



Carl Franklin, *British Napoleonic Field Artillery – The First Complete Illustrated Guide to Equipment and Uniforms*, Spellmount (2008).
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Carl Franklin's examination of British Napoleonic field artillery and uniforms is certainly extensive and covers a period of widespread evolution in artillery weapon systems, organisation, tactics and employment. He divides the book into three parts, namely 'The Fundamentals', 'The Field Equipments' and lastly, 'The Uniforms'; all parts are supported by some of the best drawings I have seen.

The section on uniforms is very thorough and covers officers and other ranks of the Royal Artillery, Royal Horse Artillery and the oft despised and much maligned Corps of Royal Artillery Drivers. As well as the uniforms themselves, small arms, artillery swords and sabres, buttons, badges and accoutrements are all examined and many painstakingly reproduced by high quality (computer assisted drawing) graphics.

The Field Equipments have been expertly covered and provide the first tangible enhancement to this area of work since Wilkinson-Latham's *British Artillery on Land and Sea, 1790-1820*, published in 1973. Guns and howitzers are supported once again by excellent drawings, those few in colour are particularly impressive, and demonstrate a high level of research. However, the chapter on rocket equipment is thin in the extreme and I suspect this is to tempt the reader to purchase Franklin's first book, *British Rockets of the Napoleonic and Colonial Wars, 1805-1901*. Whatever the rationale, a mere three-page chapter on a key subject area in a book that claims to be 'complete' is a serious lapse. This second part is supported by some excellent appendices and their sources, where applicable, are listed.

The opening chapters are an array of subjects, ranging from organisation and tactics through to draught and riding harnesses, grouped as 'The Fundamentals'. Franklin deals adroitly with the tricky subject of artillery sub unit nomenclature from a company to a battery, the nuances of the field and horse artillery troops and when the guns are 'brigaded'. The individual examination of the bracket and block trails is well covered and the chapter on draught and riding harnesses quite excellent in both description and depiction. I am puzzled as to why gun limbers was covered under Part 1 while supporting equipment; ammunitions wagons and limbers, spare wheel carriages and limbers, forge cart and limber etc., are covered in Part 2.

However, it is in the area of artillery tactics that I detect a superficial knowledge. There is absolutely no doubt that Franklin understands the ordnance and rockets as systems but he clearly lacks the feel for how they were used on the field of battle. To dismiss the role of the Royal Horse Artillery as merely to 'support the cavalry' while the Royal Artillery 'could be allocated to support the infantry or siege duties as the needs dictated' demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of the British artillery of the day. An examination of the allied organisations for battle in the Peninsula reveals that horse artillery was more frequently brigaded with infantry than cavalry; Captain Ross's ('A' Troop) lengthy affiliation in support of the celebrated Light Division a case in point. There is no debate that horse artillery was originally envisaged as direct support for the cavalry but tactics changed as the War evolved, particularly in Iberia, where the horse artillery were used in defence, to support light infantry



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skirmishers, flank guards and retreating forces: the withdrawal to La Coruña and the right flank of the battle at Fuentes de Oñoro are two good examples of the latter.

Franklin's latest book comes hot on the heels of a plethora of other books on (or around) the subject: Kiley's *Artillery of the Napoleonic Wars* (2004), Henry's *British Napoleonic Artillery* (2002), Chartrand's *Napoleon's Guns* (2003) and A Dawson, P Dawson and Summerfield's *Napoleonic Artillery* (2007) and it therefore needed to promise something special and without question conquer its (cited) comprehensiveness. As it stands, the work is a marvellous reference for war gamers, modelling enthusiasts and re-enactors but, sadly, it offers nothing new, indeed virtually nothing at all, to the debate of the role and contribution of the artillery, British or otherwise, on the Napoleonic battlefield and as such will be of little interest to the student/reader of the era. This is a great pity as the work on the British field equipment, supporting equipment and uniforms is quite excellent but the overall labour lacks any form of analysis. The bracket and block trails are examined in great detail but just what was the advantage of the one over the other? Similarly, just how did these British guns compare with those of the *Grande Armée*? Such analysis is imperative; the lack of this science and a woefully inadequate examination of how these equipments were used in anger render claims that the work is 'complete' as unfulfilled. It is a real disappointment for Franklin's knowledge of the weapon systems is undoubted and his drawings are the best I have seen.

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