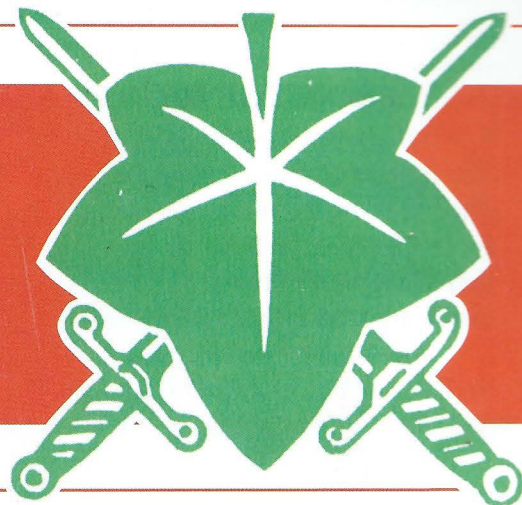


THE FORMATION SIGN

JOURNAL OF THE MILITARY HERALDRY SOCIETY



A BOUNCING BALL THEIR REWARD



The 1st Military Working Dog Regiment, Royal Army Veterinary Corps provides trained Military Working Dogs (MWD) like Arms and Explosives Search (AES) dog Travis (left) to support troops deployed to Afghanistan on Operation Herrick. Formed on 26 March 2010 the regiment was established to command the Army's previously independent five military working dog support units and now comprises approximately 284 personnel and 200 dogs. The dogs come from all over the world and include Cocker and Springer spaniels, German and Belgian Shepherds (Malinois), and Labrador retrievers, the different breeds covering specific functions.

The Regiment plays a key role in counter-insurgency and improvised explosive device (IED) detection; searching and helping to clear routes, buildings and vehicles and helping to guard and patrol key installations to assist and enhance security. The Regiment's five Squadrons are based in Britain and Germany; 101 (Aldershot), 104 (North Luffenham) and 102, 103 and 105 (Sennelager).

In late 2011 102 MWD Squadron with 80 dogs became Theatre Military Working Dog Support Unit in Afghanistan. Dogs have previously been handled solely by the RAVC and RAF Police but 102 MWD Squadron was the first squadron to command infantry soldiers selected and trained to handle IED detection dogs. Their OC commented: "It's a proud time for the 1st Military Working Dog Regiment and the squadron, who will see the introduction of embedded dog handlers, providing the infantry companies with a life- and limb-saving capability".

The regiment now uses three types of working dog. In a role for which they are well-known, Attack Dogs such as Alsations are trained to bring down a suspect when instructed to do so. High Assurance Search Dogs search all vehicles entering bases to prevent the entry of arms and explosives, while Arms and Explosives Search Dogs work with operational patrols to locate IEDs. **Gary Gibbs** reports the appearance of cloth badges identifying the dog's role on their handler's uniforms, although the significance of the different colours is not yet known. A fourth badge with the letters "VS" is worn by those working with Vehicle Search Dogs. All badges are now embroidered on MTP material and come Velcro-backed. [It is interesting to note the continued use of the dog paw to indicate handlers which originated with the small red metal paw authorised for dog handlers in Ulster by Major General Peter Leng, Colonel Commandant RAVC. – Ed]

