



About the Unit



The 12th Light Dragoons Napoleonic Living History Unit, is a non-profit making organisation. Our aim is to provide an exciting, interesting, historically accurate portrayal of one of the finest Light Dragoon regiments serving in the armies of Wellington's time.

Membership

Members come from all walks of life and new recruits are always welcome.

Recruits and dragoons

We are happy to accept recruits from early teens but mounted training and duties can only be offered to those over 16 for insurance reasons. Until then, younger recruits will be taught the basics of horse care and dismounted drill in preparation for more advanced training.

An interest in riding is always a great asset and those with previous riding experience are particularly welcome. We aim to maintain a high standard of horsemanship for the safety of the troopers and the public with all those riding in displays or battles undergoing training and an accreditation of competence to ride in military order.

Associates, junior and family

The 12th is not just a 'men only', 'riders only' unit. We actively encourage all those with an interest in any aspect of the life and history of the 12th during the Napoleonic Wars to join. For those who wish to join in a non-mounted capacity, camp life, dismounted guard duties, civilian/camp followers are all welcome as associate members. Everybody can bring their skills and experience to the unit in some way or another which all adds to the overall look and feel of an event. For family members who do not wish to take part in the period life of the unit, but still want to come along and support the 12th, free family membership is offered to the direct family of any recruit or dragoon.

Progress.

We operate a two tier system of membership to prevent recruits from being pressurised to commit to the unit before they are ready.

Initial visits - Potential new recruits are welcome to come along to 1 or 2 events as our guests to 'see what it's like' before deciding to join.

Recruits - Once potential recruits decide they like the unit and we feel that we have something to offer you, new members join as recruits. All though there is no minimum entry requirement for purchase of uniform or equipment, it is expected that recruits will be actively acquiring the uniform of stable dress and be learning the basics of drill. As part of recruit training the troop will undertake to provide instruction on horse care, horsemanship and mounted drill as well as skill-at-arms training when appropriate. Accreditation will be issued to recruits as they become competent at the troop drill and horsemanship. During this time recruits have the opportunity to really see what the unit is like and the unit see how the recruit fits in. Our style of living history is not to everyone's taste and the period as a recruit gives the opportunity for people to withdraw from the unit before they have invested too heavily in uniform and equipment.

Dragoons - Once recruits are fully accredited, they are eligible to become full dragoons. There is no set length of time that recruits spend before they are eligible to become dragoons, this depends on their progress and competence. Being a dragoon implies an equal share in the responsibilities of the camp and an equal share in the riding during events and displays. Dragoons are expected to be actively acquiring the full uniform of a dragoon including accoutrements.

NCOs - At present, the highest ranks awarded to members of the unit are NCOs. These ranks do not imply special rights or authority other than being the most experienced and appropriate members of the troop to manage events and the horses.

Commitment

We understand that some people have interests in many periods of history and others have limited time for their hobby. We don't ask members to devote themselves wholly to the 12th rather than other periods nor do we expect them at any given number of events. The 12th is a single period unit but all the troop expects of members is to ensure that they honour the commitments they give so that we can effectively plan our season's bookings.

What do recruits / dragoons provide and what does the unit provide?

At present, members (either recruits or dragoons) are only expected to own their own uniform (see below). All saddlery, tack, horse furniture and camp equipment is provided by the unit. Members are welcome to purchase their own supplies of any of these items provided that they match the troop property for the sake of a consistent appearance. The uniform of a trooper is given over:

Recruit - stable dress

	Approx.
Stable cap*	£30
Stable jacket*	£70
White cotton shirt	£15
Black cotton neck cloth	£1
Stable britches	£35
White canvas mess bag	£5
Braces	£3



Dragoon- full dress + 'campaigns'

	Approx.
Tarleton helmet*	£200
1808 pattern dolman jacket*	£150
White wool britches*	£35
'Hessian' leather riding boots (seconds)	£60-£90
1796 pattern sabre	£95
Sword belt & sabretache and slings	£112-£152
Carbine sling & cartouche box	£150
Leather re-enforced campaign overalls	£100



Some articles* must come from the same source to ensure the troop is uniform. In these cases, we have usually tried to ensure that the price is at least competitive and the quality of workmanship of a very high standard. Non vital items can be made or bought from other sources provided that they meet certain basic standards.

What to expect

Events, battles and displays.

The unit provides many forms of re-enactment / living history.

Battles

Battle re-enactment has been just one part of our calendar. We have ridden in battles all over the UK and Europe with the Napoleonic Association and foreign counterparts, against the likes of the 1ère Chasseurs à cheval, Grenadiers à cheval & Léger Lanciers of the Garde Imperiale.

From the muddy field of Waterloo in 1995 which saw perhaps the most thrilling and spectacular battle re-enactment we have ever taken part in, to skirmishes across the length and breadth of England, the troop prides itself on safe and enjoyable battle re-enactment.

Skill at arms and drill

Another major part of our public display events are the drill and skill at arms displays. A major area in which the unit takes interest is the encouragement of all members to acquire all the skills of horsemanship and handling of weapons that went to make up the training of an experienced light cavalry unit like the 12th. It was just these qualities of care and understanding of horses and skill with the weapons of the period that led Wellington to say that man-for-man and troop-for-troop he considered the British cavalry "to be at least equal to every two of the French".

To this end we often practice with the sabre and lance. Not only does this provide us the means to put on some of the most exciting displays of cavalry that the public can see outside of the regular army, but it helps troopers to become even more proficient on horseback. Just as exciting as the melee of battle is riding down the skill-at-arms course, sabre at the guard slicing 'the Turk's head' in two with one of the 6 approved sword cuts, running the ring through with the point of the sabre or piercing the tent peg with the 8 inch steel lance tip.

Ceremonial, film & photographic work

The attention to detail that the 12th has with all our uniform and horse furniture often leads to our being used for high profile ceremonial or photographic work. We have stood guard at the Brighton Pavilion, the Napoleonic Fair and the 'Cast & Crew party' for *Sharpe's Regiment*. We have appeared in several publications about uniform and regiments of the Napoleonic Wars and have provided mounted extras for the *Sharpe* series.

Social life of the unit.

We aim to provide a friendly group where the hard work and sweat necessary to care for the horses and keep them looking their best, is always mixed with a sense of camaraderie and belonging. Although women and children cannot ride with us as military personnel, all members of the family are welcome at our events. Those who wish to join in with the living history of the regiment are welcome in the period camp and for those interested, side-saddle riding in period costume is sometimes available. Those who wish to come along simply to support us are always welcome in the modern camp and in the period camp after it is

closed to the public. During weekend or longer events, the Unit often holds a 'mess dinner' where all members, families and friends are welcome to contribute and sit around the table in front of the camp fire and taste our hospitality. Women and children are always welcome and members pride themselves on exemplary standards of behaviour.

Joining & More information

If this information has whetted your appetite for the life of a light cavalryman with the 12th Light Dragoons, then we would like to hear from you. If you would like to 'join up', want to find out more or are simply interested in what we do and what is involved, please don't hesitate to contact us. Either the recruiting officer or the 'Paymaster' would be happy to give you more information and can be contacted as below.

Feel free to ask and join

The 12th Light Dragoons

'Adjutant' and Secretary:

Mr Martin Render
Shepherd's Cottage
Fern Hill
Nr Glemsford
Suffolk
CO10 7PR

01787 280077

'Paymaster' and treasurer:

Mr Neil Borley
Laburnum Cottage
West End
Launton
Oxfordshire
OX6 0DG

01869 323159