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Robert Burnham & Ron McGuigan *The British Army Against Napoleon: Facts, Lists and Trivia 1805-1815* Frontline Books, 2010. 326 & xxxv pp, £25.00

The amount of material compressed into this work is enormous and covers many aspects of the army, its composition and its operations – pay, casualties, pensions, regiments, officers' seniority, casualties, medals, and a great deal more. Some of the references are well known, such as John Spencer Cooper's list of the kit and its weight that he carried in the Peninsula (though he referred to his musket as a 'fusee', not, as here, to the curious spelling of 'fusilee', and it might have been useful to add Cooper's remark that the government should have sent them new backbones to bear the weight!). Yet much of this material is difficult for the non-specialist to discover, such as the amount of firewood allocated for troops in bivouac in 1809 or the average cost of an officer's uniform (almost two days' pay for an infantry ensign to purchase his sword-knot!).

Though much of the statistical material is available in contemporary and later sources, even if obscure, some subjects are entirely innovative. For example, the most common officers' names of those who served in the Peninsula were Campbell as the surname (twice any other) and John as a first name. A number of unusual names were also amusing, though the reference to Sholto Douglas of the 4th Light Dragoons is not quite accurate, since they did not become 'Light' until 1818. The reader will be able to add more to this list, like the appropriately named Strongitharm of the 60th Royal Americans.

Indeed, one aspect of this type of compilation is that one can compare one's own knowledge with the facts stated. In this respect, a section on the unluckiest officers names four who served throughout the Peninsula War with scant reward for their services, but Joseph Dyas of the 51st could be judged the unluckiest of all, leading two storming parties, but still remained a subaltern, as his comrade David Roberts mentions with some bitterness in *The Military Adventures of Johnny Newcome*.

Inevitably there are statements which are open to debate. Lt William Mann of the 57th is described as 'the senior serving officer of his regiment after it was cut down at Albuhera by French cavalry.' True, he was in command at the end of the battle, but a number of his seniors survived their wounds, including his colonel, the famous William Inglis, and it was a murderous musketry duel with the French infantry, and not at the French cavalry, which caused the heavy casualties. The same applies to the section on regimental nicknames, whose origins are often difficult to establish with precision. For example the 11th Light Dragoons' 'cherry pickers' is usually attributed to their adoption of crimson overalls after their conversion to hussars in 1840, and 'The Royals' applied to the 1st (Royal) Dragoons and not the 1st (King's) Dragoon Guards. Such minor points, however, are being perhaps unduly pedantic in the context of what is a cornucopia of facts, statistics and trivia, in which even those most familiar with Wellington's army will find much of interest, both informing and entertaining.

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