

Preparatory Instruction of the Recruit

(Regulations for the Instruction, Formations and Movements of the Cavalry, 1865)

When recruits shall have been practised in the elementary exercises of Marching, Facing, &c., on foot, and shall have attained a knowledge of the usual military terms and commands, they will commence their lessons in riding.

They may be instructed in small squads of eight or ten, on Trained Horses with stripped Saddles and Bridoons.

Their lessons at first should be short, and at all times gentle. With patience and mild treatment on the part of the Instructor, and with a proper explanation of the use and object of the different Aids, they will make more progress than by harshness and severity.

The recruits are to be taught to saddle and bridle their horses; and also the proper manner of leading them.

Saddling

The saddle is to be placed in the middle of the horse's back; the front of it about the breadth of a hand behind the play of the shoulder.

The crupper should admit the breadth of the hand between it and the horses back.

The Numnah to be raised well into the fork over the withers, by putting an arm under it.

Girth—to admit a finger between it and the horse's belly. With a young horse it must be tightened gradually, and not with violence.

Surcingle—to lie flat over, and not tighter than, the girth; the upper rings in line with the edge of the flap.

Breast-plate. The upper edge of the rosette, or leather, three fingers above the sharp breast-bone. The breadth of the hand between it and the flat of the shoulder, and also between the martingale (when used) and the horse's chest.

Bridling

The bridoon is to touch the corners of the mouth, but low enough not to wrinkle them.

The bit is to be placed in the horse's mouth, so that the mouth-piece be one inch above the lower tusk, and two inches above the corner tooth, in mares.

The head-stall parallel to, and , behind the cheek bone.

The curb to be laid flat and smooth under the jaw, to admit one finger between it and the jawbone, and never tighter or looser, with a view to ease the horse's mouth.

The nose-band beneath the bridoon head-stall, one finger to play between it and the nose.

The bridoon-rein of such length, that, when held up by the middle, in the full of the left hand, with a light feeling of the horse's mouth, it will touch the riders waist.

Fitting of the Stirrups

The lower edge of the bar is to be two inches above the upper edge of the heel of the boot, for the Hussar saddle; and one inch higher for the Heavy Cavalry saddle.

The position with stirrups, is the same as without, the heels well stretched down and lower than the toes. The foot kept in place by the play of the ankle and instep, the stirrup being under the ball of the foot.

Leading the Horse

The reins of the bridoon being taken over the head, are to be held with the right hand, the forefinger between them, near the rings of the bridoon; the end of the reins in the left hand, which hangs easy behind the thigh.

When leading through a doorway, the man placing himself in front of his horse, and taking one rein in each hand, close to the rings of the bridoon, steps backwards; taking care that the horse's hips and appointments clear the posts of the door. When the horse is through, he places himself on the near side, as before.

In passing an officer on his left, he looks towards him; if the officer is on the off side, the man steps to that side, leading with the left hand, till he has passed about four yards, when he comes to the near side again.

The squad having led their horses into the riding-school, and formed in line, with a horse lengths interval between each file, will receive the word...

"Stand at Ease." Each man opposite the near shoulder of the horse, the right arm passed through the bridoon rein, which has been put over the horse's head and hangs on the neck.

"Attention." The position of the man as in foot drill, but holding the left bridoon rein near the ring of the bit, with the right hand raised as high as the man's shoulder; toes in a line with the horse's fore-feet; left hand hanging down by the thigh.

"In Front of Your Horses." A full step forward with the right (sic-left) foot turning to the right-about, on the ball of it, taking the bridoon reins in each hand near the rings of the bit, raising the horse's head to the height of the mans shoulder, six inches from his breast, and making the horse

stand even. (In this position a man shows a horse to an officer when halted in leading past.)

“Dress.” When fronting the horses, dress to the left, if the right would be the flank dressed to when mounted.

“Stand to your Horses.” A full step forward with the right foot to the horse’s near side, and face left-about on the ball of the right foot fronting the same way as the horse, at the position of **“Attention.”**

Mounting with Stirrups

“Prepare to Mount.” (In Four Motions)

“One.” Face to the right on the left heel, place the right foot opposite the stirrup, parallel to the side of the horse; heels six inches apart; take the bridoon rein equally divided in the left hand, and the bit reins in the right hand, placing the little finger of the left between them*, place the left hand below the right on the neck of the horse, about twelve inches from the saddle.

“Two.” The right hand draws the reins through the left, and shortens them, so that the left has a light and equal feeling of both reins, on the horse’s mouth; the right hand remaining over the left.

“Three.” The right hand throws the reins to the off side, takes a lock of the mane, brings it through the left hand, and twists it round the left thumb; the left hand closes firmly on the mane and reins, the right hand now quits the mane, and lays hold of the left stirrup, with the fingers to the rear.

“Four.” The left foot is raised and put into the stirrup, as far as the ball of it; the right hand is placed on the cantle, and the left knee against the saddle, on the surcingle; the left heel is to be drawn back, in order to avoid touching the horse’s left side with the toe.

“Mount.” (In three motions)

“one.” By a spring of the right foot from the instep, rise in the stirrup; bring both heels together; knees firm against the saddle; heels drawn back a little, the body erect, and partly supported by the right hand.

“Two.” the right hand moves from the cantle to the pommel, and supports the body while the right leg passes clear over the horse’s quarters to the off side; the right knee closes on the saddle, and the body comes gently into it.

“Three.” The left hand quits the mane, and the right the pommel, the bridle hand takes its proper position; the right hand drops by the thigh, without stiffness, the back of the hand outwards.

The right foot takes the stirrup, without the help of hand or eye.

* The bridoon is to be taken in the same manner as the bit reins when used singly.

"Prepare to Dismount." (In three motions)

"One." The right hand takes the rein above the left; the right foot quits the stirrup.

"Two." The right hand holding the rein, the left slides forward upon it, about twelve inches from the saddle, feeling the horse's mouth very lightly.

"Three." the right hand drops the reins to the off side, takes a lock of the mane, brings it through the left hand, and twists it round the thumb, the fingers of the left hand closing on it; the right hand is then placed on the pommel; the body erect.

"Dismount." (In four motions)

"One." Supporting the body with the right hand and the left foot, the right leg is brought gently (without touching either the horse's hind quarters or the saddle) to the near side; heels close; the right hand on the cantle, to preserve the balance of the body as in mounting.

"Two." The body is gently lowered, until the right toe touches the ground.

"Three." Resting on the right foot, the left stirrup is quitted, and the left foot is placed in a line with the horse's fore-feet; the hands remain as in the former motion.

"Four." Both hands quit their hold; the man faces to the left on the left heel, and brings the body square to the front. As he is turning, the right hand lays hold of the bridoon rein near the ring of the bit, and raises the horse's head as high as the man's shoulder.



NWMP Corporal at Fort Walsh. British Military pattern saddle with iron stirrups, saddle wallets and carbine strapped over the cantle. Pelham bit with double rein set.