

Warrior

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# Redcoat Officer

1740–1815



Stuart Reid • Illustrated by Gerry Embleton

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The Publishers regret that they can enter into no  
correspondence upon this matter.

## Dedication

To James Edward Urquhart (1747–1811)  
Upwards of 40 years' service and only five shillings a day to  
show for it.

## Acknowledgements

All illustrations are author's own collection unless otherwise  
indicated.

## Technical Note

In Britain at this time precise sums of money were  
expressed as pounds, shillings and pence – usually  
rendered as £.s.d. There were 20 shillings to the pound  
sterling, and 12 pence or pennies in the shilling. To begin  
with, the pound itself was only a notional denomination  
and the actual unit of currency for large transactions  
was normally a gold guinea piece worth £1 1s sterling. A  
shortage of bullion during the Napoleonic Wars resulted in  
the issue of paper bank-notes whose value was expressed  
in whole pounds, but many transactions were still  
expressed in notional guineas.

**FRONT COVER** On 6 January 1781, about 800 French  
troops landed on Jersey and briefly seized St. Helier. The  
Lieutenant-Governor, Major Corbet, was captured and  
forced to sign a capitulation for the whole island, but Major  
Thomas Pierson of the 95th Foot refused to recognise it,  
and counter-attacked. After a fire-fight in the town square  
the French surrendered. Unfortunately Pierson was killed,  
as depicted here in a magnificent painting by the American  
born artist John Singleton Copley. (© Tate, London 2001)

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# REDCOAT OFFICER 1740-1815

## INTRODUCTION

In any army the officers are to some extent set apart from the men they lead. Their role, social background and status are often very different. As Lieutenant Nathaniel Hood of the 40th Foot rather pompously wrote: 'Soldiers are but soldiers, and officers are soldiers and gentlemen. Under this consideration the line of distinction is preserved, the profession, through all its tracts of honour, guarded ...' In the 18th century this distinction was by no means as clear-cut as Hood and some of his colleagues may have liked, and as this study will show, the gulf between officers and men, although very real, was by no means as wide as is popularly believed, or indeed even as wide as it became in Victorian times. Nevertheless, the way in which officers in the armies of King George I, George II and George III were recruited equipped and trained was certainly different, and while ultimately they shared many of the hardships and dangers endured by their men, their experience of war was not the same.

## CHRONOLOGY

This select chronology aims to provide a temporal framework for the Georgian army, and an indication of how widely it campaigned, but is not intended to be fully comprehensive.

1740	Expedition to Carthage
	Battle of Dettingen (Germany)
1745-57	Duke of Cumberland: Captain General of Army (C. in C.)
1745	Battle of Fontenoy (Flanders)
	Battle of Prestonpans (Scotland)
1746	Battle of Culloden (Scotland)
1747	Battle of Lauffeldt (Flanders)
1754	French capture Fort Necessity
	First regular battalion (39th) to India
1755	Braddock defeated on Monongahela
1756	French capture Fort Oswego
1757	French capture Fort William Henry
	Battle of Plassey (India)
1758	Abercrombie defeated at Ticonderoga
	Amherst takes Louisburg
1759	Battle of Minden (Germany)
	Capture of Quebec
1760	Battle of Wandewash (India)
	Battle of Warburg (Germany)
1761	Belle Isle Expedition (France)
1763	Pontiac's Rebellion

OPPOSITE This illustration is copied from one of a remarkable series of watercolour sketches by an officer named William Loftie, who served in the 16th Foot for over 20 years between 1793 and 1815. Most of his output dates from around 1800 and records some wide variations from the regulations. This officer of the 21st Regiment (or Royal North British Fusiliers), 1801, presents a number of interesting features such as the Tarleton helmet worn in place of a fusilier cap, and the short jacket with blue facings and gold lace which might indicate a member of the light company were it not for the white hackle in his helmet. Note also the very distinctive non-regulation pointed cuffs.

1775	Battle of Bunker Hill
1776	Capture of New York
1777	Battle of Brandywine Creek
	Battle of Saratoga
1778	Battle of Monmouth
1779	Defence of Savannah
1780	Battle of Camden
1781	Unsuccessful French attack on Jersey
	Cornwallis surrenders at Yorktown
1783	British Army evacuates New York
	Siege of Cuddalore (India)
1791	Capture of Srirangapatnam
1793-95	Lord Amherst (C. in C.)
1793	Expeditionary force sent to Flanders
	Expeditionary force sent to St. Domingo (Haiti)
1794	Capture of Port au Prince (St. Domingo/Haiti)
	Capture of Martinique
1795	Evacuation of British troops from Holland/Germany
1795-1809	Duke of York (C. in C.)
1796	Expedition to Cape (South Africa)
	Maroon Revolt on Jamaica
1798	Evacuation of British troops from St. Domingo
	Rebellion in Ireland
1799	Helder Expedition (Holland)
	Storming of Srirangapatnam (India)
1800	Ferrol Expedition (Spain)
	Liberation of Malta
1801	Expedition to Egypt
	Defence of Elba
1803	Battle of Assaye (India)
	Capture of St. Lucia
1804	Expedition to Surinam (South America)
1805	Expedition to Hanover (Germany)
1806	Expedition to Buenos Aires
	Battle of Maida (Italy)
1807	Expedition to Copenhagen
	Capture of Curacao
1808	Opening campaigns of Peninsular War
1809-11	Gen. David Dundas (C. in C.)
1809	Walcheren Expedition (Holland)
	Battle of Talavera (Spain)
1810	Battle of Busaco (Portugal)
	Capture of Guadaloupe
1811-27	Duke of York (C. in C.)
1811	Battle of Fuentes d'Onoro (Portugal)
	Battle of Albuera (Spain)
1812	Battle of Salamanca (Spain)
	Battle of Queenston Heights (Canada)
1813	Battle of Vittoria (Spain)
	Battle of Crysler's Farm (Canada)
1814	Battle of Toulouse ends Peninsular War
	Battle of Lundy's Lane (Canada)
1815	Battle of New Orleans (USA)
	Battle of Waterloo



## THE STRUCTURE OF AN INFANTRY REGIMENT

The primary aim of this study of redcoat officers is to describe the men who served as infantry officers in the army between 1740 and 1815, how they went about joining and how they were trained and promoted. However, it will be helpful to put them in context by taking a brief look at the command structure of a typical infantry regiment.

For most of the time under discussion, an infantry regiment had just one battalion. There were exceptions; second battalions were often added in wartime but it was very rare for both battalions to actually serve together and to all intents and purposes they were normally independent of each other.

The regiment was commanded by a colonel; in the early days he gave the regiment its name and actually led it in the field. However, from the mid-18th century onwards his role was no more than an administrative one. He was in fact a *colonel-proprietor*, or *inhaber*, and actual command was exercised by his notional deputy, the lieutenant-colonel, assisted by the major.

Throughout this period infantry battalions were normally made up of ten companies, each commanded by a captain, and until 25 May 1803, three of the captains also ranked as field officers; the colonel, lieutenant colonel and major. However, on 1 September 1795 an additional lieutenant-colonel and major were added to the establishment of each battalion. These additional officers, unlike their existing counterparts, did not have to look after a company as well as carrying out their regimental duties. A subsequent War Office circular dated 27 May 1803, stated that '... in future each Troop and Company throughout the Army shall have an effective Captain, and therefore that the Colonels, First Lieutenant Colonels, and First Majors, in the respective Regiments, shall no longer have Troops or Companies.' At the same time three captains were added to the establishment in order to take over the vacated companies – abolishing the rank of captain-lieutenant in the process.

Until 1803 it was the captain-lieutenant that actually commanded the colonel's own company. He occupied an ambiguous position in that he was the senior lieutenant in the regiment and paid accordingly, but in practice he normally enjoyed the status of junior captain, and was entitled to be addressed as such. Moreover, when he received any subsequent promotion, his seniority as a fully fledged captain was counted from the date of his earlier appointment as captain-lieutenant rather than the actual date of his promotion to the higher rank.

This can be seen in the example of Lieutenant James Urquhart, who became Captain-Lieutenant of the 14th Foot on 22 December 1772, and as such remained junior to all the captains until 10 December 1775. On that date he succeeded to the command of a company and then ranked as third in order of seniority, ahead of five other officers who had been promoted directly to captain in the intervening period and had, until that moment, outranked him.

The lieutenant was normally second in command of the company. Originally there was only one lieutenant to each company (including the captain-lieutenant), but grenadier companies had two since their

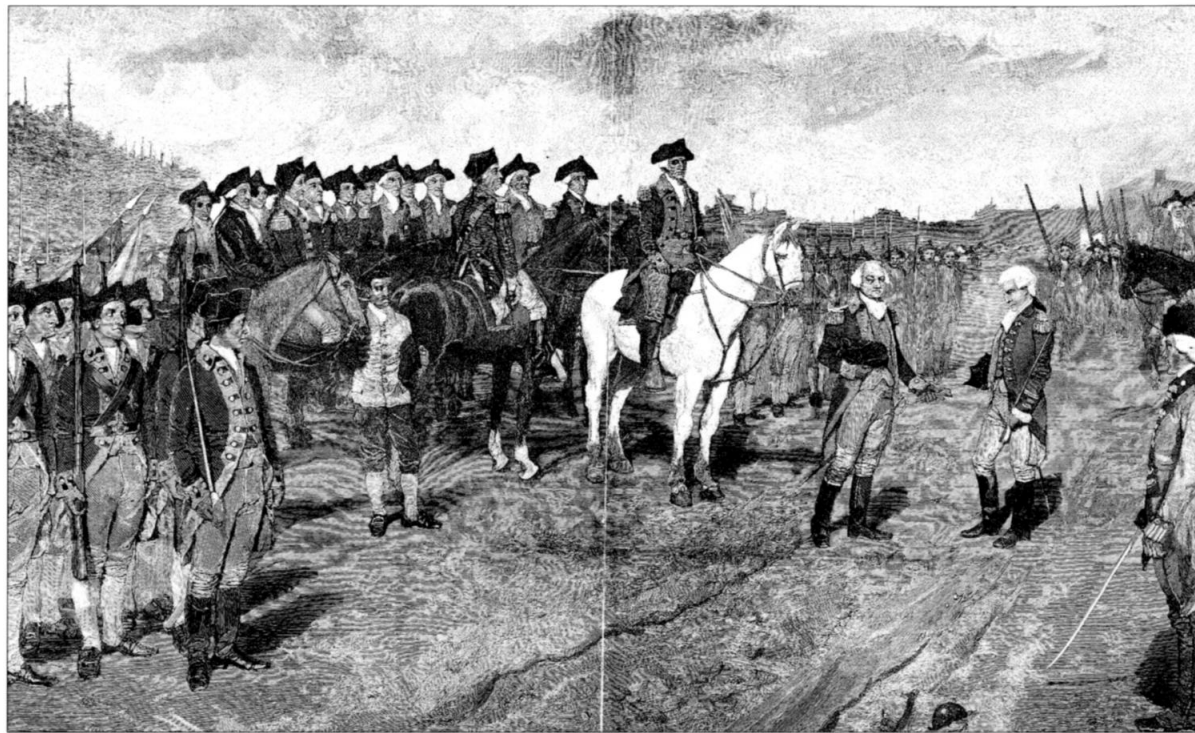
officers needed to be men of some experience. There was also a long-standing practise of taking on an additional lieutenant in wartime. These additional officers were the first to be placed on half-pay on the outbreak of peace and should not be confused with the second lieutenant. Ordinarily, the most junior commissioned officer in the company was the ensign (although Grenadier companies had none), and in Fusilier regiments they were designated as second lieutenants, although this was merely a terminological distinction.

In addition to the company grade or line officers in each infantry battalion, there were four regimental staff officers; surgeon, chaplain, quartermaster, paymaster and adjutant.

The surgeon held his commission by virtue of his professional standing and his status was on a par with a captain when it came to the allocation of billets and allowances.

**Sir William Howe, the British Commander-in-Chief in North America during the early part of the Revolutionary War. Although he never lost a battle, he failed to destroy the embryonic American Army.**





**Brigadier-General Charles O'Hara  
surrenders to Major-General  
Lincoln at Yorktown in 1781.**

Chaplains were rarely encountered in the army, especially on foreign postings. The appointment was really a sinecure in the gift of the colonel, and so flagrantly abused as such that on 23 September 1796, a Royal Warrant abolished regimental chaplains. Those already appointed (few if any actually spent any time at all with their unit) were pensioned off and no more were taken on. Instead, all future religious care was to be exercised by brigade or garrison chaplains, acting under the authority of the chaplain-general, but otherwise commanding officers of a religious mind were encouraged to seek the services of any local clergymen.

Although quartermasters' commissions were originally purchasable – like any other – this practice was forbidden by George III in 1779: 'the proper persons to be recommended for quartermasters are active Sergeants, His Majesty not thinking the office very fit for men of better extraction and consequently very improper for a Captain'. Nevertheless, there was nothing to prevent a quartermaster who had risen from the ranks subsequently holding an ensign's commission by purchase. A particularly good example was Alexander Davidson, who was commissioned quartermaster of 1/1st (Royal) on 28 May 1782. Ten years later, while the battalion was on Jamaica, he obtained an ensign's commission and he would have been promoted to lieutenant in October 1794 but died before the good news reached him on St. Domingo.

Prior to 1797 the paymaster's job, oddly enough, was held on a part-time basis by one of the company officers – almost invariably one of the captains. He did not hold rank as such, but took on the job in addition to his ordinary military duties after providing suitable financial securities. This was a hangover from the days when each captain ran his own company and expected to profit from doing so, but on 18 November 1797, a circular letter from the War Office advised that all

existing appointments would cease as of 24 December. Those nominated to fill the position after that date were to be properly commissioned as such; but while they were to rank with the captains, it was strictly laid down that they were not to undertake ordinary regimental duties, assume military command, or expect promotion.

The adjutant was expected to act as assistant to the major, look after the drill of recruits (including newly commissioned ensigns) and generally take responsibility for administration. The appointment was traditionally given to keen young lieutenants, or (much less commonly) to ensigns. On 10 June 1802, a War Office circular laid down that they were no longer to receive their subaltern's pay and were to be borne on the regiment's books as supernumeraries in whatever rank they presently held. Those adjutants not already holding subalterns' commissions were to rank as ensigns as of 25 May 1802, and while they would initially draw pay for that rank, they would subsequently rise in seniority accordingly.

## THE OFFICERS

Studies of the social origins and backgrounds of 18th-century army officers suggest that in 1780 some 24 percent of them were members of the aristocracy – including numerous untitled younger sons and grandsons of peers – while a further 16 percent were drawn from the old landed gentry or baronetage (which, socially, amounted to pretty much the same thing). Together, therefore, they accounted for some 40 percent of all officers, which would at first sight appear to confirm popular impressions. However, after 1800, these upper-class officers were disproportionately concentrated in the Household units, particularly in the even more fashionable Hussar regiments. This is starkly illustrated by the fact that while only 19.5 percent of first commissions were being purchased in 1810, they accounted for 44 percent of the ensigns in the Guards and 47 percent of cavalry cornets.

An interesting contemporary comment on the situation can be found in a letter written by Ensign William Thornton Keep of 2/28th in 1812: 'Many of our Gents are restless to remove from the infantry to cavalry, particularly if at all aristocratically inclined, for the latter though expensive is considered the most dashing service, and is generally selected by young men of good fortune and family. The consequence is that officers of the infantry hold themselves in very low estimation comparatively.' In fact, another recent study suggests that during the American Revolutionary War only 7 percent of ordinary infantry officers serving in the line were from the aristocracy, titled or otherwise, and another 5 percent from the baronetage, thereby accounting for just 12 percent of the total, as against 40 percent in the army at large.

**This sitter is normally identified as Lieutenant-General Simon Fraser (d.1782), but despite the distinctive Lovat features, the style of the uniform suggests he is actually another officer of that name who was promoted Major-General on 3 May 1796, and who subsequently served as a Lieutenant-General in Portugal. (Private Collection)**



Consequently the social distribution could be very uneven. Some regiments certainly prided themselves on maintaining a 'select' officer corps, while others must have been much more workaday in style. The 34th Foot, for example, were famously known in the Napoleonic period as 'The Cumberland Gentlemen', and John le Couteur of the 104th smugly recorded in his diary for 31 October 1814 that: 'Sir James (Kempt) was pleased to say that He had never seen a mess so like the establishment of a private family of distinction.' The officers' mess of the 39th Foot in the 1740s' on the other hand, was a much more robust establishment in which Lieutenant Dawkins once threatened to cut his major's throat!

In peacetime the army maintained a reduced establishment in which promotions and appointments by purchase naturally predominated, but in wartime, with a greater number of casualties occurring, it was a very different matter. Not only was the creation of officers within existing regiments increased, but a whole host of new regiments were raised, all in turn requiring a steady supply of officers. If too many of those officers became casualties they too would have to be replaced by yet more aspiring heroes. The expansion of the army resulted in an exponentially large demand for officers, and since this demand was not matched by a corresponding increase of the birth-rate of the gentry and the aristocracy, the additional officers had to be drawn from a much wider social base.



Officers in undress c.1812 by John Luard, who served in the Peninsula with the 4th Dragoons. From right to left: an assistant surgeon in a rather short-looking frock coat, a dagoon, an infantryman and a staff officer.

While the eventual abolition of purchase in 1870 tends to be hailed as a thoroughly good thing, it actually had no discernible effect on the social composition of the British Army. By 1830 the percentage of officers drawn from the aristocracy and landed gentry had risen to 53 percent and, despite the abolition of purchase 40 years later, the Army remained firmly in the hands of what by then had become a pretty homogenous officer 'caste'. In fact its officers continued to be drawn from that very level of society which would have been best placed to purchase commissions previously. Indeed, at the time of its abolition some opponents of purchase even argued that its removal would actually ensure the proper predominance of the landed gentry by excluding the *nouveau riche* with only their money to commend them.

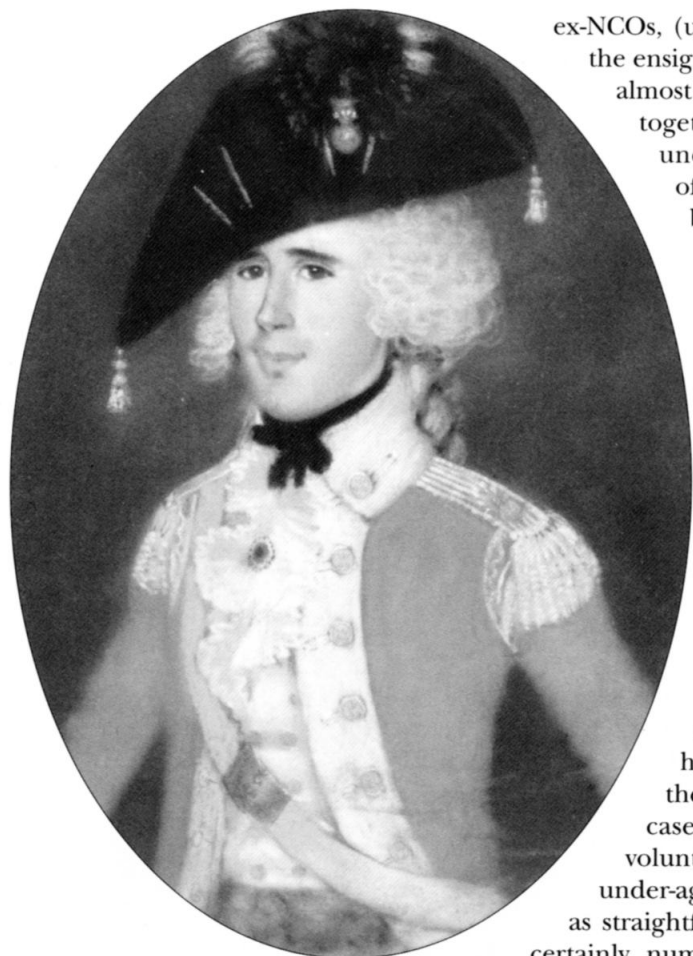
By contrast the Georgian Army drew its officers from a far wider base than its later counterpart and was much more open to promotion from the ranks. Ensign John le Couteur was rather snobbish about this, declaring in 1812 that: 'In those days of raging wars, all sorts of men obtained Commissions, some without education, some without means, some without either, and many of low birth.'

While all officers were officially designated gentlemen, if only by virtue of their commissions, the reality was that the majority of Georgian ones were the sons, legitimate or otherwise, of soldiers, clergymen, the professions, and even tradesmen. They were, as one of them put it, merely 'private gentlemen without the advantage of Birth and friends'. Some of them could certainly afford to purchase their commissions, or could at least borrow sufficient money for the purpose, but all too often they lacked it and for the most part applied for non-purchase vacancies.

A significant number of officers began their military careers in the ranks. During the 1800s *The London Gazette* not only recorded whether a commission was purchased, but also very helpfully noted whether the recipient was a volunteer, a former NCO, or simply a private gentleman. Analysing the *Gazette* entries, it has been estimated that some 4.5 percent of newly commissioned subalterns were volunteers – young men who served in the ranks, often for years on end, in the hope of being on the spot when any non-purchase vacancies arose. From the same source it appears that a further 5.4 percent were



Field officer 1st (Royal) Regiment 1804 after Loftie; an interesting illustration depicting the optional (and expensive) gold thread embroidered coat allowed to be worn by those officers of this regiment.



This rather dandified officer of the 44th evidently belongs to his regiment's grenadier company. Note the wings and epaulettes on both shoulders embroidered with a grenade badge, and the grenade badge in his cocked hat. (Private Collection)

ex-NCOs, (up from 3 percent before 1793) exclusive of the ensigns appointed to Veteran Battalions who were almost invariably drawn from the ranks. Taken together the two categories account for just under 10 percent of newly commissioned officers. However, there is good reason to believe that the true figure may actually be higher for this analysis takes no account of an unknown number of men who served in the ranks as private soldiers rather than as volunteers before being commissioned. Perhaps the most notable example of this practice occurred in 1799 when five privates of the then 100th (Gordon) Highlanders were directly commissioned from the ranks. All five had enlisted when the regiment was first raised in 1794 and since one was described as a tailor, and the other four were labourers, it can safely be assumed that none were volunteers.

Whatever his social background, the regulations stated that a prospective ensign had to be aged between 16 and 21, although the upper limit was routinely waived in the case of commissioned rankers and officers volunteering from the Militia. When it came to under-aged officers, the position was by no means as straightforward as it might first appear. There are certainly numerous instances of children being given commissions. James Wolfe, the celebrated conqueror of

Quebec, joined the 12th Foot at the age of 15, which seems to have been pretty average for much of the 18th century. There are numerous examples of very young children being entered on regimental books, but the prominence attached to such cases suggests that it was well recognised as an abuse rather than the norm. On the other hand that abuse was afforded a dubious official endorsement by the occasional granting of non-purchase commissions to the deserving orphans of dead officers. Nevertheless, they accounted for only a very small proportion of those carried on the *Army List*. In a random sample of ten regimental inspection reports of 1791, the youngest officers turned up were aged 16 and the average age was 21.

It is, in any case, important to approach the question from an 18th- rather than a 21st-century perspective. Although children were legally considered as infants until the ripe old age of 21, they normally began their working lives – or at least entered upon apprenticeships – between the ages of 12 and 15, so there was no reason why those contemplating a military career should not do likewise. The situation was exactly paralleled in the Royal Navy, where there was a long-standing practise of entering very young children on ships' books in order to (quite fraudulently) increase their sea-time and thus assist their eventual careers by boosting their notional seniority.

## PURCHASE AND PROMOTION

There were a number of avenues by which an aspiring officer could obtain his first commission: either by purchase or by obtaining a free vacancy. For most of the 18th century the regimental agent provided the first point of contact, although from 1793 onwards, direct application could be made to the Commander-in-Chief of the regiment. In many cases these applications and any accompanying testimonials as to the young man's fitness to serve his King were endorsed or even written by commanding officers. However, where there was no such recommendation, the applicants tended to be offered commissions in colonial formations such as 2/60th on Antigua, or in one of the West India regiments.

A typical example came from Lieutenant James O'Neil of the 94th Foot, writing to the Duke of York on 16 December 1795: 'Memorialist has had the honour to serve 19 years a Subaltern and purchased his first Commission and is now the oldest Lieutenant in the Service. That your Memorialist is not able to purchase a promotion having a Family of 5 Children, two of them Sons able to Serve. One of whom, James O'Neil, he has fitted out at an inconvenient Expence. And he is gone a Volunteer with the present Expedition to the West Indies. Your Memorialist could not afford to fit out his second son Arthur as a Volunteer on an uncertainty, And has some hopes that Sir Ralph Abercrombie may Notice his son James on service. Your Memorialist as an old officer with a heavy family and no mode of providing for them humbly prays your Royal Highness will please to recommend his two sons to His Majesty for Ensigns Commissions, or please to recommend himself for a Company on any service.'

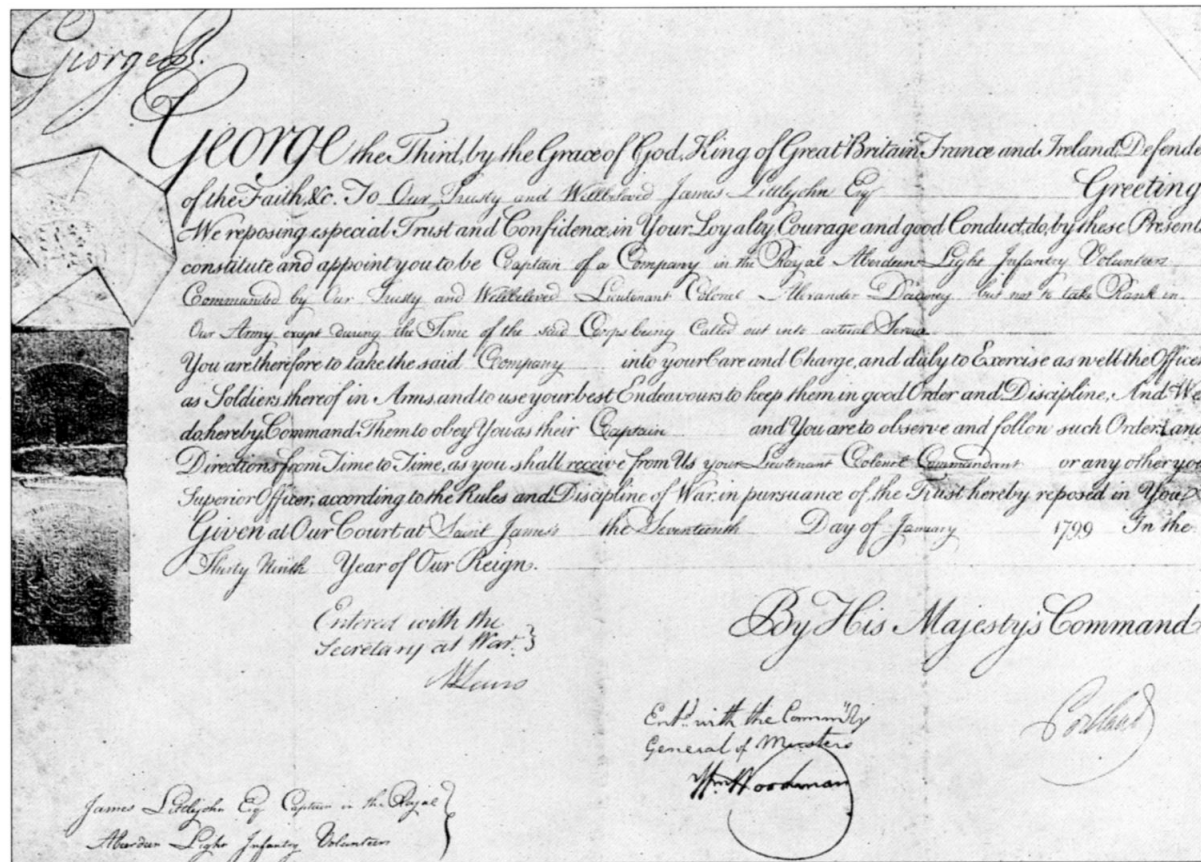
This particular appeal was partly successful in that both sons were appointed ensigns in 4/60th as of 16 December, but although O'Neil himself went to the 22nd Foot in consequence of the reduction of the 94th, he does not appear in the 1797 *Army List*.

Generally speaking however the colonel's backing was crucial in obtaining a commission, particularly as he also had the right to approve any applications to purchase vacant commissions.

While all three King Georges were opposed to the purchase of commissions no realistic, or at least acceptable, alternative had presented itself during the 18th century. The Army is often criticised for giving no serious consideration to introducing a system of regimental promotions based entirely on merit. While this might appear surprising, there were in fact widespread political as well as professional objections to any proposals of this nature, since it was considered that regimental promotion would then come to depend upon patronage. In fact, although the gentlemen of the Navy pointedly looked down on the alleged lack of professionalism in the Army, the professional examinations, or *vivas* which supposedly

Sir John Cradock:  
Cornet 4th Horse 1777, Ensign  
2nd Footguards 1779, Lieutenant  
and Captain 1781. Major  
12th Dragoons 1785, Major  
13th Foot 1786, Lieutenant-Served  
colonel 16 June 1789. Served  
in West Indies under Grey in  
command of 2/Grenadiers,  
Colonel 127th Foot 16 April 1795  
– reduced. Colonel 2/54th –  
reduced. Major-General  
1 January 1797. Served on staff  
in Mediterranean and Egypt  
1801, then Corsica, Madras and  
Portugal. Colonel 23rd Fusiliers  
2 January 1809.





governed promotion in that service were wholly concerned with the unique skills associated with ship-handling and maritime navigation. Once a candidate had successfully 'passed' as a lieutenant his subsequent career depended entirely on seniority and patronage.

In order to purchase a commission a young gentleman had first to obtain the approval of the regimental colonel, then deposit the required sum of money with the relevant regimental agent. The colonel, or more commonly the agent acting on his behalf, would then forward the applicant's name and any letters of recommendation to the Adjutant General's office at the Horse Guards for approval by the Commander-in-Chief. This was normally a formality and once the initial commission had been obtained, subsequent steps could be purchased in exactly the same manner. The colonel would request that the officer in question be allowed to purchase the desired promotion or exchange with a named officer in another unit. If a particularly ambitious officer could find no vacancy in his own regiment, the agent could always be relied upon to find one in another of the regiments in his 'management portfolio'.

Throughout most of the 18th century there was an officially regulated price for commissions. In peacetime – and to a rather more limited extent in wartime – it was also customary to smooth progress by paying something more on top, but for the meantime it is important to appreciate that the regulated price represented what might be termed the absolute value of a particular commission, not the sum which actually changed hands.

**The King's commission; all officers derived their authority and accounted their seniority from this all-important document. This particular example is made out in favour of James Littlejohn Esq., a captain in the Royal Aberdeen Light Infantry Volunteers. Exactly the same form (printed in a cursive typeface) was used for regular commissions.**

This requires some explanation. In the 1790s the regulation price of an ensign's commission in an infantry regiment was £400, and leaving aside the usual fees and anything else which might be clandestinely agreed, this is exactly what it cost him. A lieutenant's commission was valued at £500, but all that actually changed hands in purchasing it was the 'difference' of £100 and similarly with a captain's commission valued at £1,500, a lieutenant who wished to buy his way up only had to find the difference of £1,000. Should he then decide to realise his investment by selling out, the £1,500 was made up by reversing the process. That was what he was paid by the three officers benefiting from his departure. His immediate successor paid him £1,000 for his captaincy, another £100 came from the ensign moving up into the lieutenant's place, and the balance came from the young gentleman paying the full price for the ensigncy. Although at first sight the process might appear cumbersome it was actually quite straightforward since all the paperwork and cash transactions were normally handled by the regimental agent.

### Free vacancies

Although purchase might justifiably be regarded as the mainspring of the promotion system, seniority also played a very considerable part in determining how an officer's career progressed. It was the sole regulating factor in both the Ordnance and East India Company service, but its importance in the King's service should not be overlooked. For instance, if an officer died the senior man in the grade below obtained the vacancy without payment and everyone else shuffled up behind him until eventually a free vacancy was created for a new ensign. Free vacancies also arose when an officer was dismissed from the service by the sentence of a court-martial. In this case however it was an invariable rule that the cashiered officer would be replaced by a man brought in from outside the regiment in order to avoid any suggestion that his colleagues might gain from convicting him. In addition, when a commission did become vacant by purchase it was the senior man who had the right of first refusal.

However, it was not always as straightforward as it might at first appear. An officer's seniority in the army was primarily determined by the date of his commission as it appeared in the official *Army List*. Ordinarily this also determined his standing within his regiment, but it was quite possible for Army and Regimental seniority to be at variance. Any difference was obvious when an officer exchanged from one regiment into another or joined from the half-pay

**The London Gazette: officers' commissions and appointments were officially announced in this weekly journal; hence the term 'gazetted'.**

Number 15856. [ 1341 ]

# The London Gazette.

Published by Authority.

From Tuesday October 29, to Saturday November 2, 1805.

War-Office, November 2, 1805.

**HIS MAJESTY** has been pleased to appoint

**MAJOR-GENERALS**

Andrew Cowell,  
James Vesiter,  
Joseph Duffians,  
Colin Mackenzie,  
Archibald Robertson,  
John Dickson,  
Miles Sisveicy,  
John Money,  
Thomas Murray,  
James Edward Urquhart,  
George Churchill,  
Eyre Power Trench,  
George Beckwith,  
Thomas Roberts,  
Honorable Sir George James Ludlow, K. B.  
Sir John Moore, K. B.  
Richard Earl of Cavan,  
Sir David Baird, Knt.  
Honorable Henry Ashley Bennett,  
Honorable Frederick St. John,  
Sir Charles Redf, Bart.  
John Whiteclocke,  
Hay MacDowall,  
Lord Charles Henry Somerset,  
John Defpard,  
William Anne Villettes,  
William Wemyss.

To be **LIEUTENANT-GENERALS** in the Army.

**COLONELS**

Stapleton Cotton, of the 16th Light Dragoons,  
Samuel Dalrymple, of the 3d Foot Guards,  
William Johnstone, of ditto,  
Rowland Hill, of the 90th Foot,  
Honorable William Stapleton, on Half-Pay of the late 31st Light Dragoons,  
Denzil Onslow, on Half-Pay of the late 97th Foot.  
John Murray, of the 84th Foot,  
William Twiss, of the Royal Engineers,  
Honorable Charles Hope, of the 7th Dragoon Guards,  
Richard Mark Dickens, of the 34th Foot,  
Sir George Pigot, Bart. on Half-Pay of the 150th Foot.

Frederick Maitland, of the 20th Foot,  
John Leveon Gower, on Half-Pay of the late 10th Grenadier Battalion,  
Martin Hunter, of the New Brunfick Fencibles,  
John Lord Elphinstone, of the 26th Foot,  
Richard Earl of Donoughmore, on Half-Pay of the 112th Foot,  
John Abercrombie, of the 53d Foot,  
Sir George Charles Braithwaite Boughton, Bart. on Half-Pay of the late 113th Foot,  
To be **MAJOR-GENERALS** in the Army.

**LIEUTENANT-COLONELS**

Thomas Mahon, of the 9th Light Dragoons,  
John Shaw Maxwell, on Half-Pay of the late 23d Light Dragoons,  
William Thomas Dikes, of the 3d Foot Guards,  
Henry Rudyerd, of the Royal Invalid Engineers,  
John Oswald, of the 35th Foot,  
John Gaspard Le Marchant,  
James Hadley, of the Royal Artillery,  
James Catlin Craufurd, of the 91st Foot,  
William Doyle, of the 62d Foot,  
John Hutton, of the 66th Foot,  
Pinfon Bonham, of the 69th Foot,  
John Basset, of the 12th Foot,  
William Anson, of the 18th Foot Guards,  
John Bouchier, of the late Royal Artillery in Ireland,  
Isaac Brock, of the 49th Foot,  
Lord Evelyn Stuart, of the 22d Foot,  
Robert Nicholson, of the Royals,  
George William Ramfay, of the 60th Foot,  
Robert Craufurd, on Half-Pay of the 60th Foot,  
To be **COLONELS** in the Army.

War-Office, November 2, 1805.

1st Regiment of Life Guards, Cornet and Sub-Lieutenant Henry Britton to be Lieutenant, by Purchase, vice Livingstone, promoted in the 60th Foot.  
Thomas Berdimore, Gent. to be Cornet and Sub-Lieutenant, by Purchase, vice White, promoted.  
John Tomkyns, Gent. to be Cornet and Sub-Lieutenant, by Purchase, vice Herbert, promoted.  
Sir George Pigot, Bart. on Half-Pay of the 150th Foot, Major Charles Luther Watton to be Lieutenant-Colonel, without



Officers' seniority was recorded in the annual *Army List*. In this extract from the 1794 edition officers of 1/1st (Royal) Regiment are listed by their regimental commission dates in their respective ranks. The column on the right however records the original date on which an officer reached that rank in the army, either by brevet or when serving in another unit.

76 First (or the Royal) Regt. of Foot (1st. Bat.)			
Rank.	Name.	Rank in the	
		Regiment.	Army.
Colonel - -	Lord Adam Gordon	9 May 1782	Gen. 12 Oct. 93
Lieut. Colonel -	Francis Dundas	31 Mar. 1787	Col. 12 Oct. 93
Major - -	Justly Watfon Green	13 July 1791	
Captain - -	William Duncan	29 Sept. 1785	24 Dec. 77
	Francis Mannoch	25 June 89	
	Christopher Morthead	20 Jan. 90	
	W. Ja. Cockburne, <i>Bt.</i>	9 Mar. 91	24 Jan. 91
	John Clayton Cowell	12 Sep. 92	
	Gordon Skelly	16 Oct. 92	
Captain Lieut. and Captain	Samuel Stone	7 Aug. 93	26 Mar. 93
	Wm. Hutchinson	7 Nov. 1792	
Lieutenant -	Robert Nicholson	28 Feb. 1787	4 Aug. 81 9 Feb. 91
	John Puxley	30 June 89	
	John Clunes	25 June 89	
	William Duncan	30 Sep. 91	
	James Blair	23 Mar. 91	
	Neil M <sup>r</sup> Kellar	30 Nov. 92	
	James Garth	24 Jan. 92	
	Henry Erskine	20 July 93	
	John Urquhart	16 Oct. 93	
	Hutton Rowe Spencer	15 May 93	
Ensign - -	David Rattray	24 do.	
	Thomas Seaver	3 Sept. 1791	
	James Campbell	30 Nov. 92	
	Alexander Davison	20 July 92	
	Hugo Robert Arnot	9 Oct. 92	
	Matthew Smith	16 do. 92	
	John Garston	17 do. 92	18 Sept. 92
J. Stewart Robertson	15 May 93		
Chaplain - -	Miles Beevor	14 Feb. 1786	
Adjutant - -	Robert Nicholson	16 Oct. 92	
Quarter-Master	Alexander Davidson	28 May 82	
Surgeon - -	John Wright	13 Mar. 93	
Agent, Messrs. Meyrick, Parliament Street.			

(which was particularly common in newly raised battalions). His regimental seniority would then be accounted from the date on which he transferred, but his Army rank (other than by brevet – a military commission entitling an officer to take the rank above that for which he receives pay) was still calculated according to the date of his original commission.

It was therefore possible for an officer to jump the 'queue', since although he might then be at the bottom of the list regimentally, he could still be the most senior man by commission date and was therefore entitled to claim the next available purchase vacancy. Vacancies brought about by death, however, were almost always filled strictly according to regimental seniority.

On being appointed Commander in Chief in 1795 the Duke of York (who was in nominal charge of the army and a brother of King George III) insisted that no officer could become a captain without at least two years' service, or a field officer without six. There had been attempts to impose qualifying periods before, but this time they were pretty strictly enforced. Consequently the old complaint that it was possible for a schoolboy to purchase his way up to lieutenant-colonel in a mere three weeks was firmly addressed. On the other hand it was quite possible to have a situation where those officers who had the necessary qualifying experience lacked the cash to purchase and those further down the *List* had the cash but not the experience. Therefore, if there were no takers within the regiment there was nothing to prevent a suitably qualified outsider buying his way in to the regiment, either directly or by first exchanging with one of the disappointed. This seems to have occurred more frequently in promotions to field rank where both the 'difference' and the service qualification were substantially greater than at company level.

Before leaving the subject of seniority, one further aspect needs to be noted. Up until the early 1800s most infantry regiments had just one battalion, and in those few which did have more than one, such as the 1st (Royal) and 60th, the officers belonging to each battalion were listed independently and in effect were entirely separate corps.

In the expansion of the Army, which followed the collapse of the Peace of Amiens in 1803, all that changed and by 1814 all but a handful had two battalions, or sometimes more. This time the *Army List* made no distinction between them and listed all the officers belonging to a particular corps in a single sequence. In theory the more senior half of the officers in each grade served with the first battalion while the juniors served with the second. Consequently any promotion invariably led to an exchange of officers between the two. On being promoted a lieutenant serving with the first battalion became his regiment's junior captain and was automatically posted home to the second battalion. In practice however he normally waited until the most senior captain who had been serving in the second battalion came out to replace him. Depending upon a variety of circumstances he could wait for some time, or conversely, if it was quiet enough at the front, simply take himself off home without waiting.

On the whole this was an excellent system which helped to ensure that the second battalions were properly provided with some experienced officers – particularly as the original intention to reserve them for home defence was soon abandoned. However, there was an unfortunate end to the system in 1814 when the additional battalions were disbanded and their officers placed on half-pay according to regimental, rather than Army, seniority.

Despite an almost universal objection to a regimental promotion system based on selection (or patronage), promotion by merit did in



Although a civilian, the agent played a vital part in the management of a regiment. This is perhaps the most famous of them all, 'Honest Jack' Calcraft (1726-72).

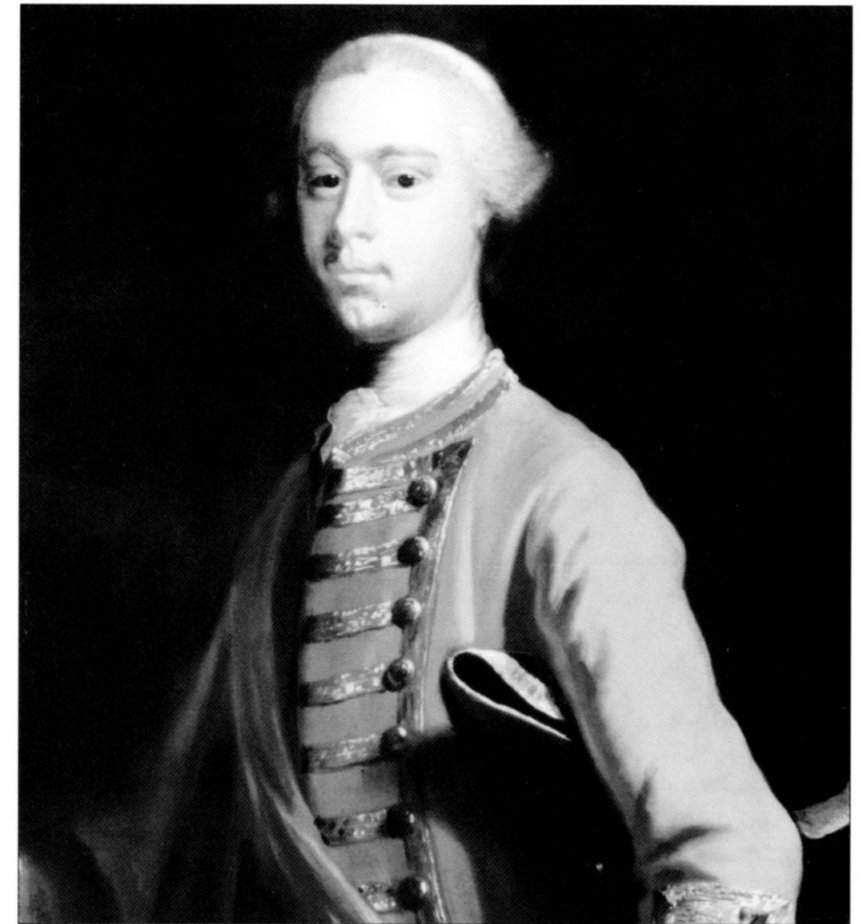
fact take place not just in the recommending of deserving candidates for commissions, but also, to a limited extent, in the form of brevets.

Ensigns and lieutenants were not eligible to receive brevets, but otherwise almost any officer could receive a promotion by brevet under a variety of circumstances. These could sometimes be quite indiscriminate, as in the case of the 'victory' brevet of 1814, which advanced all those officers whose commissions dated to before the outbreak of war in 1803. Local brevets were also granted to East India Company officers in order to place them on the same footing as Royal officers serving east of the Cape of Good Hope. Otherwise brevets were normally given to individual officers either by way of a reward for some exceptional service, to confer local seniority within a specified geographical area, or to lend added authority to a staff appointment. Promotion by this means could be incremental and it was quite possible for an officer to be a lieutenant-colonel or even a lieutenant-general by brevet while still holding the regimental rank of captain.

## A SENSE OF BELONGING

One of the curious aspects of the purchase system is the way in which it encouraged ambitious officers to move from one regiment to another in pursuit of opportunities for promotion, for the practise obviously cut across the growing sense of the regiment as a family. Moyle Sherer, who served in the 34th during the Peninsular War, wrote: 'Wander where he will, a regiment is ever, to a single man, the best of homes ... For him, who by want of fortune or other controlling circumstances, is debarred the exquisite happiness of reposing his aching heart on that blessed resting place - for such a man there is no life, save one of travel or military occupation, which can excite feelings of interest of consolation.' Some officers certainly - and quite unambiguously - regarded their regiment as home and remained with the same one throughout their careers. If their fathers also served in it, some would proudly describe themselves as having been 'born in the regiment.' There was, in short, a very real sense of belonging to the regiment. However, other officers were more mobile,

RIGHT James Wolfe in 1750, depicted as a field officer of the 20th Foot by Joseph Highmor. (National Archives of Canada C-003916)



BELOW The old vicarage at Westerham, Kent, the birthplace of Major-General James Wolfe.




particularly during the periodic recruiting booms of the 18th century. Some happily switched from one regiment to another on a weekly basis, gaining a step at each move and rarely if ever setting foot on a parade ground: their sole purpose was to rise as high and as quickly as possible, and ideally without running any serious risk of being shot at or socially inconvenienced in the process.

Many soldiers also moved for personal and professional reasons. James Wolfe began his military career in the 12th Foot, but never seems to have been particularly happy there and undoubtedly transferred to the 4th Foot for personal reasons. He then successively attempted to arrange a transfer to the 8th, 28th and 33rd Foot, before finally being appointed Major of the 20th in 1749. In Wolfe's case it is clear that his first loyalty was not to a regimental family, but to a much wider 'old army mafia', made up of professional soldiers belonging to 'army families' such as the Abercrombys, Beckwiths, Blakeneys, Dalrymples, Urquharts and of course the Wolfes. During the 18th century these men formed a professional 'mafia' – a network of friendships and family relationships which transcended social and

regimental boundaries and, to some extent, made them irrelevant in that their primary loyalty was to the army at large. Initially very important – particularly in the period when tough old professionals such as Hawley and Bland had the ear of the Duke of Cumberland – the influence of this 'mafia' seems to have declined somewhat by the Napoleonic period, simply because the army had grown too large for it to operate effectively. Indeed, it is perhaps no coincidence that the decline of this mafia was matched by a corresponding increase in the influence of the aristocracy and landed gentry, and ultimately to the social exclusion of the hard-bitten professionals who had served King George.

*The Royal*  
**MILITARY CHRONICLE**  
OR  
*British Officers*  
**MONTHLY REGISTER,**  
AND  
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VOL. I.  
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VIEW OF THE HORSEGUARDS FROM ST JAMES'S PARK  
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**LONDON**  
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*& to be had of all the Booksellers.*

**The Royal Military Chronicle or British Officers Monthly Register and Mentor. This professional journal, commencing in 1811, carried theoretical articles on fortification and other military subjects, accounts of military operations, military biographies, correspondence, and lists of promotions.**

## TRAINING

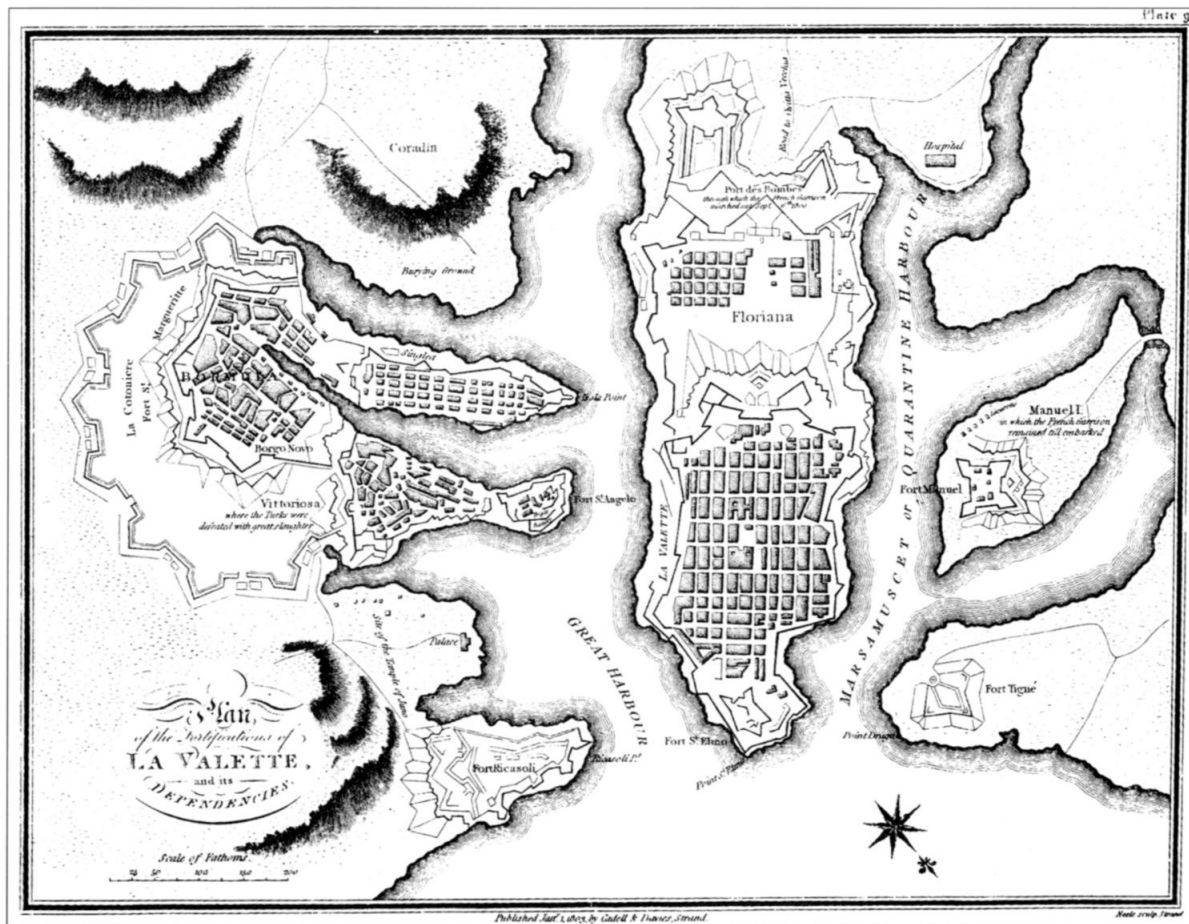
There was no formal system of education for a newly commissioned subaltern. The only real way in which officers learnt their trade was through early 'hands-on' training, and it was generally agreed this was best started as early as possible. The (anonymous) author of *Advice to Officers of the British Army* satirically suggested that: 'It will also be perfectly needless for you to consult any treatises of military discipline, or the regulations for the army. Dry books of tactics are beneath the notice of a man of genius, and it is a known fact that every British officer is inspired with a perfect knowledge of his duty, the moment he gets his commission; and if he were not, it would be sufficiently acquired in conversaciones at the main-guard or the grand sutler's.' However, the truth of the matter was that a practical apprenticeship, rather than a study of theory, was the primary requirement.

In about 1756 the then Lieutenant Colonel James Wolfe wrote a letter of advice to a newly commissioned subaltern, Hugh Lord, which contained perhaps the most comprehensive account of what passed for officer training in the army of King George II.

*'The field you are going into is quite new to you, but may be trod very safely, and soon made known to you, if you only get into it by the proper entrance. I make no doubt but you have entirely laid aside the boy and all boyish amusements, and have considered yourself as a young man going into a manly profession, where you must be answerable for your own conduct; your character in life must be that of a soldier and a gentleman; the first is to be acquired by application and attendance to your duty; the second by adhering most strictly to the dictates of honour, and the rules of good breeding; and be most particular in each of these points when you join your Regiment; if there are any officers' guards mounted, be sure constantly to attend the parade, observe carefully the manner of the officers taking their posts, the exercise of their spontoon, &c.; when the guard is marched off from the parade, attend it to the place of relief, and observe the manner and form of relieving, and when you return to your chamber (which should be as soon as you could, lest what you saw slip out of your memory), consult Bland's Military Discipline on that head; this will be the readiest method of learning this part of your duty, which is what you will be the soonest called on to perform. When off duty get a serjt or corporal, whom the*



**Sir James Grant of Grant, Colonel of the Strathspey Fencibles.**



**Valetta; one of the army's most important Mediterranean garrisons after 1800.**

adjutant will recommend to you, to teach you the exercise of the firelock, which I beg you to make yourself as much a master of as if you were a simple soldier, the exact and nice knowledge of this will readily bring you to understand all other parts of your duty, make you a proper judge of the performance of the men, and qualify you for the post of an adjutant, and in time many other employments of credit. When you are posted to your company, take care that the serjeants or corporals constantly bring you the orders; treat those officers with kindness, but keep them at a distance, so you will be beloved and respected by them. Read your orders with attention, and if anything in particular concerns yourself, put it down in your memorandum book, which I would have you constantly in your pocket ready for any remarks. Be sure to attend constantly morning and evening the roll calling of the company; watch carefully the absentees, and enquire into reasons for their being so; and particularly be watchful they do not endeavour to impose on you sham excuses, which they are apt to do with young officers, but will be deterred by a proper severity in detecting them ...'

Wolfe clearly expected the individual officer to take some responsibility for his own basic military education, but other units ran more formal officer training cadres and the practice was eventually placed on a formal footing in the 1792 *Regulations*.

'Every officer must be instructed in each individual circumstance required of a recruit, or a soldier; also in the exercise of the sword: and accustomed to give words of command, with that energy, and precision, which is so essential. Every officer, on first joining a regiment, is to be examined by the commanding officer; and, if he is found imperfect in the knowledge of the movements required from a soldier, he must be ordered to be exercised that he may learn their just execution. Till he is master of those points, and capable of instructing the men under his command, he is not to be permitted to take the command of a platoon in the battalion.

'Squads of officers must be formed, and exercised by a field officer; they must be marched in all directions, to the front, oblique, and to the flank; they must be marched in line, at platoon distance, and preserve their dressing and line from an advanced center; they must be placed in file at platoon distance, and marched as in open column; they must change direction, as in file, and cover anew in column. In these, and other similar movements, the pace and the distances are the great objects to be maintained. From the number of files in division, they must learn accurately to judge the ground necessary for each, and to extend that knowledge to the front of greater bodies. They must acquire the habit of readily ascertaining, by the eye, perpendiculars of march, and the squareness of the wheel.

'An officer must not only know the post, which he should occupy in all changes of situation, the commands which he should give, and the general intention of the required movement; but he should be master of the principles, on which each is made; and of the faults that may be committed, in order to avoid them himself, and to instruct others ...'

Although there were lapses, these instructions were generally adhered to, and John Cooke, who joined the 43rd in March 1809, recalled that: 'When an officer entered this corps it was the custom to send him to drill with a squad composed of peasants from the plough tail and other raw recruits, to learn the facings, marching, and companies evolutions. That being completed, he put on cross belts and pouch and learned the firelock exercise, again marching with the same ... The officer was not considered clear of the adjutant until he

**Paulus Aemilius Irving as an officer of the 47th Foot; the lack of an epaulette on his left shoulder dates it to before his promotion to field rank in 1775. (Private Collection)**



could put a company through the evolutions by word of command, which he had practised in the ranks. It generally took him six months in summer at four times a day, an hour at each period, to perfect all he had to learn.'

The officer himself, however, was solely responsible for his education in the theoretical aspects of his profession, and many were prodigious readers. Some no doubt preferred such racy titles as *The History of Miss Betsey* to those 'dry books of tactics', but others applied themselves more assiduously to a wide variety of textbooks, military histories and memoirs in both French and English. Frequently, officers could also obtain leave to study abroad at military academies such as the famous artillery school at Metz. In a typical example a 17-year-old Ensign, James Urquhart, of the 14th Foot, obtained leave to go to France for nine months in 1764 'to perfect myself in the French language, and in Military Tactics'.

## APPEARANCE AND EQUIPMENT

On first being commissioned an officer needed to buy all his own clothing and equipment, from his hats to his boots, from his sword to his shoe-brushes. To help him do so he might turn to one of the many privately published handbooks for aspiring young officers, such as Captain Thomas Simes' *Military Medley*. Simes' 'List of Things Necessary for a Young Gentleman to be furnished with upon obtaining his first commission in the Infantry' began, rather obviously with 'a suit of clothes', which must have been his dress regimentals, for he went on to list two 'frock suits', which were much plainer and worn on all but the most formal occasions; two hats, two cockades, a pair of leather gloves, a sash and gorget, two pairs of white spatterdashes, a pair of black tops, a pair of (black) gaiters and a pair of boots.

All of these were to be 'regimental', that is they were to conform to a pattern laid down not only by King's regulations, but also to any regimental patterns prescribed by the colonel and sanctioned through long usage. For example, officers joining the Royal African Corps were advised in an 1808 memorandum that the cockade was to be

A dirk belonging to Captain John Urquhart c.1791-1800. This type of weapon was frequently worn by infantry officers in undress, in preference to the sword. This particular example, similar in style to weapons produced by a Portsmouth cutler, William Reid, has an 8-inch blade and originally had a black ebony hilt.



Paul Revere's well-known print depicting the Boston 'massacre' in 1770 - a fairly typical example of 'aid to the civil power'. Note how both the officer and his men are still wearing pre-1768-style uniforms.

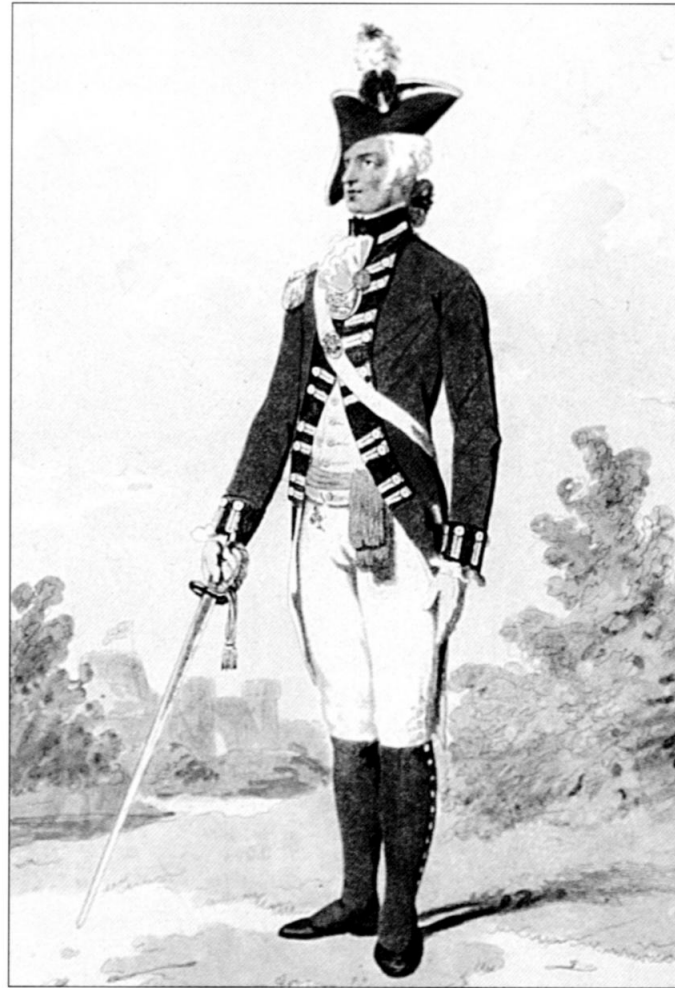
seen at 'Taylor's, No.7 Tichborne Street, Haymarket', that the pattern single-breasted jacket was to be seen at 'Mr Pearce's, army Clothier', and the dirk and belt 'to be seen at Riddell's, sword cutler, St.Jermyn Street, St. James's.'

In addition to the regimental items, Simes rather sensibly urged subalterns to purchase a 'blue surtout-coat' or greatcoat, a 'portugal cloak', a pair of leather breeches, six white waistcoats, 24 shirts, 12 stocks (presumably white wrappers), and one black stock, 18 pairs of stockings and six pairs of shoes.

He also had to provide his own bedding, including; 'three pairs of sheets, three pillow cases ... A field bed-stead, a painted canvas bag to hold it, bed-curtains, quilt, three blankets, bolster, pillow, one mattress and a palliass'.

While Simes made no mention of the very necessary deal box to hold this and all the other heavy baggage normally left behind on active service, he did advocate purchasing a leather valise in which to carry: 'a travelling letter-case, to contain pens, ink, paper, wax and wafer, a case of instruments for drawing; and Muller's works on fortification etc. It is also essential that he should have a watch, that he may mark the hour exactly when he sends any report ...'

Moreover, comprehensive as it is, Simes' list represents an ideal that may not always have been realised. The expensive regimental suit, or 'regimentals' were only worn on the most formal of occasions and instead most officers got by, from day to day, with one or other of the plain unlaced frock suits. These were not only worn on active service but also at home, often being referred to as 'red clothes' since they often lacked even regimental facings and, although it was normally discouraged, officers often slouched around in civilian clothes as well. Given the latitude tolerated in the Georgian army at home it is little wonder that on active service dress regulations were often ignored completely.



Officer 1st (Royal) Regiment in full regulation uniform; print by Dayes c.1791.

## CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

### Combat duties

Whether wearing the King's red coat or an old slouch greatcoat, an infantry officer's normal duties fell into four basic categories. He was expected to lead his men to glory in times of war, of course, but stirring deeds which won the empire actually accounted for very little of his time. James Urquhart of the 14th Foot was involved in bush fighting on St. Vincent in 1772-73, fought at Bunker Hill in 1775, and again on board ship at the Saintes in 1782. Allowing an estimated five days for his 'several actions with the Caribs' on St. Vincent this equates to a consolidated total of just one week's fighting in a career which spanned 40 years. Depending on a variety of factors some officers could naturally notch up rather more combat time, or conversely see out their whole career on garrison duty with never a shot heard fired in anger, but the inescapable conclusion is that even allowing for the associated time required to march to and from the battlefield, and waiting around for something to happen, fighting occupied only a very small element of an officer's time.

In peacetime he could all too often be required to give aid to the civil power. This was always a hazardous duty, demanding a considerable degree of personal initiative (often on the part of quite junior officers), and certainly required sufficient force of character to stand up to the local authorities as well as to whoever was committing a breach of the peace, riot or tumult. An officer could well find himself aiding the revenue service in combating smuggling or illicit distilling (especially in Scotland). In both cases he had to take great care to operate strictly within the letter of the law, for otherwise it was all too easy to be prosecuted for the actions of his men. Hunting for illicit stills was also a particularly thankless task since, as the commander of a lonely detachment of the 13th Foot stationed at Braemar Castle lamented, the soldiers themselves were often the distillers' best customers. In Scotland, for a fair part of the 18th century, officers were also employed in supervising work parties on the military roads and, although this could be a lonely duty, it brought officers and men together in a way which may not have been possible in a more tightly disciplined environment.

### Recruitment

Another major job on which officers were employed was the recruiting service. This was an extremely unpopular duty as far as most officers were concerned, and perhaps for that reason it was very common to employ newly commissioned subalterns on this service. Unfortunately, entrusting youngsters with large sums of money, far away from proper supervision, could have unhappy results. In *Advice to Officers* sergeants were cynically recommended that 'If you have a knack at recruiting, and can get sent on that service with an extravagant young subaltern, your fortune is made; as the more he runs out, the more you ought to get ... Nor need you fear anything from his future resentment in case of a



Major John Andre, Sir William Howe's Adjutant General, after a self-portrait.

discovery; as it is ten to one but the consequences of six months recruiting will oblige him to sell out, and quit the regiment for ever.'

Even if dishonest sergeants and the temptations of the flesh were avoided, the recruiting service itself was not without its financial perils. While the sergeant and his assistants were directly concerned in bringing in the recruit, should he then desert en route to headquarters, or be rejected by either the commanding officer or an inspecting field officer on arrival, the recruiting officer was held responsible for any monies already laid out for his bounty, entertainment, lodgings and attestation fees. In addition he was also responsible for the advertisements and any other costs incurred in pursuing a deserter, and equally crippling, for the costs of sending a rejected man home again. It was little wonder therefore that the Duke of Cumberland preferred that only experienced officers should be sent out recruiting, or that if subalterns were employed they should do so under the supervision of a more senior officer, placed in overall charge of the 'recruiting service'.

Such supervision also ensured that unscrupulous young men did not misappropriate the money entrusted to them too blatantly. There is a shrewd suspicion, however, that one reason for sending newly commissioned ex-rankers out on the service was to allow them the opportunity to misapply those funds to the purchase of their kit.

#### Administration

Financial pitfalls were also to be encountered in the officer's primary area of responsibility, which was the administration of his company or battalion. Once again this clearly entailed the more obvious duties such as ensuring that his men were properly clothed, fed and accommodated, trained and disciplined (either personally or informally, or by sitting on courts-martial and courts of inquiry). At a more mundane, but no less important level, the captain of a company also acted as its paymaster and banker. Some idea of what this entailed, both in terms of the workload and its costs, may be found in a contemporary 'computation' of the yearly expenses of an infantry company which included: 'Charges attending Musters, writing Muster Rolls etc.; Expense of burying Men; Charge of sending after and taking Deserters, and advertizing Deserters; nursing Men and extraordinary expenses in fluxing Men, etc.; and the Expenses of carriage of Gunpowder from y<sup>e</sup> places y<sup>e</sup> warrants upon etc. to y<sup>e</sup> Company Quarters.' Together with other miscellaneous charges such as 'printing Furlows and Discharges' and buying twice-weekly copies of the *Gazette*, this came to £11 19s 8d per annum in 1727, which, ominously, exceeded the allowance for the purpose by seven shillings. Of itself this might not appear crippling, but in practice it could turn out to be very much higher, especially as prices rose significantly during the course of the 18th century without a corresponding increase in pay scales.

Far from being rich men, all too many Georgian officers found their income wholly inadequate to the task of supporting the lifestyle expected of a gentleman. As Ensign Thomas Erskine of 1st (Royal) complained at length: 'Officers in the army, even in the most subaltern grades, have the misfortune to be considered as gentlemen which in England, as in other countries, implies a denomination of persons who from accidental circumstances of office or property are divided from the

common herd of mankind and are obliged to form a barrier between those two orders, by the luxuries of dress, equipage and attendance, but as the superfluities of life are the only props to this order of society, it is evident how distressing it must be to be installed in it unfurnished with the very article to which it owes its existence.'

An ensign's annual pay and subsistence amounted to a princely £66 18s 4d in the 1760s. Captain Thomas Simes reckoned his 'constant expenses' for breakfast, dinner, wine, beer, laundry, consumables (such as pens, paper, ink and so on), as well as the services of a soldier to dress his hair and shave him, were £46 11s 8d, which left precious little margin for error, let alone the purchase of any new clothing or equipment. Nor did matters improve for the higher ranks. In 1749 Lieutenant-colonel Samuel Bagshawe itemised his annual expenditure, including buying clothing, keeping the two horses which his rank

required, and various other outgoings, and rather gloomily concluded that his expenses exceeded his income of £280 17s 1d by £104 5s 7½d. Significantly those expenses included interest payments of £73 2s 6d on £1,350 borrowed for the purchase of his commissions.

Interestingly enough Sam Bagshawe also related that: 'The method of an officer's diet in general is breakfast at his own lodging, dinner and supper in a tavern. I will suppose his breakfast 6d, dinner 13 pence, supper and different kinds of drinkables one day with another two shillings and sixpence.' Bagshawe's account suggests that he tended to dine alone, which was certainly the experience of most officers as far as breakfast was concerned, but it was much more common for the unmarried officers to mess together for dinner or supper.

In 1809 a newly commissioned Ensign Keep of the 77th Foot, in barracks at Winchester, wrote a superb description of a regimental mess: 'One long table accommodates us all, with about 15 officers on each side with a president at one end, and a deputy at the other. The

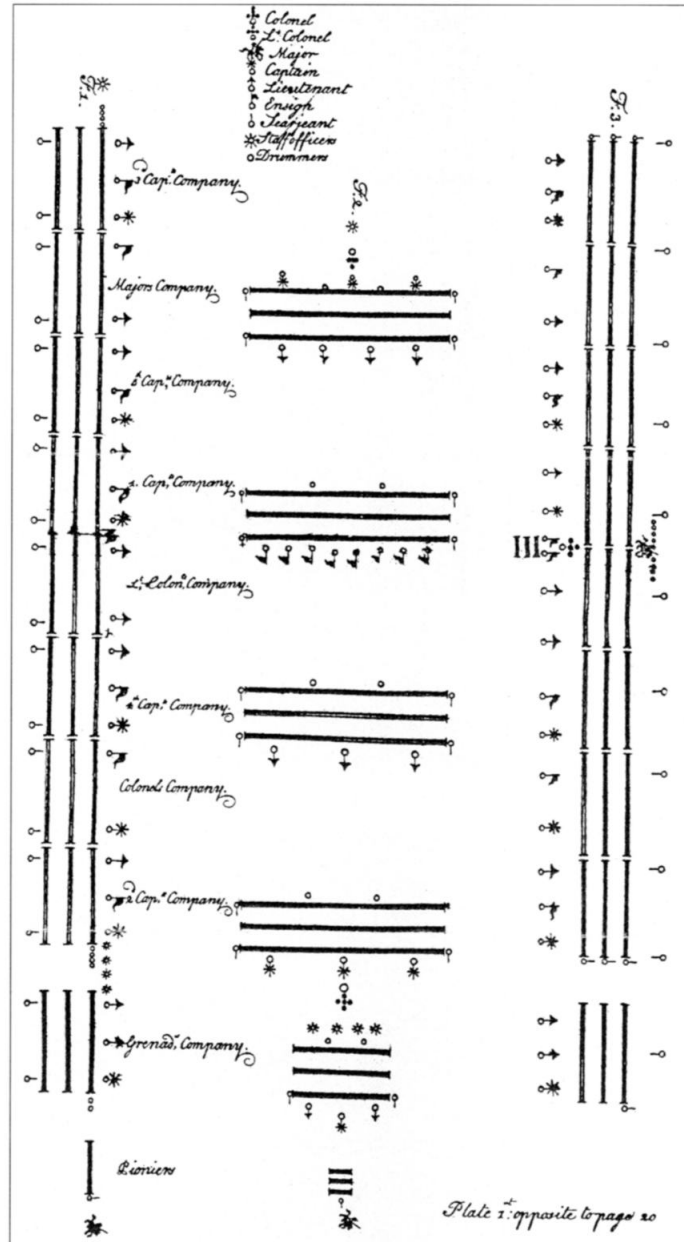


**Officers of the 61st Foot in Egypt 1801 after Private W. Porter of that regiment. The wearing of round hats is unexceptional, but the grenadier officer, identified by his all-white hackle, is wearing a jacket rather than a coat – perhaps the single-breasted one officially abolished in 1798. Unfortunately it is not possible to see whether the field officer is wearing a coat or a jacket, although his lapels are buttoned back to display the regiment's buff facings.**

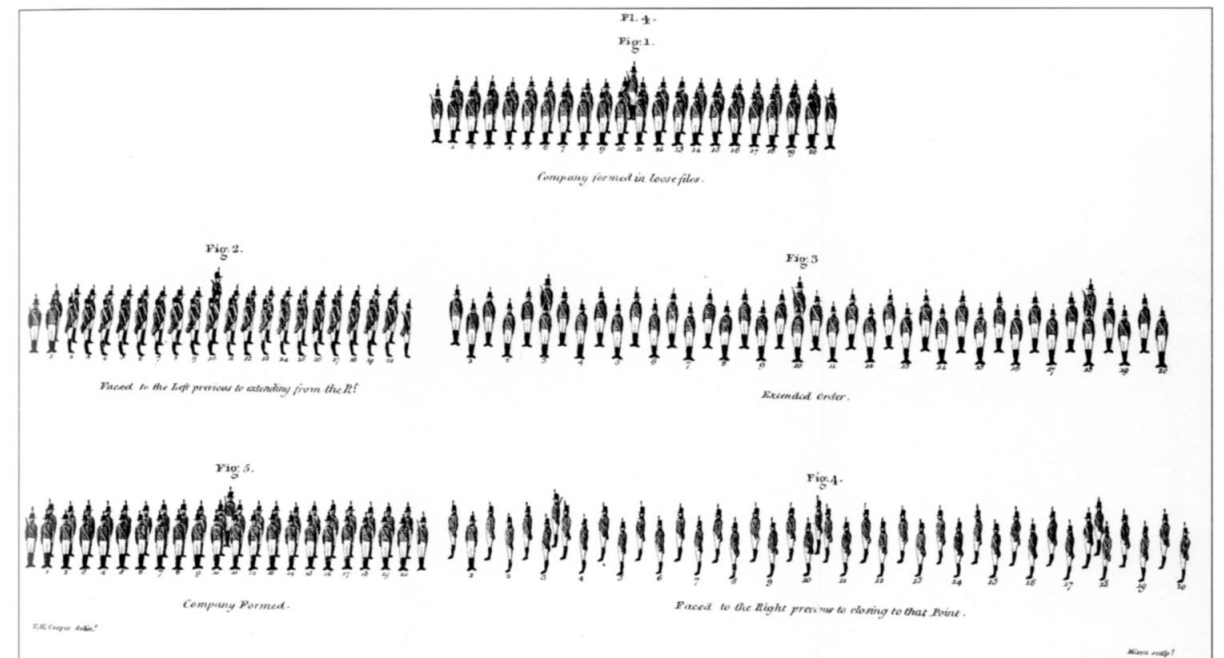
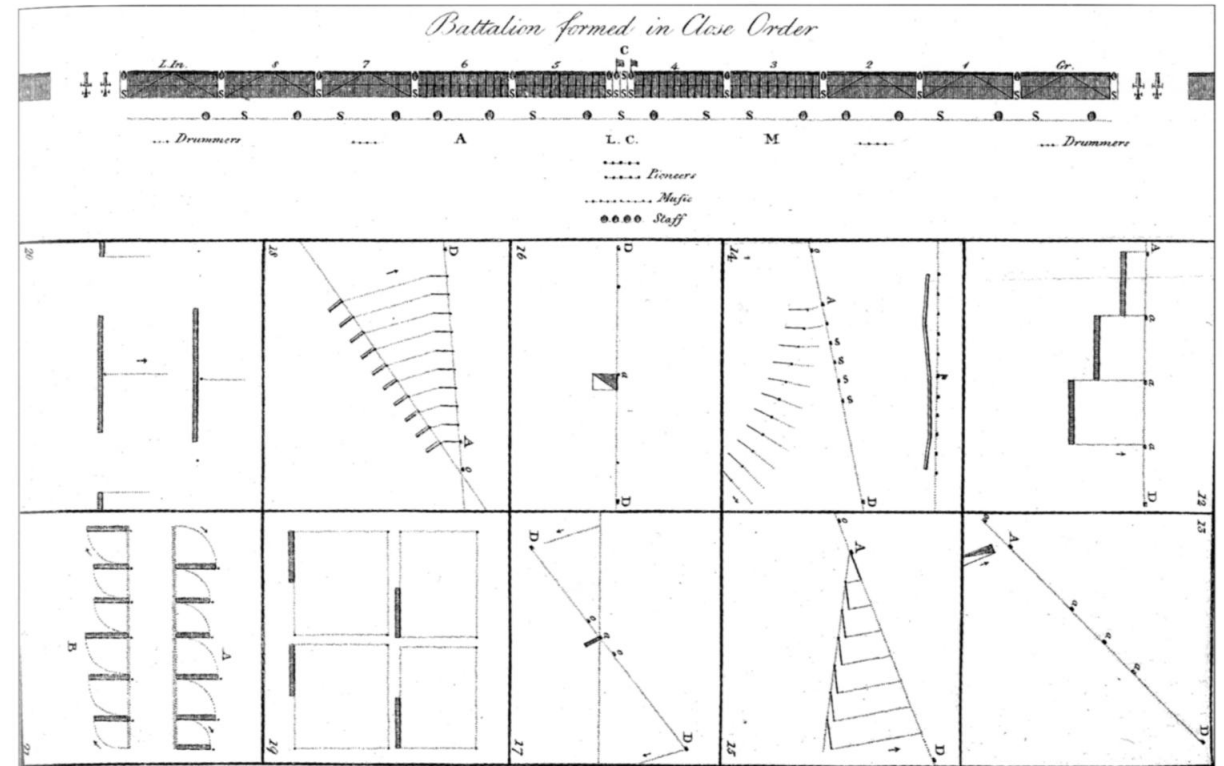
furniture of the table is entirely (like the band instruments) the property of the officers, and by continual contributions is very sumptuous (the Paymaster has deducted from my pay for this purpose £6 10s 0d). Grand silver chandeliers and choice plate with all the other things necessary are provided by this means ... We pay 2s 3d each for our dinner, which consists of three courses well supplied, but no dessert except when we have company. It is the only meal we take together; each officer provides himself with his own breakfast things and bedding, both of them are therefore required to be as portable as possible. Tables and chairs and coals and candles are supplied by the Barrack Master. Each Saturday night we give a card party and supper to the married officers and their ladies, and on other occasions the Mess room with newspapers is always open.'

Although they tended to mess together whenever practical, prior to the move into barracks at the end of the 18th century (and even afterwards) officers lived, as far as possible, in individual lodgings or billets, especially if they were married. In peacetime, or at least in relatively settled conditions, an officer was generally expected to make his own accommodation arrangements, and received a small allowance for the purpose. However, when on active service he received a billet or order from the local town major or commissary allocating him a room – or a whole house if he were of sufficiently exalted rank.

The accepted rule was that two subalterns should share, while captains got a room or a tent to themselves. In New York on 22 February 1759, the officers of the 42nd Highlanders were advised that: 'No more than one tent will be allow<sup>d</sup> for two subalterns, they are therefore to divide themselves and bespeak their tents accordingly as none is to be bespoke for them.' Ensign Keep was less than impressed by this when he was posted to the barracks at Berry Head in November 1811: 'Great inconvenience arises from this arrangement – two bedsteads to be put up, dressing tables, writing tables, breakfast apparatus etc, and it is necessary that the inmates should act in thorough good accord with each other's wishes, and be thorough good friends, to go on comfortably, in such close approximation together.'



**Battalion deployment according to the 1764 Regulations.** Note that at this time the captain stood on the right of the company, the lieutenant on the left and the ensign in the centre; except for the three field officers' companies which paraded only a lieutenant and an ensign.



**TOP Plate 2 from the 1792 Regulations depicting a battalion formed in close order on parade; the commanding officer is identified by the letter C, the lieutenant-colonel by L/C., the major and adjutant by M and A respectively, and the company officers by O. The four staff officers in rear of the 'Music' are the chaplain, surgeon, quartermaster and surgeon's mate.**

**BOTTOM Deployment of a light infantry company as depicted by Captain T. H. Cooper. Note the positioning of the officers.**



## ON CAMPAIGN

Since Britain is an island, it was inevitable that an officer's campaigning experience commenced and, hopefully, ended with a sea voyage of some description. Conditions on board ship naturally varied enormously, but there was general agreement that the most comfortable were chartered East Indiamen and West Indiamen or, in peacetime, stripped-out warships, since both were considerably roomier than ordinary merchantmen.

While the rank and file were normally accommodated in the hold, officers had cabins, although they were by no means luxurious. Lieutenant Frederick Mackenzie of the 23rd Fuziliers recorded that his wife Nancy, their two children, together with Lieutenant Gibbons' wife, her child and a maid, shared a cabin measuring 7 feet by 7 feet, when the regiment sailed for New York in 1773. Even this miserable space sometimes had to be paid for. When the 79th (Liverpool) Regiment was embarked on West Indiamen for Jamaica in 1779, it was at first proposed that the officers should each pay £30 for their berths. Not surprisingly they maintained that they could not afford what were commercial rates, and flatly refused to embark, but in the end an 'Accomadation' [sic] was reached whereby the shipmasters settled for £25, of which £5 was paid by the officers and the balance by the Navy's Transport Board. In addition to this basic charge, whether they were carried on hired transports or on naval vessels, officers had to lay in their own 'sea stock' to supplement the basic 'victuals' provided by the purser. Lieutenant Mackenzie and the other officers on board the Friendship chipped in £10 a head for single men and £15 for married ones, irrespective of rank – an advance of pay was usually provided for the purpose – and as a consequence 'lived exceeding well, and hardly eat any Salt provisions'.



Pacification with the Maroon Negroes, Jamaica 1796, taken from a contemporary sketch and showing few concessions to the climate, although General Balcarres is for some reason wearing an aid de camp's embroidered coat, perhaps because his own undress coat was insufficiently grand for the occasion.

Second Lieutenant Johnny Newcome 7th Regiment of Foot (or Royal Fuziliers)

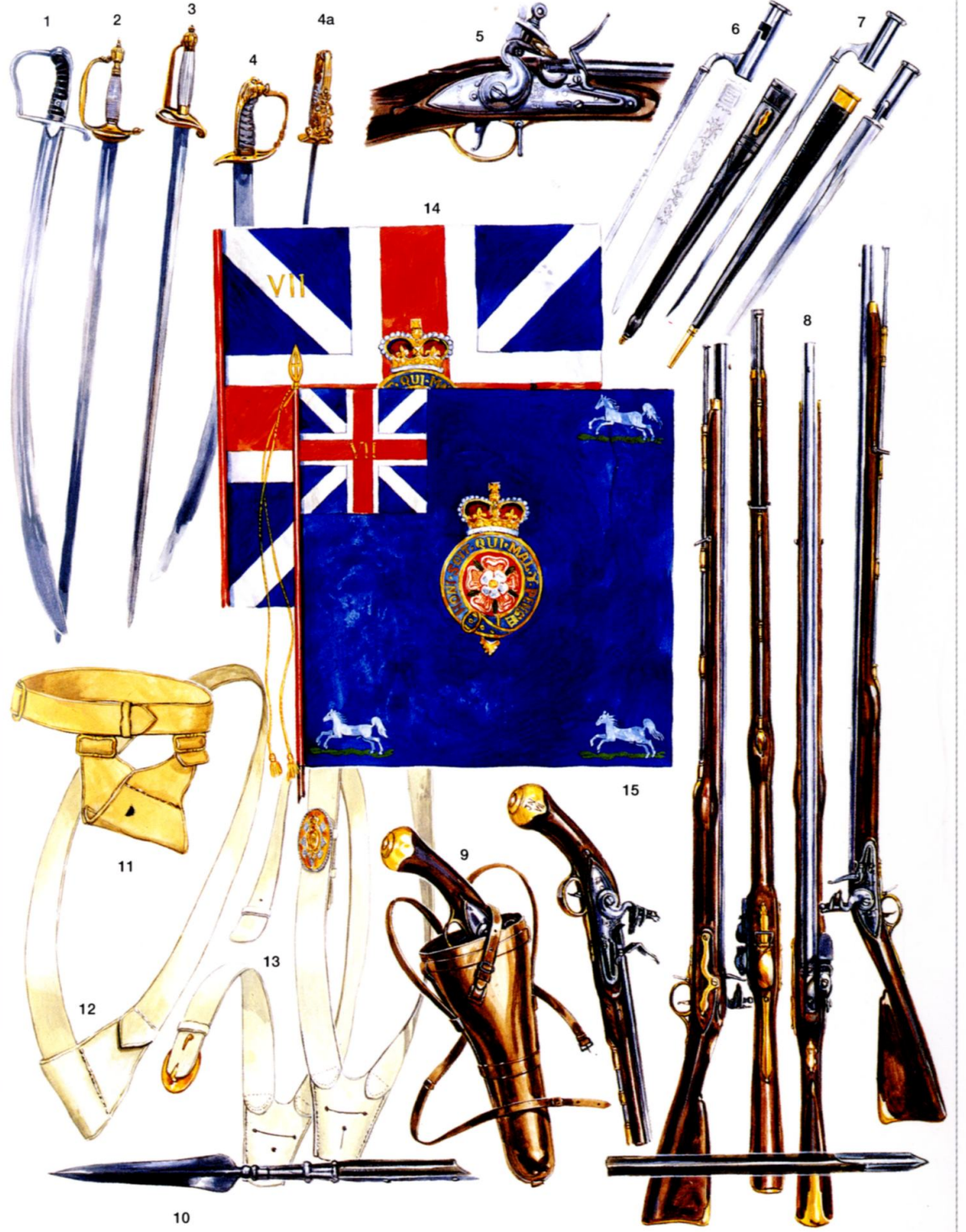


Subalterns in Training



B

Equipment

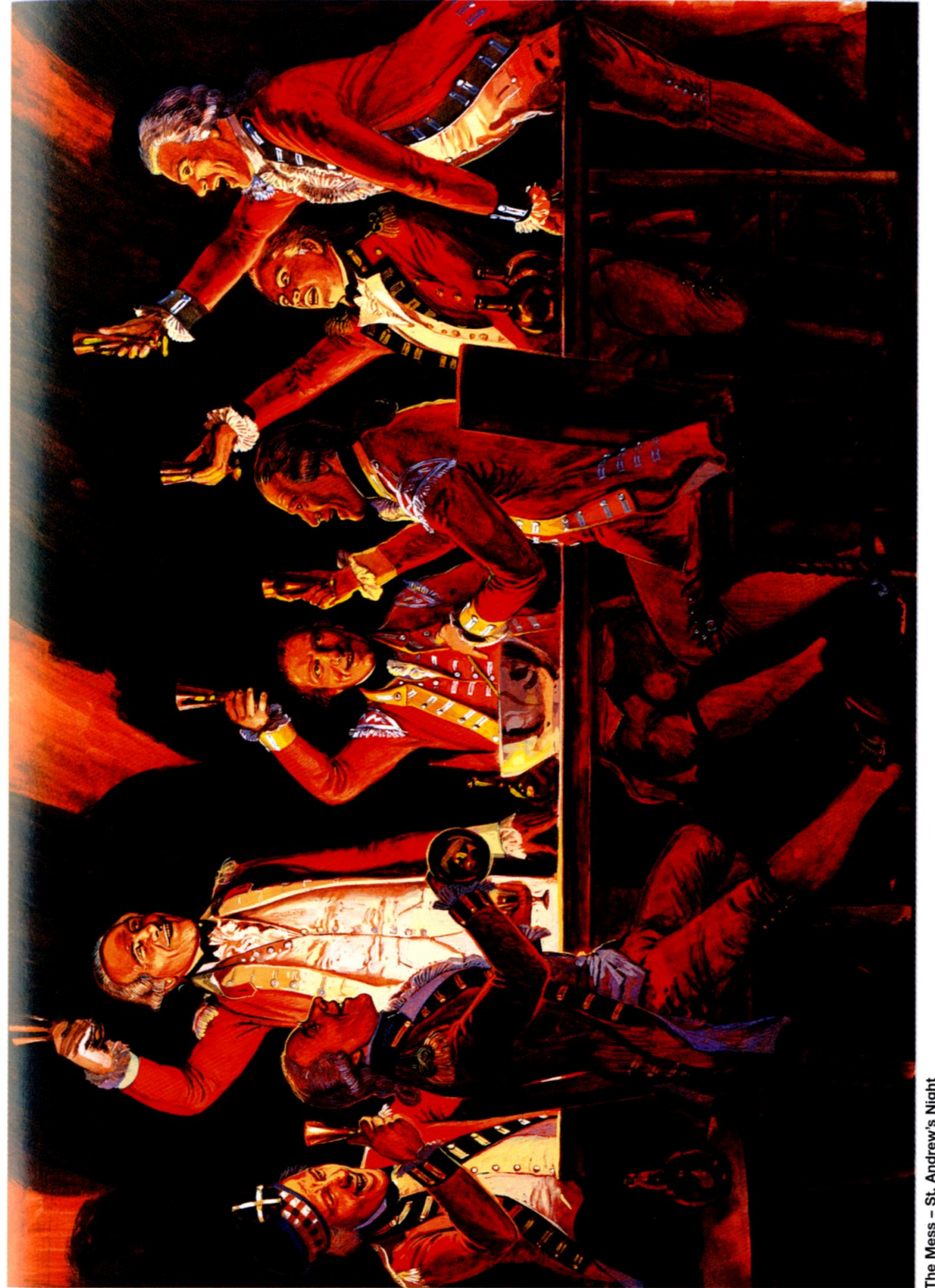


C

Ceremonial - Presentation of Colours



D



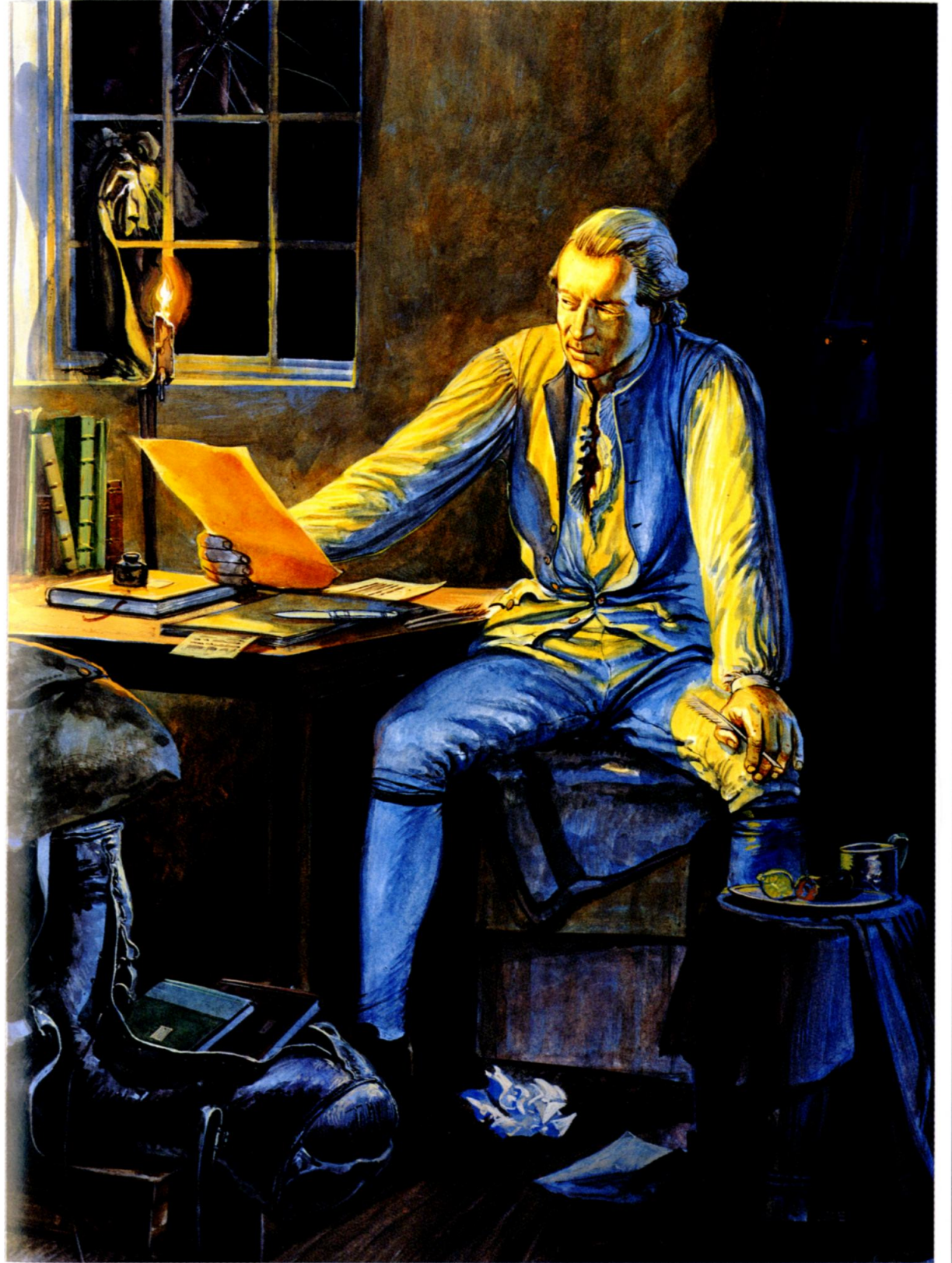
The Mess - St. Andrew's Night

E



Battle

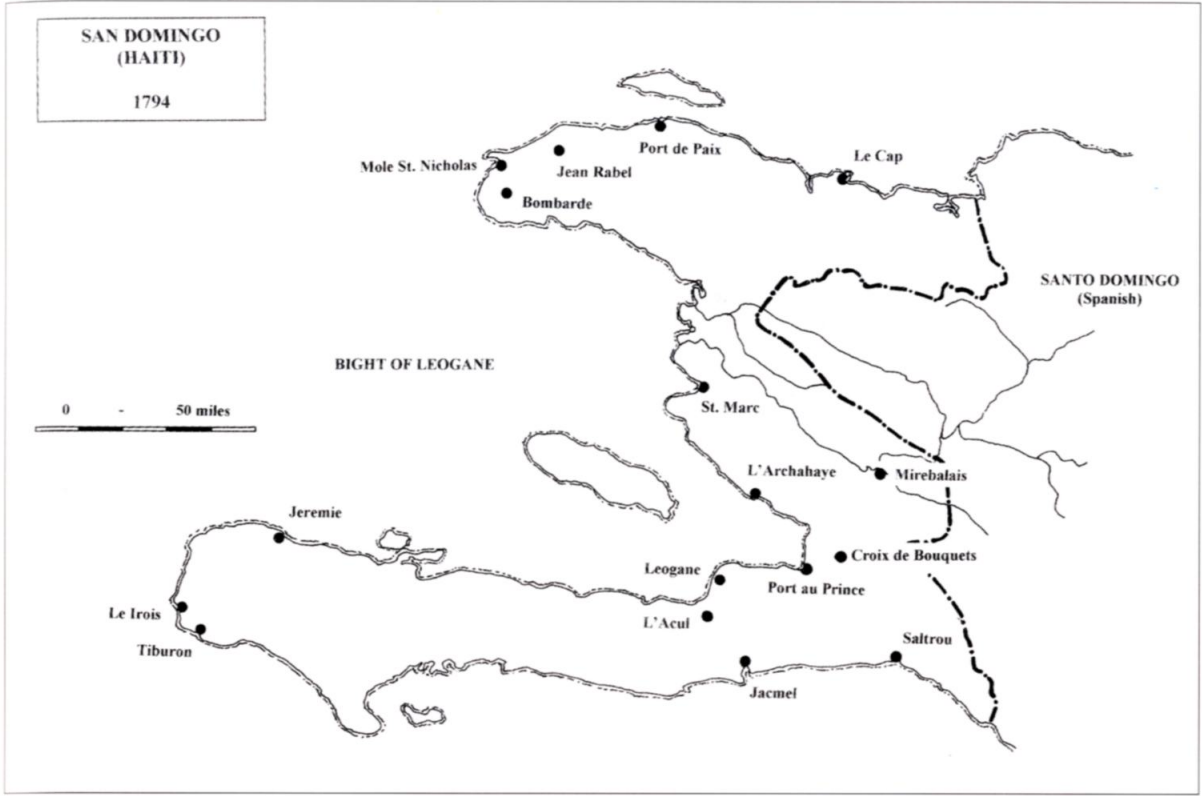
F



Staff Appointment

G

Captain Johnny Newcome, 1782



Whether jammed together or not, an officer's lifestyle at home or at least in peacetime could be agreeable enough, but foreign billets often proved a grave disappointment, though it was hardly to be expected that they should invariably be welcomed with open arms.

**Baggage allowance**

The rigours of campaigning were of course compounded by having to travel light; on receiving his marching orders, most of an officer's kit had to be packed away and left in storage. On 22 May 1778, John Peebles packed up his baggage and 'made an assortment for the Field. 2 Coats 8 Shirts washing breeches & waist coats, trouzers'. When bound for Walcheren in 1809, Ensign Keep, then of the 77th, wrote: 'We ... intend taking our boat cloaks rolled up and fastened to our backs like the soldier's knapsacks, and carrying our eatables in haversacks etc.'

In this particular case the amount of baggage allowed was cut right down to what could be carried on an officer's own back for operational reasons. Ordinarily officers were allowed a 'bat' horse (a bat being a French term for a pack-saddle), which could be led by his soldier-servant or batman. In the 1740s, subalterns were allowed £3 15s to purchase one, regimental staff officers were allowed £5 and captains £7 10s – sufficient for two horses. By 1796 the 'whole of the personal Baggage of a Subaltern officer' was officially to be valued at £60 in case of loss, and two subalterns could share another £35 for their camp equipment. A captain on the other hand could claim £80 for his personal kit and another £35 for his camp equipment, while field officers were entitled to £100 and £60 respectively.

**Map of St. Domingo; the principal British garrisons were at Port au Prince, the Mole St. Nicholas, Archahaye, Leogane and Jeremie. A notable feature of the campaign on St. Domingo was the extent to which very junior officers were left to conduct military operations on their own initiative and develop a sense of self-reliance.**

Similarly, although only the field officers and adjutant were supposed to be mounted (and could therefore claim for the loss of a horse on active service), it was common for company officers to find themselves at least one riding horse for the march. In addition, many also acquired additional baggage animals, especially if they were married and had dependants of one sort or another.

A surprising number of officers' wives accompanied them overseas, especially if the posting was expected to be an extended one. There were evidently a fair number in Boston in 1775 for example, which was perhaps only to be expected from what had been a peacetime station. Others followed the army in the field, especially during the Peninsular War, perhaps in part because officers, such as Lieutenant Mackenzie of the 23rd, married much earlier in life than their successors would do during Queen Victoria's time. Since subalterns found money tight enough at the best of times, there then may have been no alternative but to take their wives campaigning with them, especially as many were young enough and fit enough to regard it as an adventure, as Captain Landman discovered to his cost at Roleia:

*'I overtook a lady dressed in a nankeen riding habit and straw bonnet, and carrying a rather large rush hand basket. The unexpected sight of a respectably dressed woman in such surroundings greatly perplexed me; for the musket shot showering about pretty thickly and making the dust fly on most parts of the road. Moreover at this place, several men were killed, and others mortally wounded, all perfectly stripped, were lying scattered across the road, so that, in order to advance, she was absolutely compelled to step over them. I, therefore, could not resist saying to her, en passant, that she had better go back for a short time, as this was a very unfit place for a lady to be in, and was evidently a very dangerous one. Upon this, she drew herself up, and with a very haughty air, and, seemingly, a perfect contempt for the danger of her situation, she replied, 'Mind your own affairs, Sir, - I have a husband before me.'*

## INTO BATTLE

Throughout the mid to late 18th century, infantry battalions were broken down into a number of platoons, each commanded by a captain. In the 1740s companies were administrative rather than tactical units and at the outset of an action or a tactical demonstration the battalion was 'told off' into *ad hoc* platoons and officers allocated to each quite arbitrarily (see Warrior 19 *British Redcoat 1740-93*). Whilst theoretically efficient enough, this was a bad practice in man-management terms as it frequently separated soldiers from their own officers. In the 1750s, however, James Wolfe introduced the Prussian-style 'alternate firing' system under which each company was divided into two platoons. This was much more popular and, when preparing to cross the St. Lawrence to reinforce Wolfe's unsuccessful attack at Montmorency in 1759, Captain John Knox of the 43rd Foot breathlessly recorded that his orders were that 'the regiment should embark, land, and fight by companies under their own Officers, which afforded the highest satisfaction to the soldiers'.



The 92nd (Gordon) Highlanders and 2nd Dragoons charge forward together in a famous incident at Waterloo depicted by Captain Jones. Even in this black and white sketch the differences in uniform worn by officers and men is very apparent.

Wolfe's Alternate Firing was subsequently enshrined in the 1764 *Regulations*, but the clearest and most comprehensive instructions on the placing of officers is contained in the superb 1792 *Regulations* devised by David Dundas.

All the field officers and the adjutant were to be mounted: 'In order the more readily to give ground in movements, speedily to correct mistakes, to circulate orders, to dress pivots, when they ought to cover in column in a straight line, and especially to take care when the column halts, that they are most speedily adjusted before wheeling up into line. - These operations no dismounted officer can effectually perform, nor in that situation can he see the faults, nor give the aids which his duty requires.'

Under the 1792 *Regulations* the process begun by Wolfe was taken even further and for tactical purposes companies and platoons were synonymous:

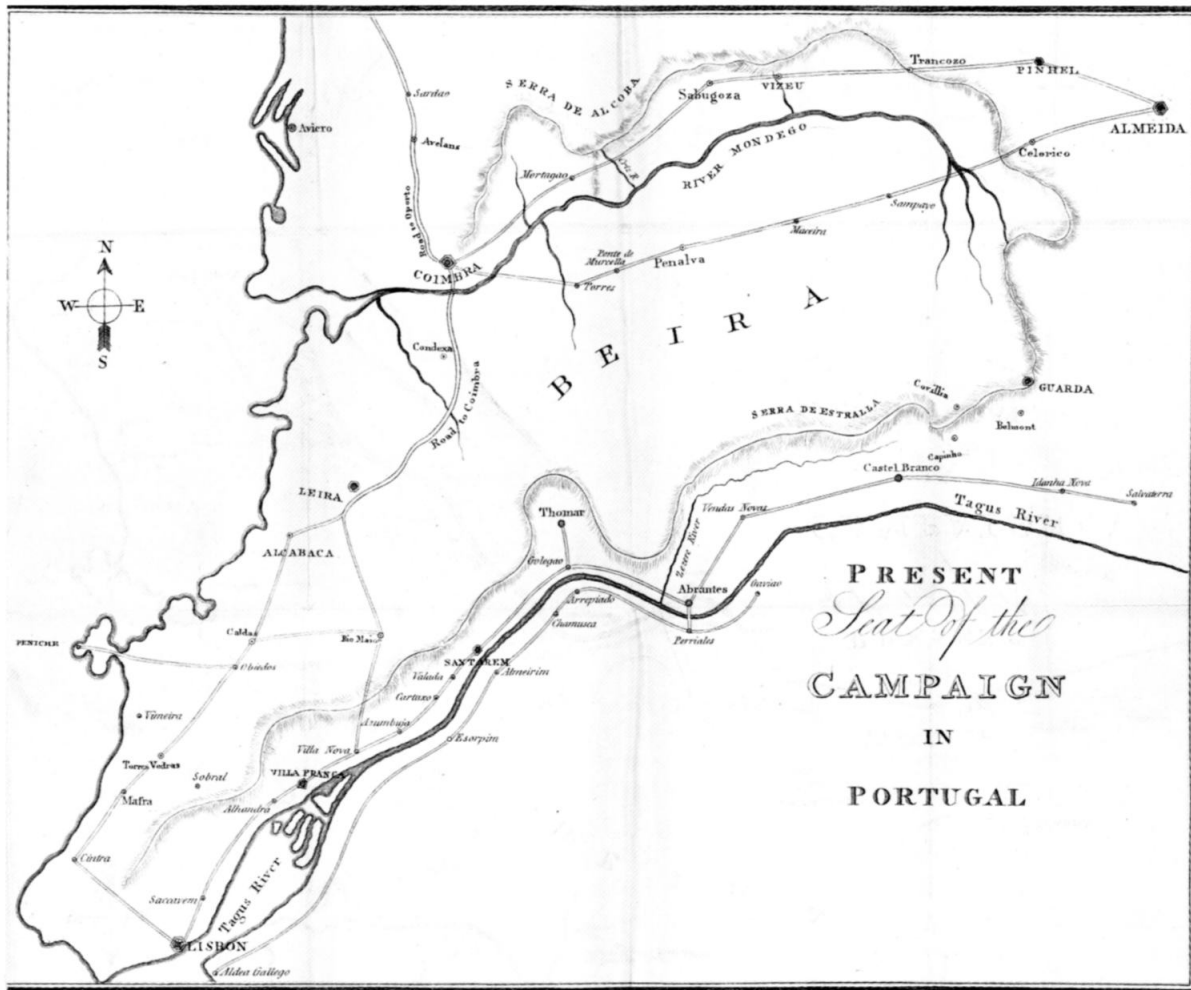
*'When the company is singly formed; the captain is on the right, and the ensign on the left, of the front rank, each covered by a serjeant in the rear rank. The lieutenant is in the rear, as also the drummer and pioneer in a fourth rank, at three paces distance'.*

*'When the company is to join others, and the battalion, or part of it, to be formed, the ensign and his covering serjeant quit the flank, and fall into the fourth rank, until otherwise placed'.*

The deployment of the light company was slightly different:

The 28th Foot as depicted in square by Captain Jones with the inevitable mounted officer in the centre.





*'The officer commanding the company will be on the right, covered by a serjeant. The next on the left, also covered by a serjeant. The youngest officer in the rear.'*

*'When the Light Infantry companies are assembled in battalion, their movements must be on the same principles as those of the line; the officers and non-commissioned officers posted in the same manner ...'*

When a battalion was drawn up in line:

*'The commanding officer is the only officer advanced in front, for the general purpose of exercise when the battalion is single; but in the march in line, and in the firings, he is in the rear of the colours.'*

*'The lieutenant colonel is behind the colours, six paces from the rear rank. The major and adjutant are six paces in the rear of the third and sixth companies.'*

*'One officer is on the right of the front rank of each company or platoon, and one on the left of the battalion ... and the remaining officers ... are in a fourth rank behind their companies.'*

*'The fourth rank is at three paces distance when halted, or marching in line. - When marching in column, it must close up to the distance of*

**A contemporary map of the Seat of the Campaign in Portugal 1810, which is a fair specimen of what was available to infantry officers proceeding to the front.**

*the other ranks. The essential use of the fourth rank is, to keep the others closed up to the front during the attack, and to prevent any break beginning in the rear; on this important service, too many officers and non-commissioned officers cannot be employed.'*

Unless placed in actual charge of a battalion or a detachment (see plate F) British infantry tactics allowed little real scope for initiative by individual infantry officers. Instead their primary job was to regulate the pace and 'regularity' of the ranks when on the move, and above all to keep their men calm and steady. This was obviously of some importance in a fire-fight, in preventing their men from firing too quickly and too wildly, but this role grew even more crucial as infantry tactics moved away from Humphrey Bland's platoon firing to Wolfe's alternate firing and then to the volley and bayonet tactics employed during the Napoleonic Wars.

British officers have traditionally been noted for cultivating an air of calm and deliberate unconcern. This is often casually interpreted merely as a social trait; as an affectation cultivated by gentlemen to underline their belief that soldiering was not a trade. In reality it was a pose deliberately calculated to prevent their soldiers from becoming too excited. While French officers, by contrast, were encouraged to 'animate' their men during an advance to contact, with cries of 'Vive le Roi, Vive l'Republique', or 'Vive l'Empreur' (as appropriate), British ones were taught to repress both their own and their men's emotions, usually by simply repeating the injunction 'Steady' in a low, calm voice, in order that they should behave all the more fiercely when they were eventually ordered to follow up their volley with a sudden bayonet charge. The psychology might be rather basic, and judging the optimum moment to release the pent-up emotional energy was a matter of fine calculation, but as a tactical philosophy it proved devastatingly effective.

As a rule officers were not personally expected to fight, as it would clearly distract them from their proper job of controlling their men, but



**Mounted officer urging on the 71st Highlanders at Waterloo. In theory only the major and adjutant should have been mounted, but in practice all field officers normally rode into battle, both in order to be able to see over the heads of their men, and to be able to move quickly to any critical points.**

inevitably it did happen. Officers routinely carried and used firearms when on patrol in the North American wilderness, and during the Peninsular War it also became fashionable for young officers to arm themselves with Baker rifles, but just occasionally an officer could find himself using his sword in earnest. During fighting on Corsica in 1794, Lieutenant-colonel John Moore (later Sir John Moore) of the 51st Foot was attacked by a French grenadier and defended himself with his straight-bladed spadron, which as he later told George Napier, saved his life, for without it 'he would not have been able to run the grenadier through the body, and would have been killed himself ... he told me he never should forget the horrid sensation it gave him drawing the sword out of the man's body, and that it was always a painful recollection to him.'

## AFTERMATH OF BATTLE

As a rule officers were about 20 percent more likely to become casualties than the rank and file – and not just because American sharpshooters had an unsporting habit of picking them off – but in the immediate aftermath of combat they generally fared much better.

They could certainly expect a certain degree of assistance from fellow officers, both in their own regiments and outside, and even from their counterparts on the other side. While there was no formal policy of treating wounded officers before soldiers (as there was in the Austrian army), casualty evacuation was normally superior. Soldiers were officially forbidden to carry off wounded comrades while a battle was actually in

Senior officers tend to make prominent targets at the best of times, but as this illustration by Captain Jones shows, Colonel Macara of the 42nd was particularly unfortunate in that after being wounded at Quatre Bras he was murdered by some French lancers.



progress, in order to avoid the well-known phenomenon of half a dozen men going off with one lightly wounded individual. A blind eye was normally turned to the evacuation of officer casualties, although this was balanced by a corresponding moral pressure upon them to return to their posts after receiving treatment, if at all possible.

In the medium to long term, aftercare was also better as a rule, if only because officers had their soldier-servants to look after them and at least a modicum of cash to pay for their care. Towards the end of the period, permanently disabled officers could be awarded pensions based on both their rank and the severity of the injury, while those less seriously wounded could also be awarded temporary pensions, usually equating to a year's pay, and in addition would have their medical bills reimbursed. Less seriously wounded officers received no gratuity but could still expect to have the cost of medical treatment covered while convalescing at home.

Those unfortunate enough to be taken prisoner might routinely expect to be relieved of any valuables carried on their persons including watches or cash, but otherwise they were normally well treated. Lieutenant Edmund Wheatley of the King's German Legion had a very unhappy time in French hands after being captured at La Haye Sainte during the Battle of Waterloo. His captors' initial surmise that he was a field officer did not prevent him from being comprehensively robbed right down to his boots and he afterwards claimed to have been several times on the point of being murdered. However, his treatment does appear to have been exceptional, and can be put down to the fact that he and his captors were caught up in a disorderly retreat.

Wheatley eventually escaped, but it was much more common for officer prisoners to be released on parole, or exchanged, often within a very short time of being captured. When Lieutenant John Urquhart was taken prisoner during a disastrous action at Bombarde on St. Domingo in the early hours of 1 May 1794, he was released just three weeks later (on his birthday) when the Republican garrison decided to ask for terms. By contrast, 14 of his men captured at the same time were not released for another two months. Similarly, during the American Revolutionary War, most of the officers who surrendered at Saratoga (1777) were eventually released on parole, while their men remained in captivity. Napoleon Bonaparte, on the other hand, ever the innovator, embarked upon a policy of refusing prisoner exchanges and paroles



Officer of Highland regiment c.1750 after Van Gucht.



after the collapse of the Peace of Amiens in 1803. Officially this resulted in captured British officers being sent to redundant fortresses such as Verdun until the end of the war, but in practice most (although not all) of those detained were naval officers. On the ground local commanders remained much more flexible and unless some notoriety attached to the individual concerned, informal exchanges were quite frequent.

## RETIREMENT

Provision for an officer's retirement was inextricably linked with purchase. Ordinarily an officer was expected to provide for himself by selling his commissions and purchasing an annuity with the proceeds. If the whole sum was invested it was calculated that an interest rate of 4 percent would produce an annual income equivalent to his pay.

Throughout the 18th century it was firmly laid down that only those commissions which had been purchased could be sold, but in practice the matter was less straightforward.

If we suppose that after having purchased his ensigncy at the regulation price of £400 an officer succeeded to a death vacancy by reason of a lieutenant's sudden demise, his subsequent promotion to captain would still only cost him the difference of £1000, and apparently he still expected to gain the full £1,500 when he sold out. This however was by no means a right. In 1812, for example, Major Cocks of the 79th Highlanders entered into a complicated arrangement to buy out Lieutenant-colonel Fulton of the same regiment. In order to expedite matters Cocks agreed to take on the selling of most of the gallant Colonel's commissions, but not his majority since that had been a free promotion and there was consequently no certainty that he would be allowed to sell it.

On the other hand an ensign who had begun his career with a free commission was in a less happy situation. He would only have needed to pay the 'difference' of an easily borrowed £100 to become

**Colonel Sir William Murray Keith, 89th Highlanders; red jacket, dark green facings, gold embroidery. Government set tartan plaid.**



a lieutenant, and might thereafter have succeeded to a death vacancy as a captain. However, when the time came to retire he had no automatic right to sell the ensigncy or the captaincy and so normally could only expect to receive the 'difference' that he had paid for his lieutenant's commission.

In the circumstances he had two options available to him. The first was to apply through his colonel for permission to sell the free commission(s). Officially this was discouraged since it reduced the number of free vacancies for new entrants, but the privilege was granted in exceptional circumstances. A much more common alternative was to obtain an appointment to a Veteran Battalion, or to retire on half-pay.

### Half-pay

The half-pay establishment was made up of phantom regiments and companies disbanded at the end of each war throughout the course of the 18th century. Originally half-pay was provided for the officers of those regiments since they would clearly be unable to find anyone to buy their commissions. In return they were expected to return to the full pay if so required and this actually occurred with surprising frequency. The Government was always anxious to keep the bill as low as possible and whenever a new levy was ordered it was piously expected that as many officers as possible should be drawn from the half-pay. This resulted in a two-way traffic. In the first place an officer who intended to retire as a consequence of wounds, ill-health or old age, but who was unable to sell his commissions could be appointed to one of the many vacancies in the half-pay regiments. This was a relatively straightforward matter and considered to be well worth the additional burden which it placed on the exchequer since the officer's departure created a free vacancy in his original corps. Alternatively he could exchange with a half-pay officer who wished to return to active duty.

Such exchanges were, as usual, effected through the ever-obliging medium of the regimental agent and were by no means confined to those officers who wished to retire from the service permanently. Those officers who joined the Staff were normally required to 'retire' on to the half-pay for the duration of their appointment, while others might choose to do so in consequence of prolonged ill-health or for other personal reasons. Retiring can in fact be something of a misnomer, for while many officers did indeed put their feet up and see out their declining years on the pension, others continued to lead active careers either on the Staff or elsewhere.

In theory too a half-pay officer could be recalled to service at any time – and indeed many were called up during the Irish emergency in 1798 – so a number of conditions were laid down. Half-pay officers could not for example be in Holy Orders and while there was no bar on an officer living abroad, he could not take service with a foreign army. Oddly enough however this did not apply to the East India Company's armies. John Urquhart, who served as an Assistant Military Secretary at India House in the early 1800s, drew half-pay as a captain in the Royal Glasgow Regiment at the same time, while a contemporary, John Blakiston of the EIC Engineers, was also on the half-pay of Fraser's long disbanded 71st Highlanders.

When an officer exchanged with another on to the half-pay it was usual for him to receive the 'difference', which in this case related to the



**William, Earl of Sutherland as colonel of the Sutherland Fencibles c.1760.**

**OPPOSITE James MacDonnell: Third son of Duncan MacDonnell of Glengarry. Originally commissioned into 1st or Strathspey Fencibles 1793, Lieutenant 19th Foot 2 February 1796. Captain 5th Foot 10 September 1803. Major 2/78th Highlanders 1804 (as depicted here). Lieutenant-colonel (brevet) 7 September 1809. Captain and Lieutenant-colonel 2nd Footguards 8 August 1811. Served Maida, Peninsula and Waterloo. Wounded in defence of Hougoumont, where he and Sergeant Graham gained distinction by their closing the gate after the French got in. Colonel (brevet) 12 August 1819, Major-General 22 July 1830. Died 15 May 1859. (Private Collection)**

respective capital values of the half-pay and full pay commissions. Naturally when the time came for him to return to active duty he himself was required to pay the 'difference'. Alternatively, he could apply for a free vacancy created by augmentation after making a formal declaration that he had not received the 'difference' at the time of his earlier retirement.

However, this only applied to regimental rank. Brevets were invariably gazetted as conferring rank 'in the Army' and were considered to be temporary. This meant that an officer promoted through one or more brevets had no right to sell them and only drew the additional pay of his brevet rank while he was actually serving. In the meantime he retained his regimental rank (and seniority) and eventually sold it or retired on to the half-pay accordingly. This could lead to decidedly unhappy situations and John Urquhart's father, Lieutenant-General James Urquhart, was by no means alone in receiving only a captain's half-pay of a bare five shillings per day.

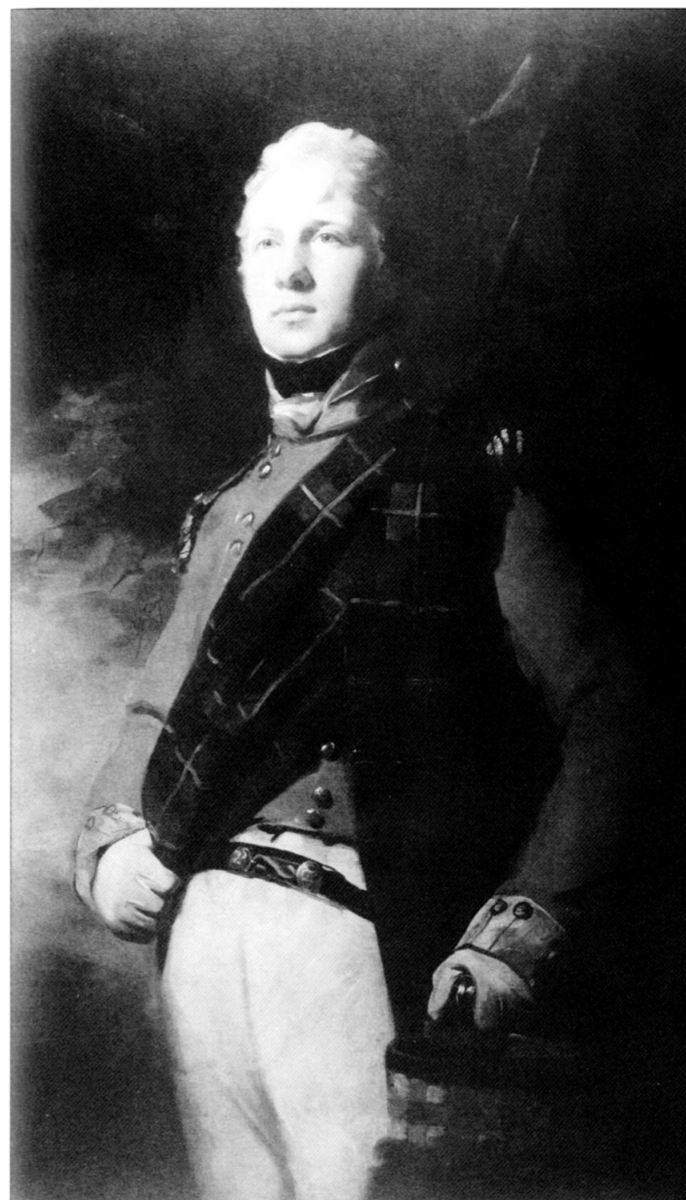
## COLLECTIONS, MUSEUMS AND RE-ENACTMENT

The most comprehensive collections of British officers' clothing, equipment and other possessions for this period are to be found in the National Army Museum, Royal Hospital Road, Chelsea, London; and in the Scottish War Museum (formerly the Scottish United Services Museum) in Edinburgh Castle. However, visits to individual regimental museums are also important as they frequently contain unusual items and relics not represented in the national collections.

At the Public Record Office, Kew, London, document class WO25 contains three sets of officers' service records relating to this period. The first, compiled in 1809-10 covers lieutenant-colonels, colonels and general officers and typically lists promotion dates, stretching back to the 1760s or even earlier and, more importantly, also provide an often extremely detailed personal memoir of service. Two subsequent sets of returns compiled in the late 1820s cover all officers then on either full pay or half-pay. Although mainly covering the period of the French Revolutionary Wars and Napoleonic Wars, they also include family information lacking in the earlier 1809-10 series.

Another important document class is WO31, containing the commander in chief's memoranda papers from 1793 onwards. Most of the papers are (successful) letters of application for commissions, promotions and exchanges. The amount of information in the various letters and documents varies enormously, but the applications from individuals obtaining their first commissions contain invaluable information on their backgrounds; a typical example is quoted elsewhere in the study.

Naturally enough there are no re-enactment groups solely devoted to infantry officers, but there are a number of groups on both sides of the Atlantic recreating British infantry units throughout this period. Interpreting a Georgian officer is neither cheap nor easy. Ironically, it is probably still cheaper to buy an original 1796



pattern sword than one of the limited selection of reproductions, but otherwise proper clothing and equipment is extremely expensive. Where an officer interpreter is unable to afford the glorious magnificence of a full set of regimentals, however, it is essential that he obtains a good quality frock or undress uniform, rather than try to make do with a stage-quality costume made from inferior materials in tawdry imitation of a dress uniform. There is simply no substitute for employing the proper materials and – equally importantly – the services of a specialist tailor. However, producing a convincing interpretation of an officer does not rest on clothing and appearance. It is also necessary to construct a detailed legend, ideally based on information gleaned from WO25 and WO31, and then immerse himself in it in order to be able to behave like an 18th-century gentleman. Last and most important of all, an officer interpreter also needs to be as technically competent as his historical predecessors; just as required by the 1792 *Regulations*.

## FURTHER READING

There is no shortage of officers' published memoirs and papers from this period, particularly when it comes to the Napoleonic Wars. All of them provide a certain insight into various different aspects of the life, activities and attitudes of Georgian officers, but three in particular stand out. For the early part of the period there is *Colonel Samuel Bagshawe and the Army of George II* edited by Alan J. Guy (London, 1990), a collection of papers which is particularly useful for the business side of running an infantry battalion. For the American Revolutionary War – and indeed for the period as a whole – John Peebles' *American War 1776–1782* edited by Ira Gruber (London 1997) is an extremely detailed diary which provides the most complete picture of everyday life in an infantry battalion. *In the Service of the King: The Letters of William Thornton Keep* edited by Ian Fletcher (Staplehurst 1997) does a similar, albeit much thinner, job for the early 1800s.

Other contemporary material of particular interest includes *Humphrey Bland's Treatise of Military Discipline* – first published in 1727 and still going strong 40 years later; Captain Thomas Simes' *Military Medley* (1768) and the anonymously edited *General Wolfe's Instructions to Young Officers* recently republished by the Canadian Museums Service. The anonymous (and hilarious) *Advice to the Officers of the British Army* was reprinted in 1946 and may still be found cheaply in second-hand book dealers. More officially the *Rules and Regulations for the Formations, Field Exercise and Movements of his Majesty's Forces* (1792) are essential reading, together with the formidably titled *A Collection of Orders, Regulations and Instructions for the Army on matters of Finance and Points of Discipline immediately connected therewith* (1807).

More modern works of some importance include Alan J. Guy's *Economy and Discipline; Officership and Administration in the British Army 1714–1763* (Manchester 1985), John A. Houlding's *Fit for Service; The Training of the British Army 1715–1795* (Oxford 1981), and John A. Hall's *Biographical Dictionary of British Officers Killed and Wounded 1808–1814* (London 1998).

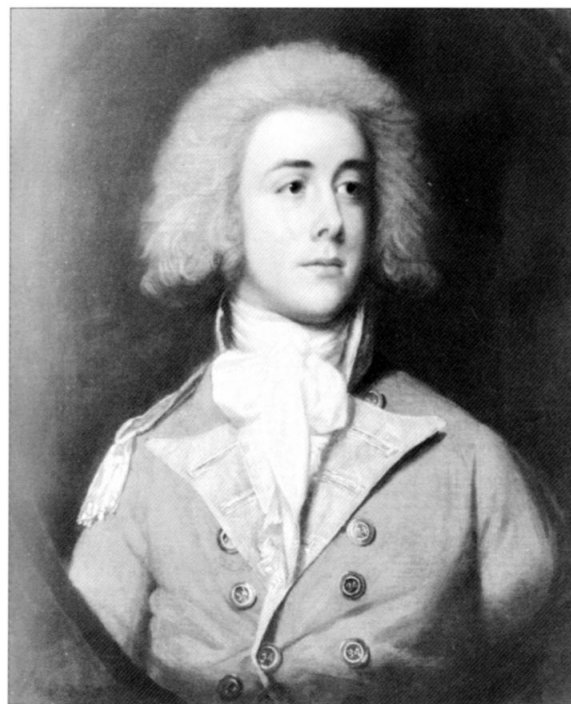
## COLOUR PLATE COMMENTARY

### A: SECOND LIEUTENANT JOHNNY NEWCOME 7TH REGIMENT OF FOOT (OR ROYAL FUZILIERS)

This plate represents a typical newly commissioned officer in the 7th Regiment of Foot (or Royal Fuziliers), which served continuously in North America between 1773 and 1783. Originally sent to Quebec, 83 soldiers were taken prisoner at the fall of Chambly on 18 October 1775, and 295 men at St. Johns on 2 November 1775. However, another 63 survived to take part in the defence of Quebec and the prisoners were eventually exchanged in December 1776. Sent as reinforcements to Philadelphia during the winter of 1777 / 78, the Fusiliers fought at Monmouth Courthouse during the return march to New York. In December 1779, they went south to Charleston and the greater part of the regiment was killed or captured at Cowpens on 17 January 1781. The remainder soldiered on at Charleston until August 1782 when 182 men were sent to Savannah and the rest were ordered back to New York, from whence they sailed for home in 1783.

The plate combines the list published in Simes' handbook with a series of bills incurred by Ensign Donald MacDonald of Kinlochmoidart of the Second Battalion of the 1st (Royal) Regiment – now the Royal Scots. The uniform, as laid down in the 1768 *Regulations*, was very similar to that worn by the

Unknown officer of the 34<sup>th</sup> Regiment, 1778. Oil painting by Thomas Beach. (Parks Canada)



7th Fusiliers and aside from badges and other marks of distinction, the only real point of difference was the requirement for our hypothetical young gentleman, Johnny Newcome, to purchase a fur fusilier cap in place of the gold-laced cocked hat for full dress – for most ordinary duties he too will have worn an unlaced cocked hat – and two gold epaulettes.

On 22 May 1788, young Kinlochmoidart bought the following items from James Burgess:

		@	£	s	d
1_ yards	Scarlet Cloth	23s	2	0	3
3_ yards	White do	19s	3	1	9
8_ yards	Cassimeer	10/6	4	6	7
1/8	Blue for facing			2	6
6 yards	Shalloon	2/4		14	
19_	White Dimity	5s	4	17	6
12 yards	Yard wide linen	1/9		1	
	A regt. Gold Epaulet			1	1
					3
8 yards	Gold Vellum Lace	3/6	1	8	
4_ dozen	Coat buttons	2/6		11	3
6 dozen	Breast do.	1/3		7	6
13 pair	Cotton hose	5/6	3	11	6
15	Bordered cotton handkerchiefs	3/9	2	16	3
4	Velvet stocks	1/6		6	
2	Stiffeners for do.		1	6	
3	Netts for the Hair			3	
	A piece of Hair Ribbon			10	6
	A Sword and Sword Knott			1	16
	A Sash			1	11
	A Belt, Belt Plat, & Gorget			1	6
	A Regt. Hat, lace band & Stamp & Cockade			2	10
	A Regt. Do. Gold loop & button do. & do.			1	9
	An additional Cockade			3	
	Deal Box Lock & Key			3	6
	2 sets of Shoe Brushes & two blk. Balls				3
	2 cloaths do.				
	Marking hose & handks.			6	
	Amount Mr. Baillie's bill for bedding etc.			15	19
	Amt. Mr Week's do. For Perfumery etc.			2	6
	Amt. Mr Carpenter's bill for Shoes & Boots			3	12
	<b>total</b>			<b>59</b>	<b>1 8</b>

This was sufficient to provide a scarlet regimental coat lined with shalloon (1), shown as individual pieces (1a) two or three white waistcoats (2) and pairs of breeches (3), but not the frock or undress coat; it is also a touch disconcerting to find him paying more for one of his hats (4) than for his sword.

The Standing Orders for 1st (Royal) at this time referred to 'regimental boots' (5). Judging by later bills paid by Kinlochmoidart, Mr Carpenter probably provided him on this occasion with one pair of high Cordovan leather boots which matched the appearance of the black gaiters worn on formal parades (and curiously missing from Burgess' bill), two pairs of stout waxed leather shoes, and two pairs of dress shoes with dog-skin uppers (patent leather) (6). In October 1795, by which time he was a captain, Kinlochmoidart bought his annual pair of Cordovan boots, two pairs of long Hussar

boots and a pair of short Hussar boots – which must have been very similar to the boots worn in a portrait by another of the regiment's officers, Captain John Clayton Cowell – as well as four pairs apiece of waxed and dog-skin shoes. Also seen are the shirts recommended by Sime (7), 13 pairs of cotton hose purchased by Kinlochmoidart (8), the gloves recommended by Sime (9) and one of the four velvet stocks (10).

BELOW (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT)

**Officer saluting with firelock (1) from Windham's Plan of Discipline for the Militia of Norfolk.**

**Officer saluting with firelock (2); after this motion the firelock was smartly returned to the previous position.**

**Officer saluting with firelock (4).**

**Officer saluting with firelock (5).**

### B: SUBALTERN IN TRAINING

Although the satirical *Advice to the Officers of the British Army*, published in 1782, observed that: 'On coming into the regiment, perhaps the major or adjutant will advise you to learn the manual, the salute, or other parts of the exercise; to which you may answer, that you do not want to be a drill-sergeant or corporal – or that you purchased your commission, and did not come into the army to be made a machine of,' hands-on training was considered to be the only effective way of learning the 'trade'. In his letter of advice to Hugh Lord, James Wolfe recommended that a newly commissioned officer should obtain private tuition from an experienced serjeant or corporal, but in many regiments it seems to have been common to place subalterns in an ordinary recruit squad until they 'passed the adjutant'.

In this scene Johnny Newcome and another subaltern are practising how to salute with the firelock – an important

exercise for Fusilier officers – under the personal supervision of the adjutant (left) and sergeant-major (right).

The adjutant's appointment was a particularly responsible post, and in addition to overseeing training he was to: '... see all detachments before they be sent to the parade; that their arms be clean, their ammunition, accoutrements, &c. in good order, and that a serjeant be sent with them to the parade ...

'That they keep an exact journal of the duty of every one in their respective regiments; viz. All detachments, all sick, gone to or returned from the hospital, deserted, discharged, dead, entertained from year to year, discharged, or absent by leave; and that they give in a weekly return every Friday morning to the major of brigade in the usual method ...

That they always take care to send their sick to the hospital, and take measures for carrying the arms and accoutrements of the sick.'

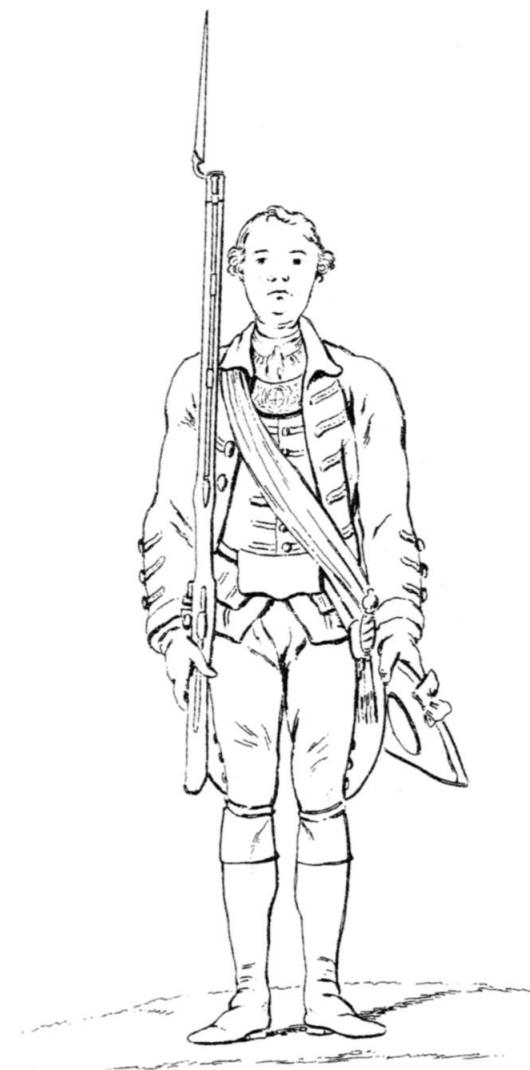
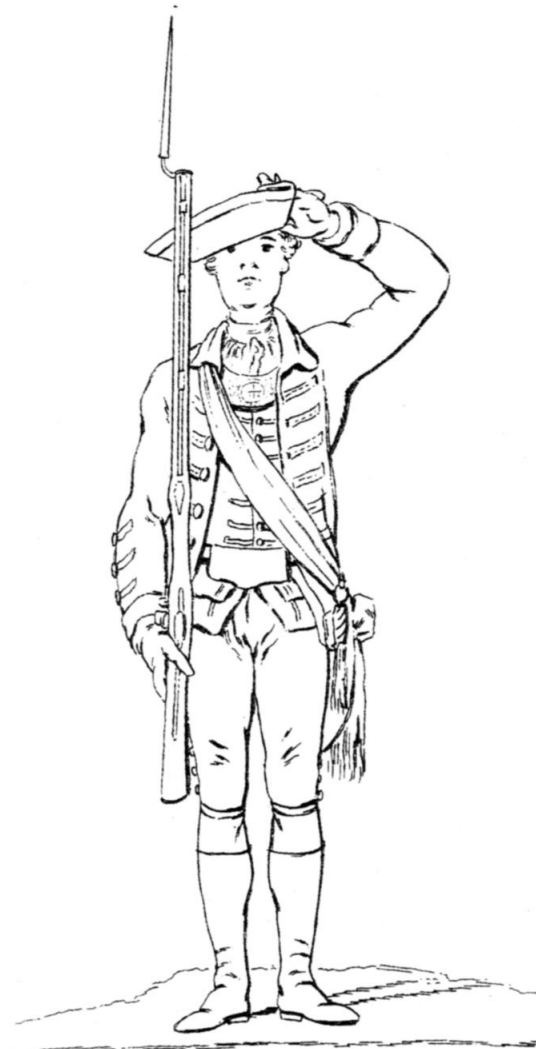
'That the adjutants of the British corps keep an exact list of

duty with the majors of brigade; that they may see justice performed, and be able to tell every body when they are near duty, in order to keep in camp, and provide accordingly.

That all adjutants keep constantly to the rules and forms of discipline and exercise, now used in the British Foot, and on no pretence whatever to change or let fall any of the said customs.'

He also had to keep the regimental books, or at least ensure that they were kept properly, and look after them as well, even when hotly pursued by hostile Indians intent on his scalp, as Lieutenant Daniel Disney of the 44th discovered at the Monongahela in 1755. All in all, the adjutant was eventually responsible for no fewer than 15 different books:

- No.1 General Order Book
- No.2 Regimental Order Book
- No.3 Description and Succession of officers
- No.4 Description of Soldiers



*Order your Fusee. 1<sup>st</sup> Motion.*

*Salute, 2<sup>d</sup> Motion.*

*Salute, 4<sup>th</sup> Motion.*

*Salute, 5<sup>th</sup> Motion.*

- No.5 Letter Book
- No.6 Monthly Return Book
- No.7 Miscellaneous Return Book
- No.8 Effective and Daily States
- No.9 Registry of Furloughs
- No.10 Description of Deserters
- No.11 Account of Defaulters
- No.12 Court-martial Book
- No.13 Registry of Deceased Soldiers
- No.14 Record Book
- No.15 Registry of Marriages and Baptisms

In the circumstances it is not surprising that the adjutant traditionally developed various eccentricities, both of dress and character. While he could, if he chose, set up for a dandy, the custom of the service also allowed him to be as casually dressed as he pleased. He was also 'a wit *ex officio*, and finds many standing jokes annexed to his appointment. It is on the happy application of these that his character depends. Thus, for example, when the men lose the step, you may observe, that their legs move like those before a hosier's shop in windy weather; if, in the platoon exercise, they do not come down to the present together, that they perform the motions just as they were born, one after the other. In short, by attending a little to the conversation of the wags among the non-commission officers and soldiers, you may soon form a very pretty collection; which certainly must be sterling, as they have stood the test of perhaps a century.'

#### C: EQUIPMENT

- 1 1796 Pattern light cavalry sword
- 2 1796 Pattern infantry officer's sword
- 3 Spadroon
- 4 1803 Pattern infantry officer's sword
- 4a 4 rotated
- 5 Land Pattern Firelock (detail)
- 6 Presentation bayonet for India Pattern firelock
- 7 Fusil bayonet
- 8 Short Land Pattern Firelock (post 1777)
- 9 Light Dagoon Pistol c.1760
- 10 Officer's half-pike or Spontoon - 1<sup>st</sup> Foot c.1750-1760
- 11 Waistbelt c.1759
- 12 Shoulder-belt 1780s
- 13 Shoulder belt c.1790-1815
- 14 King's colour 7<sup>th</sup> (Royal Fusiliers)
- 15 Regimental colour 7<sup>th</sup> (Royal Fusiliers)

Officers' 'working' equipment fell into three main categories: first there were the colours (see plate D); each battalion had two silken sheets, each 6 feet 6 inches square. The King's colour (14) was basically the national or 'union' flag, while the second one was a fairly plain sheet in the facing colour, with a small union in the canton (15). The six 'old' corps and Royal regiments had their badge in the centre and either another device or the royal cypher in the three remaining corners of the second colour. In this case the 7th Fusiliers had the white horse of Hanover. Ordinary regiments of the line had to content themselves with an escutcheon in the centre bearing the regimental number in roman numerals surrounded by a 'union wreath' of thistles and roses (and, after 1801, shamrocks).

All officers were expected to provide themselves with swords, representative samples of which are shown here. Prior to 1796 there was no official pattern and officers



This elegant ivory and gilded brass hilt belongs to a popular officers' sword style known as a spadroon. Sometimes referred to as the 1786 pattern and officially superseded by the 1796 pattern, it actually appears in portraits well outside either date.

normally purchased weapons of a regimental pattern for dress parades and pleased themselves on active service. Generally speaking, however, hilts tended to be gilded, although the 1st (or Royal) Regiment for one was noted in the 1770s to have polished steel. A particularly popular style was the straight-bladed spadroon with a rectangular-sectioned reeded ivory or ebony grip (3). This is sometimes erroneously identified as a 1786 pattern sword, but in fact that particular order (dated 3 April 1786) specified that 'the Officers of Infantry Corps shall be provided with a strong, substantial uniform sword, the blade of which is to be straight, and made to cut and thrust; to be one inch at least broad at the shoulder, and 32 inches in length; the hilt if not of steel, is to be either gilt or silver, according to the colour of the buttons on the uniform.' Nothing was actually said at that time as to the form of the hilt and in fact the style shown here can be seen in a number of portraits predating 1786. On 4 May 1796, however, it was strictly laid down that while the specification for the blade was to remain unchanged the sword was 'to have a brass guard, pommel and shell, gilt

with gold, with the gripe, or handle, of silver twisted wire.' (2). Despite its near universal use (except in Highland regiments), this does not appear to have been a particularly popular sword. Broadly interpreting the blade dimensions laid down as a minimum standard, officers of the 1st (or Royal) Regiment fitted the regulation hilt to heavy broadsword blades. Some officers simply preferred to use a variety of sabres and even the rather more robust 1796 Light Cavalry sword in action (1). As a result in 1803 a new pattern infantry sword with a curved blade was authorised (4). The original intention seems to have been that it should replace the straight-bladed 1796 infantry pattern, but by and large its use seems to have been confined to flank company officers, although William Thornton Keep refers to all the officers of 2/28th having to purchase them in 1812.

At the beginning of this period swords were normally carried on a fairly broad waist-belt, which was sometimes worn under the waistcoat. The example shown is based on a portrait of James Wolfe (11), although in this instance the sword was replaced by a bayonet. (Wolfe seems seldom, if ever, to have carried a sword in North America.) During the American Revolutionary War a cross-belt became popular, initially with an open frame buckle, but latterly with a breastplate (12). In 1788 this practise received official sanction with an order stating that when on duty the belt was to be worn over the coat, but when off duty it was to be worn under it. It was probably also at about this time that the angle of the frog at the bottom of the belt was altered so that instead of sticking out behind the sword hung down perpendicular to the officer's left leg (13).

Battalion company officers were originally expected to equip themselves with spontoons, which were essentially half-pikes comprising a spear-blade mounted on a 9-foot shaft (10). While undoubtedly an elegant weapon to carry on a parade ground, they were (understandably) unpopular. At home a succession of orders were issued sternly reminding officers to parade with them, but on active service it was a very different matter, and on 3 April 1786, the authorities bowed to the inevitable. In the preamble to the first official specification for infantry officers' sword-blades it was rather casually mentioned that the King had 'been pleased to order, that the spontoon shall be laid aside, and that, in lieu thereof, the Battalion Officers are, for the future, to make use of swords.'

Flank company and fusilier officers on the other hand continued to carry firelocks until they, too, were officially ordered to make use of their swords in May 1792 - although in this case the order was widely disregarded on active service (8).

Officers carried a variety of firearms. Pistols were normally carried in saddle-holsters, but if the circumstances warranted it a strap could be attached permitting the holster to be slung over the officer's shoulder (9). For the most part officers (and not only those belonging to battalion companies) preferred to carry firelocks instead, especially in North America. In 1759 Captain John Knox of the 43rd recorded that he and his fellow officers were doing duty with the ordinary Long Land Pattern, until Wolfe authorised the issue of captured French weapons, which were much lighter. Those who could get them almost invariably carried light fusils of .65 calibre, rather than the .75 calibre Land Pattern, although Baker rifles became very popular during the Peninsular War. Some officers could be downright

eccentric and Lieutenant-colonel William Drummond of the 104th Foot was in the habit of going into action during the War of 1812 with a double-barrelled shotgun.

#### D: CEREMONIAL - PRESENTATION OF COLOURS

The colours carried by every British infantry battalion represented a number of things. In purely practical terms they served as a highly visible marker by which the position of a battalion and its commanding officer could be seen easily, especially amid the smoke and confusion of a battlefield. They also provided a means by which both the pace and regularity or straightness of the ranks could be maintained when advancing through their 'dressing' into the centre. Similarly, in times of crisis they also served as a rallying point should the battalion be scattered for any reason, but most important of all they were and still are universally held to embody the spirit of the battalion.

Colours provided soldiers with a sense of identity long before the advent of uniforms. They continued to do so by prominently displaying not only the regiment's distinctive facings on the regimental one, but also by displaying its number and any badges or other distinctions such as battle-honours, to which it might be entitled on both the king's and the regimental colours. Young ensigns such as Johnny Newcome were traditionally called upon to receive the colours when newly presented, or to carry them on other formal occasions such as the king's birthday parade. It is no coincidence that 'a pair of colours' should be synonymous with a first commission and thus their symbolically taking hold of their colours was very much by way of their initiation into the regiment.

Nevertheless, it is clear from the memoirs of officers such as William Thornton Keep that on active service all of the subalterns took their turn at carrying the colours. Not only were they heavy and awkward but - for obvious reasons - carrying the colours was a post of considerable danger. They made an easy aiming mark, and being invested with such emotional significance their loss was not merely a matter of personal disgrace for the unit concerned (and a highly visible symbol of triumph for those who took them), but the very fact of their capture signified that the battalion had been so badly beaten or even destroyed as to be incapable of defending them.

The 7th Fusiliers were particularly unfortunate in this respect. Their original colours were lost at the surrender of St. Johns on 2 November 1775 and can be seen decorating the wall of the Pennsylvania State House in Turnbull's famous painting of the signing of the American Declaration of Independence. A replacement set of colours was presented to the regiment in the ceremony depicted here, after the prisoners were exchanged, only for them to be lost when a weak battalion of the regiment, largely comprised of recruits commanded by Major Timothy Newmarsh, was destroyed at Cowpens on 17 January 1781.

#### E: THE MESS - ST. ANDREW'S NIGHT

Officers' social life chiefly revolved around both informal and formal dinners. Informal dinners could vary from quiet gatherings of two or three officers and civilian friends, to large subscription balls at any convenient time and place. Formal dinners, on the other hand, were held to mark certain



important anniversaries; such as the queen's and king's official birthdays, the dates of the ruling king's coronation and accession, and the restoration of the monarchy on 29 May. They also, quite religiously, celebrated the four national saints' days; St. David's on 1 March, St. Patrick's on 17 March, St. George's on 23 April and St. Andrew's on 30 November. Of these, to judge from contemporary diaries St. David's day was chiefly celebrated only by the 23rd (Royal Welch Fusiliers), and St. George's day tended to be a little sedate. Captain John Peebles of the 42nd Highlanders recorded in 1781 that: 'The sons of St. George in the two Battns. of Grenadrs. din'd together at Rapalje's tavern in commemoration of the day, only three guests there, I was the president's right hand supporter as being a son of St. Andrew, and Captain Lyset on his left for St. Patrick. 18 in Company a very good dinner & plenty of drink, mirth and good humour.' He claimed to have gone home sober from this particular gathering, but St. Patrick's day was much more popular and dedicated 'to the Saint & the bottle or rather to St. for the sake of the bottle'. As for St. Andrew's night, Peebles 'having dress'd & mounted

**Officers gathered around the punch-bowl in 1794.**  
(Anne S.K. Brown Collection)

a St. Andrews X' invariably enjoyed himself, as on this occasion in 1779:

*'Went to Town to celebrate the day with his Ex: where the field offrs. & Cpts. of the 42d. were invited, the Adml. there the offrs. of the Royl. Highland emigrants & some others, about 24 in all. Major Small personated the St. who gave very good toasts & apropos for the occasion, The adm. very chatty & entertaining. Major Hay sang some good songs & spouted a prologue very well a good dinner & drink till 10 o'clock a numerous party of the Sons of St. Andw. din'd at Hicks's above 60, among whom were the Subs. Of the 42d exchang'd a complit. & some of our Compy. Join'd them after we broke up, & made a night of it.'*

**F: BATTLE**

In battle most company grade officers were primarily tasked with simply keeping their men in order, controlling their fire and

encouraging them by a suitably calm demeanour. There was often more to it than that of course, especially when commanding a company or detachment acting independently, and an excellent insight into such minor operations is given in unusually detailed account of a 1777 foraging expedition, which was recorded with some candour by John Peebles.

*'Sunday 23d. Febry a fine clear frosty morning. Not so cold. The Troops from Rhode Island went ashore early this morning - vizt 3rd Light Infantry & Grens (in which Peebles' grenadier company was serving), & the 3d. Brigade, & marched into the Country with a few field pieces & a train of waggons to bring forrage, the whole under the Command of Colo: Mawhood, when we had got a few miles beyond Woodbridge Colo: Campbell of the 52d. was detach'd with 4 or 500 men to the left to make a Sweep into the Country, he got 4 Compys. Of Grrs. With him, having ask'd for ours to be one of them, & I was order'd with 20 men to be the advance guard. - when we had marched about a mile & a half to the Westward, I discover'd a body of the Rebels on a hill which I acquainted Colo: Campbell of, Very well says he I'll manoeuvre them, he accordingly gave orders for the Detachment to form & desir'd me to move on the edge of a wood in our front, as we came forward the Rebels*

**Wellington personally ordering the 52nd forward as depicted by Captain Jones - note what may be an officer of the 95th Rifles in the foreground, or just conceivably an officer of the 52nd in a non-regulation braided dolman.**

*disappeared, & I kept moving on thinking the whole detachment were coming after, but it seems they made a turn to the left while I went on in the track of the Enemy, & soon after saw a body of them go into a wood where they halted. I sent a Corpl. To Colo: Campbell to acquaint him of their situation, but the detachmt. Being a good way off at this time he was long a coming back, - the Rebels seeing my small party drawn up & nobody near them sent out about 30 or 40 to bring us on to engage, I went up & met them & received their fire from behind a fence. I moved on to a fence in front & ord'r'd my men to fire, which we continued to do at each other for a few minutes when they gave way. I believe at seeing the Detatchmt. Coming up for I don't think we hit above 3 or 4 of them. I had two wounded: when the Detatchmt. Came near I mov'd off to the left where a party of them were driving off some Cattle & sheep & some stragglers firing at us, I then form'd & gave them a platoon [volley] & two or 3 rounds after, which made them take to their heels. Colo: Campbell sent up & order'd me to retire back to the detachmt. Which I accordingly did, they having withdrawn towards the left, he form'd his troops again in a field in the rear & to the left withall, & moving on still more to the left we saw another body of Rebels coming down thro a Swamp & making straight for a wood, Colo: Campbell hurried us on, I suppose to get betwixt the wood & them, but they got into the wood before we could get within shot of them, he then order'd me up to a fence at the edge of the wood with my little party which were reduced now to 14 or 15, we went up to the fence under the beginning of their fire, we posted*





The death of Sir Thomas Picton at Waterloo, as depicted by Captain Jones. The ADC, wearing the regulation staff uniform – a single-breasted tail-coat – is probably intended to represent Captain Chambers Newton of the 1st Footguards, killed just a few moments after his chief.

ourselves there & kept up as much fire as we could, two Grenadr. Compys 42d. & 28th came up to our support but began their fire at too great a distance; when they got up to the fence they soon found themselves gall'd by a fire on their right, & those in our front being all posted behind trees almost flank'd the 42d. Compy. In this situation the men are dropping down fast when they [his supports] got orders to retire which I hear'd nothing off. I remain'd at my post till I had not one man left near me, except Jno. Carr lying wounded, & fired away all my Cartridges, when seeing the Rascals coming pretty close up I took to my heels & ran back to the Compy. Under a heavy fire which thank God I escaped, as I fortunately did all the rest of the day ...'

All in all in this badly managed encounter, this 42nd Grenadier company lost one man killed outright, and two sergeants, a corporal and 20 men wounded – most if not all of them belonging to Peebles' little detachment. Although Peebles' account suggests that John Carr was abandoned, he evidently got away too for Peebles records visiting him in hospital and commented on 10 March that despite being in a bad way, he 'holds it out surprizingly'.

In this rather more formal engagement the company commander maintains the formation of his men as they

advance towards the enemy. Having armed himself with a fusil he has discarded his superfluous sword in favour of a bayonet. His men, based on contemporary illustrations of men of the 25<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> Foot wear a typical mixture of cropped regimental coats and single-breasted jackets or roundabouts.

#### G: STAFF APPOINTMENT

While most officers spent their whole careers with the same regiments, some moved further afield. In 1812, Ensign William Thornton Keep of the 28th informed his mother that: 'Many of our Gents are restless to remove from the infantry to cavalry, particularly if at all aristocratically inclined, for the latter though expensive is considered much the most dashing service, and is generally selected by young men of good fortune and family. The consequence is that officers of the infantry hold themselves in very low estimation comparatively; but there is another service still held in higher respect, which is called the Staff. Generally young members of the nobility, or Individuals highly connected, are nominated to these employments, as Aides de Camp or Brigade Majors, attached to the services of General Officers. Such appointments as these offer the best, and most certain path to preferment.'

The *Regulations* normally required all officers appointed to staff positions to relinquish their regimental rank and retire on to the half-pay, which is why so many nominally belonged to exotic or long disbanded corps – such as the Ceylon Regiment or the Royal Glasgow Regiment to name two

examples. The reason was of course that if an officer was to be absent from his corps for any length of time it was desirable for the resulting vacancy to be filled. In practice observance of this rule often depended on circumstances. The appointment might only be of short duration and if both staff officer and regiment were serving in the same theatre it was understood that he might retain his full-pay commission on the understanding that he could be recalled to regimental duty if the circumstances demanded.

Staff officers fell into three (sometimes overlapping) categories. These comprised the Quartermaster General's department, the Adjutant General's department, and personal staff officers.

Broadly speaking the Quartermaster General's department quite literally dealt with the quartering and transporting of the army and everything associated with it. This included the reconnoitring and sometimes the improvement – through the medium of the Royal Staff Corps – of the routes along which the army was to march. Inevitably these duties involved an element of intelligence gathering, which properly speaking fell to the Adjutant General's department along with the interrogation of prisoners. However, the department was *not* responsible for supplies, which were actually procured and transported by the civilian Commissariat. The Adjutant General and his assistants were responsible for more routine administrative matters, such as discipline and military administration.

Both departments were similarly organised on a surprisingly ad hoc basis. Each 'command', be it a field army or a military district, had its own staff comprising an Adjutant General (AG) and Quartermaster General (QMG) and one or two Assistants (AAGs and AQMGs) normally ranking as lieutenant-colonels or majors. Below them came an indeterminate number of Deputy Assistant Adjutant Generals and Deputy Assistant Quartermaster Generals (DAAGs and DAQMGs) who were usually captains or sometimes subalterns.

So-called 'personal' staff officers comprised Brigade Majors and Aides de Camp (ADCs). Although recommended by their generals, the first were in effect Brigade Adjutants and their appointments often outlived their patrons. On the other hand ADCs' appointments were entirely in the gift of their masters. A general was entitled to have three at public expense, a lieutenant-general two, and a major-general one. If this allocation was found to be insufficient to fulfil the duties demanded of them, others, distinguished as 'extra' ADCs could be added to a general's personal staff at his own expense.

According to the anonymous *Advice to the Officers of the British Army* 'An aide-de-camp is to his general what Mercury was to Jupiter, and what the jackal is to the lion. It is a post that very few can fill with credit, and requires parts and education to execute its duties with propriety. Mistake me not; I do not mean that you are to puzzle your brain with Mathematics, or spoil your eyes with poring over Greek and Latin. Nor is it necessary you should understand military manoeuvres, or even the manual exercise. It is the graces you must court, by means of their high priest, a dancing master. Learn to make a good bow; that is the first grand essential; the next is to carve and hold the toast; and if you aspire to great eminence, get a few French and German phrases by rote; these, besides giving you an air of learning, may induce people to suppose you have served abroad.



Grenadier Company officer of the Royal East India Volunteers saluting with his sword; print by Rowlandson.

Next to these accomplishments, the art of listening with a seeming attention to a long story, will be of great use to you; particularly if your general is old, and has served in former wars, or has accidentally been present at any remarkable siege or battle ...'

Harry Smith of the 95th Rifles rather more prosaically reckoned that an ADC only required to be able to ride and eat, but the reality was that ADCs and indeed most junior staff officers were perpetually overworked. At night, whilst regimental officers could relax, they would generally be found working far into the night dealing with returns, movement and other orders – in duplicate. Some of the work could of course be farmed out to clerks drawn from the ranks, but the all-important movement orders always had to be drafted and copied by officers. They had to be delivered by hand, often in darkness, in bad weather and under fire.

#### H: CAPTAIN JOHNNY NEWCOME, 1782

- 1 Dress sword knot; gold braid with double red line
- 2 Buff leather sword knot
- 3 Officer's sabre by Bibb of Newport Street c.1758–75

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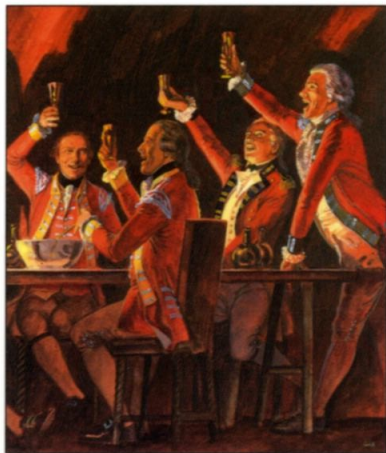
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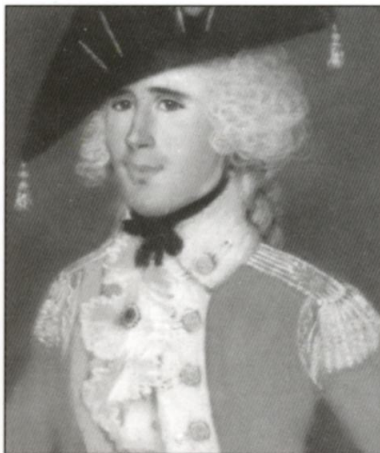
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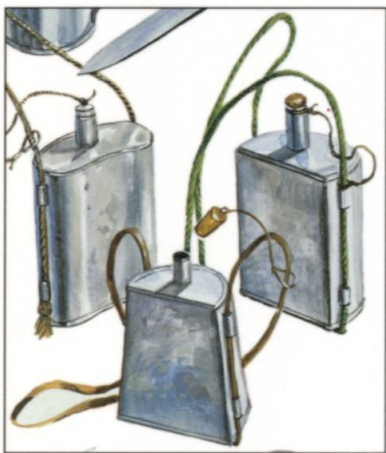
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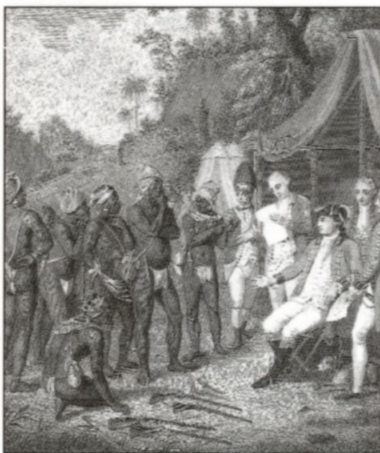
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