royal (Dick) Veterinary College Contingent of the OTC existed only for a total period of twenty-six years it was significant not only for being one of the smallest academic institutions to form an independent OTC of the Senior Division but also as the only UK veterinary college to sustain an OTC throughout the inter-war period. However, perhaps the real importance of the contingent lies in the role it played in college life during the period of its existence and the influence it had on the undergraduate years of the many men who passed through its ranks. The Dick Vet OTC was evidently successful in its purpose of producing men who would go on to serve in the military and colonial veterinary services. Many more of the cadets would, however, go on to have more or less conventional veterinary careers but would look back at their time on the OTC fondly for the sociability and camaraderie it provided.

We close this account of the Dick Vet OTC with an excerpt from an article published in *The Centaur* entitled 'Retrospective Ramblings', which the author himself describes as 'a little self-indulgence in that most pleasant and least innocuous of the minor vices – being reminiscent'. Perhaps it represents the *feel* of the OTC better than any subsequent history can⁴⁵.

'All of our campaigns, battles and minor skirmishes have each had their dominant personalities and a goodly selection of memorable haps and mishaps. One does not, we fear, remember for long the personnel of a V.E.S. or feats of rifle drill, or the annus mirabili we put in five parades too many; nor even do we remember an evening when the thick mist crept slowly down over the gorse bushes hushing

the babbling silly sounds of men and in the quietness accentuating the aching loveliness of things. But rather we remember feats of gastronomic gymnastics over some teratosis of a congenitally benighted Q.M.S., or the morning we awoke with a moral stomach-ache, a head like nothing on earth, and a throat like Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, or the year we tore the medicals limb from limb at Montrose – our Balaclava year, or the girl we met at Peebles, where the darkness by the putting-green was so black that one could not see right from wrong.'

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APPENDIX I

Royal (Dick) Veterinary College Contingent OTC Officers (from *The London Gazette*)⁴¹

Name	Rank and Appointment	Dates Served
Ainsworth Wilson	Major and CO	Sept 1912-April 1915
William McGregor Mitchell MC	Lieutenant Captain and CO Major and CO	Oct 1912 - Sept 1914 Apr 1920-Sept 1925 Sept 1925 - Apr 1929
John Lawrence Cormack	Lieutenant	Oct 1912- c.1914
James C.W. Connell (attached from KSOB)	Captain and Adjutant	Nov 1913-c.1914
Tom Grahame	Lieutenant	Feb 1921- Feb 1922
Thomas Wright Moir Cameron	Lieutenant	Oct 1921- Oct 1923
David Lepraik McWhirter	Lieutenant	Jan 1923-Jan 1924

Fred Proud MC	Lieutenant	Feb 1923-Feb 1928
Andrew George Heveningham	2 nd Lieutenant Lieutenant	Oct 1924-Apr 1926 April 1926-c.1927
John Neish Ritchie	Lieutenant Captain and CO (Bt) Major and CO	Oct 1925-Feb 1930 Feb 1930-Jan 1938 Jan 1938-Oct 1940
Kenneth William Harcourt	2 nd Lieutenant Lieutenant	Mar 1927-Sept 1929 Sept 1929-July 1932
M.P. Lothian MC (attached from A&SH)	Captain and Adjutant	c.1928- Oct 1931
Alastair Patrick Steele	2 nd Lieutenant Lieutenant	Apr 1928-Oct 1930 Oct 1930-Jan 1933
William Lee Weipers	2 nd Lieutenant Lieutenant	Mar 1929-Mar 1932 Mar 1932-Nov 1933
G. Murray MC (attached from Seaforths)	Captain and Adjutant	Oct 1931-Oct 1935
Harold Ernest Harbour	2 nd Lieutenant	Jan 1933-Apr 1936
Terence Bower Elphick	2 nd Lieutenant	c.1934-Mar 1938
Stanley Talbot Harriss	2 nd Lieutenant Lieutenant	Oct 1934-July 1936 July 1936-June 1939
C.A.R. McCrae (attached from Seaforths)	Captain and Adjutant	Oct 1935-c1939
William McGregor Henderson	2 nd Lieutenant Lieutenant	June 1936-July 1936 July 1936-Aug 1939
Charles Edward Martyn Bodenham	Lieutenant	Feb 1936-Nov 1939

CO = Commanding Officer

KSOB = King's Own Scottish Borderers

A&SH = Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders

Seaforths = Seaforth Highlanders

(Bt) = Brevet Rank

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DID YOU KNOW? Allatrate – to bark like a dog, from Latin 'allatrare'