



## 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars

### Battle honours

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>1800–1852:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Leswaree</li> <li>○ Hindoostan</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Crimean War:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Alma</li> <li>○ Balaklava</li> <li>○ Inkerman</li> <li>○ Sevastopol</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>1860–1914:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">Afghanistan 1879–80</a></li> <li>○ <a href="#">South Africa 1900–02</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>First World War:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Givenchy 1914</li> <li>○ <a href="#">Somme 1916</a>; 1918</li> <li>○ <a href="#">Cambrai 1917</a>; 1918</li> <li>○ <a href="#">Bapaume 1918</a></li> <li>○ Rosieres 1918</li> <li>○ <a href="#">Amiens 1918</a></li> <li>○ <a href="#">Albert 1918</a></li> <li>○ Beaufevrier</li> <li>○ Pursuit to Mons</li> <li>○ France &amp; Flanders 14–18</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Second World War;</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Villers Bocage</li> <li>○ Mont Pincon</li> <li>○ Dives Crossing</li> <li>○ Nederrijn</li> <li>○ Best</li> <li>○ Lower Maas</li> <li>○ Roer</li> <li>○ Rhine</li> <li>○ <a href="#">North-West Europe 44–45</a></li> <li>○ Egyptian Frontier 1940</li> <li>○ Sidi Barrani</li> <li>○ Buq Buq</li> <li>○ <a href="#">Sidi Rezegh 1941</a></li> <li>○ <a href="#">Relief of Tobruk 1941</a></li> <li>○ Gazala</li> <li>○ Bir el Igela</li> <li>○ Mersa Matruh</li> <li>○ Alam el Halfa</li> <li>○ El Alamein</li> <li>○ <a href="#">North Africa 1940–42</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <p><b>Country</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <a href="#">Kingdom of Ireland</a> (1693–1800)</li> <li> <a href="#">United Kingdom</a> (1801–1958)</li> </ul> <p><b>Branch</b><br/><a href="#">British Army</a></p> <p><b>Type</b><br/>Cavalry of the Line/<a href="#">Royal Armoured Corps</a></p> <p><b>Role</b><br/>Light cavalry</p> <p><b>Size</b><br/>550 men</p> <p><b>Nickname</b><br/>The Crossbelts</p> <p><b>Motto</b><br/><i>Pristinae virtutis memores</i></p> <p><b>March</b><br/>The Galloping 8th Hussar (quick),<br/>The Scottish Archers (slow)</p> <p><b>Anniversaries</b><br/>Salamanca Day,<br/>Balaklava Day,<br/>St Patrick's Day</p> |
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### The 8th King's Royal

**Irish Hussars** was a [cavalry regiment](#) in the [British Army](#), first raised in 1693. It saw service for three centuries, before being amalgamated into [The Queen's Royal Irish Hussars](#) in 1958.

The regiment was first raised in Ireland as **Henry Conyngham's Regiment of Dragoons** in [Derry](#) in 1693, and ranked as the 8th Dragoons. It was briefly disbanded from 1714 to 1715, and 1716 to 1719, reforming each time without any loss of precedence. In 1751, it was formally titled as the **8th Regiment of Dragoons**, and designated light dragoons in 1775 as the **8th Regiment of Light Dragoons**.

The regiment was renamed in 1777 for [George III](#) as the **8th (The King's Royal Irish) Regiment of (Light) Dragoons**, and became hussars in 1822, as the **8th (The King's Royal Irish) Regiment of (Light) Dragoons (Hussars)**. The title was simplified in 1861 to the **8th (The King's Royal Irish) Hussars**. After service in the First World War, the regiment retitled as the **8th King's Royal Irish Hussars** in 1921, and was transferred to the [Royal Armoured Corps](#) in 1939. Fighting with distinction in North Africa, Greece, France & Germany during World War II

In 1938 the regiment was transferred Light Cavalry Brigade of the Mobile Division, (The Matruh Mobile Force)<sup>[16]</sup> which later became the [7th Armoured Division](#), [The Desert Rats](#). Light tanks were issued in January 1939. These were cast-offs from the [7th Hussars](#) and the band was converted to an Anti-Tank Troop in 15 Cwt trucks (portees).<sup>[17]</sup> Transfer from [Cavalry of the Line](#) to the [Royal Armoured Corps](#) came in May 1939 as the regiment prepared for war after the Italian invasion of [Albania](#). For the first time black berets were worn as working dress instead of the traditional cavalry "side-hat".<sup>[18]</sup> In August 1939 the regiment was sent into the desert to prepare positions at the Mersa Matruh Line. As part of the preparations petrol dumps were created by burying supplies in the sand with a piece of wood indicating the burial site and marking the position on maps.<sup>[19]</sup> The regiment was part of the offensive against the [Italian Army](#) in North Africa in June 1940. [Sidi Omar](#) was captured immediately and [Fort Capuzzo](#) three days later, followed by [Fort Maddalena](#). On 22 October, supporting the [Cameron Highlanders](#) an attack was made against [Maktilla](#). Other actions took place as part of the campaign against Italian forces including the battle at [Sidi Barrani](#) where 14,000 prisoners were captured and the action at [Bardia](#). On 5 January 1941 the regiment captured and occupied [El Adem](#) airfield and by 8 January 1942 were part of the forces surrounding [Tobruk](#).<sup>[20]</sup> In February 1941 they were involved in the decisive [Battle of Beda Fomm](#), which

lead to the capture of most of the Italian forces in North Africa at the time.<sup>[13]</sup> In March 1941, the 8th Hussars saw brief service in Greece before returning to North Africa as part of the 1st Armoured Division. The regiment then returned to refit at Mena, Cairo in time for St Patrick's Day.<sup>[21]</sup>

July 1941 found the 8th Hussars, **in Stuart tanks**, back as part of the 4th Armoured Brigade for [Operation Crusader](#). During the three day Battle of Sidi Rezegh Airfield, the regiment had formed a box leaguer for the night-time lull in fighting with the rest of the brigade on 22 November (as neither side had night vision aids, battle normally ceased at dusk). The leaguer was discovered by the [15th Panzer Division](#) during the night and in the ensuing engagement left the Irish Hussars with just four Stuart Tanks fit for battle; 35 having been captured or destroyed.<sup>[22]</sup> The regiment was issued 32 new Stuarts at Cairo and, under the command of Major Sandbach the regiment returned to the battle. On 1 December, to assist ANZAC forces the regiment charged "cavalry style" again at Sidi Rezegh and although the action was successful, Major Sandbach was killed.<sup>[23]</sup> Command then fell to Major Phillips. After a re-fit and influx of recruits at Beni Yusef the 8th Hussars were temporarily converted to armoured cars but before seeing action in them were issued with new tanks. A & B Squadrons with the [General Grant](#) and C Squadron in Stuarts, all under the command of Lt Col Gerald "Smash" Kilkelly.<sup>[24]</sup> Once again part of the 4th Armoured Brigade with which it served during the Gazala battles of May and June 1942, suffering heavy losses at the Battle of Knightsbridge in which [Major Hackett](#) was severely burnt and Colonel Kilkelly captured,<sup>[25]</sup> and also battles at Bardia and Bir Hacheim. The 8th fought hard as a composite unit with the 4th [City of London Yeomanry](#) (casualties having reduced the size of both regiments) before having to withdraw with the rest of the 8th Army to [El Alamein](#). In June, the remnants of the regiment under command of Lt Col "Cuthie" Goulbourn detached one squadron to their future partners the [4th Queen's Own Hussars](#) to form a temporary regiment called the 4th/8th Hussars. The brigade, including the 8th and the 4th/8th faced the massive enemy onslaught at [Alam Halfa](#), defeating the enemy. They helped breach the minefields at Alamein and then joined the pursuit for three weeks. A short break in Cyprus preceded the regiment's return to England.

**The Western Desert Force 7th - Late 1939**

**The Light Armoured Brigade**

- Hussars
- 8th Hussars
- 11th Hussars

**The Heavy Armoured Brigade**

- 1st Royal Tank Regiment
- 6th Royal Tank Regiment

**The Pivot Group**

- 3rd RHA
- 'F' Bty, 4th RHA
- 1st Kings Royal Rifle Corp

