



THE LIGHT BRICK



GADE

He calls himself a mountaineer with a camera, so why did **Henry Dallal** spend six years shooting the Household Cavalry? **Bob Aylott** reports



TOP This shot of a guardsman caught during an off moment while arriving for duty at Knightsbridge Barracks in his trainers should have been a big seller for Henry. He used the 70-200mm zoom lens

ABOVE Henry Dallal ready for another tough assignment, this time in South America

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Nicknamed 'The Blue Mafia', riding staff at Knightsbridge Barracks exercise the horses in Hyde Park one autumn morning. Henry zoomed in with a 70-200mm lens

HENRY DALLAL was just nine years old when his father gave him a Kodak Box Brownie camera and took him to see the mountains of his Iranian homeland as a treat for his birthday. 'Since then, my love of the mountains and photography has never left me,' says Henry. 'My cameras are always with me, and if I see a mountain I want to climb it – I am a photographic adventurer.'

Over the past few years, 47-year-old Henry has climbed some of the world's toughest mountains. So far his biggest personal achievement has been a solo ascent of Mount McKinley in Alaska, which stands at 20,320ft and is North America's highest mountain. This involved a three-week expedition that included a nine-day climb from base camp to the summit and then back to base.

'I have a burning passion to experience other countries and to photograph their mountains and their tribes,' says Henry. 'I always make photography a part of my being, so to speak – as if the camera I am carrying is an extension of my body. If I am climbing a mountain or I am on a horse, I don't need to be burdened down with lots of equipment as it can restrict me – I have to feel free to move and work with speed and ease. If I am gasping for air at 20,000ft, I don't need any other problems to think about. I have my camera hanging around my neck so it's easily accessible. If my gear is in my bag, it will stay there. It would be too much effort to get it out. On the side of a mountain survival is the priority, not the

photography. You can die on a mountain as fast as you can take a picture.'

Henry makes four or five climbs each year and returns with around 2,000 colour transparencies from each trip. These pictures, combined with original sound recordings from the locations and music, are then edited into a super slide show. 'The show is the first objective,' he says. 'If I have two or three great landscape pictures from the trip, then that is a bonus. I will have them printed and try to sell them. It is one thing to see pictures in a book or hanging on the wall, but to see a spectacular slide show on a 10ft screen with sound recordings is something else – the whole experience of photography comes alive.'

However, Henry's latest adventure is a far cry from the mountains of Alaska. This time he has focused his attentions on the Household Cavalry, one of the world's most famous Army regiments. His unprecedented access to the Cavalry has resulted in the book *Pageantry & Performance* – a personal and intimate view of one of London's most colourful 'tribes', as he regards them.

So how did a civilian cross the line and join the Household Cavalry for six years? 'It was the sound of horses outside my front door in Knightsbridge that first attracted me to the Cavalry,' he says. 'To get my daily fix of nature, I go jogging in Hyde Park. When I went I saw the Cavalry horses and could get close enough to touch them, so that's how my interest began to grow.'

A friend then invited Henry to the barracks and ►



TOP The charge of the Light Brigade shot at Horse Guards Parade in London. This picture won Henry sponsorship from British Aerospace

ABOVE All the Queen's horses and all the Queen's men shot at Horse Guards Parade in London during the Queen's birthday parade

RIGHT The Farrier's axe made an interesting picture for Henry. Shot at Knightsbridge Barracks, using a 28-70mm zoom





'I'm not sure I know how to take good images, but I use my camera as a tool to capture the moment'

◀ introduced him to the regiment. 'I saw the tradition and the colour and thought, this is incredible – I have got to photograph this,' he continues.

Henry says it was his experience with nomadic tribes around the world that helped him gain his fly-on-the-wall freedom within the regiment. 'Many tribes live at the foot of the mountains that I climb,' he explains, 'and I always make a point of spending as much time with these people as possible. To absorb a culture properly you have to develop a trust and a relationship with them.'

'The Cavalry are no different from any other tribe in the world – you have to get to know them. The rules are the same and you have to understand that. They are very traditional, and you must respect their space. They will not allow anyone into their camp to photograph them for the fun of it. In the first year I was 20ft away, but by the third year I was 2ft away. That was how it worked. I never thought that it would become a long project, but it just evolved.'

Henry shot more than 20,000 pictures during that time, but he still finds the inspiration to take more shots. 'If you want to take fantastic pictures, the photography must become your priority,' he says. 'When I am up a mountain the climbing becomes my priority, but with the Household Cavalry the photography came first. I have cutting-edge pictures because the job became an obsession. There have been millions of pictures taken of the Household Cavalry, but my challenge as an art photographer was to create something different – images that had never been seen before.'

Henry uses colour transparency film, mostly Fuji Provia, with his two Canon EOS 1N bodies plus 17-28mm zoom and 28-200mm zoom lenses. He always has a polariser in his pocket and a UV filter on the lens, and occasionally uses a tripod.

He describes the past six years as a unique experience. 'I did it because I wanted to,' explains Henry. 'I was not commissioned and no one paid me. Once I started, it just went on and on, roll after roll of film.' However, he did have problems when it came to having his photographs published, as he describes



the frustrations of finding a publisher and selling himself. 'It was incredible,' he says. 'I could not find anyone who was interested, so I published it myself. Now I am pleased that it worked out in this way. I had complete control over every aspect and created exactly the book that I wanted. It was a true photographic experience.'

Going down the route of self-publishing certainly worked for Henry. He had 8,000 books printed in December and these have now sold out. From the second print run of 5,000, some 1,000 have already been ordered.

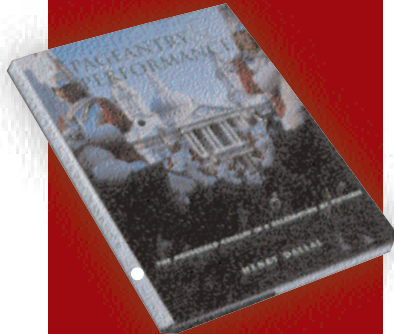
'The reality of self-promotion sinks in quickly,' he says. 'You can take the most beautiful picture in the world, but unless you can sell that picture you can forget it.' Henry is referring to two of his most unusual pictures – a shot of a Cavalry officer wearing trainers and another picture of an officer drinking a can of lager after Trooping the Colour.

'If a sports manufacturer or a brewer tried to arrange to shoot those pictures, they couldn't,' he says, 'but I can't get any interested in these images. Everyone admires the pictures, but they have not earned me a penny. These days it is the selling of yourself that is more difficult than the taking of the picture. You need a good agent – and this is the frustrating part of being a photographer.'

Henry Dallal has had no formal photographic training and says, 'I am not sure that I know how to take good pictures, but I use my camera as a tool to capture the moment.' However, following the

BOOK OFFER

Pageantry & Performance – The Household Cavalry in a Celebration of Pictures, by Henry Dallal, is available from bookshops or direct from Henry Dallal, price £45 plus p&p. However, AP readers can obtain a £5 discount by quoting 'Amateur Photographer'. Visit www.henrydallal.com or email hdallal@btinternet.com. ISBN: 0954408306.





publication of his book, he has been approached by a number of clients regarding future commissions. 'The project has cost me around £100,000 and that does not include any beer time,' he says.

On seeing one picture from the book, British Aerospace was so impressed that it has helped him with sponsorship. 'They have been very supportive, and it is also my favourite picture,' he says. Taken at night, it shows the charge of the Light Brigade at Horse Guards Parade. Henry shot three frames during a military tattoo event last year, but only one picture captured exactly the 'arty effect' he wanted.

So what advice does Henry Dallal offer to other photographers who may have ideas for future projects? 'Sell your idea to a sponsor – it is the only way,' he says. 'Forget about the book trade and publishers. I tried a distributor, but they are only interested if you are producing 20 books a year. If your heart is truly in your project, then do it all the way. It will be hard work, but it is extremely satisfying to complete the journey.'

Henry adds as a final comment: 'I am always excited to see how the light plays on a subject, such as a reflection, a sunrise or sunset. That is what life **AP** and photography are all about.'

■ Henry Dallal's exhibition, 'Pageantry & Performance', is on show at the Guildhall, Windsor, Berkshire, during the Windsor Festival, from 18-28 September. For more information visit www.windsorfestival.com or call 01753 714364.



TOP Henry captured this ice-blue vista while climbing Mount McKinley in Alaska. He calls it 'Midnight Footsteps'

TOP LEFT A dramatic picture taken in the Okavango Delta in Botswana, as a bush fire raged in the distance

ABOVE Sienna Square, Italy. Henry says the exposure was so slow that he had two glasses of wine while waiting