

Foot Grenadiers

OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD

Text by CHARLES GRANT

Colour plates by MICHAEL ROFFE



MEN-AT-ARMS SERIES

EDITOR: PHILIP WARNER

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The Last Hours

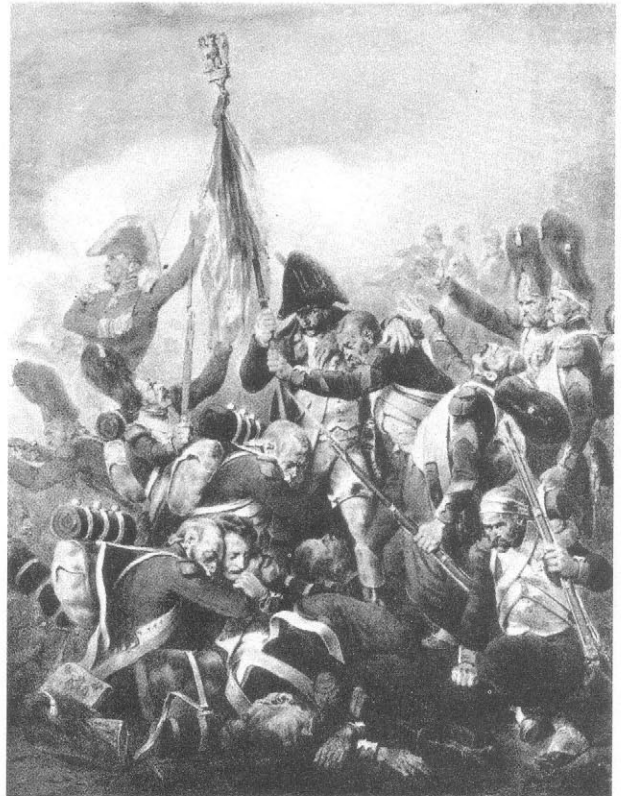


At about 9.00 p.m. on 18 June 1815, after more than eight hours of fighting, the French Army was in flight from the battlefield of Waterloo. Thousands of French troops of all arms, infantry, cavalry, artillerymen and sappers jostled, cursed and even fought each other as they stumbled southwards, harried by the Allied cavalry and the fresh hordes of Prussians desperately eager to avenge the defeats and humiliations of former years. The almost instantaneous disintegration of the mighty French Army is practically without parallel in military history. The complete repulse of the final infantry attack on Mont St Jean had, it seemed, been the spark which kindled the fire of defeat. At first a trickle, then a tremendous flood of men had started to pour down the slopes from Hougoumont and from La Haye Sainte, flooding southwards along the road to Charleroi and possible safety.

To halt the rout was impossible. Even Marshal Ney, 'bravest of the brave', was ignored by the soldiery as he stood beside the road, in a tattered and powder-stained uniform, beating the barrel of an overturned cannon with his sword in mingled fury and bitterness. Past La Belle Alliance rushed

the stream towards the farm of Rossommé, but here there was a change in the speed of the torrent, as though a rapidly flowing river had met and been obliged to swerve round a boulder in its course. On either side of the high road stood a grim square of tall and weatherbeaten men in bulky blue coats and high, red-plumed, black bearskin bonnets. They had a massive and formidable look about them and they stood in their ranks presenting a glittering and uncompromising line of bayonets. They were contemptuous of the fighting, shouting masses as they swirled past, wild-eyed and panic-stricken.

These men – the *élite* of the *élite* – were the two battalions of the First Regiment of Foot Grenadiers of the Imperial Guard. They were all

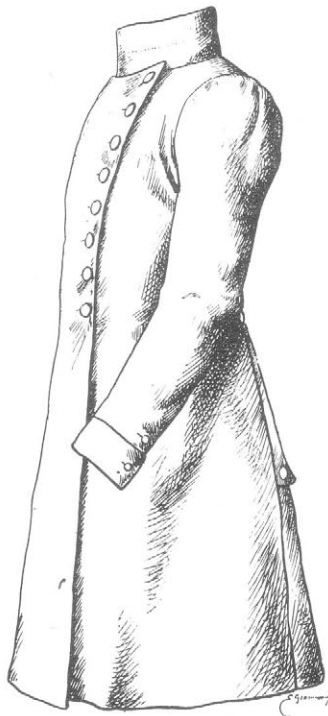


The last stand of the Old Guard, from a lithograph by Hippolyte Bellangé

devoted body and soul to the Emperor Napoleon who had created them and who even now, his last battle irretrievably lost, had sought shelter in the square formed by the First Battalion of the regiment. That their idol the Emperor – ‘*le Tondu*’ as they had named him – should enter their square for refuge while beyond their bayonets raged the enemy, was a fitting end to a story stretching over the whole period of the Empire.

Sixteen years before, the then Consular Guard had been instituted by the young Bonaparte. With him they had tramped the roads of Europe – their eagles had passed through Vienna, Berlin, Madrid and Moscow. They had endured the snows of Russia and the torrid heat of Spain. They had grumbled – after all, had ‘he’ not dubbed them his ‘*grogards*’ – but they had followed him until it was no longer possible. No other military leader, save possibly Alexander with his Companions, achieved such an identity with his men as did Napoleon; and of the hundreds of thousands who marched in his armies none epitomise this loyalty more than the men of those two veteran squares at Waterloo who held the Emperor while his world was crashing in ruins about them. It is their story – the story of the Foot Grenadiers of the Guard – that we shall tell.

The grenadier greatcoat worn by all ranks



The First Years



The origins of the Imperial Guard must be sought in the events of the *coup d'état* of ‘*Brumaire*’ in the year 1799. General Bonaparte, as he then was, had landed at Fréjus on 9th October hotfoot from his largely abortive expedition to Egypt, and he found the existing French Government – the Directory – corrupt and ready to fall. Talleyrand, later one of the great figures of Imperial France, acted as intermediary between Bonaparte and a group of conspirators in the Government who wanted the already famous and popular Napoleon as a ‘front’ man in their bid to seize power. These conspirators included Lucien, Napoleon’s brother, the President of the Lower House. To further the plot, an emergency was declared and the sessions of both the Upper and Lower Houses were transferred to St Cloud, ostensibly to remove them from any popular agitation in the capital, and at the same time Bonaparte was given command of the troops in the Paris region. However, when Bonaparte attempted to speak to the Lower House of the Legislature he found them bitterly hostile. Shouts of ‘*Outlaw him!*’ were raised, and he was pushed and threatened by some of the more aggressive members. Making a somewhat inglorious exit from the Orangerie, where the session was taking place, Napoleon and his brother Lucien addressed the Guards of the Legislature assembled in the grounds. Lucien alleged that an attempt had been made to assassinate his brother. An order was given, the Grenadiers of the Guard

of the Legislature moved forward, and with bayonets fixed and drums rattling they swept into the Orangerie. They were treated to the ludicrous spectacle of the deputies fleeing as fast as their legs would carry them, many of them discarding their gaudy togas – their uniform of office – the more easily to precipitate themselves through doors and open windows.

'Brumaire' had succeeded, and Bonaparte was in power. The new Government, the Consulate, was officially a triumvirate although it was Bonaparte who emerged as First Consul, and he was unquestionably the master.

But it is with the military and not the political scene that our concern must lie, so we return to the troops still mustered outside the Orangerie. They numbered just under 1,000 men. They were a rather heterogeneous mixture, many being old revolutionaries of varying political hues, and they rejoiced in the grandiose title of 'Grenadiers of the Convention'. With them was another unit, the 'Guard of the Directory', who like the others were uniformed more or less as grenadiers, with the distinguishing high, bearskin cap (this being a descendant of the eighteenth-century 'mitre' cap worn by the original 'grenadiers' when the theory was that the generally worn broad tricorne infantry hat got in the way of the arm throwing the grenade). There was also a small group of cavalrymen. All waited stoically to see just what was going to transpire.

It was not until the small hours that the man they were to know so well in the future appeared before them. It must have been an intensely dramatic moment. Although many in the rear ranks would hardly have been able to see the small, slight figure of Bonaparte in the flaring and uncertain light of the torches, all would have heard the harsh, metallic Corsican accent announcing that the Directory was dead, that the government of France was to be a Consulate, and that they – Guards of the Convention and of the Directory – were to be in future the Guard of the Consuls. The announcement was greeted with cries of 'Long live General Bonaparte!' and the new Consular Guard faced about and set off on the road back to Paris, singing, it is said, a song of highly revolutionary sentiments.

On 11th November both Guards were reviewed

by the First Consul on the Place de Carrousel in Paris, and the promise was repeated, to be formally enacted by consular decree of 28 November 1799, when the Guard of the Consuls was officially organised. It comprised a number of units, both horse and foot. It seems, however, that only the best of those who had been present at the recent coup were accepted into the new Guard. The Foot Grenadiers comprised one regiment of 2 battalions, each of 6 companies, plus a regimental staff and 25 musicians. The companies consisted of 2 officers, 14 non-commissioned officers, and 80 grenadiers, plus 2 drummers.

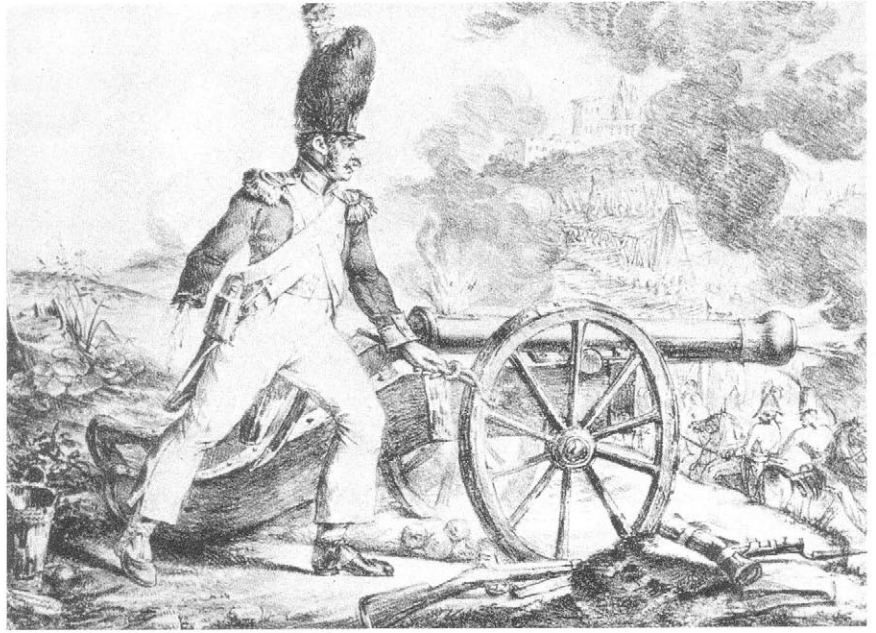
From the outset no effort was spared to ensure that the corps was truly an *élite*, and loyalty to Bonaparte was an essential requirement. Old-style revolutionaries who might have been politically unreliable were pensioned off, and a particular favourite of the First Consul was made Colonel-in-Chief of the whole Guard, Foot Grenadiers included. This was Joachim Murat, who was to make his name as one of the greatest cavalry leaders of all time. The highest standards were imposed, not only in drill but in the physical qualities of the men. The minimum height for entrants was 5 feet 6 inches – a very high standard for those days – and the very young were not eligible, the minimum age for entry being twenty-five. Pay was substantially greater than it was for troops of the ordinary line regiments, the grenadier receiving nearly twice as much as his counterpart in a regiment of foot. But the vital qualification was military experience with proven gallantry.

Belt buckle of a grenadier officer



E. G. G. G.

Grenadier Brabant operating a cannon single-handed at the Battle of Marengo (from a lithograph by Engelmann), and a 'fusil d'honneur' of the type awarded to him for the feat



Already the uniform which was to be familiar for sixteen years was established: the blue coat with white facings, scarlet cuffs with white patches, red-fringed epaulettes and the characteristic bearskin hat. It was a simple uniform by the conventions of the time, but one of dignity – and it was to last right up to the dark days of 1815 without any appreciable alteration. A final point – each member of the Guard was considered to be a rank above his line counterpart, a fact which did not endear them to the lesser mortals of ordinary units.

Both Britain and Austria were eager to tear from the new France the territorial advantages gained in recent wars, Britain viewing with anxiety her possession of the Low Countries and Austria stubbornly resisting any suggestion that peace should be made with consular France. However much he might have desired peace at that time, the First Consul concluded that Austria should be struck and struck hard. And where better to do this than the scene of his prodigious success of 1796, Italy? So, in the early part of 1800, an army

base was established at Dijon. In Italy, French arms were in a parlous state and Gen. Masséna had been twice defeated and was besieged in Genoa. It was time for Bonaparte to move, and on 11 April 1800 300 men of the Guard of the Consuls marched off to war.

There followed the legendary crossing of the Alps with infantrymen, including the Foot Grenadiers, handling cannon over the St Bernard Pass. Great drifts of snow were everywhere, and progress could be made only with the greatest difficulty. At times the First Consul himself had to exhort his exhausted men to further efforts to force their way onwards. The situation in beleaguered Genoa was desperate and, aware that time was not on his side, Bonaparte drove his troops forward relentlessly.

On 16th May the leading elements of Bonaparte's army reached Aosta, and in little more than a week the so-called Army of the Reserve was concentrated in the valley of the Po. But it had not arrived soon enough to save Masséna who, after a tremendous and practically unparalleled

defence of Genoa, had been obliged to surrender to the Austrians.

After sundry marchings and counter-marchings, and on 9th June a sharp action at Montebello, the First Consul found himself at Marengo. There, the victim of inadequate cavalry reconnaissance, he concluded that the Austrians were in retreat. In actual fact he was about to be attacked by an army more than half as strong again as the 20,000 men he had with him. With Bonaparte was the Consular Guard, now 900 strong, for reserves had apparently come up to augment the strength of the original party. The battle was as bitterly contested as any of Napoleon's engagements. Strong Austrian forces pressed hard against the French and, with General Watrin's infantry division in sore straits, the Foot Grenadiers received the order to advance and support their fellows. Marching in square, the Foot Grenadiers were roughly handled, being charged by Austrian cavalry and enduring intense enemy musketry, but their arrival helped to restore a deteriorating situation. Here a grenadier – one Brabant – earned fame by taking over a cannon whose crew had fled or been killed. He operated it successfully for some time by himself, a considerable feat for an infantryman with only a rudimentary knowledge of artillery pieces.

Late in the afternoon a division under Gen. Desaix, earlier detached from the main army, arrived in the nick of time. The presence of this new division completely altered the complexion of things and the defeat that had seemed inevitable turned into a victory. The entire French Army advanced, and after a brief last resistance the exhausted Austrians gave way. Their retreat became a headlong flight as far as the fortress of Alessandria, wherein they gratefully sought asylum. It was Bonaparte's initial victory as Head of State, and his Foot Grenadiers had played a part in it.

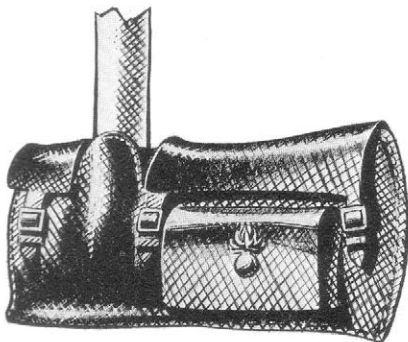
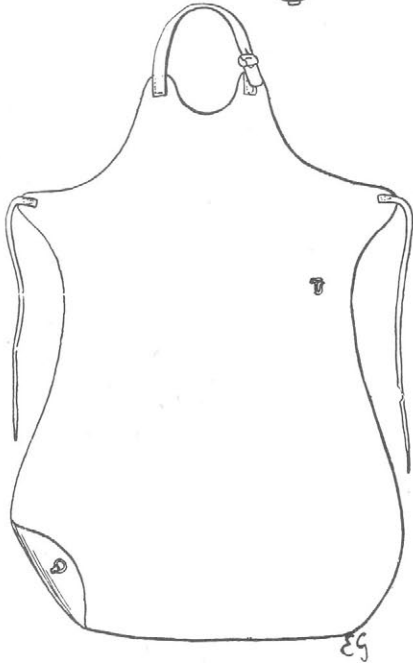
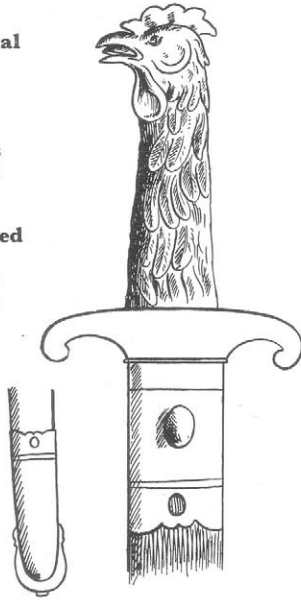
The Empire



The Consular Guard's return to the French capital after the Italian triumph was a spectacular one, and the enthusiastic Parisians devoted themselves wholeheartedly to honouring Bonaparte's men. A plebiscite confirmed that the French people were in favour of the consulate, and on 14 December 1800 a new constitution establishing a permanent consulate was proclaimed. Hostilities still continued against Austria, both in southern Germany and Italy, but the Peace of Luneville was signed on 9 February 1801. However, a state of war still existed with the intractable island across the Channel.

The Guard was now fully in the swing of ceremonial duties about the person of the First Consul. Already its function had become clear – it was a personal bodyguard directly responsible to the Head of State. On 8 September 1801 there was an increase of each of the two Foot Grenadier battalions from six to eight companies. In addition, a highly picturesque body increased the rank and file strength. Two pioneers (*sapeurs*) in each company, traditionally bearded and selected for size and brawn, marched at the head of their companies bearing heavy axes and wearing long leather aprons. Supposedly, their function was to use their axes to break down obstacles, destroy enemy field-works and generally clear the way for the regiment following, but like many other long-standing military traditions their presence was a mere colourful gesture. In practice the pioneers of the entire regiment marched at the head of the unit, making a spectacular *tête de*

A 'sapeur's' sabre in its scabbard had a total length of 82 centimetres. The leather apron was 1 metre 25 centimetres in length, 67 centimetres around the waist, and 90 centimetres across the bottom. The massive axe was carried in a pouch and hung from a strap over the left shoulder with the shaft uppermost



colonne. This phrase covered all the various bodies which led a regiment on the march, and as well as the *sapeurs* included the regimental band, the corps of drums and so on. Instead of the normal short *sabre-briquet* carried by the other grenadiers, they were equipped with a long and massive sabre. This depended from the left hip and was exchanged on active service for the less clumsy *briquet*. In charge of the pioneers was a sergeant.

Throughout this time the Guard was becoming more closely identified with the First Consul, and indeed it would not be long before he would be heard to refer, anticipating the Imperial future, to 'my Guard'. It was clear too that, with its various ancillary bodies – engineers, commissariat and medical staff – the Guard was to be a completely self-contained unit.

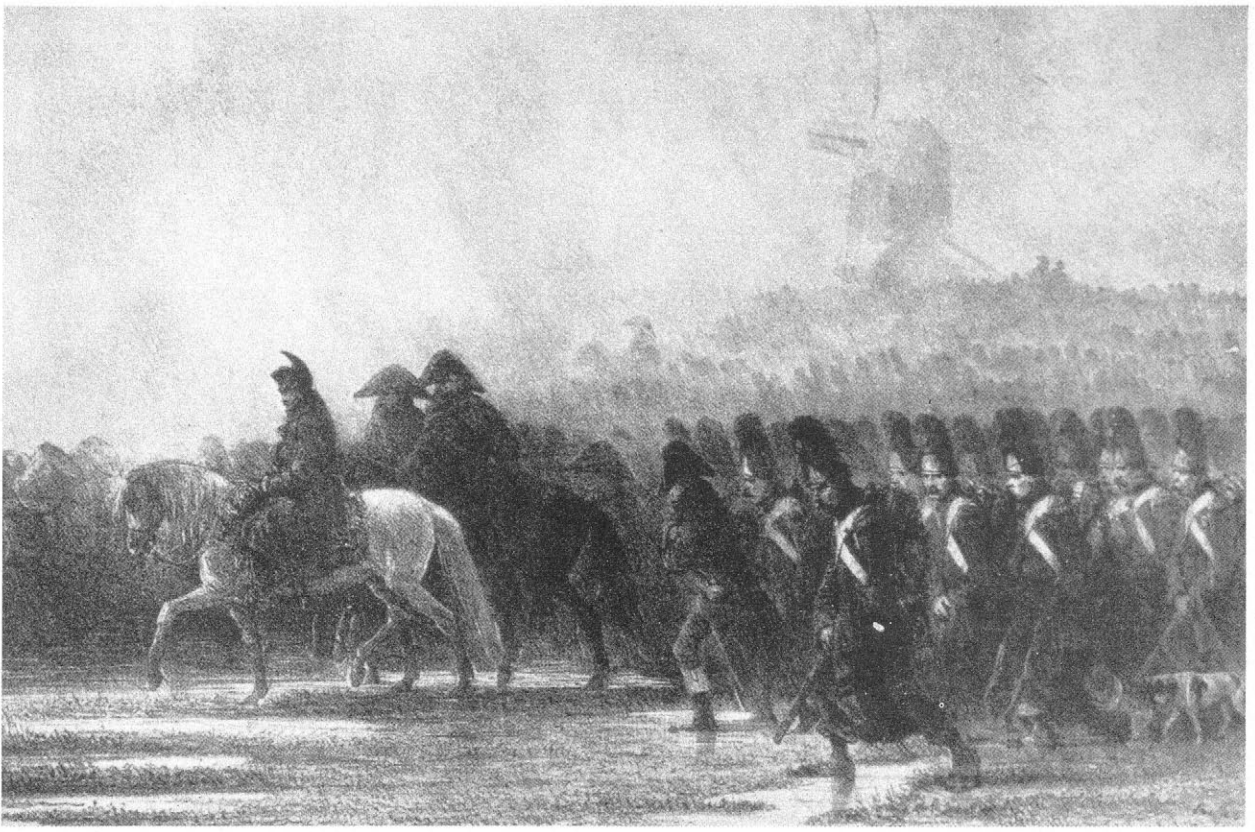
At this time the Foot Grenadiers was commanded by Col. Hulin, an old soldier with previous service in the Bourbon armies, who had been at various times in the 'old regiments' of Navarre and Champagne. He was much at home in the Foot Grenadiers, many of whose regimental customs stemmed from those of the *ancien régime*. Along with their brethren in the mounted Grenadiers they powdered their hair and wore it carefully arranged 'en queue'.

Social life in Paris was extremely lively and much to the soldiers' taste. No ranks stationed in the city, especially in such a favoured corps as the Foot Grenadiers, were ever at a loss for invitations to all sorts of functions as were appropriate to their station.

On 27 March 1802 the Peace of Amiens brought a temporary halt to the war with Great Britain. In that year, recruiting for the Guard was put on a regular basis. Each year, one man from each regiment of line infantry was put forward as a candidate for possible vacancies in the Foot Grenadiers.

On 16 May 1803 the short-lived Peace of Amiens came to an end. The British Government had found it impossible to come permanently to terms with Bonaparte, and inevitably battle had to be joined. It was to be a long, bitter and unbelievably costly struggle, and would come to an end only twelve years later.

By this time, another overwhelming vote in Bonaparte's favour had made him consul for life.



Napoleon on the march, surrounded by his faithful Foot Grenadiers, from a lithograph by Raffet

Nevertheless there was some muted discontent, rumours of conspiracies and plots against him. These culminated in his order for the arrest and execution of the Bourbon Duc d'Enghien in March 1804. This was an inevitable prelude to the next step, which was a giant stride indeed, taking him to the Imperial throne. On 18 May 1804 the Act declaring that the Imperial succession was to be vested in Napoleon Bonaparte and his heirs was passed, and from this point Bonaparte, in our story, becomes the Emperor Napoleon.

Throughout this time the Grenadiers of his Guard had not been far from his thoughts. On 21st January of the same year he had added a species of cadet or young soldiers battalion – called *vélites* – to each of the existing infantry regiments of the Guard. Generally these young men were selected from the annual 'call-up', but volunteers were also looked upon favourably. Pay for the *vélites-grenadiers* was as for their seniors in the parent regiment, but a donation to the regimental funds had to be made by the parents of each *vélite*.

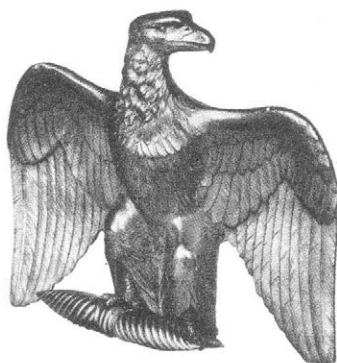
As the Consul became Emperor, so the Consular

Guard became the Imperial, and our regiment is now to be known as the Foot Grenadiers of the Imperial Guard. By this time, very many conventions had been established in the regiment. Side-whiskers were *de rigueur* and, as has already been noted, hair was powdered and worn in a pigtail even on active service. It was tied by a black ribbon ornamented with a tiny silver grenade. Moustaches were allowed to be grown between 1st March and 1st December, but had to be shaved off during the winter months. Gold ear-rings were almost as much a part of the uniform as was the bearskin bonnet, and each recruit to the Foot Grenadiers had to have his ears pierced to receive them, although lack of funds often caused some delay in their purchase. If this were the case, tiny metal wires were inserted against the time the ear-rings themselves were available.

The design of the uniform of the Imperial Guard was not subjected to any major changes and remained substantially what it had been in consular days, except that the new buttons bore



On 2 December 1804 Napoleon issued eagles to all his regiments. Though the standard also carried the regimental flag with the battle honours inscribed on the back, it was the eagle which was the symbol of glory and which every French soldier would defend to the death. The flags shown are those of the 1st Regiment of Foot Grenadiers and the 2nd Regiment (front and back views)



the crowned eagle of the Empire, and the metal plaque in front of the bearskin now carried the eagle, flanked by grenades on either side, as its device. The Guard was on parade on 14th July at a splendid piece of Napoleonic ceremonial when, at the Hotel des Invalides, Napoleon presented the new Legion of Honour to deserving recipients. It was the first of many brilliant pageants which Napoleon used to amuse and excite his people.

Numerically, the Foot Grenadiers were to remain much the same for a while, three battalions in all of which one was the *vérites*. But the regimental band was brought up to a total strength of forty-six musicians, not including the bandmaster. They performed doughtily on 16th August at another presentation of the Legion of Honour, this time at the great army camp at Boulogne, when, with the Foot Grenadiers drawn up around him, Napoleon took the salute at the march past of the assembled troops, to the tremendous thunder of over a thousand drums.

On his return to Paris the Emperor prepared for the most important day of all – the Coronation. The Pope himself was invited to perform the crowning.

The event was designed with the express purpose of demonstrating to Europe and indeed to the world the power and magnificence of the new France, and certainly 2 December 1804 was a splendid day in the long and glamorous history of Paris. For the army, however, and certainly for the Guard, probably even more significant was what took place three days later – the distribution of the eagles, the new emblem of Imperial France, to all regiments of the army on the Champ de Mars. For the first time in French history a device, as opposed to a flag or banner, was the object to which the troops undertook to devote life and limb. Marred though it was by rain, the scene was one of frantic enthusiasm. The colonels accepting the eagles as representatives of their regiments, swore to lay down their lives in defence of them. Many certainly did in the years which followed. The loss in battle of an eagle was to be the most terrible blow a regiment could suffer, in its own eyes and in those of the rest of the army; and when it happened, as it sometimes did, the regiment's loss of face was appalling.

Ulm and Austerlitz



Beyond Paris, its illuminations and its fêtes, more grim and serious business was afoot. All along the northern coasts of Europe from Hanover to Brest lay the corps and divisions of the French Army of the Coasts of the Ocean. And centred on Boulogne was the main fleet of barges, fishing-boats and every conceivable craft suitable for the transportation of men, horses and guns for an invasion of England. Further impetus was given to Napoleon's plans when Spain declared war on Britain on 12th December. But a treaty between Russia and Great Britain, to which Austria acceded on 9th August, caused Napoleon to realise that he would have to defer his plan for a cross-Channel operation.

On 26th August the new Grand Army, transmuted from the Army of the Coasts of the Ocean, began its long march towards the heart of Europe. A task force of six companies of Foot Grenadiers, together with 75 veterans and 45 *vérites*, had been hastily recalled from Wimereux and ordered to march to Strasbourg.

The entire military might of France was now flooding south-east across Europe, representing one of the finest armies ever to appear on the European scene, and indeed Napoleon was never to command its like again. Of them all, the Foot Grenadiers was the cream, a regiment of hard-bitten veterans who tramped steadily at their mile-devouring march towards the Danube. In immediate command was Col. Dorsenne, whose



Gen. Dorsenne, Colonel-in-Chief of the Foot Grenadiers. At his death in 1812 he was succeeded by Gen. Friant

reputation was such that a word from him could make even the toughest Grenadier tremble. The entire Guard, now rated with divisional status, was commanded by Marshal Bessières and totalled something like 7,000 of all arms. Last to leave Strasbourg, the Foot Grenadiers moved in campaign marching order and were proud (although they doubtless grumbled among themselves) to carry a considerably heavier pack than did the line infantry, containing spare boots, clothing and rations. In marching order the Grenadiers wore the *bicorné*, the two-cornered hat, their treasured bearskin bonnets being carefully preserved in a case strapped to the top of the haversack. Despite their toughness, they must have felt the strain when they joined the Emperor at Nordlingen, having marched 130 miles in four days. Stragglers were now being noticed, even from the Foot Grenadiers, and when the regiment arrived at Donauworth on the Danube on 8th October, over 500 men from all the Guard regiments had been left behind on the road.

The shape of what was to be Napoleon's most spectacular campaign was now apparent. The Austrian Gen. Mack had blithely led his forces forward, leaving far to the rear the Russian armies moving slowly to join him, and had concentrated at Ulm, at the junction of the Iller and the Danube. There he learned, to his horror, that the French in overwhelming strength were between him and Vienna. By 15th October Ulm was under attack

and, after attempts at a breakout had proved abortive, Mack surrendered. On 21st October the enemy infantry and cavalry, having laid down their arms, filed past a jubilant Napoleon.

Meanwhile the Foot Grenadiers had yet to fire a shot in action, their efforts having been restricted to seemingly endless daily marches. However, having prepared their parade outfits, plumes, and so on, they were privileged to receive the flags of the surrendering Austrian units, confided to them for safe custody. There were no less than forty of them, and doubtless for propaganda purposes the Grenadiers took them on parade before they were dispatched to Paris.

On the day of the surrender Napoleon left for Augsburg, and then for Munich where he remained until 28th October. Then he left to follow his advanced guard, which had set off three days before. From this point on it was march, march, march on the trail of the Russians who were falling back rapidly, destroying every bridge as they crossed it. The Russian commander wished to avoid fighting on the south side of the Danube, his aim being to join the reserves coming from Russia, and also Austrian reinforcements hurrying to meet him. These ceaseless marches were beginning to tell even on the veterans of the Foot Grenadiers. Although extra shoes had been allocated to them at Munich, their uniforms were by now patched where they were not simply in rags. Worn-out breeches were replaced by nondescript garments looted from peasants' cottages. Indeed, their appearance was enough for the martinet Dorsenne to be utterly furious at what he saw on his inspections. But for once the Emperor paid little heed to the non-uniform blouses and coats, nor to the plunder quite openly dangling from haversacks and crossbelts. That their weapons were in order sufficed for the present.

On 5th November Napoleon arrived at Linz, where he rejected an armistice offered by Francis, Emperor of Austria, and continued on towards Vienna which by now had been declared an open city. It was entered first by Murat, leading the cavalry advance guard. On 13th November Napoleon followed him into the city and took up residence in the Imperial Palace at Schönbrunn. Although discontent had mounted in the Guard, the Grenadiers were able to recoup their forces in

Vienna. It was only a brief respite however, for on 19th November the energetic and wily Kutusov joined the other Russian army between Brunn and Olmutz in Moravia, and through blizzards of sleet and snow the Foot Grenadiers were sent off in this direction, Napoleon catching them up on the following day. There followed a short period of diplomatic manœuvring, designed to allow time for the Emperor to perfect his plan of allowing the Russian/Austrian Army, 89,000 strong, to attack his 53,000, and then with the enemy completely committed bringing up his reserves of another 22,000 men.

So it transpired. The Russians accepted the bait, and on 30th November their generals decided to launch an all-out attack on the French.

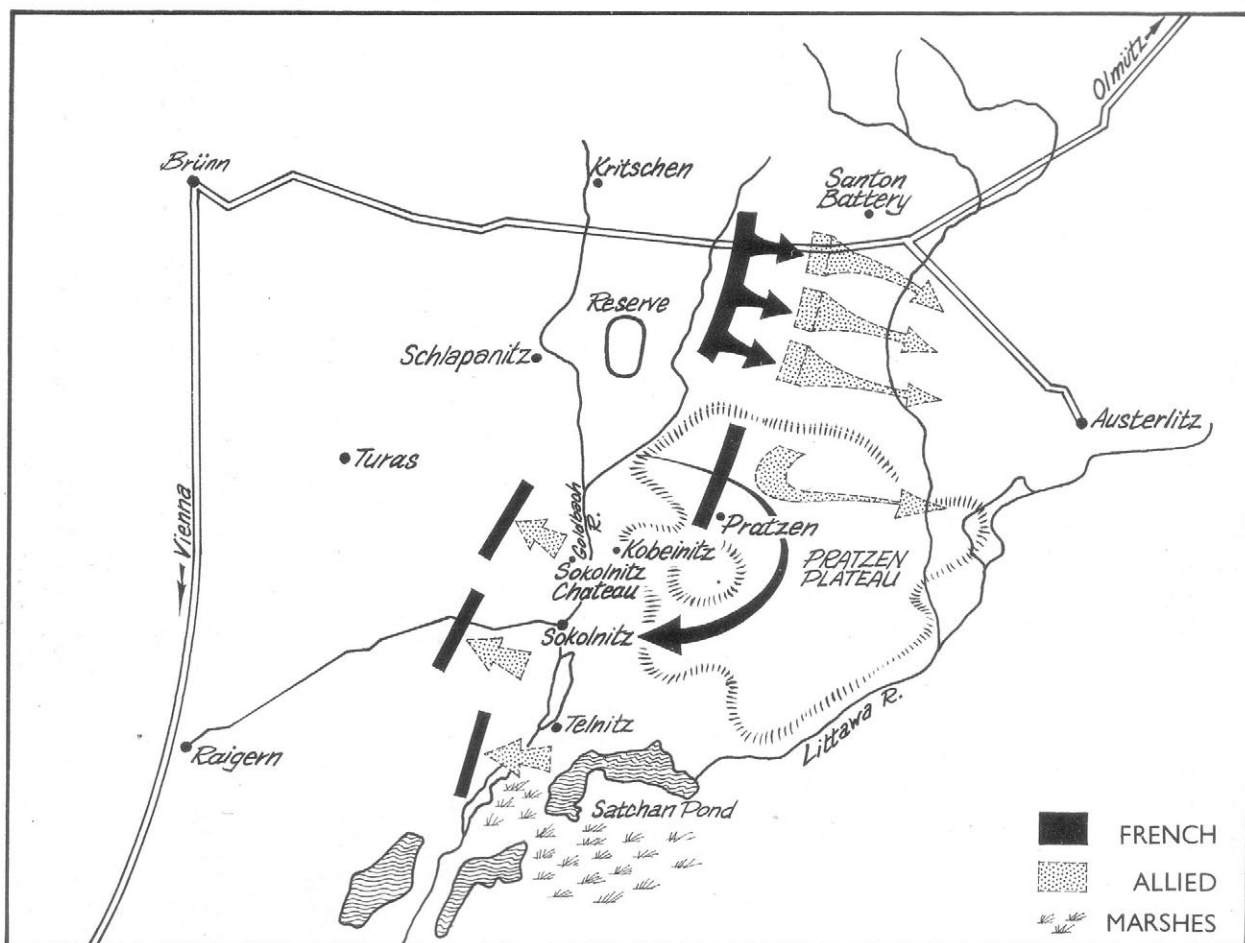
During the night before the battle the Emperor took it into his head to visit the Grenadiers in their camp. The overjoyed soldiers ignited great torches

of straw to guide his way as *le Tondu* made his way through their bivouac.

On the morning of 2nd December it was dark and foggy when the Grenadiers shouldered their heavy muskets and marched off to take up their position, again in reserve, to the left of the French line between the corps of Lannes and Oudinot. It was about 7.00 a.m. when they formed up behind a little hillock whereon the Emperor had taken his stand. About an hour later, when the sun had begun to rise, the Foot Grenadiers could see the dark masses of the Russian columns debouching from the Pratzen Heights in the centre of the Allied position. Soon the rattle of musketry and the thunder of hundreds of cannon echoed across the snowy countryside to introduce the Battle of Austerlitz.

The impetuous attack of the Russians gained considerable ground but, as Napoleon had hoped,

Battle of Austerlitz, 2 December 1805



these attacks were directed mainly against the French wings and had stretched their forces in the centre to a dangerously thin extent. So when Marshal Soult, commanding the French *corps de rupture* in the centre, was ordered forward his men went through the Russians without interference. By 1.30 p.m. the battle was virtually over, and Napoleon had won a great victory. The Russian right and centre disintegrated and made off towards the village of Austerlitz, leaving the rest more or less trapped. Many Russians perished in the freezing waters of Lake Satschan when they attempted to cross the ice.

But yet again the Foot Grenadiers had not been engaged. Their comrades of the Guard cavalry had fought with great effect, but the Grenadiers had stood throughout the day. They were as yet unblooded.

Berlin



The Foot Grenadiers set off on the long march back to France – no longer the long, exhausting forced marches but rather almost a triumphal progress, for they were fêted and honoured everywhere. Among the honours heaped upon all ranks when they reached Paris on 16th February was the welcome one of fifteen days' extra pay – highly useful, considering the very full social activity of the time.

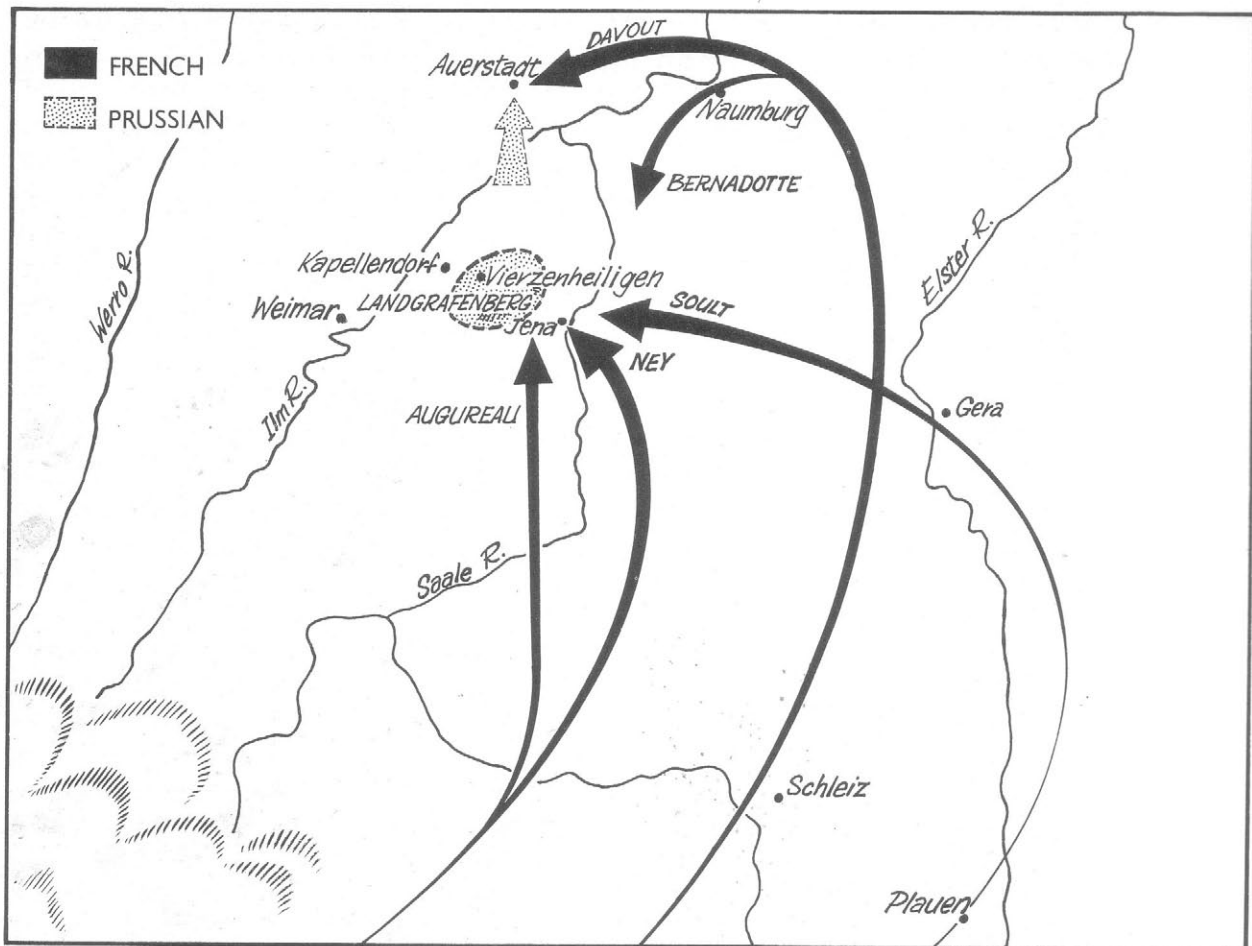
By Imperial decree of 2 April 1806 was created the 2nd Regiment of Foot Grenadiers of the Imperial Guard, uniformed and equipped like the 1st Regiment. By now the Foot Grenadiers were reaching a new peak as ceremonial and household troops. Apart from ensuring the Guard's smartness,

the Emperor devoted much attention to its welfare and the maintenance of its efficiency. Commissariat and transport services were augmented and streamlined, and the Guard hospital was improved. Indeed, whatever the Guard required was provided without quibble. To maintain the supply of trained men of mature years and experience, a second battalion of *velites* had been created during the previous year, so that there were now two young soldier battalions to feed the parent regiments as circumstances required.

Meantime, another mighty storm was brewing, this time over Prussia. Ostensibly the *casus belli* had been a flagrant flouting of the Prussian territory of Ansbach by the march of a column of French troops on its way to the Austrian theatre of war. Active steps were taken to bring the Prussian Army up to war footing, but these plans had been largely anticipated by Napoleon. He had been making his own preparations, and among his customary stream of orders those for the Foot Grenadiers dictated that they should be in Mainz by 28th September. He himself left to join his army in south-west Germany, where it had been stationed since its withdrawal from Austria, on the 25th. A Prussian ultimatum reached him on 7th October, but he vouchsafed no reply, and on the following day French troops entered Prussian territory.

Marching in three great columns the dense masses of the French Army rolled purposefully onwards, and on 10th October the first serious clash took place at Saalfeld. A corps of Marshal Lannes defeated a Prussian force under Prince Louis, who was slain.

On 13th October the Emperor passed through Jena – destined to give its name to the coming battle – and from the heights of the Landgrafenberg, the plateau to the north of the town, he contemplated the Prussian forces arrayed before him. From all directions his troops were converging to join Marshal Lannes, whose corps had been the first to arrive. The Foot Guard joined Lannes on the plateau; they had not wasted their time in passing through the Jena streets, most having acquired – or in a later phrase 'liberated' – more than one bottle of strong liquor. That night the Emperor set up his tent in the centre of the Foot Grenadiers.



The approach to Jena, October 1806

At about 6.00 a.m. on 14th October the battle began with a determined Prussian advance. The French at once counter-attacked: the Prussians' tactics were inadequate to check the clouds of skirmishers and they were driven back in disorder. During the afternoon Napoleon ordered a general advance, and the Prussian retreat became a wholesale flight.

To the fury of the Guard, however, they were held in reserve throughout the entire day while the noise of battle raged about them. It is reported that they were not careful in concealing their anger, and one presumptuous *véliste* was rebuked by the Emperor for overloudly advocating an advance. That night Napoleon fell asleep in the midst of a silent and sullen square of Foot Grenadiers. As after Austerlitz, they were entrusted with the captured enemy colours, thirty of them this time.

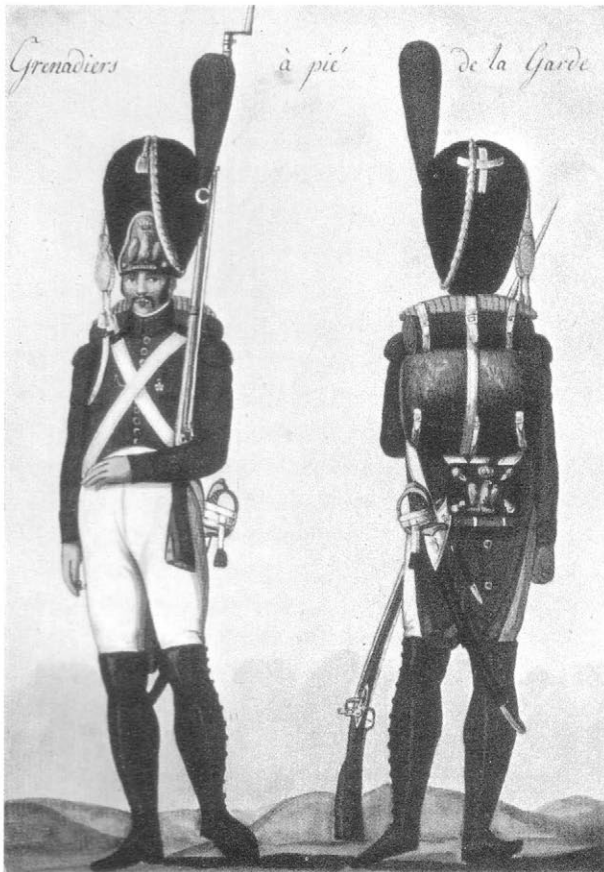
The pursuit after Jena was a classic of its kind, in the true *l'épée dans les reins* tradition. Thousands of prisoners were taken, and fortress after fortress surrendered. It was complete demoralisation, which the Prussians never forgot or forgave. Throughout the hunt, for that was just what it was, the Guard followed the Emperor, whose aim was to utterly destroy the last remnants of the Prussian Army, and prevent any units linking up with the Russians who were yet again advancing from their fastnesses in the east.

On 24th October the Foot Grenadiers reached Potsdam after a prodigious march, and bivouacked in nearby parks. At night innumerable camp-fires shone upon the Grenadiers grouped around them, and although there were sounds of revelry there was a strict maintenance of discipline. From time to time, detachments were seen marching briskly about the park, with drummers in the lead, off to

some guard-mounting or other duty. The whole scene must have impressed the many Berliners who, despite their hatred of the French, flocked in thousands to view their invaders.

When Napoleon arrived he took the opportunity to visit the tomb of Frederick the Great, and was not too proud to seize the King's sword and other relics for transmission back to France. Throughout his stay in Berlin the Emperor staged military spectacles to impress the inhabitants. The handing-over of the city keys on 27th October was a notable occasion; the Foot Grenadiers took their usual leading role in the parade. During their stay in Berlin, large quantities of clothing arrived for the Guard from Paris, and the Grenadiers were able to replenish their stores.

On 25th November the Foot Grenadiers marched from Berlin with the Emperor. The road chosen led to the east, for they were to join the bulk of the French Army now facing the Russian hordes on the River Vistula.



Contemporary water-colour showing front and back views of a grenadier

Eylau and Friedland



Napoleon reached Warsaw on 18th December. With the Polish capital as a base, he made efforts to trap the Russians into a battle of his own choosing, but the wily Muscovites avoided compromising themselves, and retreated. Pursuit was impossible, for exhaustion was crippling the French Army. Returning to Warsaw after these movements, Napoleon decided he had no alternative but to let his men go into winter quarters.

During the next few weeks, Napoleon's activity was at the customary frenzied peak. He hoped for a much longer period of reorganisation than he was in fact granted, but the end of January 1807 saw him obliged to make his first dispositions to counter early Russian movements. An incursion into part of the French line of cantonments was defeated, but was dangerous enough to make him act, and on 27th January the entire army was ordered to march. On 3rd February there was an inconclusive action at Ionkovo at which the Guard was present, but again the Foot Grenadiers were unable to find the action they sought.

It took some time for the French cavalry to locate the retreating Russians, but finally the trail was found and after another sharp engagement on 6th February they continued their retrograde movement. Eventually they reached a place called Eylau, little more than a wretched assembly of huts, with a small church and churchyard which was taken over by the Foot Grenadiers.

It was hardly past dawn on 8th February when

the Russians opened the fighting with a tremendous bombardment from their artillery, and the Foot Grenadiers began to suffer the heaviest losses of their career. Massed about the cemetery in the left centre of the second line, they were at once swept by Russian round shot. Whole files were cut down by a single ball, and on their left front the village of Eylau was quickly in flames. At 11.00 a.m. a heavy snowfall reduced visibility to a few yards. Marshal Augereau's entire 7th Corps, advancing head down into the fury of the snow-storm, lost its way and marched straight into the muzzles of the massed Russian artillery, and in a matter of minutes the entire corps was almost totally destroyed. To rescue the remnants of Augereau's divisions the whole of the French cavalry had to advance, and throughout a tremendous series of charges the Grenadiers remained under fire at the churchyard. At one time a powerful Russian column forced its way into Eylau itself and the Emperor's escort had to draw swords in his protection.

At last Dorsenne ordered one of the Foot Grenadier battalions to counter-attack. Eagerly the veterans advanced, and without firing a single round of musketry charged into the enemy ranks, flinging the Russians back towards their own lines at the point of the bayonet. This was not done without loss, of course, and officers and men fell in plenty. The battle swayed to and fro until night-fall, when the exhausted men of both sides dropped where they stood, quite incapable of further effort. The battle had in effect been an indecisive one, but during the night Bennigsen, the Russian commander, decided that a retreat was essential. By morning the ground before the French was empty but for the grim lines of snow-covered and frozen dead. It had been the bloodiest fight of Napoleon's career. Although he remained master of the field, and in theory had won the battle, Eylau was by no means the glorious victory it was given out to be. By the last week in February the French were back in their winter quarters, Napoleon basing his headquarters at Osterode. The Foot Grenadiers received a daily tot of brandy, and crosses of the Legion of Honour were awarded to men who had distinguished themselves at Eylau.

Now, to every depot throughout the Empire,

went orders for replacements for the heavy losses of the battle, and soon the roads of Europe were covered with long columns of men pressing on towards Poland. Danzig, the great port which threatened Napoleon's rear, had first to be taken; it was besieged by Marshal Lefebvre and fell on 27th May. Napoleon was now able to give his undivided attention to plans for an offensive against the Russians, and he moved his headquarters to Finkenstein.

On the very day Napoleon intended to advance, the Russians anticipated him, attacking the French at Guttstadt and then retreating. There was a battle at Heilsberg on 10th June which the Russians could have claimed as a victory, although again they left the field to the French. Early on 14th June Bennigsen was with the bulk of his army at Friedland, facing the corps of Marshal Lannes with the Alle River between the two forces. At once the Russian brought his army across to crush the apparently isolated Marshal. But Lannes defended himself with vigour, and during the morning the lengthy columns of the Grand Army appeared, led by Napoleon himself with his Foot Grenadiers marching in full dress with nodding red plumes and white gloves. A general attack on the Russians took place in the late afternoon with, as usual, the Guard placed in reserve. The battle was a copy-book one with the Emperor at his best, and by 10.00 p.m. the Russians had been out-generalled and out-fought. It was the anniversary of Marengo.

On 19th June the Foot Grenadiers were with the Emperor when he entered Tilsit on the River Niemen and there, on a raft anchored in the centre of the river, the Emperors of Russia and France saw each other for the first time. On 7th July a treaty was signed between the two countries, followed by one between France and Prussia. As might have been expected, Napoleon strove to impress the Czar with the might and splendour of his Empire and his army, and many and varied were the ensuing festivities. On 30th June the Guard gave a dinner for their Russian counterparts. During this period of junketing and feasting, promotions and decorations were heaped on the Guard, and many chests were ornamented with the coveted cross. They were in parade order almost all the time and their musicians, now

sumptuously attired in new uniforms lavishly enriched with gold braid, were a dazzling sight as they led the numerous parades.

On 25th November the Guard returned to Paris. Huge arches had been erected, and in the streets they were awaited by a multitude of people. Their uniforms were considerably the worse for wear, but they marched into the city with tremendous *élan*. On each regimental eagle glittered proudly the wreath of silver leaves attached to it as a gift from the municipality of Paris. The dinners, theatrical performances and banquets lasted a month; it was more than enough for even the liveliest *grogard*. But they were wise who made the most of it, for soon they would be on the move once again.

Spain



The Emperor's attention was now on Spain and Portugal. To ensure the adherence of those two countries to the Continental System (which denied the markets of Europe to Great Britain) he decided that his control had to be more direct and absolute. To this end he sent Gen. Junot on 19 October 1807 into Spain *en route* for Lisbon, which he reached on 30th November. At the beginning of the following year he turned his attention to Spain; and by a mixture of guile and intimidation he had, by the beginning of May, deprived Spain of both its king and heir, the Prince of Asturias. This was followed on 6th May by the proclamation of his brother Joseph, King of Naples, as King of Spain. But the Emperor reckoned without the temperament of the Spanish

people and Madrid burst into open insurrection. Within a month the length and breadth of Spain had risen against the French occupying forces.

While the so-called negotiations with the Spanish royal family had been taking place at Bayonne, Napoleon had been guarded by the Foot Grenadiers. When he moved his residence to the nearby Château de Marrac the Foot Grenadiers followed, and bivouacked in the extensive grounds. Having, as he thought, completed arrangements for the settling of the Iberian problem, Napoleon was on his way back to Paris when he received, at Bordeaux on 21st July, the dreadful news that Gen. Dupont, with 15,000 men, had surrendered to the Spaniards.

Napoleon immediately drafted orders for the invasion of Spain by an army of 200,000 men, all veterans of the Grand Army under his personal command. Included in this array was to be the entire Imperial Guard, rapidly brought up to strength by replacement from the line regiments.

On 4th November, escorted by the Foot Grenadiers carrying provisions for four days, he entered Spain. A proof of the Emperor's reliance on the Grenadiers is shown by an order at this time that the security of his coach and state papers was the responsibility of the Foot Grenadiers, and that an officer and three men were deputed to guard them at all times. The road to Madrid was not an easy one, but the capital was finally invested in great strength on 2nd December, with the Foot Grenadiers posted near the Imperial Headquarters at San Bernardino. On 3rd December the French guns opened fire, and after only a little fighting the city capitulated and was entered by Napoleon the following day.

For about a fortnight the bulk of the French Army lay at Madrid, until at length came news of the presence far to the north near Sahagun of Sir John Moore and the British Army. This news to Napoleon was a red rag to a bull, and at once he concentrated his efforts on the pursuit and destruction of the Englishmen, sending 40,000 men over the passes of the Guadarrama Mountains in the depths of winter. The exertions of his troops on this march were prodigious. The Foot Grenadiers marched with the Emperor, the veterans doubtless recalling another occasion years before when they had forced their way across

the St Bernard on the way to Marengo. This journey was possibly even worse. Men had to link arms to prevent themselves being flung over precipices by the wind. Even the Emperor, forced to dismount, had to follow suit with two of his generals. Nevertheless he pressed on with the advance guard leaving the Grenadiers to the rear, but they were able to overtake him at Villacastin after marching in the most dreadful conditions over 50 miles in two days.

Again the Emperor's anxiety to catch up with Moore took him on ahead, and the Grenadiers found it hard going indeed, trying to maintain his pace.

On 1 January 1809, when the Emperor had reached Astorga, his plans were changed suddenly and dramatically. The confirmation of rumours of a conspiracy against him in Paris, news of military movements by the Austrians, and the realisation that Moore had given him the slip, decided him to return to France. After a march of 225 miles in ten days the Foot Grenadiers paraded in Astorga in a pitiful condition. Then they were off on the road back to Benevente.

For the present, Napoleon was to leave the Guard in Spain, and the Foot Grenadiers were far from pleased at being thus abandoned by *le Tondu*. Their loud discontent reached the Imperial ears, and at an inspection at Valladolid he expressed his displeasure as only he could. However, although they had been left behind this time, the Grenadiers were not to be apart from the Emperor for long, and before many weeks had passed they were on the move again.

Return to the Danube



Austria had taken advantage of Napoleon's pre-occupation in Spain to declare war and attack the diminutive French armies in central and southern Germany. Napoleon immediately abandoned Spain and returned to Paris, made his dispositions, and hurried east towards the Danube. The Foot Grenadiers returned to Paris on 12th April, and the very next day set off for the assembly-point at Strasbourg.

Meantime the Emperor, having heard that the Austrians had crossed the Inn into Bavaria, was hurrying towards the fighting taking place along the Danube, but he left orders that the Guard was to join him with all speed. On 10th May the French Army entered Vienna and again the Emperor took up residence at Schönbrunn. Twenty-five Foot Grenadiers who had volunteered to carry out forced marches to arrive at the palace in time to greet the Emperor were on duty on his arrival there. When the whole regiment had arrived it took up its residence around Schönbrunn.

Although a large part of his army had still some way to come, Napoleon decided to force the Danube crossing forthwith. He flung bridges across to the island of Löbau and thence to the north bank of the river where the Austrian Army was posted. The crossing was made on 20th May, and the following day the storm broke upon the French. Numbering about 22,000 men, they were violently attacked by nearly 100,000 Austrians. The villages of Aspern, and Essling whence the



Detail of Consular Guard button

Detail of Imperial Guard button

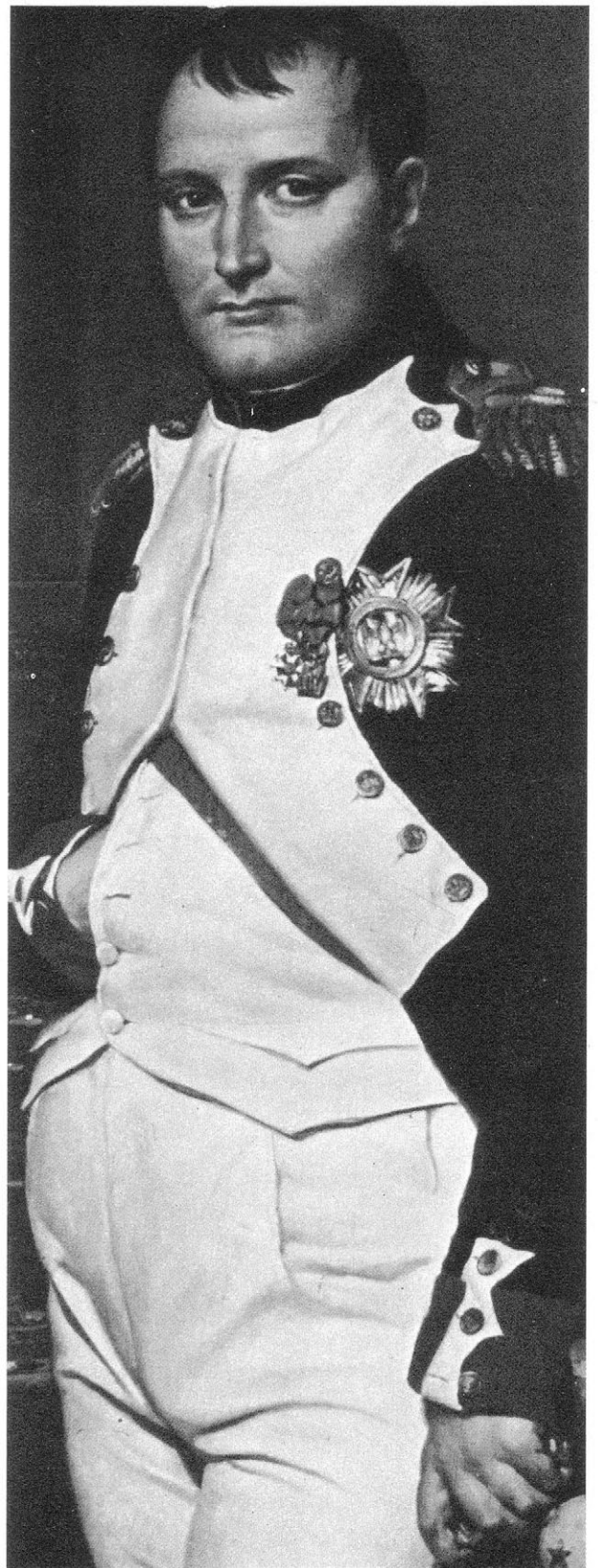


battle takes its name, were the scenes of intense fighting and were taken and retaken several times during the day. The following morning the battle was renewed, reinforcements having crossed to the north side during the night, including the Foot Grenadiers and the rest of the Guard. All this time the Austrians had been making attempts to destroy the French bridges, by floating down hulks and masses of logs, and finally a blazing floating mill tore a huge gap in the main bridge and cut off communications with the south bank. The French reserves were unable to cross, and in face of this the Emperor had no alternative but to order a retreat to Löbau Island. Throughout the fighting the Foot Grenadiers had been in reserve in a very exposed position, suffering heavy casualties. At one moment, when it appeared to them that Napoleon was remaining too long under enemy fire, they shouted to him to get back out of danger, and threatened to lay down their arms until he did so.

Napoleon returned to the south side of the Danube when the gap in the bridge was repaired, and the Foot Grenadiers were posted near his temporary headquarters at the village of Ebersdorf, south-east of Vienna. A hospital for the wounded men of the Guard was set up in the village, and the Emperor visited the place frequently before moving back to Schönbrunn. On 7th June the usual review took place, Napoleon taking the opportunity to pinch the ears of his favourite heroes – his customary if sometimes painful sign of approbation.

During a temporary armistice Napoleon transformed Löbau into a gigantic fortress. At the beginning of July all was ready and, with the Foot Grenadiers in attendance, the Imperial Headquarters was set up on the island, on which no fewer than 165,000 men were assembled.

On the night of 4th July, amid a storm of thunder and lightning, the French began the crossing to the north bank of the Danube. By 9.00 a.m. on the 5th they had gained a substantial footing and thousands of troops were pouring over the bridges. The Foot Grenadiers took up a position to the right of the French line, well back in reserve. The villages of Aspern and Essling were seized and, at the end of the day, Napoleon's 188,000 men faced an Austrian army of some



David's portrait of the Emperor in 1810. He is wearing his favourite uniform of a Colonel of the Guard

155,000. Together with the bulk of the cavalry, the Guard was in reserve under the Emperor's own direction. During the evening an attack was launched against the high ground at Wagram – which gave its name to the battle – but this was repulsed. Some of the French troops actually fled until they collided with the Foot Grenadiers, whose presented bayonets brought them to a sudden halt.

On the 6th the battle recommenced in earnest. At one time the Austrians almost broke through, but the crisis was averted. The French gunners suffered so cruelly from enemy counter-battery fire that volunteers were called for from the Foot Grenadiers to assist in manning the guns. Twenty were asked to come forward from each company, and fifty from each volunteered. The general commanding the artillery later reported most flatteringly on the behaviour of the Grenadiers at his guns. Eventually a massive infantry column of 8,000 men moved forward to shatter the Austrians' centre, and the battle was won with the Austrians in full retreat.

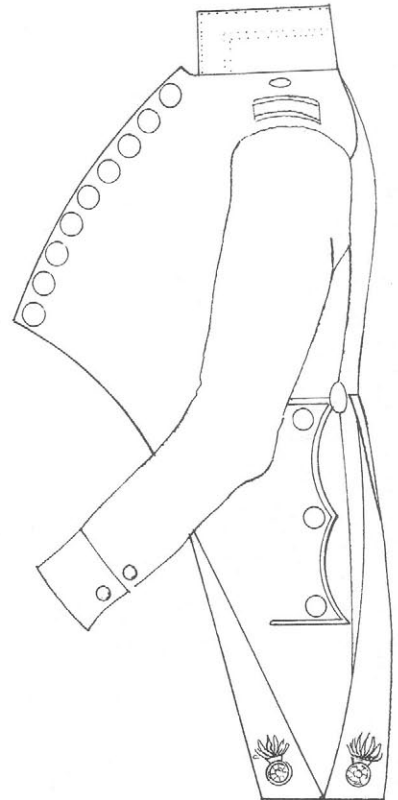
Peace was eventually signed on 14th October, and the same day the Foot Grenadiers were ordered to return to France.

And now for a considerable time the Foot Grenadiers were to enjoy the fruits of their labours. For more than two years their duties were solely of a ceremonial nature, although many of their comrades of the Young Guard were still embroiled in the fighting continuing unabated in Spain. Of the Foot Grenadiers nothing was required but the maintenance of their smart and well-drilled appearance for the numerous functions at which they were present. The first was the anniversary of the Imperial Coronation on 2nd December, when the Grenadiers turned out in strength to provide duty pickets in Notre-Dame, and guards of honour at various points between the Tuileries and the Cathedral. About this time, however, there were rumours of Imperial divorce and remarriage. The grumblers were not happy about this – they had always liked Josephine.

The rumours were all too true, however, and the Foot Grenadiers had to reconcile themselves

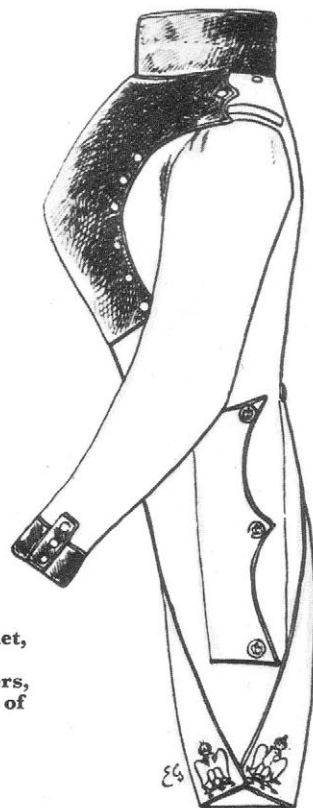


Contemporary water-colour of a grenadier drummer wearing the 'surtout', the undress tail-coat without facings or revers, and a side-view plan of the coat





A print, after Martinet, of a grenadier of the 3rd (Dutch) Grenadiers, and a side-view plan of the coat

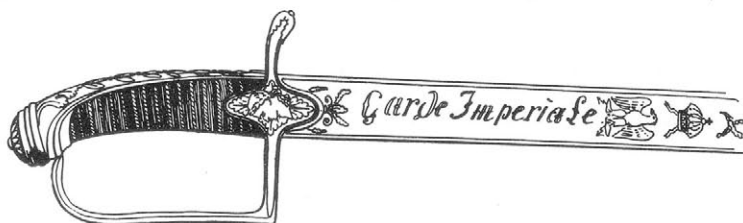


to the new arrival when, on 30 March 1810, they were on duty for the entry into Paris of Marie Louise, Archduchess of Austria, prior to her marriage to the recently divorced Napoleon.

Following Napoleon's annexation of Holland, when his young brother Louis renounced the throne, many of the Low Country units were incorporated into the French Army. Of these the Dutch Royal Grenadiers became the 2nd Regiment of Foot Grenadiers of the Imperial Guard, replacing the earlier 2nd Regiment which had been merged with the 1st in the previous year. The Dutchmen arrived in Paris at the end of August, and when the Emperor reviewed them he was much taken with their fine appearance. But their reception by the Foot Grenadiers was rowdy in the extreme and developed into a near riot, and subsequently apologies had to be tendered to

those of the populace whose feelings and persons had been abused by inebriated soldiery. Instead of the customary dark blue of the senior regiment, the Dutchmen of the 2nd wore white coats faced with crimson. They had the bearskin bonnet but these carried no metal plaque in front as did those of the 1st. The Dutch Grenadiers, as they were termed, were a splendid-looking unit, but they doubtless cursed the uniforms which became dirty very easily and required constant attention. The 2nd Foot Grenadiers was not part of that jealously preserved section, the 'Old Guard'; and later, as we shall see, it became Number 3 and another 2nd Regiment was formed in 1811.

Meantime the strength of both Foot Grenadier regiments was kept up by drafts from the junior Guard regiments; half the annual intake was provided by them.



Russia



Throughout 1811 Napoleon took steps to prepare for the anticipated clash with Russia, by establishing powerful forces in strategic positions across Europe from the Baltic to the Adriatic. The central reserve for these forces was to be the still expanding Imperial Guard, designed to be far more powerful and numerous than ever before. Although it became increasingly difficult to find men of the necessary age and quality as replacements for the Guard, the Emperor refused to lower the standard of admission; and despite the dearth of recruits, a 2nd Regiment of Foot Grenadiers was formed on 18 May 1811. The former Dutch Regiment, the erstwhile 2nd, now became the 3rd. Most of the men for the new 2nd Regiment came from line regiments serving in Spain and from regiments of the Young Guard also there. Later, in July, nearly 1,000 men who had been under instruction at the Army School at Fontainebleau joined the Guard infantry. All had the required minimum service of five years.

A similar process in reverse was carried out at the same time. Old soldiers, or men otherwise declared unfit for service, were transferred to the Gendarmerie, or admitted to Les Invalides.

On 9th June the entire Guard was on duty for the baptism of Napoleon's son at Notre-Dame, and the Emperor accorded a month's extra pay to all Grenadiers on duty during the day. He knew how to please the grumblers. On duty also was the band of the 1st Foot Grenadiers, said to be the finest in the army, numbering some forty-eight instrumentalists at this period. They were splendid

to behold, uniforms dripping with gold lace, hats sprouting enormous ostrich plumes, and of course the Drum-major outshone all the rest.

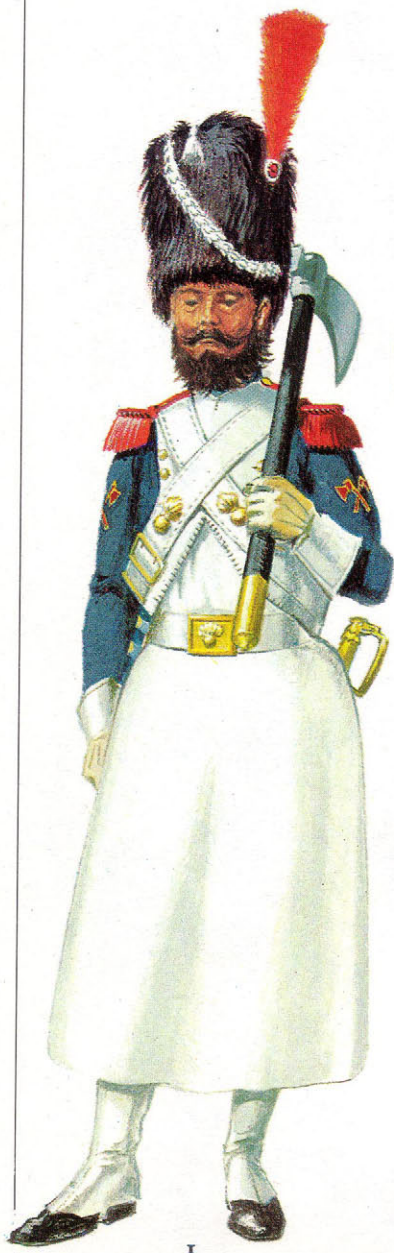
It was determined about this time just what was to be included in the coveted designation 'Old Guard'. As far as the infantry was concerned it comprised only the 1st Foot Grenadiers; their brothers-in-arms the 1st Foot Chasseurs; the officers and N.C.O.s of the 2nd; and the officers of the 3rd. To be a member of the Old Guard was a highly prized distinction; all the other members of the Guard were considered to be in the Middle or Young Guard. At this time the Old Guard infantry was under the command of Gen. Curial, who had had a long and distinguished service in the Guard. A new flag had been prescribed to be carried on the pole bearing the eagle, the tricolour vertically divided into blue, white and red. It was ordered, but apparently not brought into use until the following year when the Grenadiers had returned from Russia.

On 16th September orders were sent by the Emperor to Marshal Bessières, commanding the Imperial Guard, to prepare his men for active service. Throughout the spring and summer of 1812 a tremendous flood of men, horses and guns poured eastwards across Europe into Poland, the largest army ever seen in Europe – 600,000 fighting men. About half the men were French, the remainder were contingents from a dozen different countries subject to the Emperor. Backing the fifteen infantry and cavalry corps of this new Grand Army was the Imperial Guard, now expanded to a total of 50,000 men. As early as the beginning of February contingents of the Guard had left Paris, and for months the Foot Grenadiers had been ready to march at a moment's notice. They watched regiment after regiment leave for the east. On 20th February the 3rd Regiment, the Dutch Grenadiers, left their barracks at Versailles. Next was the turn of the 2nd Regiment, on 3rd March; and the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment was next to go. Only the most senior battalion of all – the 1st of the 1st Regiment – remained until 9th May.

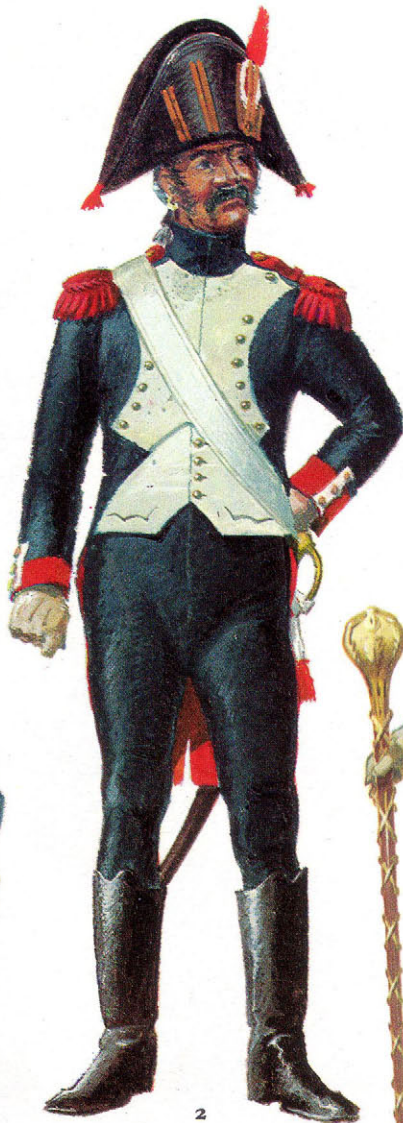
On 15th May Gen. Curial, commanding the Third Guard Division of which the Foot Grenadiers formed part, arrived at Glogau. By 30th May they were overtaken by the Emperor at Posen.



A drum-major of the Guard, from a lithograph by Charlet



I



2



3

- 1 Pioneer, Consular Guard,
1802
2 Grenadier (walking-out
dress, winter), 1799-1815
3 Drum-major, Consular
Guard (full dress), 1802



1



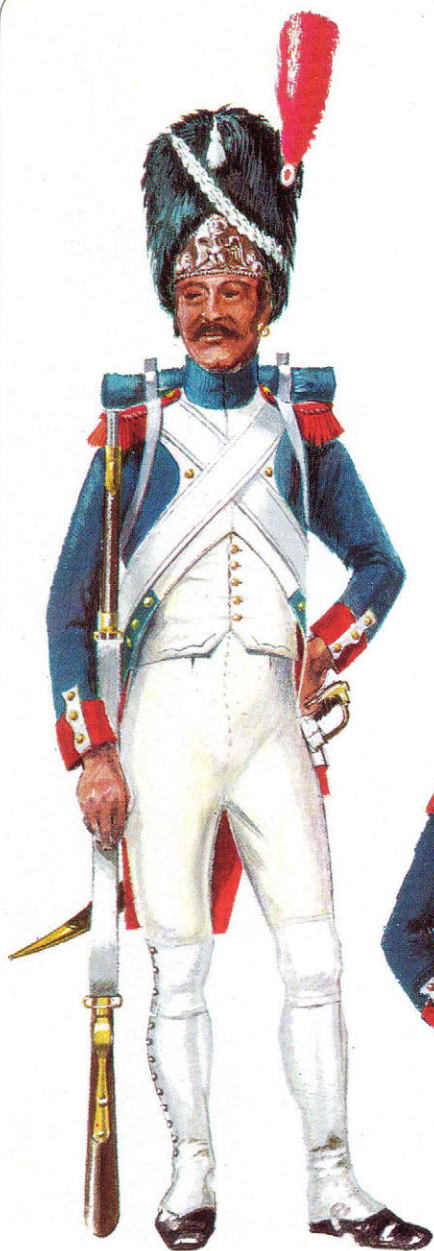
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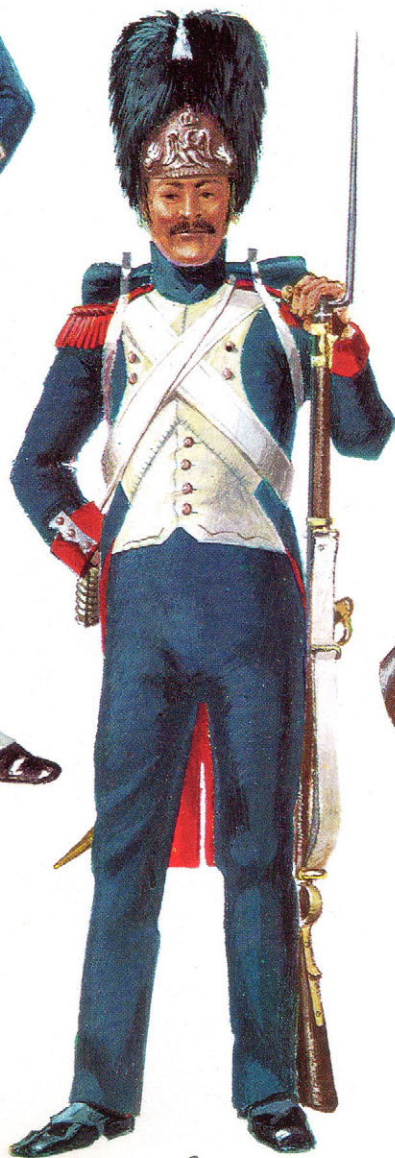
3

- 1 Cymbalist, Consular
Guard, 1802
2 Musician, Consular
Guard (full dress),
1802-3
3 Drummer (full dress),
1804-5

- 1 Grenadier (parade dress), 1804-15
- 2 Grenadier (active service order), 1805-15
- 3 Grenadier (greatcoat order), 1804-15



I



2



3

- 1 Drummer (field uniform), 1806-7
- 2 Pioneer (field uniform), 1806-7
- 3 Grenadier (field dress), 1806



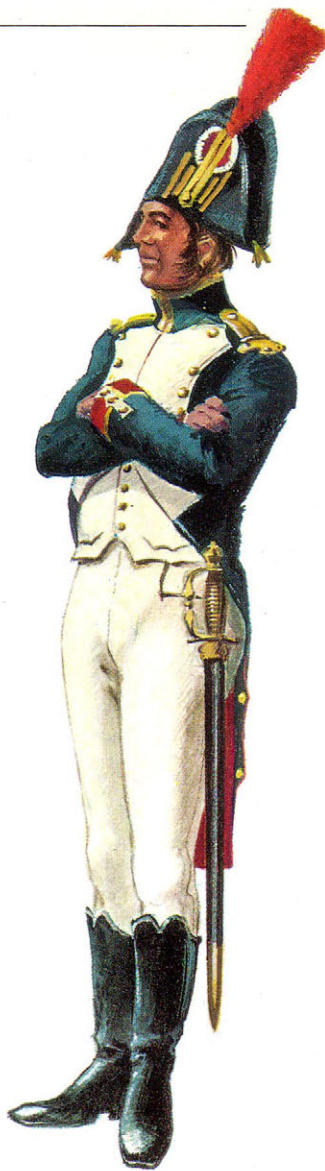


1 Pioneer (full dress),
1810-14
2 Sergeant, 1809
3 Drum-major (full dress),
1810

- 1 Pioneer (walking-out dress), 1810-15
- 2 Musician (undress uniform), 1810-14
- 3 Musician (full dress), 1810-11



1



2



3



I



2



3

- I Sergeant-major (walking-out dress, summer), 1811-15
- 2 Corporal, 3rd (Dutch) Regiment (full dress), 1811-12
- 3 Grenadier (marching order), 1812-14



1

1 Fifer, 3rd (Dutch)
Regiment (undress
uniform), 1812



2 Drum-major 3rd
(Dutch) Regiment
(undress uniform), 1812



3

3 Drum-major (undress
uniform), 1812-14

The Third Division in its entirety was inspected by Napoleon at Thorn on 5th June; and then, laden with six days' rations, the Grenadiers marched from Thorn through Gumbinnen, where the proclamation announcing the outbreak of war with Russia was read to the troops. On the evening of the 23rd the crossing of the River Niemen began, and during the next two days the French Army poured across the three pontoon bridges on to Russian soil.

On went the long French columns; through Vilna, Gloubokoye, Vitebsk. At Vitebsk news was received of the death in Paris of the stout-hearted Dorsenne. Gen. Friant, one of Marshal Davout's three famous divisional generals known as the 'Immortals', was presented to the Foot Grenadiers as their new Colonel-in-Chief.

Leaving Vitebsk on 11th August, the columns of the Grenadier regiments plunged deeper into Russia. The marching was hard, but on 15th August there was a brief halt to honour the Emperor's birthday. Then on to Smolensk. After three days of hard fighting the Russians abandoned the city and fell back, leaving it in flames. On the night of 24th August Napoleon moved on. The heat during the day was at times nearly 80 degrees, but the nights in contrast were bitterly cold. The countryside was totally abandoned, houses and farms burned and deserted, and already tens of thousands of Frenchmen had fallen out of the ranks, sick, wounded or simply unable to maintain the pace. Many other troops were occupied in maintaining the long lines of communication. Even so, when the army clashed with the Russians at Borodino, it was still over 120,000 strong, and the Foot Guard battalions were hardly diminished.

Borodino was a battle of extreme bitterness and violence. The Russians fought with all their typical tenacity, heedless of losses, and throughout 7th September the struggle raged. Time and again appeals were made to the Emperor by his generals to throw in the Guard at points where its intervention appeared to be necessary, but the Guard remained in reserve. 'I will not have my Guard destroyed 800 leagues from Paris,' Napoleon exclaimed. His refusal to use the Guard proved justified, for the battle was won without them. Afterwards the Emperor's tents were pitched close to a redoubt where some of the most intense fight-



Gen. Friant, one of Marshal Davout's 'Immortals', succeeded Gen. Dorsenne as Colonel-in-Chief on the long march to Moscow

ing had taken place. Round him were the squares of the Foot Grenadiers, and dead and wounded lay everywhere. The Russians had lost 50,000 men, the French nearly 30,000. The Grand Army had received a grievous blow, one which had far-reaching and serious effects.

Nevertheless Borodino was a victory. Moscow was abandoned, and the Foot Grenadiers arrived on 14th September to find it a silent and deserted wilderness. The Grenadiers established their headquarters in a large house near the city gates. Like the rest of the army, they were in a bad way – ragged, exhausted, many of them ill. It was a poor shadow of the once glorious Grand Army that made its formal entry into Moscow the following day. The famous band played bravely, but the streets were still and empty. By the evening the city was in flames. Looting was rife, and a regiment of the Guard was detailed to watch over the Kremlin at all times.

Throughout the stay in Moscow everything was done to keep the troops up to standard. An appearance of normality was preserved with the usual reviews and inspections, and a theatrical company was formed from a group of French refugees who had run a theatre in Moscow. But it was becoming increasingly evident that a retreat was inevitable. The lines of communication were

lengthy and hazardous. There was no sign of a Russian capitulation, and shortage of food was becoming a problem. Supplies of food and clothing were assembled. Of all the troops it was the Guard – undoubtedly favoured of course – which was nearest to establishment. The 1st Foot Grenadiers turned out 39 officers and 1,346 men on 10th October. The 2nd Foot Grenadiers were nearly as strong with 35 and 1,117. Not quite so good was the 3rd Regiment with 39 officers and only 714 men, about 300 having been lost in the march to Moscow. The infantry of the Guard had been generally fortunate in losing very few in action, and the entire Guard at this time numbered about 21,000 men, infantry and cavalry.

Finally the expected decision was made, and early on 19th October Napoleon and his entourage left Moscow after just over a month's sojourn in the city. Foiled in an attempt to return by a different route through undisturbed country, the Emperor had to fall back towards the route by

which he had reached Moscow, through the wilderness of a land already devastated by war. Winter was now beginning, and the ever-decreasing remnants of the Grand Army marched through snow and bitter cold, fighting the elements as well as the Russians who now pursued and harried them at every opportunity. Man after man would drop with exhaustion and simply lie in the snow, too weak to move. The temperature continued to drop, and around the French were the ever-watchful, skirmishing clouds of Cossacks. On one occasion they even ventured so close as to cause the Emperor and his escort to draw swords to defend themselves.

Because they retraced their original steps, the French had to endure the grisly spectacle of the Borodino battlefield, with the thousands of dead frozen and unburied. From now on Napoleon marched in the centre of the Foot Grenadiers, solid ranks of veterans on all sides. Onwards they went to Smolensk, harassed at every turn. Fewer



During the retreat of the Grand Army from Moscow to Berezina, an old grenadier buries his flag to keep it from falling into enemy hands

and fewer men were marching in disciplined units, and thousands had simply thrown down their arms to join the vast horde of stragglers staggering along in the wake of the regiments. On its arrival at Smolensk the Grand Army was reduced to less than half of the 100,000 men who had left Moscow. The Imperial Guard was still 14,000, with the Old Guard just short of 6,000.

Near Krasny a determined attempt was made to hold up the retreat. But after some bitter fighting, in which the Foot Grenadiers went into action, the Russians were repulsed. It was one of the Imperial Guard's best actions. It seemed that the sight of the 'men of bronze' advancing with levelled bayonets was enough to make the Russians fall back. West of Krasny was the great River Dnieper, which the main French Army crossed on 19th November. Six days later bridges were thrown across the Berezina. The Russians had been outmanœuvred here, and little was initially in evidence to hinder the crossing. On 27th November Napoleon crossed with the Guard, and the same day the Russians appeared in force. Attacks were made on both sides of the river during the following day while the French were crossing the bridges. On 29th November the rearguard crossed, and thereafter the Russian pursuit lost impetus. It could afford to. French losses had been terrifying, and even the Guard now numbered but 2,000 men in all.

At Smorgoni on 5th December Napoleon left the remnants of his army and set off for Paris. To the moment of his departure the Foot Grenadiers did their duty, posting sentries round the Emperor's bivouac and establishing guards and pickets, as though the snow-covered hovels had been the Imperial Tuileries. Truly they deserved the Emperor's gratitude.

1813



On 25 December 1812 there assembled at Königsberg in East Prussia the battered remnants of the Imperial Guard under their commander, Michel. Present were 77 officers and 603 men of the 1st and 2nd Foot Grenadiers, the 3rd Regiment having been virtually wiped out. The retreat had taken its toll of even these hard-bitten veterans, and although they were able to take their place in the ranks only a comparatively small proportion was fit for action at that moment.

Even more misfortune was to come. Murat, given command of the Grand Army on the Emperor's departure, took his leave on 16 January 1813, ostensibly ill. Eugene, Viceroy of Italy and Napoleon's stepson, took over and began to reorganise the army as best he could. Slowly the Guard concentrated at Posen and made ready to return to duty by the side of the Emperor. At Posen the Foot Grenadiers mustered some 400 men.

Meantime in Paris every effort was made to create an army from practically nothing – conscripts were called up before their time, and garrisons were combed for men who could take their place in the line. The Grand Master of the Palace, Duroc, was put in charge of organising the Guard depots. Even in such parlous times the requirements for entry to the Foot Grenadiers were maintained at their high level: for Old Guard officers and N.C.O.s twelve years' service were required, and for other ranks ten years; the demands were only slightly less for the remainder of the corps. By this time there was only one regiment of Foot Grenadiers, the 1st, being an amalgam of the men of the 1st and 2nd who had

returned from Russia. In February Napoleon ordered the creation of a 2nd Regiment of Foot Grenadiers as before. Only the officers and N.C.O.s were graded as being of the Old Guard. The few men from the 3rd Foot Grenadiers went into the new 2nd Regiment.

Amid prodigious efforts a new French Army was taking shape and preparing to meet the huge forces moving towards Germany and central Europe. By 1st April as much as possible had been done, and on the 15th of the month Napoleon left St Cloud to join his army. The newly reconstituted Guard, including two battalions of Foot Grenadiers, soon to be reinforced by two more, lay in reserve near Eisenach. On 29th April the entire Guard arrived at Erfurt, where a Foot Grenadier pulled down the Prussian flag and replaced it with the French tricolour.

On 1st May the French Army advanced directly towards Leipzig and there was sharp fighting near Poserna, where Bessières, Commander-in-Chief of the Guard, was slain by a round shot. On the following day the Allied forces surprised the French at Lützen. The Emperor reacted with promptitude, and in a very short time the French Army was on its way to the danger-point, Napoleon leading the Guard in person. They arrived on the battlefield early in the afternoon and the sight of the tall, black bearskins of the Foot Grenadiers was enough to restore the spirits of the tired young conscripts who had so far borne the brunt of the fighting. By late afternoon Napoleon had deployed his reserves to carry out a counter-attack. Sixteen battalions of the Young Guard led the assault with the Foot Grenadiers in close support. The enemy centre broke, and Russians and Prussians fell back towards Dresden. Again the lack of cavalry prevented pursuit and the victory, although complete, could not be exploited. Compared with the Young Guard, which had suffered heavily, the Old Guard had few casualties, only 55 killed and wounded.

Napoleon's advance continued and on 20th May he arrived at Bautzen. Early that morning battle was joined, the Emperor directing the action from a hill some distance from Bautzen, surrounded, of course, by the ranks of the Grenadiers. The fighting continued unabated next day, and the Emperor, evidently fatigued, slept for a

time in one of their squares despite the noise of a great battle. The fighting raged all day until finally came the order for a general attack. Forward surged the Foot Grenadiers in a wave of blue coats and black bearskins and the enemy broke before them, streaming off towards Weisenberg and Löbau, with the Foot Grenadiers cheering as they watched them run. Again, however, it was not a total victory for Napoleon; losses had been about equal, and most of the Allied withdrawal had been carried out in good order.

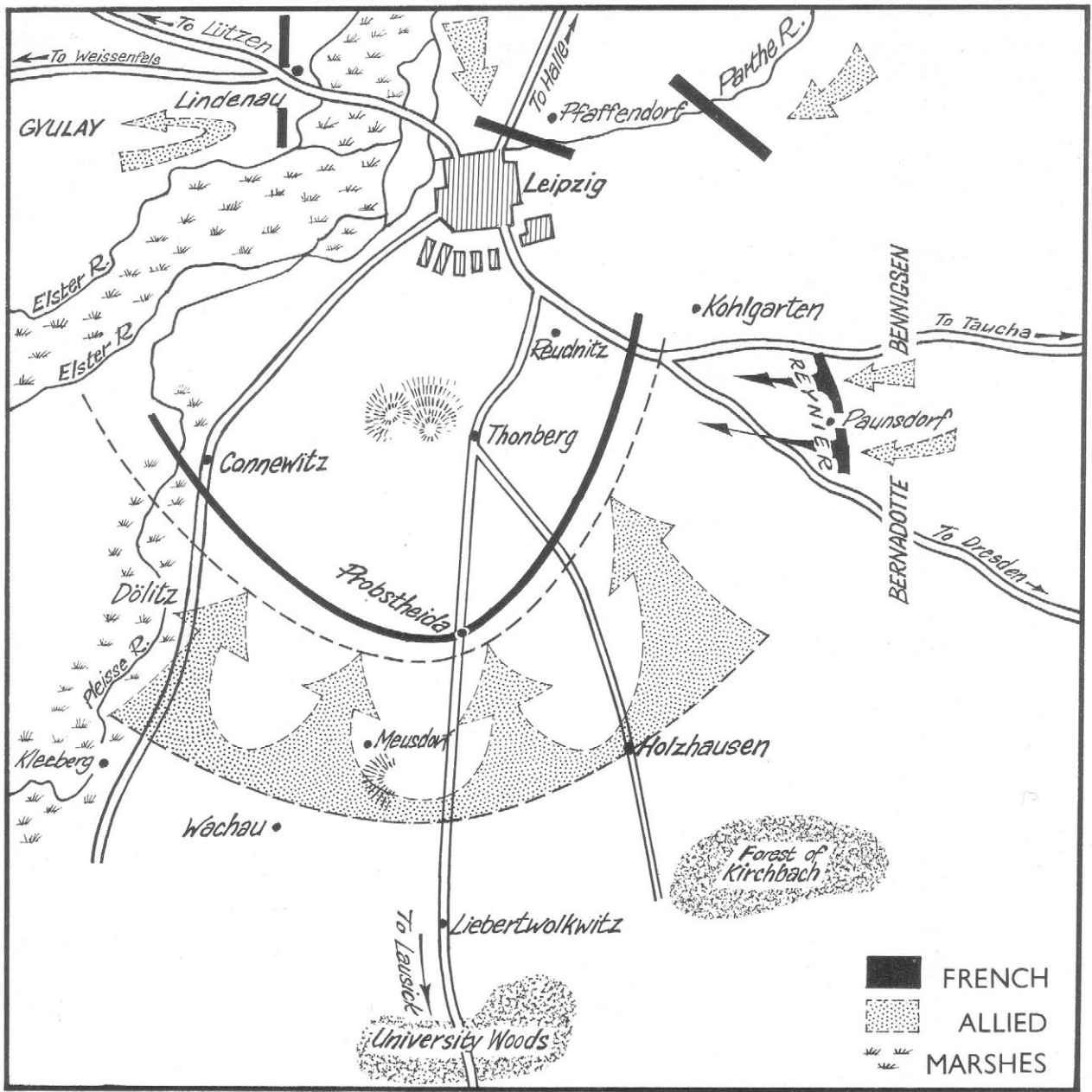
On 4th June an armistice was signed, lasting until 20th July, and then extended for another month. During this time the Foot Grenadiers were at Dresden, commanded temporarily by Gen. Mouton while Soult, who had succeeded the dead Bessières, was off in Spain. The entire Guard now numbered about 30,000 combatants, including the two Grenadier regiments.

On 11th August Blücher, the Prussian general, took the offensive, and the armistice was over. On 15th August Napoleon marched with the Foot Guard to Silesia in the hope of pouncing upon Blücher before the Austrians could join him. Led by the Foot Grenadiers the French made forced marches over terrible terrain, but were unable to trap the wily old Prussian. At Górlitz on the 24th it was learned that enemy armies were threatening Dresden. At once the Grenadiers, despite the 125 miles covered in the previous four days, marched for the Saxon capital. Although the Allied troops flung themselves in waves at the French defences, Napoleon's line held; and late in the afternoon he launched a counter-attack spearheaded by the Grenadiers. They advanced at the *pas de charge* and so shattered the Austrians facing them that heavy reserves had to be sent for in haste to support them.

By nightfall heavy losses had been suffered by the French, most of the Guard generals having been wounded, and hundreds of men killed. When the battle was resumed the following day the Foot Grenadiers remained close to the redoubt where the Emperor had his headquarters. Combined French attacks on the Allied wings were uniformly successful although not without heavy loss. During the night of 27th August the Allied commanders, among whom was Czar Alexander of Russia himself, decided to retreat towards Bohemia. The



Sgt. Taria, who served as a grenadier from 1809 to 1815 and, years later, after the invention of photography, posed in this authentic uniform



Battle of Leipzig, 18 October 1813, the position on the third day

result favoured the Emperor, who had 10,000 casualties against the Allied total of nearly 40,000. However, although the attack on Napoleon had failed, the Allies were able to defeat several of his generals who had been given independent commands. These victories gave the Allies heart to maintain the struggle, and, vastly greater than Napoleon's army, they began to close in. Napoleon reinforced his Guard as fast as he could, bringing each battalion of Foot Grenadiers up to a strength

of 800 men, which more than replaced the casualties suffered at Dresden. The 1st Regiment was replenished from the 2nd, which took its own replacements from the Young Guard. Gen. Friant continued to command the 1st Grand Division, which included the 1st and 2nd Foot Grenadiers. Indeed, by the end of September, the Guard as a whole made up over 30 per cent of the entire French Army, and numbered not far short of 50,000 men.

Finally Napoleon prepared to do battle on the plain of Leipzig. On 16th October 177,000 French were ranged against armies which ultimately numbered some 300,000 men.

On the first day of the battle, despite their superiority of numbers, the Allies could not break the French. There was a comparative lull on the 17th, but on the following day the Allies attacked at six different places all along the line. At one point during the afternoon the Emperor had to throw in the Guard to retake an important village seized by a force of Russians and Swedes, and the enemy melted away at the sight of the tall bearskin bonnets. As the end of the day approached, Napoleon realised that he had no alternative but to retreat. The odds were mounting against him, and during the night the army began to cross the River Elster. By dawn on the 19th only the rearguard remained, and were subjected to a continuous attack throughout the morning. At 1.00 p.m., through a ghastly error, the main bridge was blown up while jammed with thousands of troops. The rearguard was still fighting in the outskirts of Leipzig but they were now in a hopeless position, of course, and many were taken prisoner or surrendered. The Allied victory was an expensive one, no less than 54,000 of their troops being killed or wounded during the struggle. The French lost about 40,000, although to this figure must be added the 30,000 prisoners taken after the destruction of the bridge.

Friant and his Foot Grenadiers were now in the forefront of the action all the time; no longer was it possible for them to be held in reserve. The enemy pressed the French very hard, and on the 27th the duty battalion had to drive off a raiding party which threatened Imperial Headquarters. But finally only the Bavarians, once allies of the French, stood between them and the Rhine. On 30th October Napoleon used the dense cover of the forests to launch the Foot Grenadiers in an assault against the Bavarian left, then flung in what was left of his cavalry. The Bavarians collapsed, losing heavily, and the way was clear again. On 2nd November the French Army reached Frankfurt. The Foot Grenadiers had arrived there the previous day, and on 3rd November the exhausted Guard marched into Mainz.

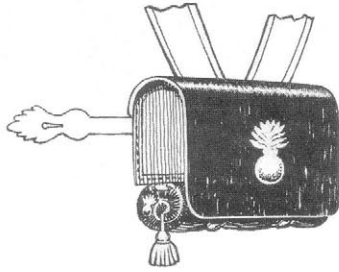
1814



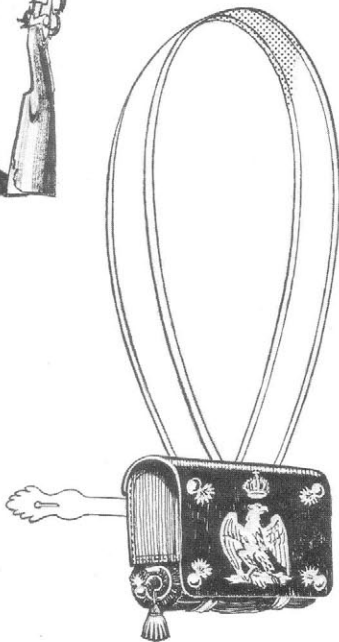
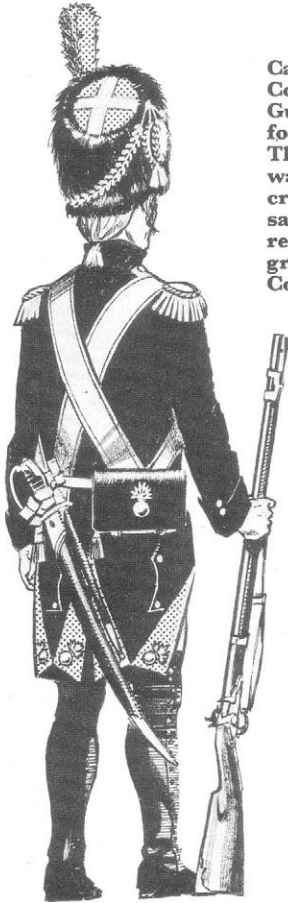
The beginning of 1814 saw Napoleonic France in a grave situation. Moving towards her eastern borders were the massed forces of Prussia, Austria and Russia, while in the south Wellington had crossed the Pyrenees and was at grips with Marshal Soult on the soil of France itself. Enormously outnumbered as France was, it would have taken a miracle to save the situation, and Napoleon very nearly supplied it more than once. It seemed that with the Empire so closely threatened he reverted in the hour of need to the Bonaparte of 1796, and although doomed to failure the campaign of 1814 was one of his best as a general.

The Foot Grenadiers mustered at Triers in December 1813 under Gen. Friant, with the Old Guard division numbering less than 6,000. At the moment when hundreds of thousands of the enemy were about to pour across the Rhine, they formed the only reliable veteran reserve the Emperor had. He planned to defeat each invading army in turn by swift and secret movement. At Brienne on 29 January 1814 he began by administering a sharp repulse to Blücher's Prussians, who escaped complete destruction only through having intercepted a French dispatch giving details of Napoleon's movements. The Guard had not arrived in time for this battle.

On 1st February a fierce attack was made on the French forces at La Rothière by the Austrians and Prussians under Blücher. Napoleon had to withdraw, losing fifty cannon; but it was not long before he struck back, and at Champaubert on 10th February he smote and nearly destroyed an isolated Russian corps. At Montmirail on 11th February the Foot Grenadiers went into action



Cartridge boxes of the Consular and Imperial Guards. Note the rolled forage-cap beneath. The projecting strap was secured to the crossbelt supporting sabre and bayonet. The rear view is of a grenadier of the Consular Guard



with a vengeance. Advancing at the double, deployed by battalions 100 paces apart, the veterans struck the flank of the enemy and rolled it up, at the same time driving off attacks by Allied cavalry. It was a great triumph for the grumblers and the battle rapidly became a near rout. Four thousand enemy casualties, twice those of the French, were left on the field.

Vauchamps on 14th February was another victory. Hastening to the assistance of Marshal Marmont, under heavy attack by Russian forces, Napoleon flung the Guard into action again. The mere sight of the forest of black bearskins was sufficient to cause the enemy to retreat.

And so the fighting went on: the next engagement was at Montereau on 18th February, and by the 25th the Emperor entered this town in triumph. But a really decisive battle still eluded him.

The next heavy fighting was at Craonne on 7th March. Forty thousand French attacked 25,000 Russians but were held at bay. The Russian Army was able to retire toward Laon where Blücher, in command, determined to stand and fight. On 9th March a thick mist covered what was to be the battleground of Laon as the Guard took up its position in the centre of the French line. The indecisive fighting died down in the late afternoon, but at about 7.00 p.m. Blücher launched a surprise attack on the French right and put the corps of Marshal Marmont to flight. Napoleon had to retreat, with the Guard acting as rearguard.

The Allied armies were now in full march for Paris. On 20th March the last battle took place at Arcis-sur-Aube, when Napoleon was confronted by powerful enemy forces under the Austrian Gen. Schwarzenberg. When he discovered on the following day that he was outnumbered at least three to one he immediately began a retreat, facilitated through the slow pursuit of the Austrian general.

On 30th March the Allies were at the gates of Paris, where Marmont commanded the defence. Fierce fighting took place and there were severe losses on both sides. Every man in the Paris garrison was drawn into the battle, National Guardsmen, militia, conscripts and recruits from the Guard depots. Men in hospital dragged themselves out to join the defence, and from the

barracks at Courbevoie fifty aged Invalids of the Old Guard defended the Neuilly bridge. All was in vain. Marmont surrendered, and on 31st March the Allies entered Paris. On 11th April Napoleon signed his abdication at Fontainebleau.

The Guard and the Emperor said farewell on 20th April at Fontainebleau. A party of Foot Grenadiers lined the grand staircase, the remainder were drawn up in the courtyard. As *le Tondu* moved along the impassive ranks, here and there tears streamed from the ruddy cheeks of the veterans who had followed him across Europe. He spoke to the men: 'I cannot embrace you all, but I shall embrace your general.' Then, ordering the regimental eagle forward, he kissed it. The veterans looked on mutely until Gen. Petit waved his sword and shouted, 'Vive l'Empereur!' and the courtyard echoed with the roar of the grumblers' salute.

On 28th April the Emperor and his suite, which included 300 Foot Grenadiers, sailed to exile at Elba. But it was not to be for long. On 28 February 1815 he boarded the *Inconstant* in Elba harbour, and at midnight sailed for France in his last bid to preserve the Empire.

Waterloo



Napoleon reached Paris from Elba in less than three weeks, entering the Tuileries on 20 March 1815. He was again without doubt the Emperor – it was as though Elba, Leipzig and 1814 had never occurred. At once he bent his energies to the task of preparing for war, which was already inevitable because the Allied powers in conclave at Vienna had already unanimously decided that Napoleon

must be destroyed, this time for good. Of paramount and immediate importance was the army; it had to be brought back to fighting strength and its morale restored after the period of Bourbon rule. The very day after Napoleon's arrival the men of the Elba Battalion, mustered in the Court of the Carrousel and taking pride of place on the right of the line of troops, watched the return to the Foot Grenadiers of the gleaming Napoleonic eagles. On the following day an Imperial decree restored the Imperial Guard with its former functions, duties and privileges. Everywhere the fleur-de-lis was torn down and the white Bourbon cockade replaced by the tricolour.

In the new Imperial Army were initially three large regiments of Foot Grenadiers, commanded again by Gen. Friant, with Gen. Roguet his second-in-command; and soon a fourth regiment was created. Officially they all belonged to the Old Guard, although evidently they were not all recognised as such, for the 3rd and 4th were commonly known as the 'Middle' Guard. Commanding the four regiments were Gens. Petit, Christiani, Poret de Morvan and Harlet.

By the end of April all Europe was arming, and on 9th May the Allies decided upon an invasion of France. Leading the army due to attack from the Low Countries was the formidable Wellington, on whose left flank were the forces of that inveterate hater of France, Blücher.

On 1st June orders were given for the Imperial Guard to be ready to leave Paris on active service. The Foot Grenadiers were well up to strength, the first three regiments, each of two battalions, numbering over 1,000 men in each regiment. On 8th June the Imperial Guard left for the scene of operations, and reached Soissons on 10th June.

The first clash with the Allied scouting parties came on 15th June, and on the following day took place the battles of Ligny, where the Emperor confronted the Prussians, and Quatre Bras, where Ney fought Wellington.

At Ligny the Prussians had not completed their concentration, but were still rather stronger than Napoleon supposed. During the first stage of the battle the Foot Grenadiers stood in reserve in columns south of Ligny and to the left of Fleurus. Late in the afternoon all the Prussian reserves had been drawn upon, but Napoleon still had the

entire Guard in hand. At 5.30 p.m. it was ordered forward, but promptly told to halt – a strong force was approaching the Prussian left. It took some little time to ascertain that it was friendly – D'Erlon's corps, in fact – and not until 7.00 p.m. was the planned attack resumed. The drums beat the charge and the dense columns of the Guard moved steadily forward in two bodies, one to the east and one to the west of Ligny, the Foot Grenadiers in the former. This new menace was

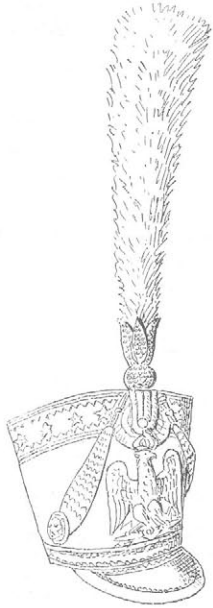
back at Caillou, moved forward to take up Lobau's vacated position. At 6.00 p.m. the Prussians captured Plancenoit despite Lobau's efforts to hold it. They were driven out by a spirited attack by the Young Guard, but quickly seized the village again. Upon this Morand ordered the 2nd Battalion of the 2nd Grenadiers, with a chasseur battalion, to retake it. With drums beating the veterans went forward at the double in close column of platoons. They penetrated Plancenoit without firing a shot, completely broke the Prussians, and in little more than fifteen minutes the village was clear. Debouching from Plancenoit, they drove back the enemy several hundred yards before retiring to take up a defensive position in the village.

Meantime, the remaining eleven available Guard battalions were formed up in squares, as an additional safeguard, along the Brussels road facing Plancenoit. Already under fire from the British guns, round shot from the Prussians to the east were now sweeping through their ranks.

About 7.00 p.m., when it seemed that one last effort might win the day, Napoleon ordered nine battalions of the Foot Guard to advance on the Allied position on Mont St Jean. Six only were immediately available, and one of these (the 2nd Battalion of the 3rd Grenadiers) was posted in reserve on a small rise between La Haye Sainte and Hougoumont. Three further battalions came up too late to be included in the attack and were posted at the foot of the slope leading up to La Haye Sainte, where they were formed into columns of attack. These three included the 1st Battalion of the 2nd Grenadiers.

At this point of the battle the Foot Grenadiers were disposed thus:

- 1st Grenadiers: both battalions in reserve near Rossommé.
- 2nd Grenadiers: 1st Battalion in support near La Haye Sainte;
2nd Battalion defending Plancenoit.
- 3rd Grenadiers: 1st Battalion taking part in the attack;
2nd Battalion posted between La Haye Saint and Hougoumont.
- 4th Grenadiers: Both battalions amalgamated and taking part in the attack.



Shako worn by officers of the Foot Grenadiers when detached to auxiliary regiments for duty

too much for the battle-weary Prussians and they began to recoil. Blücher came up at the gallop, and in attempting to stem the advance had his horse killed under him and was carried semi-conscious from the field. The centre of the Prussians was broken, but the wings held firm in retreat, and firing continued until a late hour.

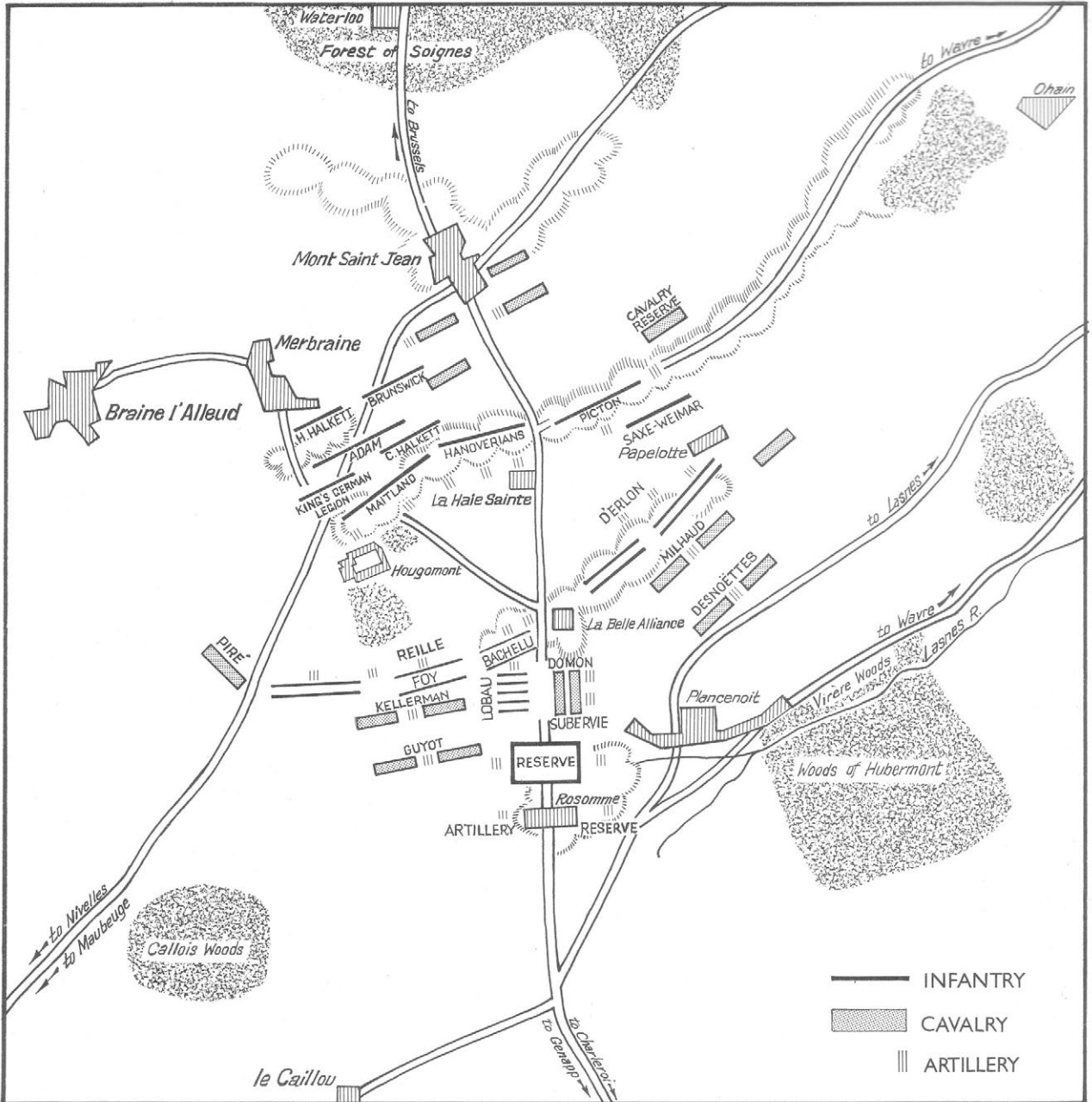
The Foot Grenadiers bivouacked near the shattered village of Ligny.

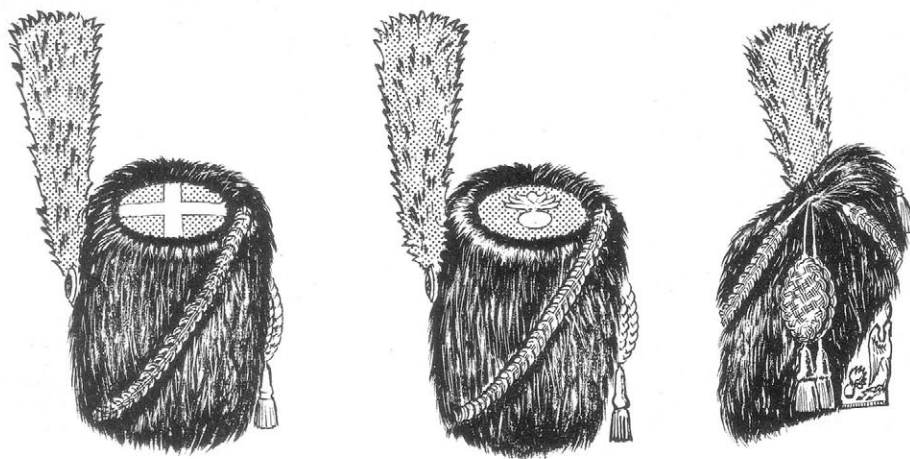
Two days later, at Waterloo, the armies of Wellington and Napoleon faced each other. After a night of marching across country in pouring rain the entire Foot Guard, deployed on both sides of the Brussels road near Rossommé, was the ultimate reserve behind the corps of Gen. Lobau. The veterans remained there until, at 4.00 p.m., Lobau moved to the right to bolster up that flank against increasing pressure from the east. Then the Foot Guard, except the 1st Grenadiers who stood fast at Rossommé and a chasseur battalion further

Slowly and deliberately the attacking columns of the Foot Guard moved up the slope towards the Allied position, swept by round shot and musketry, over the strewn bodies of the dead and wounded. The five battalions advanced separately at first, but some drew together as they marched, and it seems the attack was delivered in squares rather than columns, to counter possible cavalry attacks. The dense smoke of gunfire hung in great black clouds everywhere on the battlefield, contributing

to the lack of co-ordination in the assault. The different squares contacted the enemy in succession rather than simultaneously. First to strike was the right-hand battalion, the 1st of the 3rd Grenadiers, which reached the British position and caused a partial withdrawal by two regiments. A Belgian general directed the fire of a battery against the French and then ordered forward a brigade, which struck the French flank and hurled the Grenadiers back down the slope.

Battle of Waterloo, 18 June 1815





The bearskins show, left to right, the cross on the crown as worn by the Consular Guard; the grenade (shown in greater detail at far right) adopted by the Imperial Guard; and the side view of the Imperial Guard model. At far right above is the button at the base of the cockade. The two plaques are those of the Consular Guard and the Imperial Guard which replaced it

The second echelon was the 4th Grenadiers, which came into contact with General Halkett's brigade. This drew back at first, but then stood firm, and after a tremendous exchange of musketry the Grenadiers began to retire down the hill, meeting the other Guard battalions pouring back as they did so.

The final attack had failed and the French Army was in flight. The three supporting battalions, including the 1st of the 2nd Grenadiers, formed immediately into squares, but were at once engulfed by the stream of fugitives, and themselves broke up. They were joined by the 2nd

Battalion of the 3rd Grenadiers, which had been reduced by artillery fire to 300 men, and after beginning to retreat southwards was broken up by Allied cavalry attacks.

Fighting continued at Plancenoit for some time before the Prussians again seized the village and the Guards there had to fall back. The 2nd Battalion of the 2nd Grenadiers dispersed on nearing the squares of the 1st Grenadiers at Rossommé. This, the most senior of all the Guard regiments, held off the enemy until the Emperor had made good his escape. The remainder of the Guard was involved in the general ruin of Waterloo.

The Plates



A1 Pioneer, Consular Guard, 1802

The uniform is less elaborate than later varieties of the pioneer's outfit. The epaulettes are the plain red type as worn by the Grenadier, the only ornaments being the grenades on the crossbelts. The function of the wearer is indicated by crossed axes on the upper arm, and the special cock's head hilt of the pioneer's sabre can also be seen. Throughout the Consulate and the Empire the pioneer's bearskin did not have the front plaque.

A2 Grenadier (walking-out dress, winter), 1799–1815

The style of this dress never altered during the life of the Guard. The *sabre-briquet* is carried suspended from a crossbelt, and the bearskin is replaced by a *bicorné*. If the weather was very cold the greatcoat was also worn. An alternative winter walking-out dress was the *surtout* worn with white waistcoat, blue breeches and a high, hussar-type boot called the *souwarov*.

A3 Drum-major, Consular Guard (full dress), 1802

The Drum-major of the Foot Grenadiers of the Consular Guard was – like every Drum-major before or since – a splendid figure. This uniform was the basis of the later Imperial counterpart. The large *bicorné* laced with gold and ornamented with tri-coloured plumes, together with heavily laced crossbelt and gold-ornamented breeches, made up a most expensive outfit by any standards. The low, gold-fringed boots are noteworthy, and the whole figure is one of extreme opulence.

B1 Cymbalist, 1802

The reference for the painting of this rather spectacular individual is in a collection of engravings by Chataignier, but there does not appear to be any further evidence in this regard. Presumably it could not have been policy to employ Negroes especially for this office, and this man just happened to be available at the time.

B2 Musician, Consular Guard (full dress), 1802–3

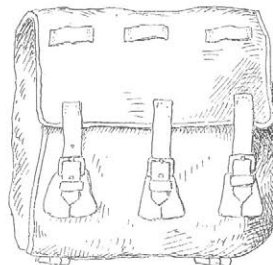
A collection of engravings by Potrelle is the source for this plate. The blue uniform with its crimson facings was retained as full dress until the end of the Empire. There are five buttonholes on the facings and the braid on each buttonhole has a small fringe on the inner extremity. Later the number of buttonholes was increased to seven. (See Plate F2.)

B3 Drummer (full dress), 1804–5

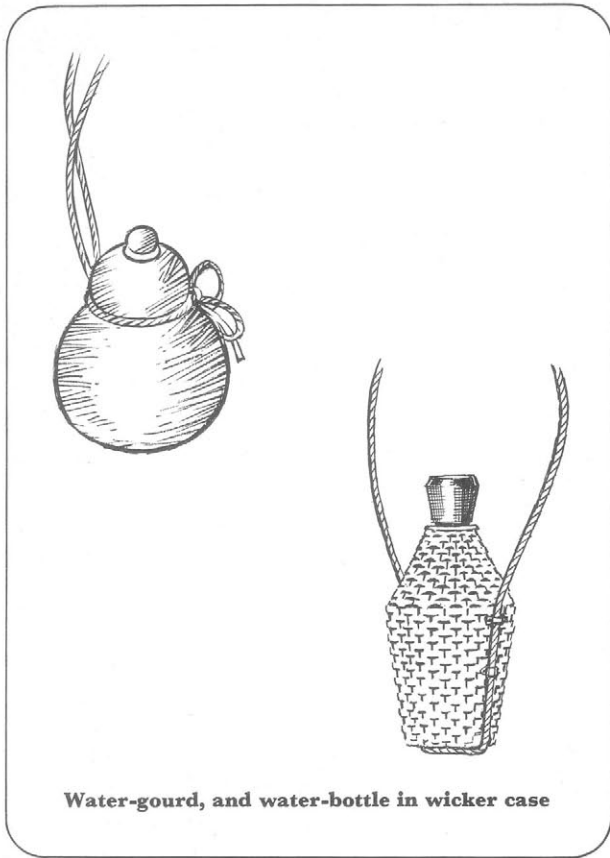
The first uniform of the drummers was most impressive. Red lace mixed with gold ornamented the edges of the white facings, collar, and the turn-back of the coat tails. The crossbelt supporting the drum bore the grenade motif and drumstick holders. The bearskin plaque was of brass at this time.

C1 Grenadier (parade dress), 1804–15

This is the conqueror's uniform worn in all the capitals of continental Europe from Madrid to Moscow, altering only very slightly during the years. Surprisingly simple in design, it is nevertheless extremely impressive: plain blue tunic with white facings and red cuffs and epaulettes; and the high black bearskin with bronze plaque and tall red plume.



Infantry haversack carried by the Imperial Guard



Water-gourd, and water-bottle in wicker case

is unusual. The pointed cuff belonged to the Foot Chasseurs of the Guard; but the plaque of the bearskin and the colour of the epaulettes leaves no doubt that the drummer is of the Grenadiers.

D2 Pioneer (field uniform), 1806-7

The simpler version of the pioneer's uniform worn on active service. In the field the long and exceptionally heavy pioneer's sabre was left in barracks and replaced by the short, curved *sabre-briquet* of the ordinary grenadier. The red-gold mixture continues to appear in the bearskin cords, however.

D3 Grenadier (field dress), 1806

This is the uniform worn throughout the campaigns of 1806 and 1807. The *surtout* at this time had seven large buttons, which were later increased to nine when the front of the coat was cut lower towards the waist. The plaque of the bearskin is of brass; it was later changed to bronze. Black gaiters would naturally be preferred to white in marching along dusty roads.

C2 Grenadier (active service order), 1805-15

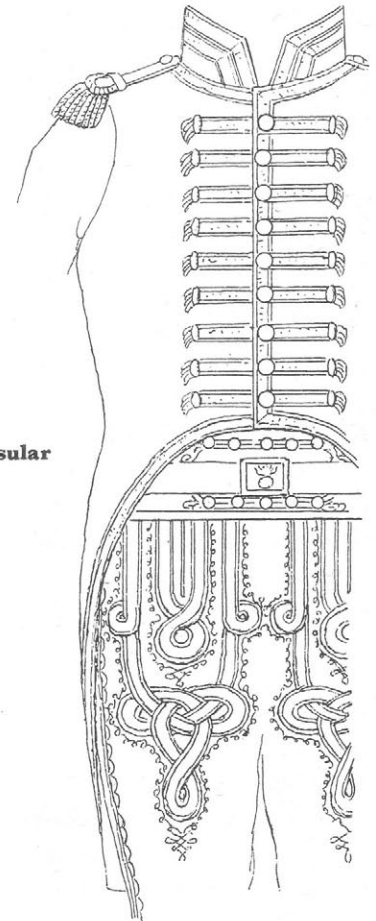
This is the uniform which epitomises the fighting grenadier of the Napoleonic era. On the march the bearskin plume was removed, rolled, and tied to the scabbard of the sabre. To avoid wear and tear of the gaiters they were worn inside the wide blue trousers.

C3 Grenadier (in greatcoat), 1804-15

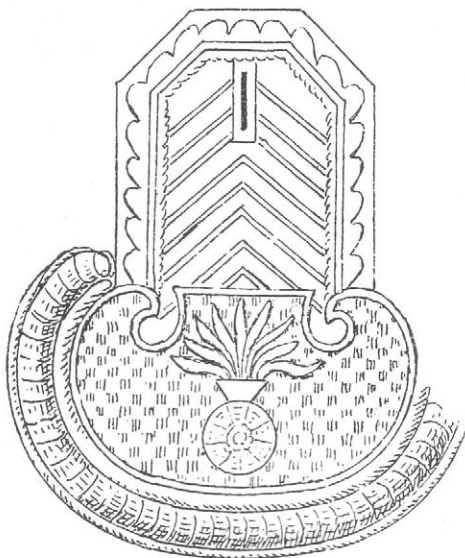
The initial issue of greatcoats to the Foot Grenadiers was made in December 1804. It is entirely of blue, double-breasted, with two rows of eight buttons. The usual red-fringed epaulettes were worn on the shoulder, kept in place by a red strap edged with white. The grenadier has removed both plume and cords from the bearskin, possibly anticipating a hard winter.

D1 Drummer (field uniform), 1805-7

The drummer is wearing the *surtout*, the coat without facings, buttoned straight down the front. The reference for this plate was a contemporary illustration, but the pointed (rather than square) cuff



Uniform of a Consular Guard cymbalist



Top of officer's epaulette

E1 Pioneer (full dress), 1810-14

In April 1810 the pioneers were given a most elaborate uniform ornamented with mixed red and gold braid on all seams of the coat and edges of the facings. The lace on the buttonholes ended in small red-gold fringes and the epaulette straps were also of gold. This very costly uniform was, of course, not worn on the march or on active service.

E2 Sergeant, 1809

This is the full-dress uniform without haversack or musket, and would probably be worn by a sergeant on orderly or barrack duty. The single diagonal gold stripe on the forearm indicates the rank. His epaulettes are mixed red and gold.

E3 Drum-major (full dress), 1810

This uniform was possibly first introduced in 1809. Gold braid has been attached in even greater profusion than on the Consular Guard counterpart at *A3*. The low boots have been replaced by hussar-type boots, gold-fringed and gold-tasselled in front. The only less elaborate accoutrement is the cross-belt, which shows rather more of its basic material than did the former type.

F1 Pioneer (walking-out dress), 1810-15

Worn instead of the more luxurious full dress. The plain *surtout* is simply decorated with gold lace on collar and cuffs (the latter without the white

patch), and the pioneer-type sabre is worn attached to a crossbelt. The *bicorné* is ornamented with a small, woollen, pear-shaped tuft. Breeches and gaiters are worn.

F2 Musician (undress uniform), 1810-14

This is the ordinary grenadier's coat with the addition of gold lace on cuffs and collar, together with the trefoil gold epaulette in place of the red-fringed one. The small straight sword is carried on a 'frog' attached to a belt worn under the front flap of the breeches, and the *bicorné* has a tall red plume. Black, half-length boots are the musician's standard footwear.

F3 Musician (full dress), 1810-11

Seven buttonholes on the facings of the coat characterise the later Imperial musician, plus the increased size and number of the hat plumes, and the half-boots in lieu of the former high-buttoned gaiters. The uniform is highly braided, with gold cord epaulettes. This uniform may well be the one introduced on the occasion of the marriage of Napoleon to Marie Louise, when a great deal of money was spent on bringing the Guard up to a new peak of magnificence.

G1 Sergeant-major (walking-out dress, summer), 1811-15

This is the later nine-button version of the *surtout*, ornamented with the two diagonal stripes of gold lace indicating the wearer's rank. Not unnaturally he has two gold long-service chevrons on the left upper arm; and like most sergeant-majors the ribbon of the Legion of Honour. Epaulettes are fringed with a mixture of red and gold (later they were completely gold). Breeches, stockings and buckled shoes complete a very effective ensemble.



Detail of button from uniform of Grenadiers of the Guard of the Directory



G2 Corporal, 3rd (Dutch) Regiment (full dress), 1811-12

This most attractive but predominantly white uniform must have been a trifle impractical. The corporal's rank is indicated by two yellow stripes (not gold) on the forearm; facings are crimson, plume red. No plaque was worn on the front of the bearskin.

G3 Grenadier (marching order), 1812-14

The greatcoat with red patch on the stand-up collar and red piping round the cuffs comes from a contemporaneous source, but there might be some doubt about its validity. It is thought the

bicorne was last worn in the field in 1809. Before the Battle of Essling in 1809 every man put on his bearskin and discarded his *bicorne* by throwing it into the Danube! *Bicornes* were issued again in 1811 but, as they were apparently so unpopular, it might be asked whether they were ever worn in the field again.

H1 Fifer, 3rd (Dutch) Regiment (undress uniform), 1812

The uniform is white with crimson collar, facings and cuffs, the lace being partly gold. In this instance the gaiters are black, the white being reserved for full dress. The bearskin is without the plaque worn by the 1st and 2nd Foot Grenadiers.

H2 Drum-major, 3rd (Dutch) Regiment (undress uniform), 1812

Blue *surtout* and breeches; black, gold-laced, hussar-type boots. Collar and cuffs of the distinctive crimson. The high *bicorne* is gold-laced and bears a tall white plume. A long sabre is carried in a black, gold-ornamented scabbard.

H3 Drum-major (undress uniform), 1812-14

Even the Drum-major had to have an undress uniform, but it was still of some magnificence, with heavy gold braid on the collar and gold epaulettes. The boots are similar to cavalry boots, possibly an affectation. The uniform was worn on occasions of military ceremonial not meriting full dress. For 'working' dress, blue trousers or breeches would be worn.

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CHARLES GRANT has had a lifelong interest in militaria and is a passionate war-gamer. He has written for many military publications including the *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*; is editor of *Slingshot*, the journal of the Society of Ancients; and is a regular contributor to *Tradition*. He has two books to be published shortly on modern and eighteenth-century war-gaming. Scottish-born, and a retired officer of the Special Branch, Scotland Yard, he is married with two children and now lives in Kent.

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