

World-class tro

Pictures: Steve Dock



Stable occupation: Mucking out, at 0600, are from left, Gnr Steve Flint, Gnr Ben Moore and Gnr Guy Ridley

When it comes to musical rides and gun salutes, the Troop has no rivals

ON many of the nation's most significant royal occasions The King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery is the instantly recognised face of the British Army.

Its 172 soldiers (and 120 horses) fire salutes on royal anniversaries and state occasions. The Troop, as it is known, uses six 13-pounders, all of which were fired in anger during the First World War. The 1½-ton guns, as in all artillery units, are its Colours.

The unit is also famous for its musical drive, a thrilling blend of fearless, precision horsemanship, colourful pageantry and glamorous uniforms, during which six gun teams weave in and out at the canter and the gallop.

Based in barracks at St John's Wood,

London, soldiers of the Troop are very much a part of the operational Army, serving in the Balkans and Northern Ireland.

But it is for their ceremonial role that they enjoy a worldwide reputation. From the State Opening of Parliament to Remembrance Sunday (when it fires the gun marking the start of the two-minute silence), to royal birthdays, the Troop has become a symbol of the nation's proud past and a dramatic confirmation of the efficiency with which the modern Army goes about its business.

On these pages we look behind the scenes as the Troop prepares for its public performances.

oupers



In all their splendour: Soldiers of The King's Troop canter towards the gun line in Hyde Park, above, before firing a salute to mark the Queen's Accession to the Throne, below



Shining example: King's Troop soldier Gnr Ian Barnes "bliffs" a ceremonial saddle to perfection



Polish (but no spit): Gnr Georgena Meyes buffs up the bit chain on a military head cover



Finishing touch: Gnr Justin Kemp works on the wheels of his 13-pdr

