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C.E. Franklin *British Napoleonic Uniforms: The First Complete Illustrated Guide to Uniforms, Facings and Lace*, The History Press, 2008; 330pp., illus., ISBN 978 1 86227 484 6; £ 40.

There has never been a single, comprehensive study of the uniforms and equipment of the British Army at this most important period of its history; indeed, the subject is so large that probably it could never be compressed into one volume. The present work is thus a formidable undertaking and has much to recommend it.

It comprises introductory texts on uniforms, equipment, weapons and horse furniture, and a colour plate on each of the army's regiments: heavy and light cavalry, Foot Guards, line and light infantry and rifle corps. The artillery and engineering services, controlled by the Board of Ordnance, are not included, nor is the staff, commissariat or the King's German Legion and other 'foreign corps' that formed part of the British Army at the time. The plates are computer-generated and profuse, and include much valuable information, including details of lace and musicians' uniforms, some of which is difficult to discover from other sources. The illustrations are clear and precise, though the colouring is not always exact; notably the green of the rifle corps uniforms is very much lighter than it was in reality. They cannot, of course, be comprehensive, especially in the matter of regimental insignia, for example buttons and shoulder belt plates (these derived mostly from H.G. Parkyn's work of 1956), for to cover all known patterns would take a book in itself.

Similarly, many recorded regimental peculiarities are absent, even the famous vandyked band on the undress caps of the 2nd Dragoons; such omissions presumably have arisen from limitations on space. It would have been most useful had it been indicated which images were derived from surviving garments or contemporary portraits, and which were reconstructions, as the latter might involve some points worthy of discussion. An example is provided by the illustrations relating to the ephemeral 111th Regt. of Foot (Loyal Birmingham Volunteers) of 1794-95, the material present not mentioning the published accounts of their head-dress which indicate that, contrary to the reconstructions shown, the hats of even the rank and file had fur crests, and yellow feathers rather than those depicted.

Some statements are questionable, such as the comment concerning the 130<sup>th</sup> Loyal Staffordshire Volunteers that 'research has failed to find the details of the uniform' when actually it is recorded in the portrait of an officer albeit one destroyed many years ago. The sharp-eyed reader might pick up points like the Foot Guards' 'Belgic' shako plates being dated as 1810-15 rather than the correct '1812-15' reference to a colour-sergeant 'circa 1809' when that rank was not introduced until July 1813 and the 103<sup>rd</sup>'s shoulder belt plate being described as a shako plate (another derived from Parkyn where it is identified correctly). There is a glossary that includes some contemporary words but omits some pertinent terms, for example 'watch-coat', 'firelock' (the common term for a musket), 'breastplate' (the name by which shoulder belt plates were known at the time) and definitions of some facing-colours such as 'gosling green' or 'philemot yellow'. Although there is a general section on sources, no conventional bibliography is given. Nevertheless, this is a work that will interest all uniform historians, while recognizing that it is not, if only because of limitations of space, a 'complete illustrated guide'.

**Philip Haythornthwaite Mars & Clio 27, Autumn 2009**