

Royal Army Service Corps

The **Royal Army Service Corps (RASC)** was a corps of the British Army responsible for land, coastal and lake transport, air despatch, barracks administration, the Army Fire Service, staffing headquarters' units, supply of food, water, fuel and domestic materials such as clothing, furniture and stationery and the supply of technical and military equipment. In 1965 its functions were divided between other Corps (RCT and RAOC) and the RASC ceased to exist; subsequently, in 1993, they in their turn (with some functions of the Royal Engineers) became the "Forming Corps" of the Royal Logistic Corps.

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History

For centuries, army transport was operated by contracted civilians. The first uniformed transport corps in the British Army was the **Royal Waggoners** formed in 1794. It was not a success and was disbanded the following year. In 1799, the **Royal Waggon Corps** was formed; by August 1802, it had been renamed the Royal Waggon Train. This was reduced to only two troops in 1818 and finally disbanded in 1833.

A transport corps was not formed again until the Crimean War. In 1855, the **Land Transport Corps** was formed. This was renamed the **Military Train** the following year.

In 1869, there was a major reorganisation of army supply and transport capabilities. Before 1869, supply duties had been the responsibility of the Commissariat, a uniformed civilian body. In 1869, the commissaries of the Commissariat and the officers of the Military Train amalgamated into the Control Department under a Controller-in-Chief. The following year the other ranks of the Military Train were re designated the **Army Service Corps (ASC)**, officered by the Control Department. In 1870 the control department was absorbed into a new Department of the Surveyor General of the Ordnance and the former post of Controller-in-Chief was abolished.^[1]

The Department of the Surveyor General of the Ordnance retained the Control Department and further structured into four new divisions superintended by a director; the first was the Supply and Transport Division formed from the merging of the former commissariat, purveyors and barrack departments, the second was an Artillery and Stores Division that absorbed the former contracts,

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George VI Royal Army Service Corps badge. Motto: *Honi soit qui mal y pense*

Active	1888-1965
Allegiance	 United Kingdom
Branch	 British Army
Role	Military administration
Garrison/HQ	Buller Barracks, Aldershot
Nickname(s)	<i>The Moke Train</i> or <i>the Commos</i>
Motto(s)	<i>In Arduis Fidelis</i> (<i>Faithful in Adversity</i>)
March	<i>Wait for the Wagon</i>

clothing, ordnance and stores departments and the third was a Contracts Division. The fourth division created was called the Control Establishments Subdivision that became responsible for the administration of the control departments staff.^[2]

In November 1875, the Control Department was abolished and its work in regard to field service was allocated to two new departments the **Commissariat and Transport Department** and the Ordnance Store Department (which later developed into the Royal Army Ordnance Corps). These two departments remained part of the department of Surveyor General of the Ordnance. In 1878 the Control Establishments Subdivision's name was altered to the Commissariat and Transport Establishments Division under the supervision of a Commissary General.^[3]

In January 1880, the Commissariat and Transport Department was renamed the **Commissariat and Transport Staff** and the Army Service Corps was renamed the **Commissariat and Transport Corps**. Finally, in December 1888, these two bodies amalgamated with the War Department Fleet to form a new Army Service Corps, and for the first time officers and other ranks served in a single unified organisation.

In 1887 Department of the Surveyor General of the Ordnance and its head was abolished; its former functions were then distributed among the several divisions of the Military and Civil Departments: the work of the Supply and Transport Division was allocated to the Quartermaster General's Division.^[4]

The ASC subsequently absorbed some transport elements of the Royal Engineers. In 1918, the corps received the "Royal" prefix for its service in the First World War and became the Royal Army Service Corps. It was divided into Transport and Supply Branches.

Before the Second World War, RASC recruits were required to be at least 5 feet 2 inches tall and could enlist up to 30 years of age (or 35 for tradesmen in the Transport Branch). They initially enlisted for six years with the colours and a further six years with the reserve (seven years and five years for tradesmen and clerks, three years and nine years for butchers, bakers and supply issuers). They trained at Aldershot.^[5]

Alone among the "Services" (i.e. rear echelon support corps), RASC personnel were considered to be combatant personnel.^[6]

In 1965, the RASC was merged with the Transportation and Movement Control Service of the Royal Engineers (which was responsible for railway transport, inland water transport, port operations, and movements) to form the Royal Corps of Transport. All its supply functions, (including the supply of vehicles, their care and preservation in storage and delivery), along with the staff clerks, were transferred to the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, leaving the new RCT solely responsible for transport and movements. In 1993, the RCT and RAOC were merged to form the Royal Logistic Corps, the modern descendant of the ASC.



1915 recruiting poster

Ranks

Officers of the Control Department, Commissariat and Transport Department, and Commissariat and Transport Staff held different ranks from the rest of the Army.^{[7][8]} From February 1885 they were given honorary military ranks, which they held in conjunction with their commissary ranks.^[9] Officers of the ASC and RASC held full military rank.

Army rank	Control Department rank	Commissariat & Transport Department rank	Commissariat & Transport Staff rank
<u>Second Lieutenant</u>	Sub-Assistant Commissary	Sub-Assistant Commissary	Quartermaster
<u>Lieutenant</u>	Assistant Commissary	Assistant Commissary	Deputy Assistant Commissary-General
<u>Captain</u>	Deputy Commissary	Deputy Commissary	Deputy Assistant Commissary-General
<u>Major</u>	Commissary	Commissary	Assistant Commissary-General
<u>Lieutenant-Colonel</u>	Assistant Controller	Assistant Commissary-General	Assistant Commissary-General
<u>Colonel</u>	Deputy Controller	Deputy Commissary-General	Deputy Commissary-General
	Controller	Commissary-General	Commissary-General

Notable personnel

- Category:Royal Army Service Corps soldiers
- Category:Royal Army Service Corps officers

See also

- 15 Air Assault Close Support Squadron RLC
- Cathedral of St Michael and St George, Aldershot (annual service, East Window, and photo of memorial chapel)

Footnotes

1. Roper, Dr Michael (1998). *The records of the War Office and related departments, 1660-1964*. London: Public Record Office. p. 165. ISBN 9781873162453.
2. Roper. p.165.
3. Roper. p.165.
4. Roper. p.165.
5. War Office, His Majesty's Army, 1938
6. War Office, Royal Warrant for the Pay, Appointment, Promotion and Non-Effective Pay of the Army, 1931
7. "No. 24281" (<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/24281/page/4>). *The London Gazette*. 4 January 1876. p. 4.
8. "No. 24822" (<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/24822/page/2016>). *The London Gazette*. 12 March 1880. p. 2016.
9. "No. 25444" (<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/25444/page/760>). *The London Gazette*. 20 February 1885. p. 760.

External links

- Royal Army Service Corps and Royal Corps of Transport Association (<http://www.rascrctassociation.co.uk/>)
- The Army Service Corps, 1914–1918 (<http://www.1914-1918.net/asc.htm>)

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