

Pattern and Experimental Troopers Swords of the British Cavalry from 1864 to 1890 ~ Part One

INTRODUCTION

THE BRITISH Cavalry Regulation Swords to be discussed in this article evolved from the first "Universal" Pattern of 1853 and officially ended with the introduction of the last, and entirely different, troopers sword of 1908.

Although there were distinct stages of development during the period under study, all these swords look similar and tend to be referred to as the "1885" Pattern; that Pattern, approved in 1885, being the most prolific and commonly found of this series today.

My interest in these swords was heightened some years ago on my becoming aware that all the 1884 dated "Pattern 1882 Long" swords I examined have 34.5 ins. long blades while the "List of Changes" and contemporary reports refer to length of 35 and 3/8ths. ins. which is also the blade length of the Sealed Pattern 1882 Long Swords.

By John D. Morgan

Brian Robsons "Swords of the British Army" provides an invaluable reference and sound basis for further research. However, there does seem to be a lack of known surviving examples of swords of the period c.1878 to 1885 to adequately back up the present published research and even those swords available for inspection can be difficult to relate to the data.

The story needs to continue with a brief mention of the Pattern 1821 swords for Light and Heavy Cavalry and the Universal Patterns of 1853 and 1864.

BACKGROUND

The troopers swords still in official use in the British Cavalry by 1878 were the Patterns 1853 and 1864. The previous Pattern 1821 swords

had by now been phased out and passed on to the Yeomanry Cavalry, sold overseas, converted to naval use, etc.. The Pattern 1821 swords were assembled in the manner generally introduced in 1796; that is with the narrow tang passing through the drilled round wood leather bound grip and rivetted over the pommel. The grip was further secured by a rivet passed through holes drilled through "ears" on the backpiece, grip and tang. Although many surviving examples appear as sound as the day they were made, problems had presumably occurred in use as in 1853 the "Reeves Patent Hilt" was introduced. In this new hilt the tang became, in effect, a continuation of the blade with built-up chequered leather grips rivetted to each side. In service the grip was criticised as being too round and awkward to hold and thus in the subsequent patterns was made more oval. It was surprising that the authorities chose to continue with the Light Cavalry type 3-bar

Fig 1

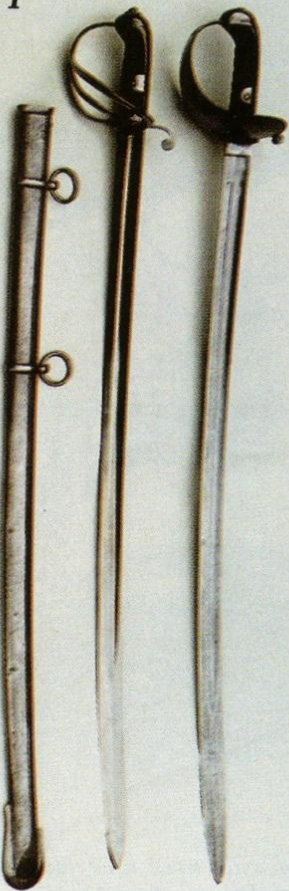


Fig 2

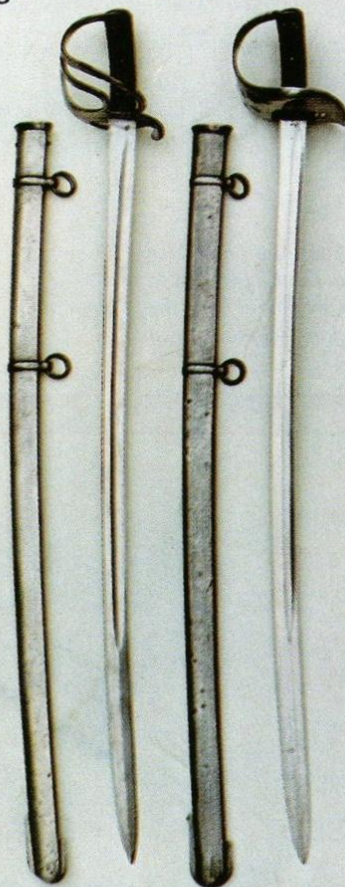


Fig 3



guard rather than the more protective bowl type, nevertheless the sword was gradually introduced to see some service in the Crimea though probably too late for use in the cavalry actions at Balaclava.

The wrought iron 3-bar guards were liable to breakage and a new bowl guard of homogeneous, or cast puddled, steel from "Mr Firth of Sheffield" was introduced in December 1863 (later confirmed by LoC.887, dated March 1864) to replace broken Pattern 1853 guards. No official introduction of the Pattern Sword exists, as inferred by the following handwritten note in a contemporary ledger...

"The new hilt was proposed to be used for the repair of all cavalry swords whose hilts had been damaged, the C-in-C. approved of this measure. In order to prevent the two patterns being employed in the same Regiment it was ordered that on a cavalry sword hilt becoming damaged, a new sword with the old pattern hilt should be issued from store without the scabbard. This latter was to be sent to Pimlico with the broken sword and the new pattern hilt fitted to it, and returned with the scabbard to store at the Tower, and when a sufficient number had accumulated for arming an entire Regiment, they were to be issued on application"

...The weight of the new hilt was so "arranged" as not to disturb the old balance of the sword. The Pattern 1864 saw very little active service until the outbreak of the 2nd. Afghan War in 1878 and as it had been

introduced without any prior tests, or trials, it is no surprise that complaints were soon received from several Regiments. These complaints primarily concerned the guard, the edge of which damaged the clothing and saddlery. Only the RHA, having made complaints in this respect, were allowed in 1876 (LoC 2870) to retain the Pattern 1853 sword.

Later in 1878 more complaints were received regarding the general suitability of the Pattern 1864 sword following incidents in Afghanistan.

It may be appropriate here to mention that the arguments over cut and thrust, curved or straight blades, had apparently abated at this time as the continued use of the slightly curved and spear pointed "compromise" blade of the 1821 Patterns seems to have been accepted by both the Authorities and "Users" as seen in all the swords illustrated. This is further confirmed later by the detailed questionnaire sent to all Regiments in 1884 on the 1882 Patterns where the main criticisms concerned the guard, length and quality of the blade and balance of the sword, although opportunity was there for any other comments.

In 1878 about 12000 "Service Pattern" swords were in store; these stocks would have comprised both Pattern 1853 and 1864 swords, most undoubtedly being the 1853 Pattern. Despite the Directive of the C-in-C in March 1864 that no Regiment should have two patterns of sword, at least one Regiment, the

Fig 1. Swords for Light and Heavy Cavalry, the Patterns 1821, with 35 and 5/8th ins. and 36 and 1/4 ins. blades respectively.

Fig 2. Cavalry Troopers Swords, Patterns 1853 and 1864. These Patterns were Universal for all Line Cavalry other ranks. The blades are 35 and 1/2 ins. long; point to fuller averages 9 and 5/8ins.

Fig 3. Close up of the 1864 hilt to show the sword knot slits; there is no slit at the top of the guard.

Fig 4. Ostensibly a Pattern 1864 Sword, but it does not have the usual double sword knot slit at the base of the guard, there is a single slit at the top instead. The blade is 35 and 1/2 ins. long with the fuller ending 9 ins. from the point. There are no markings apart from the "MOLE" shield cartouche on the blade. The scabbard is the Pattern Long, overall length 36 and 1/8 ins. This sword may well be one of the six Experimental New Swords made by Mole and Son in 1878. (National Army Museum, 7410-10).

Fig 5. Close-up of hilt. (National Army Museum, 7410-10).



Fig 4



Fig 5

17th. Lancers, had both. Some Regiments, including the 7th. Hussars, seem not to have received the P.1864, but the 3rd, 4th and 20th Hussars, 4th and 5th Dragoon Guards definitely did. The 1st Dragoons and 5th Lancers received theirs as late as 1881.

EXPERIMENTATION AND SWORD TRIALS

As the result of the complaints from Regiments about the Pattern 1864 sword and at the request of the Authorities, Mole & Son submitted a sample for a modified sword in late 1878. They were then instructed to produce a further 6 swords of this "New" Pattern and, due to the large stocks of current service swords, to also make 6 swords the same but converted from the Pattern 1864.

The resulting reports were "most satisfactory", the only objection being from the 5th Dragoon Guards that the edge of the hilt injured the mens pantaloons. This criticism suggested that the guard, though stated to be smaller, was basically still of the 1864 pattern with the unlippped edges. The blade was still about 35.5 ins. long, though lightened by grinding down.

The National Army Museum have a sword (Inventory No. 7410-10) that could well be one of the "New" swords prepared. The guard of this sword is of the 1864 pattern except that the double slits at the base of the guard are

omitted and instead a single slit is located at the pommel end, as in the Pattern 1853 hilt. This sword was made by Mole & Son and it is quite likely that one of the suggested modifications was to consider returning to the old sword knot position and there were no doubt 1864 guard "blanks" readily available without having to make a new one. The blade of 7410-10 has no issue or inspection stamps but is stamped with makers name and also etched with a shield incorporating "MOLE".

This etched cartouche is encountered on (what appear to be) later Pattern 1885 swords by Mole and which, generally lacking official markings, I consider to be direct issues to Yeomanry Cavalry Regiments. More recently I have become aware of the use of this cartouche on some earlier examples including the 1882 sealed patterns.

In March 1880, Mole received orders to make 800 more of the converted swords for immediate issue and trials; these were described as ..."Experimental Sword and Scabbard, Pattern 1880, converted from the Sword and Scabbard Pattern 1864". The guard was reduced in size and weight, though probably not yet with rounded edges, and had sword knot slits at top and bottom of the guard as a decision on a preferred sword knot position had yet to be made; these were obviously converted 1864 guards.

From contemporary reports I am certain the blade length was 35 and 3/8ths ins, though this

is not made absolutely clear; the blade was thinner, narrower and lighter than the 1864 blade. The scabbard was as the 1864 pattern but with fixed loops instead of loose rings, the lower loop being brought closer to the upper loop in an "attempt" to prevent sword loss should the upper sling break.

Meanwhile, in June 1880, approval was given for the manufacture of 100 experimental swords of a lighter pattern with 33ins. blades, the steel guards being "slightly rounded" at the edges.

These latter swords were issued in equal quantities to the 11th and 20th Hussars, 6th Dragoons and, despite having already had official sanction in 1876 to continue with the Pattern 1853, the RA and RHA. The main criticism in fact came from the RHA who still claimed the guard damaged their clothing. This suggests that the guard edges were as yet not fully rounded; in fact the contemporary description refers to them as "more turned up". Though 100 were made, I have yet to see such a hilt, but at this stage the manufacturers had not the means of forming a rounded edge in steel hilts. The sword was otherwise generally liked for its handiness and lightness, the hilt remaining the main point of concern.

In November 1881, another sword, and scabbard, was ordered from Messrs. Mole and 24 were issued for trials in 1882. This sword was referred to as the "Experimental Sword and Scabbard, Pattern 1880, New, with modified

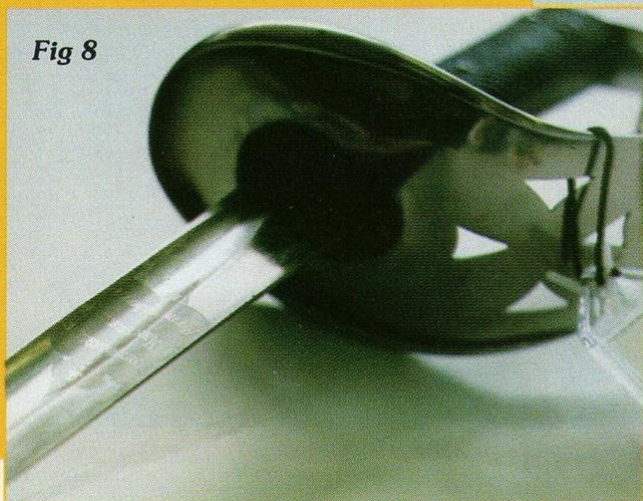
Fig 6



Fig 7



Fig 8



form of hilt". The hilt was of malleable iron so that the edges could be properly rounded, but in fact, by the time further swords were manufactured the technical difficulties of making a steel hilt with rounded edges had been overcome. Surviving examples suggest that some 1864 pattern hilts were then used for reasons of economy. The results of the trials were favourable and the previous objections were overcome.

THE PATTERN 1882 SWORDS

One of the New Pattern swords actually tried was shown to his Royal Highness the Field Marshall Commanding-in-Chief who approved it; the swords and scabbards of these Long and Short Patterns were then sealed on 16/12/1882 with the concurrence of the Surveyor-General of Ordnance.

While these trials were in progress, the question of converting existing stocks of swords was still being considered, with the intention of these matching the New sword. Two examples of the conversions were submitted in December 1881, referred to in Committee Reports as No. 1 and No. 2. No. 1 had a ground down, lighter, though unshortened blade and a new guard with rounded edges and with the sword knot slit at the top of the guard only. A New scabbard was fitted as this was found to cost no more than converting an "old one".

No. 2 had a ground down and shortened blade so as to make it uniform in length with the New Experimental Sword for Medium and Light Cavalry; it took the same scabbard as the New sword. In January 1882 the Surveyor General of the Ordnance approved recommendations that the store of 1864 pattern swords should be gradually converted, the majority to type No. 2, with a few being converted to type No. 1 for some Heavy Cavalry Regiments.

The official introduction and approval of these four categories, the Pattern 1882 Long and Short New, and the Pattern 1882 Long and Short Converted, was announced to the Service under LoC. 4204 on 16/12/1882 in the List of Changes.

The blade lengths were stated as 35 and 3/8ths ins. and 33 ins. The next LoC for these patterns was LoC. 4429 on 23/2/1884 confirming issue of the Long Pattern to the 4th and 5th Dragoon Guards and the 1st and 2nd Dragoons; the Short Pattern to all other mounted services except Household Cavalry.

PART TWO will be continued NEXT ISSUE

Fig 6. This sword was discovered at the Woolwich Arsenal "clear out" c.1994 and first made known in "Swords of the British Army, 2nd. Edition". The blade is 33 ins. long with fuller ending 8 and 7/8 ins. from the point. It is undated but stamped "MOLE BIRMINGHAM" and inspection stamp of crown, B and 21 on back. The guard has no markings, is similar to the standard type but is turned up a little more at the sides and the entire edge has a peculiar rounded thickening. Brian Robsons identification is I am sure correct but, to be more precise, it must be the "Experimental Sword and Scabbard, Pattern 1880, New, with Modified form of hilt", the hilt of this pattern being malleable iron which would allow this forming of the rim. 24 were made which explains its rarity! (MoD Pattern Room).

Fig 7. Sword, Pattern 1882, Long. This is the Sealed example in the Pattern Room, Nottingham. The blade is 35 and 3/8th ins. long, the full ending 9.5 ins. from the point. The blade is stamped "MOLE"...etc. and has the MOLE Cartouche. The scabbard is 36 and 1/4 ins. overall length. The Converted Sealed Pattern originally lodged with the Pattern Room on 19/1/1882 (as ref: 602) was substituted by this sword, with new scabbard, on 16/12/1882 (ref: 613); the Short Pattern was similarly replaced. It is assumed that the Converted Pattern Swords and scabbards were discarded. The January description has been cancelled and overwritten by the December entry. As an observation I would add that, without the documentation, this Long Pattern New Sword could well be taken for a Converted sword due to the closeness of fuller to hilt; there being normally a long flat "ricasso" section on the new blades. (MoD Pattern Room).

Fig 8. Etched shield on the 1882 Sealed Patterns incorporating the wording "Robert Mole & Son, Makers, Birmingham". The same etched shield appears on NAM-1710-10 and is found occasionally on other occasions of the "1885" type by Mole.

Fig 9. Two examples of the 1882 Pattern, Short. Both have 33 ins. blades. The left hand sword may be one of the swords made after the "Pattern 1880" trials in early 1882. The blade is identical to the Pattern 1880, New, in the Pattern Room, even having the same markings.

There is a faint erased date on the guard - possibly 6.1881; if so, a little puzzling as a little early. However, as the guard is a converted 1864 guard with the 2 sword knot positions it may have been one reused from the 1880 Long Conversions? The right hand sword is a straightforward "Sword, Cavalry, Short Pattern 1882 Converted" with blade dated February 1884. Blade and scabbard have conversion stamps. The blade has traces of the original 1864 maker, REEVES. The hilt has 1887 date stamp to the Yeomanry and the scabbard is painted khaki for overseas service.

Fig 10. Close-up of the converted 1864 guard of the Short Pattern sword on the left. Note sword knot slots at top and bottom of guard.

Fig 9

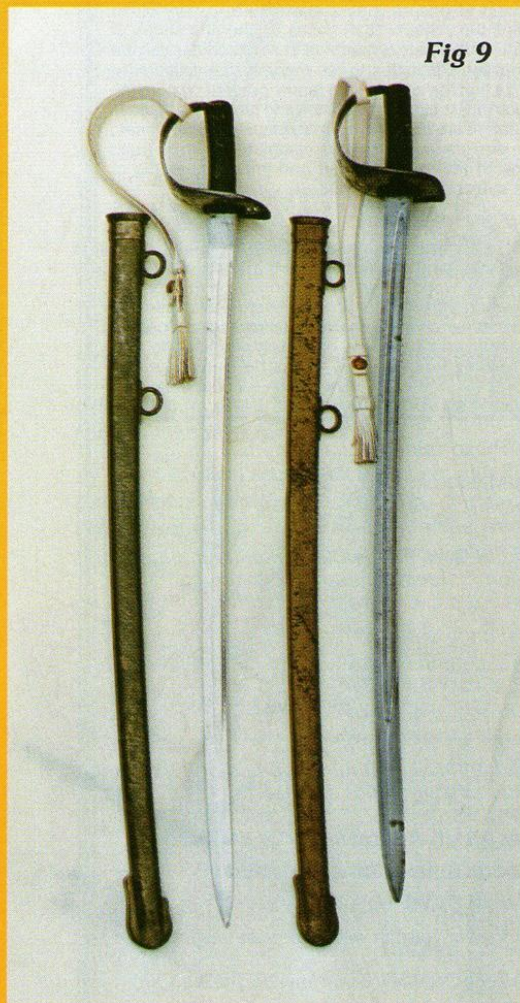


Fig 10



Pattern and Experimental Troopers Swords of the British Cavalry from 1864 to 1890 ~ Part Two

PATTERN 1882 SWORD PROBLEMS

IT IS NOT clear when issues of the Pattern 1882 swords commenced. Specifications for testing dated April 1882 and January 1882 exist for the Converted and New Pattern respectively.

Records indicate that c. July 1884 the 8th Hussars, 12th and 17th Lancers, 1st, 5th and 6th Dragoon Guards, and 1st and 2nd Dragoons had not received theirs but that the 7th and 15th Hussars received the Short Pattern in April. It is interesting that 1882 pattern swords had been issued to the India Stores Department, the 20th Hussars having returned from India with theirs in November; I have seen Short Pattern 1882 swords stamped ISD, but no other markings. Many of the swords were then found unserviceable after testing by the Regiments, though according to the Superintendent at Enfield the swords had been "overtested". This officer was also a member of the "Special Committee which was inaugurated later in October 1884 for "the purpose of considering and advising upon the patterns and quality of the swords and scabbards then in use by the Cavalry". The Official Test Specification required a "shortening" of 4 ins. by bending with a vertical pressure on the hilt, whereas the Regiments had "shortened" the blades by 6 ins.! He found that the weakness was towards the point and considered that, by adding about 2 ounces towards the point, the blade would be sufficiently stiff.

The Superintendent reported his findings on 10/07/1884, his letter being passed to the C-in-C.

He referred to the extensive trials before the Pattern was adopted, that there had been no objection to the blade being too light or soft and that the Pattern was not "got up" at Enfield but by Mole and Son under instructions from the Assistant Adjutant-General (Col. Annesley); the "great object they sought being lightness". His proposals were given favourable consideration and a set of questions he had prepared were sent to all Cavalry Regiments at home and abroad by Col. Annesley. The replies became an important factor in the 1884 Committee's later deliberations.

Various other reports contained details of damage to blades, mainly on home Service. Most were bent, presumably between the fuller and point, by such causes as "kick from horse", "struck on ground, or against another sword", "sword knot caught on another man's carbine". A few cases of breakages from similar causes, the oddest being one broken while cleaning! There was considerable Official opinion however that blades were soft and made of inferior materials.

The Regiments had expressed an almost unanimous preference for a longer blade and the Committee on 13/11/84 decided that a slight increase beyond that of the 1882 (Short) was desirable, if achieved "without loss of handiness and balance and without such increase in weight that would

Fig 11

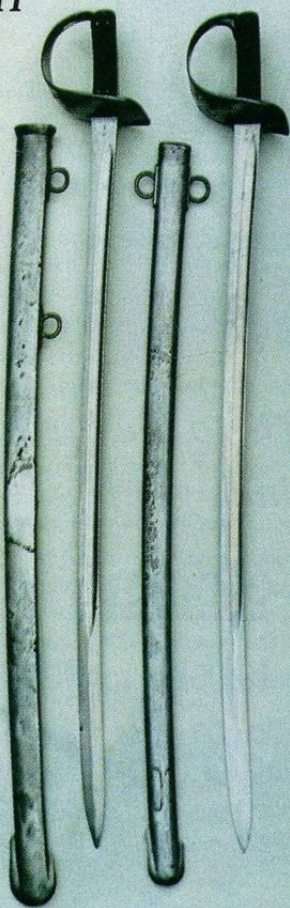


Fig 12

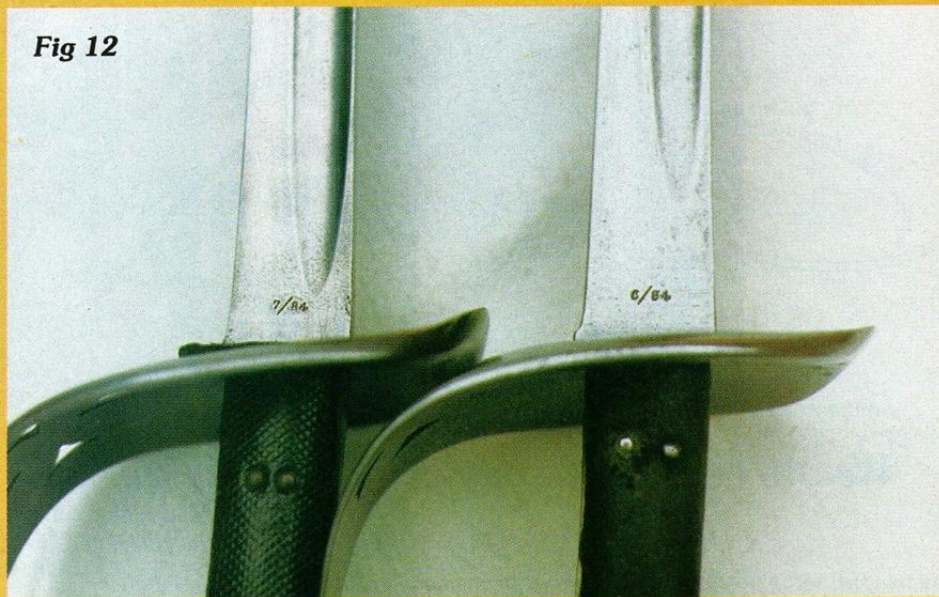


Fig 11. On the left, the example that set me off on this research!, "Pattern 1882, Long, New", blade dated June 1884, with Long Pattern Scabbard converted from an 1864 scabbard; (sword and scabbard acquired separately!). The sword is marked to the 5DG and has a 34.5 ins. blade with fuller ending 9.5 ins. from the point. I know of two identical swords marked to the 5DG; one being in the Tower Armouries (1X 343). If these blades had been shortened from the sealed pattern length of 35 and 3/8th ins., then the fullers would have originally ended 10 and 3/8th ins. from point! ... unlikely. Further comment at this stage would be conjectural. The blade has several stamps, including an arrow, WD, crown and 12. The hilt is dated 10.1884; possibly issue date to the 5DG. The right hand sword is a "Sword, Cavalry, Pattern 1885; Converted from Pattern 1882 Long"; note the addition of handstop. Blade length 34.5 ins. with fuller ending 8 and 5/8th ins. from point. Blade and hilt have various markings and conversion stamps including traces of "REEVES" on back as this sword was originally a Pattern 1864!

Fig 12. Detail of my "1882 Long" swords to show dates on blades.

be objectionable”.

The RSAF (Enfield) were thus directed to prepare 6 swords with 34 ins. blades and 6 swords with 34.5 ins. blades; Mole also prepared a few though lighter.

These were all tested, together with a mix of 60 other swords currently in Service taken from 5 Regiments, and tested in front of the Full Committee on 18/12/1884 and 6/1/1885 at the Tower and on 16/1/1885 at the Albany Barracks.

These latter tests were the most severe, some carried out mounted at the gallop and the rest dismounted, against horse and sheep carcasses.

Although no sword was entirely successful due to the severity of the tests the 34.5 ins. bladed sword was most favoured.

One aspect thoroughly investigated was the steel quality and content, and method of hardening. Mole & Son (as Government sword contractors), Firth & Son and Sanderson & Co (steel suppliers) attended a full Committee meeting on 23/1/1885 to “favour the Government with evidence”. The main concern was whether hardening should be by oil or water, each method having particular merits. Oil seemed to be preferred, especially by the Superintendent (RSAF-Enfield).

Mr Mole stated that oil hardening, a method he had used for some 10 years, is the simpler process with fewer rejects. He added that water hardening does make for a harder blade, but cracks can be a problem and its success depends significantly on the steel quality. Oil hardened blades are tougher, a set bend being more likely than a break (as the reports of damage from the Regiments indicated).

Analysis of the actual steel manufacture for sword blades continued for several months, the matter being taken very seriously; much detailed information exists.

As a result of these investigations the Committee recommended that 12 identical swords should be made up equally by the RSAF at Enfield, by Wilkinson and by Mole; each manufacturer hardening 2 blades in oil and 2 in water (though Wilkinsons made only 2).

The results of the tests were reported to the Full Committee on 23/3/1885 who, after deliberation, decided to leave the choice of method to the manufacturer.

The conclusion to all these tests was that a), all 1882 pattern swords were to be retested to a revised Specification and only those that passed were to be reissued and b), the new sword with 34.5 ins. blade was recommended for Approval by the Committee on 14/5/1885 having passed all the required tests. The sword did not receive Official Approval until 4/11/1885, and the detailed Specification was dated 9/11/1885. In conclusion, the Committee recommended that to maintain a standard of quality and production costs, a proportion of swords each year should be made at the RSAF at Enfield.

Fig 13. Pattern 1882, Long, sword converted to Pattern 1885 length but still retaining its original unshortened 1882 Scabbard. Fuller ends 7 and 3/4 ins. from point. Blade stamped MOLE and inspection stamp on guard. Crude, not shaped, handstop added; may be an unofficial or Yeomanry conversion? (National Army Museum 6312-251-141)).

Fig 14. The left hand sword is a “Sword, Cavalry, Pattern 1885, Marked M” with the 1889 pattern experimental blade. The guard has erased markings to the 9L; later markings to the Duke of Lancasters Yeomanry with “Y” Approval stamp. The right hand sword is a “Sword, Cavalry, Pattern 1885”. The blade is dated 1886 ('86) and by “WEYERSBERG, KIRSCHBAUM & CIE, SOLINGEN”. The hilt has erased markings to the 14H and later stamps to the Leicester Yeomanry. No further Orders were given to the Solingen firm after the completion of their Contract, the principal and, possibly only, manufacturers of these swords then being Mole and Enfield. (Note that both fixed loops are now fixed at the scabbard mouth, also note the handstop at the top of the grip; both features were introduced in the 1885 Specification).

Fig 13



Fig 14



THE FINAL SWORDS OF THE "1885 SERIES"

The first issues of the "Sword, Cavalry, Pattern 1885" appear to have been to the 2nd. Dragoon Guards (Queens Bays) on 11/11/1885. This Order was urgently requested on 28/10/1885 as the Regiment was due to embark for India and the Officer representing the India Office considered that some of their 1882 pattern swords were unserviceable. These "Short Pattern" swords had been issued in July 1884 and subjected to the revised test in March 1885 in which 294 were failed and replaced. It is interesting that, prior to the tests, these 1882 pattern swords had been considered serviceable by the Colonel of the Regiment. Although it was apparently intended that all the 1882 pattern swords should be replaced by the Pattern 1885, the Summary in the Appendix at the end of this article, produced from Official documents, indicates two additional 1885 patterns, one being a Conversion from the Patterns 1853 and 1864; the other a Conversion of the Pattern 1882 Long (an example is illustrated). I would think there were comparatively few of the Pattern 1882 Long swords available for conversion bearing in mind that they were made for four Regiments only and many would have failed the 1885 Tests. These Pattern 1885 Conversions were approved early in 1886, no doubt due to the desperate situation of satisfying the Government requirement of 30,000 swords with only one commercial firm, Mole & Son, available to manufacture swords on a large scale.

Apart from producing some earlier swords for trials, Wilkinsons do not seem to have wished, or been able, to be involved in mass sword production at this time. To meet the target, Mole & Son were given a three year Contract to supply 9,500 swords and Enfield were given an order for 2000. The German firm of Weyersberg, Kirschbaum and Co. of Solingen were Contracted to produce the remainder of just over 18000 and, as had happened some 100 years earlier, were able to produce them at a cost of well below that of the English made swords. The Solingen order was completed in April 1887. Pattern 1885 swords by this firm have the makers name "WEYERSBERG, KIRSCHBAUM & Cie, SOLINGEN" stamped on the left flat of the blade together with the date, usually '86.

The 1884 Committee had recommended that future testing was to be, firstly, by a machine at Enfield which delivered a blow on the blade edge and back; secondly by bending round a rigid former to reduce the effective length by 4.5 ins. and, lastly; bending in a machine of a form similar to one in use at Wilkinsons since 1844 by vertical pressure on the hilt to reduce the blade length by 5 and 6 ins.

Incidentally, the severity of these tests was lessened in 1890 for the testing and retesting of 1885 pattern blades by reducing the "shortening" requirement to 3.5 ins. Blades made after 1885 were supposed to be stamped "X" on the left flat. It must be added that the "X" mark does not appear on swords in my possession pre. 1890.

Despite all the effort and care that had culminated in the 1885 pattern, there was increasing concern regarding the strength of the blade.

As with the 1882 patterns, many complaints no doubt arose from excessive unauthorised testing in the Regiments, but there were also reports of damaged swords in action against the Mahdis; these were possibly exaggerated.

The matter was brought to a head by serious complaints from the 5th Dragoon Guards in Ireland resulting in the swords there being retested, though less severely. This probably accounts for the 1890 test Specification for a bending test shortening of only 3.5 ins.

2876 swords were tested; 2138 being Solingen made; 229 by RSAF-Enfield and 490 by Mole. The percentage of failures were 3.55%, 5.22% and 12.7% respectively, no explanation was given.

In April 1889, two distinguished Engineers asked to analyse materials, blades and tests, thought the current tests so severe they could weaken the blade.

Their recommendations were for a bending test to each side of the blade with subsequent tests to one side only, that instead of hand hammering the blades were to be machine rolled for consistency, oil hardening was to be used and also a uniform steel specification.

Experimental blades were made up early in 1889 by Enfield "E" and

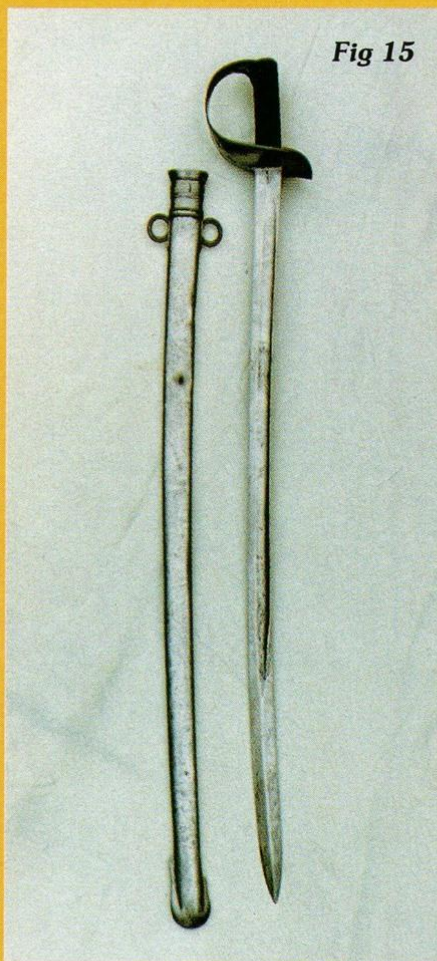


Fig 15

Fig 15. "Sword, Cavalry, Pattern 1890". Made in 1896; '90 stamped on blade back. The official scabbard for this sword is the P. 1885 MK2. However the scabbard with this sword is made up from a Pattern 1882 Long scabbard dated 1884 with lower loop removed and a top section and mouthpiece from another sword; probably a Regimental armourers alteration.

Fig 16. Shoe of the converted scabbard for the 1890 sword. Illustrated to show the small piece of steel brazed on at some time to repair wear. This was authorised on 29/4/1871 as it was found difficult to braze on a complete replacement shoe.

Fig 17. Swords specifically made for the Yeomanry have been generally ignored; however this sword is shown as it is another example of the use of the 1864 hilt, converted. The blade is 34.5 ins. long, but no markings. The sword is so far unidentified but probably made for a Yeomanry unit.

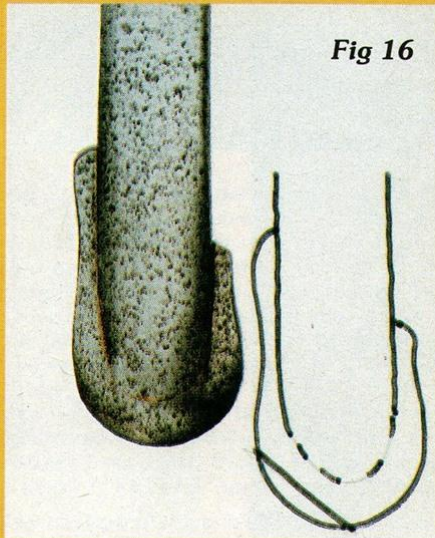


Fig 16

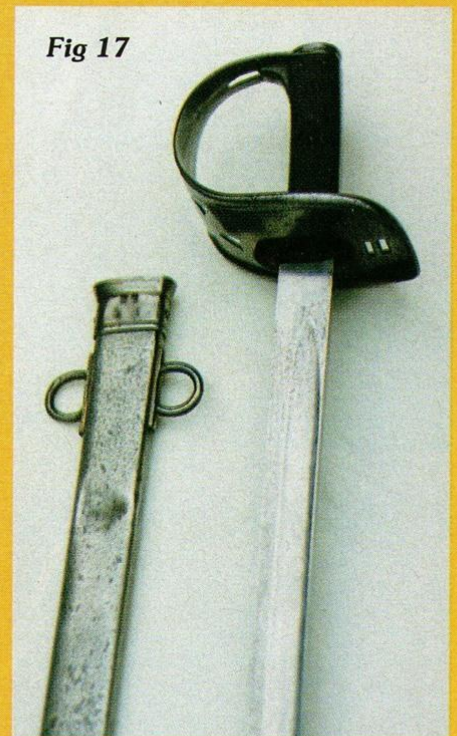


Fig 17

Wilkinson "W" and put into trials with four Regiments.

Although the test results were unclear there was an urgency to recommence production and so these blades were hilted with the 1885 pattern guard and marked "M" (I believe this to stand for "Modification"). The swords were then tested in accordance with the Specification of 7/3/1889. The sword was referred to as the "Sword, Cavalry, Pattern 1885, Marked "M". The "M" mark ceased on the Formal Adoption of this sword as the "Sword, Cavalry, Pattern 1890" in May, 1890.

As the scope of this article avoids much detail, including sword and scabbard weights I should mention that although the initial thoughts in 1878 were for a lighter sword, the Pattern 1890 is in fact heavier than the 1864 pattern! Basically, it seemed that the blade weight for a cutting sword needed to be increased for adequate strength.

There were still 18 years of Committees, Experimental swords and Trials ahead, not to mention the disliked Pattern 1899 sword, before the introduction of the last and, arguably the finest, British Cavalry Troopers sword in 1908.

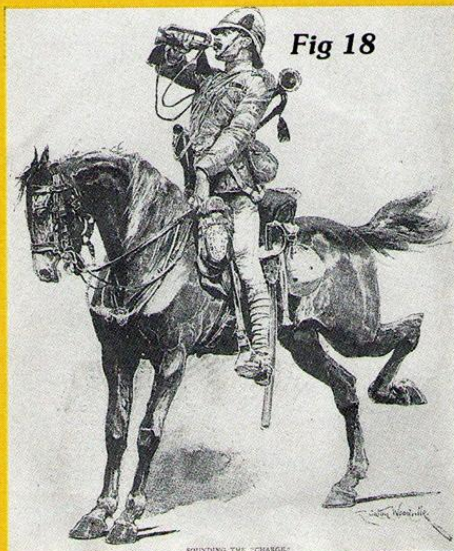
APPENDIX

Summary of Experimental Swords, Approved New Patterns and Official Conversions between c. 1861 and 1899

DEC. 1863

A new guard approved to replace broken 1853 sword guards. Known as the Pattern 1864 with 35.5 ins. blades (Confirmed by LoC.887; March 1864).

Fig 18. Sketch of a Cavalry Trumpeter by Caton Woodville c.1900. The sword strapped to the shoe-case on the saddle is a Pattern 1885 or 1890.



LATE 1878

A sample of a modified sword submitted by Mole and Son.

JUNE 1879

6 New and 6 Converted swords with 35 and 3/8th ins. blades by Mole and Son for trials, based on the 1878 sample.

MARCH 1880

800 more of the Converted Pattern with 35 and 3/8th ins. blades, known as the "Experimental Sword and Scabbard Pattern 1880, Converted from the Sword and Scabbard 1864".

APRIL 1880

Sample made of a new lighter sword and scabbard with 33ins. blade. "Sword, Cavalry, Experimental Pattern 1880, New".

JUNE 1880

100 of the April 1880 sword made.

DEC 1881

2 further Conversions of the P.1864 swords; No. 1 (35 and 3/8 ins.), No. 2 (33 ins.).

APRIL 1882

24 further swords with 33 ins. blades and modified hilts made for trials and known as "...Experimental Swords and Scabbard Pattern 1880 (New) with Modified form of Hilt". This sword also appears to be known from the Records as..."Swords, Cavalry Pattern 1881", presumably as the manufacturing orders and test details were initiated in December 1881.

JAN 1882

"Sword and Scabbard, Cavalry, Pattern 1882 Long (and Short) Converted from Pattern 1864". 35 and 3/8 ins. and 33 ins. blades. LoC 4204 Dec 1882.

DEC 1882

"Sword and Scabbard, Cavalry, Pattern 1882 Long (and Short), "New". Blade lengths as converted swords. LoC 4204 Dec. 1882.

NO STATED DATE

"Sword, Cavalry, Pattern 1882 Short; Converted from 1882, Long". 33ins. blade.

NOV 1885

"Sword, Cavalry, Pattern 1885". 34.5 ins. blade. Confirmed by LoC.4854., 4/11/1885.

c. 1885-1886

"Sword, Cavalry, Pattern 1885; Converted from Patterns 1853 and 1864". 34.5 ins. blade.

MAY 1886

"Sword, Cavalry, Pattern 1885; Converted from Pattern 1882, Long". 34.5 ins. blade.

MARCH ~~1882~~ 1889

"Sword, Cavalry, Pattern 1885, Marked M". This sword was fitted with a heavier blade and became the Pattern 1890. The blade was stamped with an "M", this was in addition to the "X" which had been in use since 1885 as a guide for future testing. The "M" was confirmed by Specification dated 7/3/89 and was used till c.May 1890.

JAN/JUNE 1889

"Sword, Cavalry, Pattern 1885, Yeomanry Cavalry Marked YC". Swords passed on to the Yeomanry after January 1889 should have been tested and stamped "YC".

MAY 1890

"Sword, Cavalry, Pattern 1890". 34.5 ins. blade, stamped "90" on back edge; this immediately distinguishes it from the previous patterns. Confirmed by LoC 6477 dated 22/5/1890.

OCT ~~1889~~ 1899

"Sword, Cavalry, Pattern 1899". Confirmed by LoC 9880. This was a new design with 33.5 ins. blade, much disliked. Many are official conversions of 1890 swords and scabbards.

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Also, various other Letters, Reports and Specifications were scrutinised.

