

THE NEW ROMNEY FENCIBLE CAVALRY
(DUKE OF YORK'S OWN)
1794 to 1800

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The New Romney Fencible Cavalry served their six years of embodiment against the background of the war of the French Revolution and of the Irish Rebellion in 1798, the threat of which became the occasion for their serving in Ireland from 1797 to September, 1800. On April 24th, 1794, a general deputation of the Cinque Ports and their members met the Lord Warden (Pitt) at Dover Castle as a result of which £6,500 was secured to form units within the Ports.¹ Pitt himself subscribed one thousand pounds and of the various sums furnished by the Towns and Ports, the Port of Romney raised £104 17s. 6d.²

Early in 1794 a threat of invasion drove the British Government to various expedients to raise men. Letters of service were issued for the raising of thirty-one corps of Fencible Infantry and twenty-one units of Fencible Cavalry in Great Britain. To these latter the Cinque Ports contributed two units, *The Cinque Ports Fencible Cavalry* and *The New Romney Fencible Cavalry*. Troops of Yeomanry and companies of Volunteers were also raised within the Ports, but no Fencible Infantry.

It seems strange that the Portsmen recruited for wholetime service should have been for cavalry units only, since barely ten years before there had been in existence during the War of American Independence a *Cinque Ports Battalion of Fencible Infantry*. It was commanded by Lieut.-Col. the Hon. George Augustus North, son of Lord North, then Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, who was Honorary Colonel. The writer has collected considerable detail about the service of this unit which was a most interesting one because it formed one of eight only of such units which were then raised throughout Great Britain. It was often referred to as *North's Cinque Ports*.³

¹ *Walmer Castle and its Lords Warden*, by the Marquess of Curzon (1927), pp. 47, 48.

² *Records of Walmer*, by Charles Elvin (1890), pp. 246, 247.

³ This unit appears in the Army List 1780, p. 82, under Fencible and Provincial Regiments in Great Britain as *The Cinque Ports Battalion*. Lord North's proposal to raise it and the warrant to his son to command and to form it in five companies were issued on 23 July 1779 (W.O.1, Vol. 616, pp. 281, 283, 287 and W.O.26, Vol. 30, p. 127). The battalion was reviewed at Dover Castle on 6 May 1780 and received a very favourable report, being complete to its establishment of 414 Officers, N.C.O.'s and Men (W.O.34, Vol. 195). The unit served at Maidstone, at Portsmouth and in the Sittingbourne area. It was disbanded on 10 May 1783 (W.O.4, Vol. 122, p. 105).

THE NEW ROMNEY FENCIBLE CAVALRY 1794 TO 1800

The proposal to raise a troop of Fencible Cavalry at New Romney appears to have been initiated by Sir Edward Dering, the sixth Baronet, of Surrenden Dering, near Ashford, and by the Corporation of New Romney. Sir Edward had been elected to represent New Romney in five successive parliaments. It was suggested that his second son, Cholmeley Dering, then aged twenty-eight, should command the troop. This was not the first unit to be raised by the Dering family, for in 1689, the 24th Regiment of Foot (now the South Wales Borderers) had been raised by the third Baronet, as recorded by a memorial tablet in the Dering Chapel in Pluckley Parish Church.

The Letter of Service for *The New Romney Fencible Cavalry* was issued from the War Office on April 10th, 1794, to "Choly. Dering Esqr." and authorized the raising of "a troop of Fencible Cavalry for service in Great Britain only; to consist of 1 Capt., 1 Lt., 1 Cornet, 1 Quartermaster, 4 Serjts., 4 Corpls., 1 Trumpeter and 46 Private men. The Clothing is to be red with white lining and white waistcoat with different Facings; the Saddle Cloth to be of like colour with the Facings." The breeches were to be of leather and the waistcoat of flannel; and for arms a sword with belt and a pistol to be carried in a holster on the saddle, and a waistbelt with cartridge box. The letter further stated that the recommendation of the officers was to be left to Mr. Dering, "being such as are well affected to H.M. and most likely by their interest and connections to forward the completion of the Troop." Twenty-five guineas each was to be allowed for the purchase of horses, and in all respects pay and allowances of the Troop was to be on the same footing as H.M. Regular Regiments of Dragoons. A pious hope was expressed that the Troop would be completed within three months.¹

Cholmeley Dering was duly appointed to command the troop as Major, his commission being dated from April 10th, 1794. The first known list of officers was as follows:

1794. NEW ROMNEY CORPS OF FENCIBLE CAVALRY.		
<i>Major Command</i>	Cholmeley DERING	10th April, 1794.
<i>Captain</i>	J. WM. HEAD BRYDGES	12th April, 1794.
<i>Lieutenant</i>	{ —George Hole	24th May, 1794.
		{ —William Savage
<i>Cornet</i>	John Adams	10th April, 1794.
<i>Adjutant</i>		

Agent, Mr. Bownas, Spring Garden.

There is still in existence a list of subscriptions paid to H. Bingham, Esq., on account of Major Cholmeley Dering "to raise the New Romney Fencibles."

The raising of *The Cinque Ports Fencible Cavalry* was authorized

¹ W.O.4, Vol. 152, pp. 119-122.

some two weeks later by a Letter of Service in similar terms dated May 1st, 1794, but in their case the establishment ordered was for six troops. It was addressed to the Hon. Robert Banks Jenkinson,¹ then barely twenty-four, who was an M.P. for the Borough of Rye, and a friend of Pitt, the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports.

By August, 1794, the local press records that two troops of *The New Romney Fencible Cavalry* joined *The Cinque Ports Regiment of Fencible Cavalry* on their march from Chatham to be encamped at Ewell, near Dover. The regiments of Fencible Cavalry were often referred to as Dragoons; they were equipped as Light Dragoons, and by September we find the *New Romney Light Dragoons* advertising in *The Kentish Gazette* for deserters!

Five days later there was issued from the Adjutant General's Office a letter sending the authorized pattern of the jacket and waistcoat, "the shape and colour of which have been approved by His Majesty for the use of the Fenc. Cav. now raising in South Britain. Such Corps as prefer a jacket and shell for their Clothing instead of the jacket and waistcoat will be allowed to make them up accordingly but the jacket must be Red as well as the Shell and in other respects be like the Clothing of the Light Dragoon Regts. in general. The Officers who raise the Fenc. Corps will be at liberty to choose the Colour of the Cuff and Cape for their respective Clothing."² However much the New Romneys were restricted as to a general pattern the Sergeants at least enjoyed a unique distinction for we have it on the authority of a Mr. Herington, Clothier of Yale Buildings, who in answering a letter from the Clothing Board replied: "When the Fen. Cav. was first raised, the Sergts. of many Regts. had Silver Prussian Lace and I have never been directed to use any other except for one Regiment, the New Romney, the Sergts. of which have always had Silver on Vellum Lace which is 9d. per yard dearer than the Prussian."³

The writer much regrets that he has no sketch of the uniform of the New Romney Fencible Cavalry, but much can be inferred from a copy in his possession of a painting of an Officer of the Cinque Ports Fencible Cavalry in red jacket and silver lace, which must have been very similar.⁴

¹ The Hon. Robert Banks Jenkinson (b. 1770, d. 1828), son of the second Earl of Liverpool. He later became Lord Hawkesbury (1803), and then the Earl of Liverpool (Dec. 1808). On the death of Pitt in 1806 he succeeded him as Lord Warden and in the command of three Battalions of the Cinque Ports Volunteer Regiment. In July 1810 he raised and commanded the Cinque Ports Local Militia Regiment. He was Prime Minister 1812-27.

² W.O.7, Vol. 31, p. 46.

³ W.O.7, Vol. 31, p. 46. Letter dated 11 Jan. 1798.

⁴ This officer was that Thomas Davis Lamb, of Rye, who served as a Captain with the Cinque Ports Fencible Cavalry 1794-1800. He commanded the 3rd. Battn. Cinque Ports Volunteers in 1803-1809. On the formation of The Cinque Ports Local Militia in July, 1810, Lamb was appointed Major. He later became Private Secretary to his Commanding Officer (then the Earl of Liverpool) and died, as a bachelor, about 1820.

On April 7th, 1795, a memorandum was issued from the Adjutant General's Department ordering that the Corps of Fencible Cavalry in general be allowed to raise their establishment to 75 Rank and File per Troop, and to augment to six Troops per Corps.¹ This increase in the establishment soon brought the promotion of Major Cholmeley Dering to Colonel and of Captain Head Brydges to Lieut.-Col., both dated 20th April 1795. By June the Regiment was at Canterbury Barracks with orders to march one troop "to consist of full estab. of 80 Rank and file" to Hythe Camp "on the 12th."

There soon appeared a recruiting poster, handsomely printed in red and black, advertising that the King had been pleased to augment *The New Romney Light Dragoons* to a full regiment to be commanded by Colonel Dering with Headquarters at Canterbury. An original copy together with the Guidon of the regiment is still preserved at the office of the Kent T.A.A.F. Association at Maidstone. For reporting their existence and for providing the illustrations of both of them (Plates I and II) here reproduced the writer is greatly indebted to your President (Major M. Teichman Derville) to whom further acknowledgment is made at the end of this article.

Although no copy is available, it is evident that *The Cinque Ports Fencible Cavalry* also published their own recruiting poster about this time. For it is on record that Jenkinson having shown Canning one of his sergeant's handbills the latter read out at Lady Malmesbury's a facetious poem composed by him. A few extracts are worthy of quotation, for not only do they give some further clues as to the uniform and especially the plume in the head-dress, which presumably approximated very closely to that of *The New Romney Fencible Cavalry*, but it would seem that there was also shown a figure in uniform :

" We're no common Dragoons, made of Tailors and Barbers,
But true Cinqueport Horsemen, the pick of five harbours,
Who, though doom'd to lose leather, all scorn to complain,
And stick fast by our spurs without touching the mane.

Their hair shall be decently plaistered with Tallow ;
On their helmets three feathers of Red, Black, and Yellow.
Their jackets shall reach half the way down their back,
And those jackets shall be of red, yellow, and black ;
In short, their whole dress shall agree with ye head—
What a comely appearance, Black, Yellow, and Red !

When you've made up your minds, pray repair to my Serjeant ;
He's just like the figure you see in the Margent—"²

¹ W.O.3, Vol. 13, p. 145.

² *George Canning and His Friends*, edited by Captain J. Bagot (1909), Vol. I, p. 34 and pp. 133, 134.

On the 6th June *The New Romney Fencible Cavalry* were ordered to march one troop on the 12th to Hythe Camp to consist of the full establishment of 80 rank and file. Later there was issued an order for "*The New Romney Fencible Light Dragoons* augmented by additional troops to be ready for inspection and completely raised by the 8th of September 1795. To be inspected by Lt. Gen. Sir Robert Sloper."¹

On October 14th the Regiment took part in a review by the Duke of York at Barham Down Camp where his arrival was announced by a general discharge of Artillery.

"The different regiments encamped there were joined by the Sussex Militia from Birchington Camp—a company of foot Artillery, the Somerset, Lancashire and *New Romney Light Dragoons* and Royal Horse Artillery from this city, when they all underwent a general inspection by H.R.H. and the Duke of Richmond.

The Infantry and Cavalry forming a line entire, the Duke of York on his first entering the field rode down the line, and afterwards took his station in the front opposite Barham Court, where he witnessed the various evolutions performing, and expressed the highest encomiums on the exactness and precision with which they were conducted; the whole forming a very grand spectacle."²

The full title of the New Romneys eventually became *The New Romney Fencible Cavalry (Duke of York's Own)*. How this honour of the subsidiary title was accorded is not recorded, but it duly appeared in the Army List quoted later in this article. Sir Edward Dering may well have been a friend of the Duke of York, for he was a lively M.P. and well known in the best London Clubs where he lost large sums in gambling. He died on December 8th, 1798.

In 1796 it was notified from the War Office to the Clothing Board of the Army that "the Colour of the Clothing of all the Regular Regts. of Light Cav. without exception is to be Blue and that of the whole of the Fencible Cav. Red, with Red waistcoats and white Buckskin Breeches."³ On the 17th of March it was ordered that "all the regiments of Fencible Cavalry without exception to be clothed in one and the same uniform manner except with regard to the Number or initial letters on the buttons and the Colour of their Cuffs and Collars which are to remain as at present."⁴

The Regiment was ordered on the 26th of October to march for Bury St. Edmunds (three troops) and three troops to Thetford, Mildenhall, Barton Mills and Brandon, the move to be completed by

¹ W.O.3, Vol. 14, pp. 185 and 190. Letters to Col. Dering and Lt.-General Sir R. Sloper.

² *The Kentish Gazette*, 15th October, 1795.

³ W.O.4, Vol. 172, pp. 148 and 202.

⁴ W.O.7, Vol. 30, p. 152.

the 11th and 12th of November Accordingly we find in *The Kentish Gazette* that "on the 28th of October the first division of *The New Romney Light Dragoons*, commanded by Colonel Dering, marched for Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk." There the regiment remained until the autumn of the following year, 1796, when on the 21st of September orders were issued to march via Witney for Bath on the 26th and 27th, there to arrive on the 13th and 14th of October.¹ That December they were quartered at Worcester, Gloucester and Ludlow.²

The situation in Ireland was now becoming more serious. On the 15th of December, 1796, the French Armada then assembled for the invasion of Ireland set to sea. Already a large Spanish and French battle fleet had left Toulon. Failure to effect a junction and bad weather defeated the object of occupying Ireland as a convenient base for the invasion of England. The considerable fleet which on the 22nd entered Bantry Bay encountered a storm which on Christmas Day increased to gale force which forced its dispersal back to France. This crisis provided an opportunity for something more like Active Service, and by the 9th of February, 1797, there was noted at the Horse Guards a "List of Fencibles which have offered to serve in Ireland," giving the names of nine units of Fencible Cavalry, "about 2,200 men," including the Cinque Ports, who had been stationed in Scotland since July of the previous year, and the New Romney who found themselves in Ireland by next April.

The year 1797 has been described as the darkest in British history. Added to serious reverses abroad and the threat of further invasion, widespread alarm was caused by the fear of revolution and of financial ruin and famine. Rebellion and Civil War with all its fanatical religious bigotry and violence raged in Ireland, "a third of the population of the British Isles was ready to repudiate its allegiance to the Crown."³

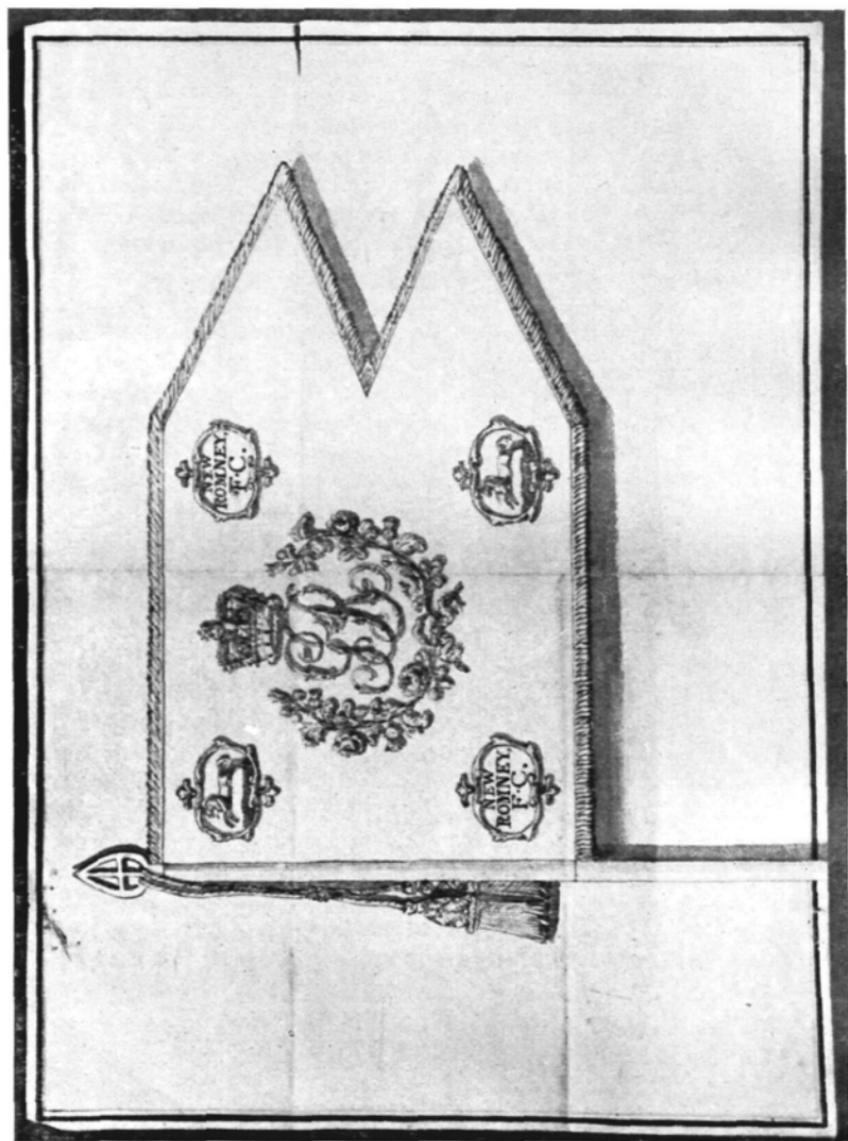
In the middle of February, pending the sailing of a still larger Armada against the British Isles, the French essayed a filibustering raid up the Bristol Channel, the object of which was the destruction of Bristol and a threat to Chester and Liverpool. On the 22nd a landing had been effected at Fishguard which ended in an ignominious surrender to a smaller force hastily collected locally. For this action the Pembroke Yeomanry bear the unique Battle Honour "Fishguard."

Such was the situation when *The New Romney Fencible Cavalry* entered upon their Service in Ireland. In the records of New Romney there is an entry that "money was given to Colonel Dering to treat the men who are going to Ireland," and on the 8th of April they were

¹ Orders for the Movement of Troops 1795-1796 in W.O. Library.

² W.O.5, Vol. 73. Quarters of Cavalry.

³ *The Years of Endurance*, by Arthur Bryant (1942), p. 202.



GUIDON—NEW ROMNEY FENCIBLE CAVALRY

(The horse represents the White Horse of Hanover, as frequently depicted in badges of the Georgian period)

set upon their way by being under order to march to Warrington "to follow such orders as they shall receive from Lt.-Gen. Powell or O.C. North Western District. . . ."¹ On the 11th of April, 1797, their service in Ireland commenced² by their disembarkation at Dublin on the 11th and 12th.³

Little is known of the subsequent military service of the New Romneys except the bare facts of where they were stationed, the conditions of pay and allowances, and the lists of officers. Enquiry by the writer has failed to bring to light any such sprightly record as he has collected of the activities and the social life of *The Cinque Ports Fencible Cavalry* in East Lothian—how the latter, having arrived at Carlisle in July of 1796, with their band lined the streets at the funeral of the poet Robert Burns at Dumfries on the 25th; how their Colonel, Lord Hawkesbury, "cordially disliked the whole business" and disapproved of Scottish hospitality; and how they provided sergeants and a fat jolly adjutant as instructors for *The Edinburgh Volunteer Light Dragoons* of which another poet, Sir Walter Scott, was Quartermaster.⁴

The commencement of their Service in Ireland must have seemed all the more serious for *The New Romney Fencible Cavalry* because during that month of April there occurred the Mutiny of the Fleet at Spithead followed in May by the still more sinister rising at the Nore. The loyalty of the Army, and even of the Guards, was in doubt. On the 21st of May there was found at Chatham Barracks a copy of a seditious handbill which had had a wide circulation amongst the troops. The pay at first for Privates was eightpence per diem, but on the 22nd of July there appeared a warrant granting an allowance to Dragoon Guards, Dragoons and Fencible Cavalry in Ireland whereby: "Private men in addition to the pay of eightpence per diem, and borne on the Establishment, the further sum of sevenpence per man making 1/3 out of which a sum not exceeding 4/6 per week (unless he chooses to appropriate more) to be applied to expence of his Mess, including Vegetables etc; a sum not exceeding 2/7½ a week to be retained for necessaries (Breeches, Stable Jacket & Trousers etc, Shirts, Shoes, Gaters etc; Brushes, Curry combs etc, and the remainder 1/7½ paid weekly to himself subject to the accustomed deduction for washing and for articles to clean his clothing, and appointments. Trumpeter 1/7 per Corporal 1/7½ and Serjeant 2/2½." The British Soldier has always regarded deductions with the gravest suspicion, and so must the New Romneys have viewed the small balance on Pay Day, especially after an increase in pay!⁵

¹ W.O.5, Vol. 73. Quarters of Cavalry.

² W.O.7, Vol. 32, p. 217.

³ H.O.100, Vol. 67. Letter from Lord Lieutenant 20/5/1797.

⁴ Article by the Author, *Cinque Ports Gazette*, Vol. I, pp. 23-25.

⁵ H.O.101, Vol. 2, p. 329.

THE NEW ROMNEY FENCIBLE CAVALRY 1794 TO 1800

In the first half of 1798 the New Romneys were quartered in the hutted camp at Laughlinstown.¹ The list of officers, as given in some old monthly Army Lists (1798-1800) preserved in the Royal United Service Institution, and "corrected to 1 June 1798," was then as follows :

FENCIBLE CAVALRY
NEW ROMNEY
(OR DUKE OF YORK'S OWN)

LAUGHLINSTOWN HUTTS IN IRELAND

Col.	Cholmeley Dering,	20 Apr. 95.
Lieut. Col.	J. W. Head Brydges,	20 Apr. 95.
Maj.	Edward Barnard,	4 Nov. 95.
Cpts.	Edw. Taylor, C. Grevis, H. Cookes.	
Capt. Lieut. and Capt.		
Lieuts.	Benjamin Jones, Henry Debbing, J. Crozier, James Stevenson, John Bray, J. Adolphus.	
Cornets.	T. Towers, Hugh Henry, Robert Wales, John Stanley.	
Chap.	Edward Cage.	
Adj.	James Stevenson.	
Surg.	J. Adolphus.	
Agents.	Wybrants & Son.	

It is interesting to record that throughout these Army Lists, under the general heading of Fencible Cavalry, appeared the note : "The Fencible Cavalry were raised in 1794 to serve during the War in any part of Great Britain. When disbanded, the only officers entitled to Half Pay are the Adjutants and Quartermasters." It seems likely that with their arrival in Ireland the New Romneys may have undergone a change of uniform from Red to Blue for, following an enquiry by the Lord Lieutenant, he was notified by the War Office on the 27th of July, 1798, of the King's consent that all the Fencible Cavalry in Ireland could have blue clothing.²

The Army List (corrected to 1/8/1798) shows the New Romneys then to have been stationed at "Cashell, Ireland." The list of officers remained the same except that amongst the Cornets the name of Robert Wales ceased and S. R. Allyn was added. In July the regiment moved to Limerick where with other units they came under the command of Maj. General Sir James Duff, their effective strength present being 221 and 29 absent sick, recruiting or on furlough.³ The Army List (corrected to the 1st of December) gives their station still as Limerick ; H. Cookes had disappeared from the list of Captains, and the senior subaltern, Benjamin Jones, had become Capt. Lieut. and

¹ W.O.13, 5/1/1798.

² W.O.4, Vol. 172.

³ W.O.1, Vol. 612.

Captain.¹ It seems that they remained at Limerick until November 1799 when they were ordered to Tullamore with detachments at Longford, Kilbiggin and Clonard.²

In 1799 the British regiments of Fencible Cavalry in Ireland were augmented to 55 men per Troop all mounted: "the New Romney from 18th August 1799 inclusive (24 Sergts, 24 Corpls, 276 Privates; instead of 18 Sergts, 18 Corpls and 192 Privates mounted and 30 Privates dismounted). Augmented Estabt. 357 Present Estabt. 291."³

The Army List corrected to 1st January 1800 shows their station "at Maryborough etc." Captain Edward Taylor had replaced Head Brydges as Major, and R. Wales had been promoted to Captain. The Lieuts. were now Henry Debbling, J. Adolphus, T. Towers, Sam Webb and F. H. Loftus; and the Cornets were John Ledwell, James Jarvis and Wm. Plenderleath; Paymaster, C. Nevile. No Adjutant is shown. In the list corrected to the 1st of March 1800 there are only eleven units of Fencible Cavalry shown and the station of the New Romneys is given as Tullamore, Phillipstown, etc. J. H. Scott had been added to the list of Cornets and appointed Adjutant. In the list corrected to the 1st of September 1800 the station remained the same; J. A. Pickard had been added to the list of Cornets and as Adjutant. J. Jarvis had become Assistant Surgeon.

By February of 1800 the service of the Regiment was drawing to a close, and on the 8th recruiting was closed⁴; on the 14th there was issued to the Fencible Cavalry the thanks of the C. in C. (the Duke of York);⁵ and commanding officers were asked to induce N.C.O's and regular men to join the Regular Cavalry⁶. The Pay Lists and Muster Rolls for that August and September show that a total of 201 had transferred from the New Romneys to the Regular Cavalry.⁷

- 3 to 1st Dragoons.
- 27 to 6th Dragoon Guards.
- 45 to 9th Dragoons.
- 12 to 10th Light Dragoons.
- 10 to 14th Light Dragoons.
- 39 to 16th Light Dragoons.
- 2 to 18th Light Dragoons.
- 32 to 22nd Light Dragoons.
- 7 to 23rd Light Dragoons.
- 24 to 24th Light Dragoons.

¹ This peculiar Rank was at that time given throughout the Army to the officer appointed to command the Colonel's troop or company.

² Muster Rolls in W.O. Library.

³ W.O.8, Vol. 9, p. 351.

⁴ W.O.3, Vol. 21.

⁵ W.O.1, Vol. 621, p. 157.

⁶ W.O.3, Vol. 21.

⁷ W.O.13, Vol. 3773.

THE NEW ROMNEY FENCIBLE CAVALRY 1794 TO 1800

Sad to relate, the few N.C.O's who transferred, despite their special and expensive Silver Lace, were required to revert to the rank of Private !

The New Romney Fencible Cavalry embarked for England on the 27th of September, 1800, so that their service in Ireland terminated on the 26th.¹ The next month they had ceased to exist ; the second paragraph of the War Office letter dated the 16th of October disbanding them reads as follows :

“ According to the Rule laid down in Ireland on the Reduction of the British Fencible Cavalry serving there to which it is thought proper to confirm in the case of the few Regiments brought away to this Country to be reduced, the Boots, Spurs, Cloakes and other appointments that may remain in the possession of the Regiment are to be considered as the Property of the Colonel and to be disposed of as he shall think proper to direct. The six months pay allowed to Commissioned and Warrant Officers beyond the day of Reduction is not to be issued until further order.”²

And there ends the story of *The New Romney Fencible Cavalry (Duke of York's Own)*. Although it presents a less lively record than that of *The Cinque Ports Fencible Cavalry* yet the service of the New Romneys during the Rebellion in Ireland may well have been the more arduous. Colonel Chomeley Dering died on the 7th of November 1836 at the age of 70. Hitherto, so little has been known of their history that, in presenting these further details, it has seemed best to quote all references in the hope that they may lead to further research with which to enliven and adorn the bare skeleton of facts. The writer feels that he cannot close this record without paying his grateful tribute to your President, Major M. Teichman Derville, O.B.E., D.L., M.A., F.S.A., F.R.Hist.S., for his valuable help and encouragement over many years in everything relating to the history of the armed forces of the Cinque Ports ; and to his former Commanding Officer in *The Cinque Ports Battalion*, Colonel T. B. Hornblower, T.D., D.L., for making funds available for research during his term of command.

¹ W.O.7, Vol. 32, p. 217.

² W.O.4, Vol. 180, p. 449.