

1A. (left) A British cavalry sword with brass basket-hilt having a guard made up of three open "S" panels. B. (right) British infantry sword, or "hanger," with steel basket-hilt having a guard of two open "S" panels.

Mid-18th Century British Military Swords With Open “S” Paneled Guards

Anthony D. Darling

The two swords illustrated and discussed in this paper are of particular importance to students and collectors of 18th century British military edged weapons, primarily those in use prior to the first regulation patterns of 1788.¹ One (1A), having a brass hilt, is a cavalry sword while the other (1B), with steel hilt, is the weapon of an infantryman. Contemporary pictorial evidence indicates that the latter was in use as early as 1742 and, as the former’s guard configuration resembles its infantry counterpart so closely, we can safely assume that both swords date from this period. What is strange is that so fragile a metal as brass would have been used for the hilt of a mounted man’s sword, his primary weapon, whereas swords were rarely used by infantry, and, if so, only as a last resort. In fact, swords were abolished for infantry privates save for grenadiers,² Highlanders and drummers in 1768.³ Records indicate that many infantry regiments had in fact stopped wearing swords during the Seven Years’ War (1756-1763).⁴

Infantry Sword

This sword, or “hanger,” has a slightly curved, single-edged 28-inch blade with one narrow fuller. The blade is stamped with the remains of a “running fox” mark which may indicate the work of the Birmingham sword cutler, Samuel Harvey.⁵ The hilt, of steel, consists of a mushroom-shaped pommel with affixed tang button⁶ and a guard made up of an open-work, heart-shaped counterguard and three narrow vertical bars, one of which serves as a knuckle-bow. The apices of these bars are welded to a ring into which the base of the pommel fits. The bars are interconnected by two open “S” figures,⁷ thus forming a basket-hilt. There is a wristguard—an extension of the rear quillon—at the cusp of the counterguard. The grip is wood carved in a spiral and wrapped in leather; the braided wire binding is missing. Sharkskin is also known to have been used as a grip wrapping on examples of this sword pattern.

Swords with hilts of this configuration were issued to the battalion company privates of the 23rd



Regiment of Foot, or Royal Welsh Fusiliers, as it is shown worn by the figure representing that regiment in *A Representation of the Cloathing of His Majesty’s Houshold and all the Forces upon the Establishments of Great Britain and Ireland* printed in 1742 by order of William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland.⁸ Of the 52 infantry regiments represented in the *Cloathing Book*, only three were designated as “fusiliers” and are the only ones having swords with curved blades.⁹ In addition to the 23rd, the establishment included the 7th Royal Fusiliers and the 21st Royal North British Fusiliers.

The Royal Welsh was raised in 1688 as a regular marching regiment and for a time known by the name of each successive colonel. It was formed into a fusilier regiment in 1702 and called the Welsh Regiment of Fusiliers.¹⁰ The regiment served with much distinction in Marlborough’s campaigns during the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714) and was designated “royal” in 1714. After a long tour of home service the Royal Welsh was dispatched to Flanders in 1742¹¹ and fought in the battles of Dettingen and Fontenoy. When Prince Charles Edward landed in Scotland in 1745, the regiment was one of several sent back to England but remained on the south coast. Subsequently returned to Flanders, the Welsh Fusiliers were involved in the battle of Val and other engagements.¹²

In modern literature the sword was apparently first illustrated in 1967 in the works of Warren Moore and George C. Neumann.¹³ Moore, without

NOTE: Although not a “talk” at Albuquerque, this article by Mr. Darling was prepared for use at this time.



2. Hilt of the infantry sword (outboard side).



3. Hilt of the cavalry sword (outboard side).

documentation, associated the sword's use with the grenadiers of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers.¹⁴ In 1973, Neumann tied in the association with the regiment more closely by illustrating¹⁵ an example having a wood grip covered with sheetmetal (originally gilt) embossed with the three-feathered crest of the Prince of Wales, the motto "Ich Dien" (I serve), and a royal crown. In the same publication,¹⁶ Neumann pictured a curve-bladed, brass-hilted sword having a guard made up of a knucklebow and a heart-shaped counterguard. Its brass grip is cast with the same regimental devices as above but with the addition of the Hanoverian "running horse."

When the Royal Welsh Fusiliers ceased to wear steel-hilted swords having open "S" paneled guards is not known. However inspection reports issued in 1768, just prior to the abolition of swords for battalion company privates, reveal that the entire regiment had only 55 swords.¹⁷ The David Morier paintings of 1751, commissioned by the Duke of Cumberland, depict the grenadier of every infantry regiment and the Foot Guards. Many varieties of sword hilt are shown but the only one resembling this style is worn by the grenadier of the 31st Regiment; this

sword has a straight blade and a guard made up of a single "S" panel.¹⁸

Cavalry Sword

This sword has a straight, single-edged 34½ inch blade with one narrow fuller. The blade is stamped on both sides with the Solingen "anchor" mark. The brass hilt consists of a flattened, mushroom-shaped pommel with affixed tang button and a guard made up of an open-work counterguard and four narrow vertical bars whose apices are soldered to a ring into which the base of the pommel fits. The bars are interconnected by *three* open "S" figures thus giving more protection to the thumb and fingers than the infantry sword. The hilt was fabricated without a wristguard. The grip is wood, covered with sharkskin which is secured by two strands of braided brass wire. The pommel is engraved:

K

3 = N = 27

These markings are believed to indicate the 27th private of the third troop of the King's Own (or simply "King's") Regiment of Dragoons.¹⁹ Unfortunately, there is no contemporary evidence, pictori-



4. Hilt of the cavalry sword (front view).



5. Pommel markings on the pommel of the cavalry sword which are believed to indicate the 27th private in the third troop of the King's (or King's Own) Regiment of Dragoons.

ally, to support this premise. The first occasion this sword appears in literature is in Charles Henry Ashdown's *European Arms and Armour*, 1909.²⁰ Two swords of this configuration are shown as a panoply with a mid-17th century pikeman's armor in Edinburgh Castle. In 1916, Charles ffoulkes described two specimens in H. M. Tower Armouries as "Backswords, 18th century, with a basket-hilt formed of large S scrolls."²¹

In the early 1930s, ffoulkes, in collaboration with E.C. Hopkinson, published a series of articles titled "Swords of the British Army" in the *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*. In one article, the authors stated that the King's Own Dragoons had brass hilted swords by 1742 but cited no source.²² Later in the article, ffoulkes and Hopkinson quoted from an unpublished MSS, by Hastings Irwin, then in the Royal United Services Institution: "The hilt was divided into four²³ equal panels divided by vertical bars with S shaped pieces in between." According to the authors, Hastings Irwin suggested this to be the sword covered by the resolution of 1788 for heavy cavalry and also that the hilt was brass.²⁴

With modifications, this series of articles was published as *Sword, Lance & Bayonet* in 1938.²⁵ The authors illustrated this brass hilted cavalry sword (plate III, 31) and incorrectly captioned it "grenadier 1751" mistaking it for the steel hilted sword worn by the 23rd Royal Welsh Fusilier private in the 1742 *Cloathing Book* and the 31st Regiment's grenadier in the Morier paintings of 1751. To confuse this issue further, ffoulkes and Hopkinson made reference (p. 75) to a print in the British Museum by Saint Fal, published in 1815, showing a Highlander, presumably a sergeant, with a brass "S" hilted sword.²⁶

Neumann, writing in 1967, illustrated²⁷ the sword and correctly identified it as a cavalry weapon. In the late 1960s, I researched 18th century British cavalry swords and published some of my findings in 1969.²⁸ I noted in the caption to the illustration (fig. 13) of this hilt configuration that three of the four troops of the Horse Guards had hilts of vertical and horizontal brass bars according to the 1742 *Cloathing Book* and also stated, without documentation, that the King's Own Dragoons also carried brass hilted swords. My sources at the time for this second



6. A second example of the cavalry sword having a slightly more rounded pommel. Note the contour of the counterguard. In addition to the Solingen "anchor" this specimen is stamped on the blade with a "broad arrow," indicating government ownership. The other example does not have the broad arrow. (National Army Museum, 72U5-7-36, photograph courtesy of Peter Hayes, Department of Weapons.)

statement were the research of ffoulkes and Hopkinson²⁹ and *Weapons of the British Soldier* by Colonel H.C.B. Rogers who had written, also without documentation, on page 131, "The pattern of basket-hilt varied from regiment to regiment, and those of the King's Own Regiment of Dragoons, for instance, were of brass."³⁰

In 1973, the brass hilted cavalry sword illustrated in this article, having the obviously regimental markings on the pommel as noted above, came into my collection. The following year I entered into an extensive correspondence with Colonel Rogers who very kindly examined the unpublished Hastings Irwin MSS, now in the National Army Museum. The manuscript consists of five large volumes of notes and art work, mostly of uniforms of the 18th and early 19th centuries, compiled by D. Hastings Irwin and presented to the R.U.S.I. by his widow in 1921. Unfortunately there is not much information on swords but a portion of the fifth volume is devoted to comments on the copy of the

1742 *Cloathing Book* in the War Office Library and later compared with the originals in the British Museum Library. Hastings Irwin recorded a "brass basket-hilted sword" on the page he devoted to the King's Own Regiment of Dragoons and no other cavalry regiment is mentioned in the MSS as having swords with brass hilts.

In 1977, I obtained access to the only colored copy of the 1742 *Cloathing Book* in North America, now in the New York State Library, Albany.³¹ The engraving representing the King's Dragoons' private does indeed show a brass hilted sword but unfortunately with a different guard configuration.³² This may be explained by the fact that only four figures were utilized to represent the 14 dragoon regiments; the distinctions of uniform were colored in after the engravings were completed. One figure, having his musket slung over his back, was used to represent four regiments: the Royal Dragoons, the King's, the Royal Regiment of Ireland, and the Queen's. Of course all four regiments have the same sword hilt. At this time, another cavalry regiment was known as the "King's" — The King's Own Regiment of Horse. The figure representing this regiment in the *Cloathing Book* is armed with a sword having a steel basket-hilt of the Scottish or Highland pattern.

The King's, or King's Own, Regiment of Dragoons was raised in 1685 with the title of the Queen Consort's Own Regiment of Dragoons.³³ From 1689 to 1692 it was called by the name of its colonels. In the latter year it was redesignated the Queen's Dragoons, but from 1714 to 1751 it was known by the titles used in this survey. Three years after it was raised, the regiment sided with William of Orange and fought under him in the Irish and Flanders Wars of the late 17th century. During the War of the Spanish Succession, the regiment saw service in Spain and was involved in the suppression of the 1715 Jacobite uprising in Scotland. Like the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, the King's participated in the battles of Dettingen and Fontenoy during the War of the Austrian Succession.

As further evidence of the use of brass hilted swords by cavalry, there is a report of "Horsemen's Swords in the Tower," dated 8 February 1756:³⁴

Brass-hilted: 2016 serviceable
 Iron-hilted of sorts, hilts of different patterns:
 434 serviceable
 "Oliver Cromwell's"³⁵ with iron hilts: 117
 serviceable

We know that three of the four troops of Horse Guards had brass hilted swords but this, allowing for around 150 privates per troop, would account for only 650 brass hilts if indeed the swords of these three troops were returned to the Tower.³⁶

In summation, assigning use of this cavalry sword to the King's Regiment of Dragoons rests on the following premises:

- 1) We may assume the sword is British and dates in the decade of the 1740s on account of its similarity to another (the steel hilted sword worn by the Royal Welsh Fusilier) in the 1742 *Cloathing Book*.
- 2) Brass hilted swords were used by relatively few cavalry units in the British Army during the 1740s.
- 3) The *Cloathing Book* has only one regular cavalry regiment equipped with a brass hilted sword—the King's Regiment of Dragoons.
- 4) Accepting the pommel markings to be regimental (what else could they be?) then the "K" probably indicates "King's" of the regimental title.
- 5) The only other cavalry unit with "King's" in its title was a regiment of horse, the private of which is shown wearing a steel hilted sword in the *Cloathing Book*.



7. A third example which was made up with an additional bar at the rear of the guard. (Photograph courtesy of Jackey Lacey, Press Officer, Christie's and Edmiston's, Glasgow.)



NOTES

1 In 1788 a Board of General Officers recommended specific patterns in respect to hilt style and blade dimensions for both light and heavy cavalry. These patterns are illustrated and described in Brian Robson, *Swords of the British Army: The Regulation Patterns 1788-1914*, London, 1975, pp. 14-22.

2 Each infantry battalion had a company of grenadiers who long ago had ceased to be issued grenades. Grenadiers were the tallest and strongest men of a battalion; they wore the distinctive "mitre" cap that was replaced by one of bearskin in 1768.

3 Privates in Highland regiments and grenadiers were ordered to stop wearing swords in 1784.

4 Bennett Cuthbertson, *A System for the Compleat Interior Management and Oeconomy of a Battalion of Infantry*, Dublin, 1768, cited in Hew Strachan, *British Military Uniforms 1768-96*, London, 1975, p. 154.

5 The first Samuel Harvey (d. 1778) was working as early as 1748. As a rule the initials "SH" or "H" are stamped within the animal's body.

6 The tip of the blade tang, which passed through the grip and pommel, was peened over the tang button.

7 There is no evidence that the "S" is an abbreviation for anything. It is a more decorative means than a saltire to connect other bars and form a "basket-hilt."

8 Only a few copies of the *Cloathing Book* survive. It consists of 104 hand-colored engravings of a private from each regiment (cavalry and infantry), the units of the Household Cavalry, the three regiments of Foot Guards, ten regiments of Marines, eight untitled figures (probably independent companies or garrison troops), and a figure each for the Gentlemen Pensioners and Yeomen of the Guard. The Royal Welsh Fusiliers did not receive the numerical designation "23," officially, until 1751.

9 The Royal Fusiliers were raised in 1685 to serve as guards for artillery trains. They were armed with flintlock muskets, or "fusils," instead of the matchlock. The latter, requiring the use of a lit matchcord, was considered too dangerous to be used around gunpowder. The headgear of a fusilier was about identical to that of a grenadier.

10 Charles Dalton, *English Army Lists and Commission Registers*, v. V, Part II, London, 1960, p. 61.

11 War of the Austrian Succession: 1740-1748.

12 There are several regimental histories listed in Arthur S. White, *A Bibliography of Regimental Histories of the British Army*, London, 1965, pp. 75-76.

13 *Weapons of the American Revolution and Accoutrements*, N.Y., p. 159 and *The History of Weapons of the American Revolution*, N.Y., p. 225.

14 As the figures in the *Cloathing Book* illustrate battalion company privates and not grenadiers (the figures of the fusiliers are not wearing match cases, *de rigueur* for grenadiers until 1784) we are not sure if the grenadier company of the Royal Welsh was issued this sword pattern. The David Morier painting (1751) of the Royal Welsh grenadier depicts a steel hilted sword having a heart-shaped counter-guard and two looped bars outside the hand. See A.E. Haswell Miller and N.P. Dawnay, *Military Drawings and Paintings in the Royal Collection*, Volume One, London, 1966, plate 63.

15 *Swords and Blades of the American Revolution*, Harrisburg, Pa., p. 70.

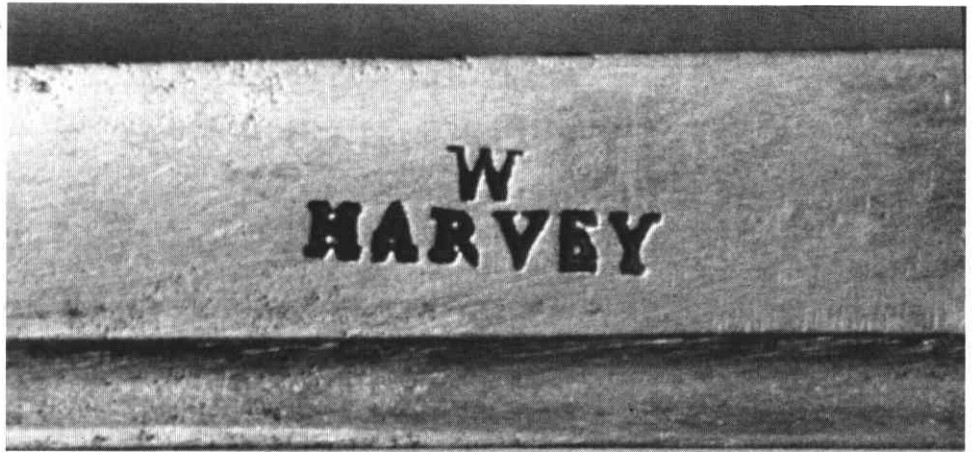
16 *Ibid*, p. 67.

17 The Rev. Percy Sumner, "Army Inspection Returns 1753-1804," *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, v. IV (1925), London, p. 110.

18 Haswell Miller and Dawnay, *op. cit.*, plate 66.

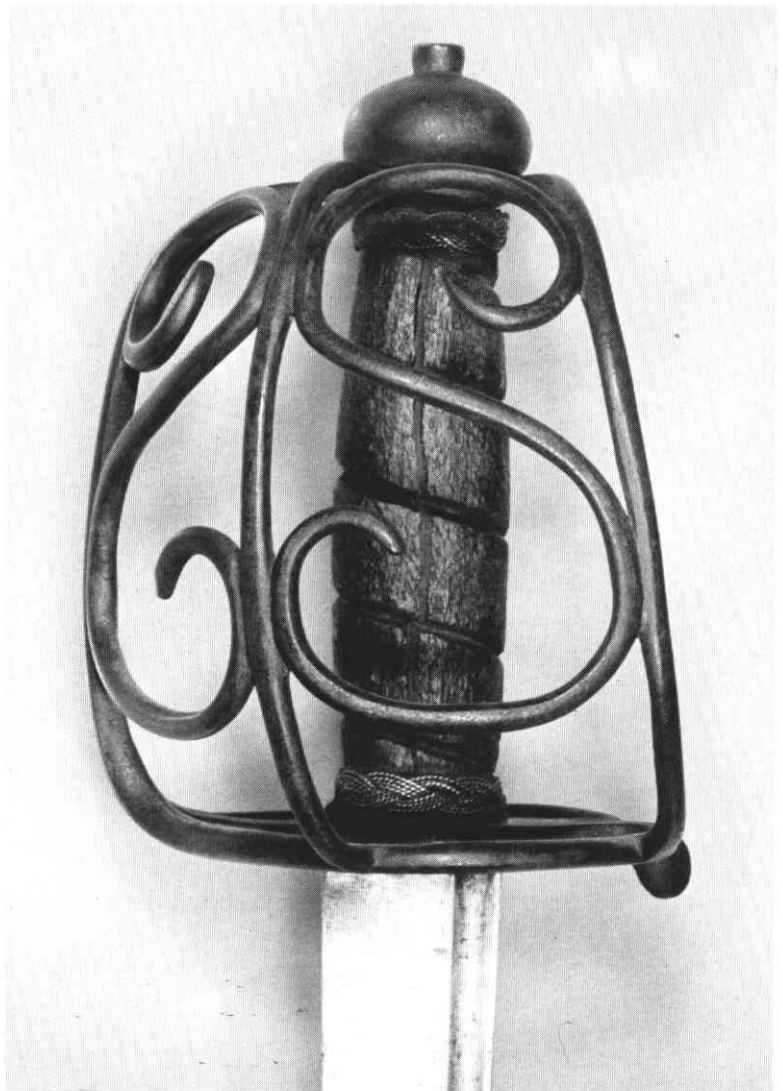
19 In the *Cloathing Book*, the regiment is called the "King's Regiment of Dragoons" but in J. Millan's *The Succession of Colonels to All His Majesties Land Forces*, London, 1742, it is listed as the "King's Own Regiment." In 1751, the regiment was given the numerical designation "3rd" and regimental equipment would probably be marked "3" or "3D" after that date. The Morier painting of that year shows the regimental private armed with a sword having a steel basket-hilt of the Scottish or Highland type (see Haswell Miller and Dawnay, *op. cit.*, plate 37). Dragoons were originally

SWORD NUMBER ONE: British infantry sword or hanger with steel basket-hilt of two open "s" panels.



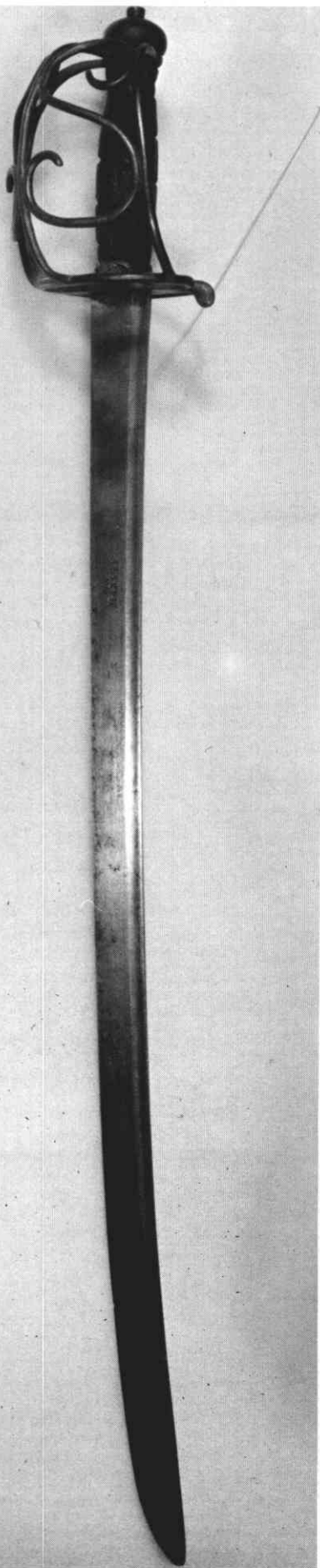
(3)

SWORD NUMBER ONE: Blade marking.



(2)

SWORD NUMBER ONE: Close-up of the hilt. Swords with guards of this type were carried by the battalion companies of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers c. 1742 and the grenadier company of the 31st Regiment c. 1751.



(1)

Mid-18th Century British Military Swords With Open "S" Paneled Guards: An Update

Anthony D. Darling

Seven years have passed since my study of these swords was published in the *Bulletin* of the American Society of Arms Collectors.¹ Some important discoveries have been made and I should like to bring them to the attention of the members.

To review quickly: there are two patterns of swords having this style of guard. The first, for infantry, has a hilt of steel with two "S" panels comprising the guard and a slightly curved blade whose length varies from 23 to 28 inches. All the specimens having blades signed by the sword cutler are stamped with a representation of a "running fox," about 1½ inches in length; inside the animal's body are the initials "SH" or "H," which are believed to stand for the Birmingham sword cutler, Samuel Harvey, who worked from at least as early as 1748 until his death in 1778.² We know that a sword of this type was carried by the battalion companies of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, as it is shown in contemporary art.³ At the Morristown National Historical park, New Jersey, there is an example having a grip covered with gilt sheetmetal which is embossed with the regiment's crest.⁴

The other pattern, having a 34½ inch straight blade, is obviously for cavalry. The hilt is of brass and has three "S" panels instead of two. In the study I suggested that this sword pattern was used by the King's Regiment of Dragoons.⁵ I based this, somewhat "weakly" according to some authorities, on the fact that the figure representing this regiment in the 1742 *Cloathing Book*⁶ wears a brass-hilted sword; all the other cavalry regiments (whose swords can be seen) are shown with hilts of steel.⁷ I also based the association of the sword to this particular regiment on account of one example's pommel markings:

K

$$3 = N = 27,$$

suggesting that the "K" represented "King's" of the regimental title.

In this survey, there are three swords to be discussed: one for infantry and the others for cavalry.

SWORD NUMBER ONE

This is the infantry pattern having a short (27¾ inches), slightly curved blade and a steel hilt made up of two "S" panels. The structure of the sword is about identical to the one discussed in the previous article, except that the



keepers for the spiralled wire grip wrapping, which is missing, are brass wire braided "turk's-heads." The other sword's keepers are steel "collars." The importance of this survey's sword is in the blade markings:

W

HARVEY

which is stamped on either side of the blade. The only "W. Harvey" recorded is a William Harvey, working in Birmingham from 1816 until the early 1840s. Obviously this is too late for the manufacture of a sword which would have occurred c. 1740-1760.

About the same time that I acquired the W. Harvey-signed sword, I obtained another basket-hilted hanger, c. 1750,⁹ with a different guard but having the same pattern blade which is stamped:

S. HARVEY

This I concluded was Samuel Harvey, working in Birmingham as early as 1748. The stamping, save for the initial, is just about identical to that of the "W. Harvey," and therefore there is possibly a relationship existed between the two sword cutlers: father-son or siblings. To research this, the only avenue open to me was to hire a Birmingham record searcher. From him I learned that the Harvey family had been members of the Old Meeting House, a Non-Conformist (Presbyterian and Unitarian) church, from at least as early as 1718, when a Samuel Harvey purchased the shares of a Joseph Robinson; this building had been erected in 1696. The Harveys continued to be trustees and seat holders of the Meeting House until the building was destroyed in the religious riots of 1791. Sadly, all records, births, marriages, deaths of the

Although Chuck Darling was not able to attend the Prescott meeting, he sent this material: it is a preview of his soon-to-be-printed monograph on basket-hilted cavalry swords.

parishioners, were also destroyed.¹⁰ In respect to other parishes there are no recorded baptisms of a W. Harvey save for a William, son of William Harvey, christened at St. Philip's 8 September 1727: obviously not our man. There are two Samuels recorded: Samuel, son of Samuel Harvey, 14 May 1698, St. Martin's; Samuel, son of John Harvey, 19 Jun 1704, St. John, Deritend (just outside Birmingham).

Unfortunately, the lack of additional information effectively terminates further research into the Harvey family, sword cutlers of Birmingham.

The only other record¹¹ of a W. Harvey at this time is a list of Low Bailiffs in Birmingham 1732 to 1832: William Harvey serving in 1739, and for the year 1753, a Samuel Harvey; their trades are not listed.

SWORD NUMBER TWO

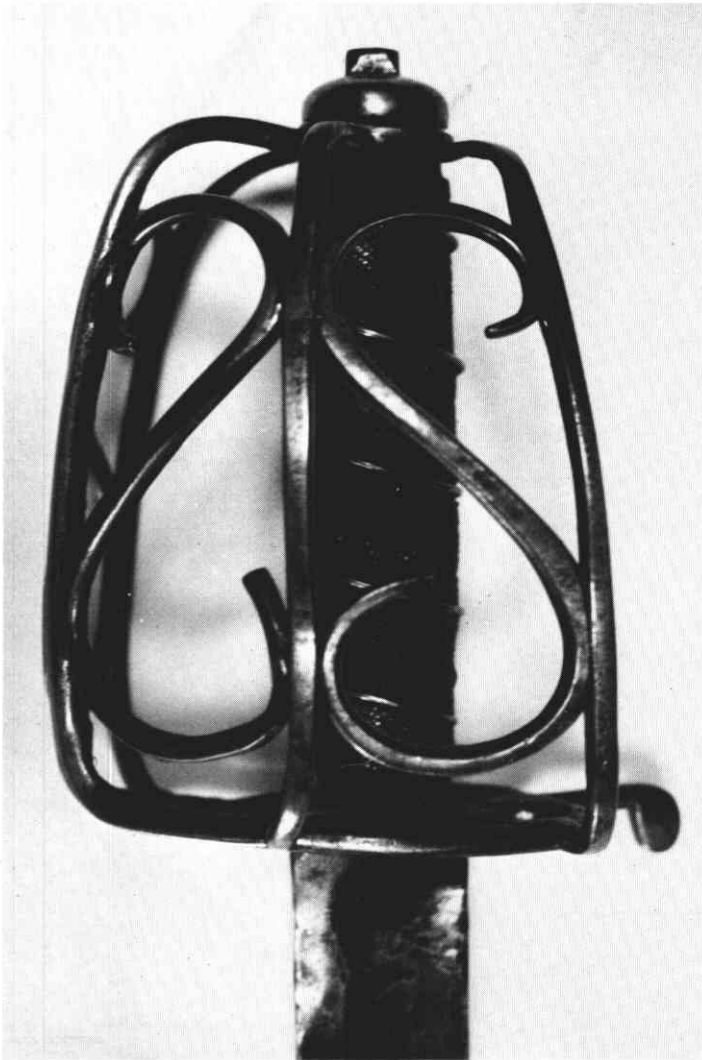
In the Fort Ticonderoga Museum, this sword is similar to the infantry pattern but is considered "cavalry" because the guard, of steel, is made up of three "S" panels and the 34 inch blade, signed "Wooley & Co,"¹² is cavalry. This blade is a late 18th century replacement, but probably was utilized to serve the same function as that of the previous one: to be used on horseback. This is the only example having a *steel* guard of *three* panels known to me. It is not shown in any contemporary illustrations. The skeletonized counterguard, or stool, is heart-shaped with a prominent wrist guard. The grip is covered in sharkskin but the wire binding is a replacement.

SWORD NUMBER THREE

This sword is identical to the example in my previous article, having a brass hilt with a guard of three "S" panels. The sword has no regimental identification engraved upon it, although the blade is stamped with the typical Solingen, Germany, "anchor" mark. I have been unable to obtain reproducible photographs of it, and so I have chosen to utilize one of the original sword, taken from a different angle to show more clearly this pattern's unique wrist guard and also the regimental markings on the pommel. In addition, the sword is in somewhat "relic" condition with a damaged hilt and grip and a rusted blade.

In July, 1987, I received a long letter from a Graham H. Budden, a 30 year old Royal Air Force helicopter pilot stationed in Norwich, England. Parts of his letter are worth reproducing:

I am writing to you in connection with a sword I discovered in my parents' attic about three years ago. Family legend has it that the sword belonged to Thomas Brown, a trooper in Bland's Regiment of Dragoons. [Humphrey Bland: author of *A Treatise of Military Discipline*, London, 1727, perhaps the most important British work of its kind published in the 18th century. Until 1753, regiments were as a rule known by the names of their colonels.] Brown was knighted on the battlefield of Dettingen in Germany 27 June 1743 by King George II. The sword in the attic was accompanied by a contemporary print which describes the action. [Budden supplied



(4)

SWORD NUMBER TWO: Closeup of the steel guard which is made of three open "S" panels. The rear quillon or wrist guard and skeletonized, heart-shaped counterguard are similar to those of Sword Number One. (Cat. no. S-272, Fort Ticonderoga Museum).

me with a 35mm color print of the sword and print—not very clear but discernible enough to reveal a typical brass hilted cavalry sword having a guard of three “SS” panels.] My parents never attached any importance to them and let me take them away to hang on my living room wall as a conversation piece.

It was some months later that I discovered by chance, watching a television programme, that this chap Thomas Brown is regarded as one of the British Army’s greatest heroes!

I decided that I really ought to find out if the family legend was true or not, and see if Brown’s regiment [now known as The Queen’s Own Hussars and stationed then (1985) in Germany] was interested in seeing the sword. There ensued some considerable correspondence, but suffice to say that I eventually visited the regiment, where I was received with interest but a certain amount of scepticism. They referred me to a retired major who collects old militaria who, in turn, led me to contact [the late] Mr. Peter Hayes in the Weapons Department of the National Army Museum in London. He, of course, immediately recognized the sword and was able to show me a perfectly preserved example from their store room. He then spent some time rummaging through his books and papers before producing two articles that he said would be of interest to me.

The articles were yours. One was “The British Basket-Hilted Cavalry Sword,” published in the *Canadian Journal of Arms Collecting*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (1969). The other was from *Bulletin* No. 49 (1983) published by the American Society of Arms Collectors. I have enclosed a photograph of the sword and print hanging on my wall. I am afraid it is not particularly good but you can see that it is a basket-hilted sword of the type you talk about.

The print has a handwritten inscription on the back that states “1785 Apr 18th a present by Magt Smith the sister to Thom Brown the Dragoon,” and I have traced a family tree that clearly goes back to the Margaret Smith. There is documentary evidence from a local history book dated 1871 that Mr. George Smith (one of the family tree) had the sword and print. To my mind the only aspect that is open to question is exactly how the sword came to be in Thomas Brown’s sister’s possession. Trooper Brown was invalided out of the army because of his injuries [suffered at Dettingen—see below], on a pension, and bought himself a pub in his hometown. [Kirkleatham, North Yorkshire?]. He died three years later [actually January, 1746, at Yarm] without ever having married and there is no record of his having made a will.

The battle of Dettingen in which trooper Thomas Brown gained undying fame and an apparent knighthood occurred during the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748). The Austrian emperor, Charles VI, having no male children, in 1713 established that the order of succession and the lands of the Hapsburg Austrian empire would go to his eldest daughter, Maria Theresa. He died in 1740 but her rights were disputed by Spain, Bavaria, and Saxony. During the First Silesian War (1740-1742) Frederick II (“the Great”) of Prussia sided with this coalition but left the war when he was ceded Silesia by Maria Theresa. France, an ally of Bavaria, had also become involved. The following year, 1743, the British King, George II, as Elector of Hanover, had collected a multinational army on the lower Rhine in support of Maria Theresa. Forty thousand strong, the army consisted of Hanoverian, British, Dutch, and other German allies of Austria. The force moved up the Rhine into the valleys of the Main and Neckar Rivers to drive a wedge between the French and their Bavarian allies. In turn a French army of 30,000 under Marshal de Noailles and General Grammont moved down the middle Rhine to block this

advance. The allied camp at Aschaffenburg was suddenly put into jeopardy by de Noailles; King George began a return towards Hanau. Grammont, with a part of the French army, was sent to take up a position in front of the Allies at the village of Dettingen so as to bar their



(5)

Brass-hilted cavalry sword with guard constructed of three open “S” panels. This is the same sword shown in A.S.A.C. *Bulletin* 49, figs. 1A, 3-5, but this is a different picture to show the unique counterguard.



(6)

“Thomas Brown born at Kirkleatham” (12 5/8 by 8 1/8 inches).
By L.P. Boitard, pub. 8 November 1743. (reproduced with kind
permission of the British Museum)

retreat. And it was here that the battle was fought, on June 27th 1743, the last battle in which an English king personally led his troops into combat and where Thomas Brown became one of warfare’s truly authentic heroes.

Space here does not provide for a full account of the battle. It began early in the morning with heavy artillery fire upon the allied left flank. Grammont emerged with his infantry which was met by the troops of King George. A deadly allied fire upon the French right center caused it to recoil in disorder behind the safety of the French cavalry. It was the cavalry’s turn and the French horse was sent into the fray. Piecemeal counter-attacks, mainly by the British cavalry, repulsed them. The defeat of the French cavalry caused Grammont’s infantry to flee.

Ten British cavalry regiments, including Thomas Brown’s (Bland’s Dragoons) were involved in the battle, Bland’s suffering the highest number of casualties: nearly three-quarters killed and wounded. Three times did the regiment charge into the massed French infantry which outnumbered them four to one, and then engaged in a full scale skirmish with the French mounted troops. At the end of one charge a regimental standard had fallen

from the hand of a dead cornet¹³ and lay abandoned on the ground. Brown, who had two horses killed under him, dismounted and recovered it, but as he regained the saddle a sword-cut from a French trooper chopped off two fingers of his bridle hand, effectively disabling it. His horse then bolted and carried him into the middle of the French army where the color was pulled from his grasp. Brown then pretended to retreat to the safety of his own lines but suddenly made post haste for the French gendarme who had seized the standard, shooting him with his pistol. Recapturing the standard, Brown managed to grip it between his leg and the saddle. Head down, he galloped through the enemy ranks to the safety of his decimated regiment. In addition to the loss of his fingers he received eight sword cuts on the face, head, and neck, and two bullets in his back! Tradition has it that Brown was created a Knight Banneret on the battlefield.

We have the following information about Thomas Brown:

His nose and upper lip were nearly severed from his face; a terrible gash, from the top of his forehead, crossed his left eye. He stood five feet eleven inches. George II offered him a commission in the army but his not being able to write prevented the acceptance of



(7)

“Thomas Brown of Brigadier Bland’s Dragoons” (17½ by 14¾ inches) By John Bowles & Son, pub. 21 November 1743. The artist’s rendering of Brown’s uniform and equipment would seem to have been accomplished with a fair degree of accuracy. However, his Short Land Service musket would normally be positioned on the *right* side. The decoration on the pistol housing (arms of Great Britain) is unlike those shown in the 1742 *Cloathing Book*. Normally the pistol was positioned in the holster so that the butt cap faced away from the trooper. The significance of the small horn (priming?) secured to the shoulder belt is not known. (cat. no. 1514 Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection)

it. The King placed Brown near his person in the Life Guards [then one of the four troops of Horse Guards]. As the balls in his back could not be extracted, he was obliged to quit the Service. He had a pension of £30 per annum, and died of his wounds at Yarm, January, 1746, aged 31.”¹⁴

Returning to Graham Budden’s letter, I was not unfamiliar with Thomas Brown and the battle of Dettingen¹⁵ but I had no idea of the sword pattern carried by Brown and the other enlisted men of his regiment. After reading the letter, I immediately checked out Colonel Bland’s regiment for its later numerical designation (established in 1753 for all cavalry and infantry).¹⁶ To my surprise Bland’s, numbered the 3rd in 1753, was also the *King’s Dragoons*. And so the actual possession of a sword having a brass hilt made up of three “S” panels by a trooper in the King’s Dragoons serves to reinforce the premise in my previous article: that the “K” engraved on the pommel of at least one of these hilt patterns must represent the *King’s Dragoons*.¹⁷

When I decided to publish my updating of these sword patterns, I felt that I would include as an illustration a contemporary print of Brown. He was popular enough at the time to have no less than four prints done of him.¹⁸ Two of these I have reproduced in this study.¹⁹ I was able

to obtain photographs of two from the British Museum, including the print in Graham Budden’s possession. After a search, I was finally able to locate an example of the third, and what was to prove to be the most important, from the Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection in Providence, Rhode Island.²⁰ When this arrived (figure 7), I was somewhat disappointed to see that although the artist had drawn Brown on horseback and brandishing his sword, the configuration of the hilt was incomprehensible and unlike anything I had ever seen. This of course is nothing so rare with illustrators of this period who were more interested in getting a print out in a hurry than with accuracy.²¹ I must have examined the photograph of the print several times and then I realized that in brandishing his sword, Brown was holding it *upside down*, which is contrary to the way I and other collectors study edged weapons. When the actual sword is reversed, point upwards and pommel towards the ground, the lower curves of the two inner “S” panels—on either side of the knuckle bow—with the tips facing each other, can be compared with the artist’s interpretation, obviously somewhat hurried, of the guard.

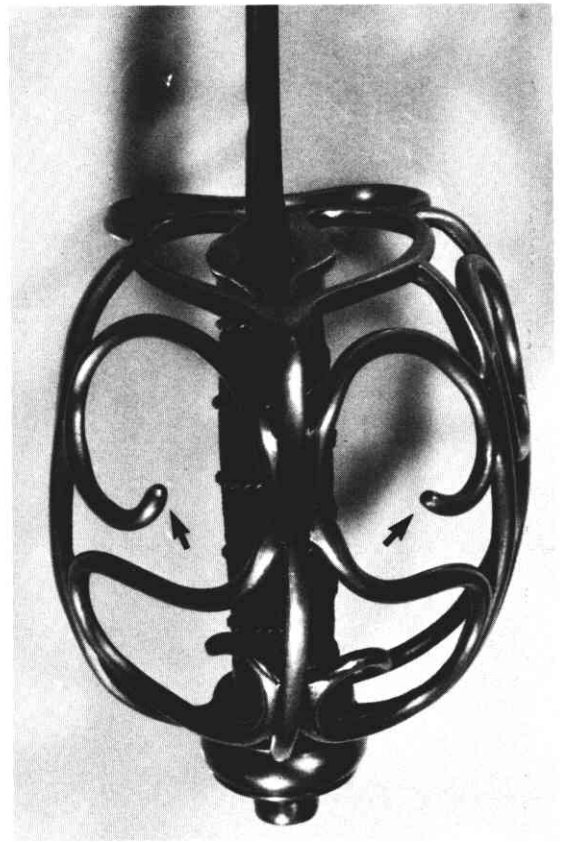


(8)

Close-up of Brown's sword hilt as shown in the John Bowles & Son engraving. The two small arrows indicate the lower curves of the inner and front "S" figures. I am at a loss to explain that part of the hilt indicated by the single arrow; it may be the artist's somewhat clumsy attempt at recreating Brown's sword's counterguard (see fig. 5). This area was often covered by a piece of buff leather, inside the basket, to prevent chafing of the thumb and finger-tips if a glove was not worn. This buff liner, or the remains of it, is shown in fig. 6 of my previous article in *Bulletin 49*.

NOTES

1. - Number Forty-Nine, Fall 1983, pp. 2-8.
2. - Commander W.E. May, R.N. and P.G.W. Annis, *Swords for Sea Service*, London, 1970, p. 317.
3. - *A representation of the Cloathing of His Majesty's Household, and of all the Forces upon the Establishments of Great Britain and Ireland*, [John Pine, engr, by order of the Duke of Cumberland] London, 1742, plate 56. This is reproduced as fig. 11 in Cecil C.P. Lawson, *A History of the Uniforms of the British Army, Vol. II*, London, 1941 (reprint 1963).
4. - The three ostrich feathers of the Prince of Wales, the motto "Ich Dien" (I serve), a crown - and the Hanoverian "running horse." The sword is illustrated as 26.S in George C. Neumann, *Swords and Blades of the American Revolution*, Harrisburg, PA, 1973.
5. - Officially given the number "three" in 1753 but previously had been known as the "King's" or the "King's Own" - or by the name of the colonel.
6. - See note three.
7. - Not counting the four troops of Horse Guards and two troops of Horse Grenadier Guards, this includes eight "horse" regiments and 14 dragoon regiments. Unfortunately, the sword is not shown on the figures representing the 2nd, 4th, 6th, and 9th through 14th Dragoons.
8. - May and Annis, *op. cit.*, p. 317.
9. - Anthony D. Darling, "A British Grenadier's Scimitar of the 18th Century," *Arms Collecting*, Vol. 28, No. 1, Feb. 1990, pp. 3-8.
10. - Catherine Hutton Beale, *Memorials of the Old Meeting House and Burial Ground*, Birmingham, 1882, pp. 31-32.



(9)

The hilt of fig. 5, reversed. The arrows indicate the "S" curves which correspond to those in the John Bowles & Son engraving (fig. 7).

11. - *Ibid*, p. 58.
12. - The trading style of James Woolley of Birmingham, c. 1790-1797. See May and Annis, *op. cit.*, p. 322.
13. - The lowest rank of cavalry commissioned officer, corresponding then to an infantry ensign. In modern times, a second lieutenant.
14. - *Hone's Year Book*, London, 1832, p. 727.
15. - He is mentioned in The Hon. J.W. Fortesque, *A History of the British Army, Vol. II*, London, 1899, p. 98 and in Lawson, *op. cit.*, p. 124.
16. - N.B. Leslie, *The Succession of Colonels of the British Army From 1660 to the Present Day*, London and Aldershot, 1974, p. 17.
17. - Brown's sword bears no regimental markings.
18. - Army Museums Ogilby Trust (comp.), *Index to British Military Costume Prints 1500 - 1914*, London, 1972, Nos. 1099-1102.
19. - No. 1100 is a copy of No. 1099 and therefore is not included.
20. - Peter Harrington, *Catalogue to the Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Volume I, The British Prints, Drawings, and Watercolours*, New York and London, 1987, p. 309.
21. - Even many of the well-known painters of the day, such as David Morier, took little care to depict carefully weaponry, especially if they were reproducing enlisted men. Morier's paintings of the British cavalry and grenadiers, c. 1751, are illustrated in A.E. Haswell-Miller and N.P. Dawnay, *Military Drawings and Paintings From the Royal Collection, Volume One: Plates*, London, 1966, figs. 23-70. Of the 31 mounted figures (including those where a sword is not in evidence), I have only been able to identify one sword from an existing specimen.