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# Art in the field

Sculptor Frippy Jameson was given unprecedented access to the Cavalry Blacks at Hyde Park Barracks, as she describes to Janet Menzies

THERE are moments when you do still get a bit proud to be British, and HM The Queen's Birthday Parade is guaranteed to jerk a tear. Rows of magnificent horses, as black and shiny as the high boots of their riders, jog and clash their way down The Mall. Swords are drawn, cuirasses gleam. Everything is bright and fluttering and ringing. As the Household Division leaves The Mall to Troop the Colour on Horseguards, tourists dive into Harrods to buy shortbread tins in unprecedented quantities. By early afternoon, it's all over and the Household Cavalry goes back to its Hyde Park Barracks at 20A Knightsbridge – which is where sculptor Frippy Jameson is waiting to capture the secret world behind the pageantry.

"The contrast between the pageantry that you see and what goes on behind the scenes is what struck me most," explains Jameson, who began working on a collection of bronze sculptures of the Household Cavalry almost a year ago.

She describes the surreal experience of her first visit to the barracks: "You go into Knightsbridge but the barracks building itself is a hidden place. It is a modern building and I went in through the Hyde Park entrance. It is in such a famous part of London but it is so calm after the activity of Hyde Park and Knightsbridge, and you go in and it is a military environment yet it is overwhelmingly calm and quiet. The horses are kept on two levels with three or four horse-lines at each level. There is a curved ramp like a

multistorey car park. Then at the bottom there are the sick lines where horses that need extra care live, and where I was based.

"What interested me sculpture-wise was this difference between it and the world outside. I like to capture the peace and quietness of horses. It is the atmosphere they have of silence – and in the barracks there is a huge sense of silences and quiet and order." As Jameson points out, many who work with horses will recognise that feeling of hushedness that is so beguiling about the environment of stables. Outside in the heart of tourist London, everyone is rushing about but in Hyde Park Barracks there is another, secluded world. "I love the feeling of being with horses, I can understand why they are used for therapy. And they are so beautiful, I have always been captivated by horses," explains Jameson.

The first horse she met was drum horse Perseus, who is the most recent drum horse to join the Household Division and has the rank of major, as drum horses are the most senior animal in the armed forces. Perseus is unusual for a drum horse in being almost a bright bay, with much less white on him than is traditional. Jameson says: "Perseus was just big and red and very beautiful and, of course, very strong. You can see why he is known as Big Red. He is a really lovely horse, very sweet-natured. I photographed him and measured him. Normally I make my maquette on site and do it from life, but



Below left: Frippy Jameson in her studio in the Borders. Above: sculpture of drum horse Perseus at the foundry. Right: Cavalry Black Oracle. Below right: Perseus without drums (left); two greys (right)

it had to be video this time. But Big Red was very patient. The Household Cavalry horses are so used to being taken out and having people handle them.

"The soldiers were fantastic and so disciplined but very welcoming and they couldn't help enough. When I first went there I was staying in a corner doing some sketches and then as I was there for the week, I had some conversations and heard the stories. I heard all about the mare, Paardeberg, who started out being trickier than the other cavalry blacks. But now the Corporal of Horse [the equivalent of Sergeant elsewhere in the armed forces] rides her regularly and has formed a relationship with her and they go show jumping with lots of success."

Back home in the Scottish Borders, Jameson had to work on the rough maquette sketches she had made in the barracks until eventually they were ready to go to Edinburgh's Powderhall Bronze Foundry to be cast. She explains: "I love doing life size but with Perseus I did a one-fifth life size and I have done him with all the tack. The others I have done mainly one-sixth life size and one with an officer, one-quarter life size."

Jameson has concentrated on horses and people throughout her career but admits that this opportunity to work with the Household Cavalry was unique: "To see so many cavalry blacks all lined up there, you can't imagine what is behind those walls."

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Frippy Jameson's Household Cavalry is on exhibition from 13 June to 6 July at The Osborne Studio Gallery, 2 Motcomb Street, London SW1. Her website is at: [frippyjameson.com](http://frippyjameson.com)

