

Warrior

OSPREY
PUBLISHING

British Rifleman

1797–1815



Philip Haythornthwaite • Illustrated by Christa Hook



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FRONT COVER *The Rear-Guard* by J.P. Beadle.
Craufurd with his rearguard on the retreat to Vigo in December 1808; 2nd Bn. 95th Rifles, 43rd and 52nd Light Infantry. (Regimental Museum, The Royal Green Jackets)

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THE BRITISH RIFLEMAN 1797-1815

INTRODUCTION

Of all the elements of the British Army that served in the Napoleonic Wars, none can be better known than the rifle corps. Allied to their singular dress, armament and tactics was a unique *esprit de corps*, and their fame was spread by a larger number of memoirs by members of one regiment (the 95th) than any other unit, and by many works of modern popular fiction. In many aspects of their service, however, the rifle corps were not very different from the less glamorous regiments of the line, and so this book concentrates upon those factors that made them unique, and does not concentrate upon those aspects of military life that were common throughout the army. Nor is there space to cover in detail the actions in which the rifle corps were engaged, for they served in the forefront of virtually all the battles and campaigns of the period.

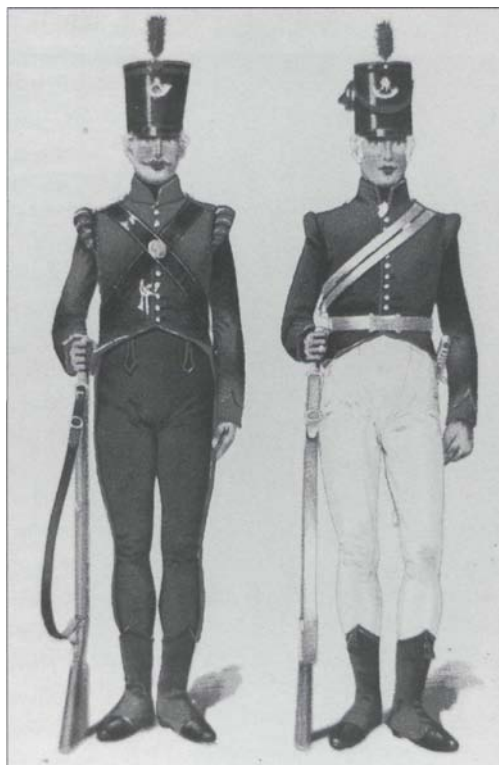
THE EARLY RIFLEMEN

In 1881 it was stated that 'The musket was the arm of the masses, and the rifle is that of the individual', and as early as 1747 the scientist Benjamin Robins remarked that whichever army perfected a military rifle, its result would be little short of the revolution caused by the discovery of gunpowder. These remarks encapsulate the effect upon military theory that the rifle was to exert, although its potential was probably only appreciated during the Napoleonic Wars, when the rifle-armed troops of the British Army were among its most proficient exponents.

Until the first half of the 19th century the great majority of firearms were smooth-bored, the bullet being fired from a tube (barrel) with a smooth-sided interior, in which the 'windage' - the gap between the projectile and the sides of the barrel - caused transverse movement of the projectile as it moved down the barrel, thus reducing considerably its accuracy of flight. Around the turn of the 15th-16th centuries it had been realised that enhanced accuracy would be obtained if a spin were imparted to the projectile, a theory probably deriving from the fact that arrows with the feathers set at an angle made them more stable in flight. To replicate this effect, spiral grooves were cut into the inner



In the early French Revolutionary Wars the regular British Army had no rifle-armed units, so units employed foreign or allied riflemen as skirmishers instead. This anonymous illustration of c.1795 depicts a rifleman of the Hanoverian Army, the German subjects of King George III. The uniform is green with brass buttons and includes a green-plumed 'round hat' and black belts. (The Royal Collection © 2001, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II)



surface of the firearm's barrel, and to exploit the effect of this 'rifling' it was necessary to make the projectile fit more tightly than normal. Not only did this reduce the windage, but tighter-fitting bullets also maximised the power of the propellant charge, as the gases created by its ignition were used almost entirely to propel the projectile, instead of being partially dissipated in passing between the projectile and the interior of the barrel. All this increased accuracy.

For many years, however, rifled firearms were used primarily for hunting; military weapons were more expensive to produce than smoothbores, and proficiency in their use was thought to be more difficult to learn. Moreover, great accuracy was hardly relevant in a scheme of warfare involving compact blocks of troops manoeuvring in close formation, in which it was only required that a firearm should be able to register a hit at *some* point upon a target many yards wide and the height of a man, at close range. Thus there was little military use of rifled firearms; the Landgrave of Hesse had three rifle-armed companies in 1631, and although some 'fowling pieces' were used in the English Civil War, many of these must have been smooth-bored. (They did, however, provide an early opportunity for the concept of sniping: in his *Observations upon Military and Political Affairs* (1671) General George Monck, for example, recommended that each company should have six men armed with 'fouling-pieces' (sic) to act upon the flanks as marksmen, and it seems that eight rifled carbines were issued to each troop of Household Cavalry in 1680.)

The civilian use of rifles was most common in certain regions, notably Germany and parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire; for example, it was noted that "The fondness of the Tyrolese for shooting amounts to a complete passion."² Accordingly, as the tactics of light troops began to be developed in the early 18th century, involving troops who operated in 'open order' rather than in the customary compact blocks, rifles were used by units recruited from huntsmen, foresters and the like who had civilian experience of rifle-shooting. There remained, however, an inherent conservatism in the military establishment. Under the ethos of 18th-century 'enlightenment' the concept of taking

ABOVE LEFT The old morality that was prejudiced against sharpshooting: Frederick the Great of Prussia challenges an enemy Pandour and makes him too ashamed to shoot, an attitude quite outdated but echoes of which were still found during the Napoleonic era. (Print after C. Röchling)

ABOVE RIGHT The 'very foreign' appearance of the riflemen of the 60th Royal American Regiment is shown in this illustration derived from drawings by Charles Hamilton Smith. Left: 5th Battalion 60th, in green jacket with red facings and piping, blue breeches and grey gaiters both trimmed in red, and black leather equipment. Right: rifle company of the 6th Battalion 60th, in green jacket with red piping, white breeches, grey gaiters trimmed green, green plume and shako-cords, and buff leather equipment (and rifle sling), with a green cord on the shoulder belt supporting the powder horn. (Print after P.W. Reynolds)



The initial uniform of the officers of the 5th Battalion 60th is shown in this copy of a portrait of Lieutenant John Anthony Wolff, who was commissioned in December 1797. A captain from June 1806, he was shot through the body at Talavera and was a prisoner of war until 1814, when he was granted half-pay and a pension; he retired to Hanover. The dark green uniform with red facings and silver buttons and lace is in light cavalry style, and includes a crimson barrelled sash together with the cross-shaped shoulder-belt badge that became a distinctive insignia of rifle corps in general. The helmet has a green turban and plume and red cockade. (Print after P.W. Reynolds)

deliberate aim at an individual was regarded as dishonourable, and in some quarters such attitudes persisted into the Napoleonic era. They are exemplified by anecdotes concerning Frederick the Great, who on one occasion was reported to have noticed one of his own riflemen lying under cover, waiting for a target, whereupon Frederick berated him for acting like a footpad and ordered him to stand in the open like a Prussian! On another, he encountered an Austrian Pandour (irregular light infantryman) hiding behind a tree, waiting to shoot at him; intent on shaming him, Frederick rode towards him, pointed at him with his cane, and 'called out in a threatening tone, 'You, sir!' The Pandour lowered his musket in a fright, and uncovering his head, remained in an attitude of homage until the king passed by.¹³ Even during the American War of Independence it was said that Benedict Arnold found it necessary to assure Morgan's Riflemen that they were justified in shooting deliberately at the British general Simon Fraser at the second battle of Saratoga, even though Fraser was a man worthy of respect and honour.

Despite such reservations, the enhanced range and accuracy of rifled weapons, when compared with the accuracy of the smoothbore, which even under ideal conditions was very poor at anything over 150 yards, and under combat conditions infinitely worse, could not be overlooked. One Prussian authority claimed that to put a soldier *hors de combat* required firing his own weight of lead and ten times his weight of iron (musket and artillery shot respectively). A traditional maxim held that to kill an enemy required seven times his weight of shot, and the head of the British Field Train in the Peninsular War, Sir Richard Henegan, claimed that at Vittoria 459 shots were required to register one hit, and even this did not take into account casualties caused by artillery. Perhaps the most famous condemnation of the ordinary musket was made by Colonel George Hanger, an enthusiastic supporter of the rifle:

A soldier's musket, if not exceedingly ill bored and very crooked, as many are, will strike the figure of a man at 80 yards; it may even at a hundred; but a soldier must be very unfortunate indeed who shall be wounded by a common musket at 150 yards, provided his antagonist aims at him; and, as to firing at a man at 200 yards with a common musket, you may just as well fire at the moon and have the same hopes of hitting your object.⁴

Compared with such weapons, the accuracy of a rifle was a revelation. The British encountered skilled riflemen in America, where the German tradition of rifle-manufacture had been transplanted and had produced the long-barrelled Pennsylvania (sometimes called Kentucky) rifle. Hanger recorded an encounter which would have been quite impossible using an ordinary musket. Out reconnoitring with Colonel Banastre Tarleton, he was observing the enemy position by a mill, and 'our orderly-bugle stood behind us, about three yards, but with his horse's side to our horses' tails. A rifleman passed over the mill-dam, evidently observing two officers, and laid himself down on his belly; for, in such positions, they always lie, to take a good shot at long distance. He took a deliberate and cool shot ... the

distance he fired from, at us, was full four hundred yards ... Colonel Tarleton's horse and mine, I am certain, were not anything like two feet apart ... A rifle-ball passed between him and me ... the bugle-horn man, behind us, and directly central, jumped off his horse, and said, "Sir, my horse is shot." The horse staggered, fell down, and died.⁵

Despite the potential of such weapons, only a small minority of the American troops were armed with rifles; indeed, when Maryland proposed to send a rifle company to the Continental Army, they were told that the men would be of greater use armed with muskets, as smoothbores were more easily kept in order, could be fired faster and could accommodate a bayonet. Nevertheless the potential of the rifle was recognised, and the purchase of rifles from Germany was authorised for the British Army, and Birmingham gunsmiths were contracted to manufacture others. These plans were changed by a demonstration in spring 1776.

At Woolwich, in heavy rain and strong wind, Captain Patrick Ferguson of the 70th Foot achieved unprecedented feats with a rifle of his own invention. He maintained a rate of fire of between four and six shots per minute - about twice the rate of a smoothbore - fired at a rate of four shots per minute at fast walking pace, almost always hit a target at 200 yards, and having poured a bottle of water into the pan and barrel, had the gun operational again, without having to unload, in half a minute. Immediately, orders for the previous rifles were cancelled, and sanction given for the construction of 100 Ferguson rifles, even though (at £4 each) they cost twice as much as an ordinary musket. The gun's most remarkable feature, however, was that it was a breech-loader, with access for loading gained by unscrewing a plug by rotation of the trigger-guard. The principle had been invented at least as early as 1704 by the French engineer Isaac de la Chaumette, and a number of breech-loading guns had been produced by the unfortunately named gunmaker Bidet, but the action was too fragile for active service and no military application was made prior to Ferguson's patent of December 1776.

The Experimental Rifle Corps at Ferrol, 25-26 August 1800. This illustration shows the members of this ad hoc unit in the infantry uniform of their original units, from which they were detached for rifle training. (Print after Richard Simkin)



RIGHT Coote Manningham, one of the originators of the Rifle Corps and the first colonel of the 95th, pictured in regimental uniform. Note the whistle attached to the shoulder belt. Instrumental in the formulation of 'rifle' tactics, he died as a major-general in 1809 following the privations of the retreat to Corunna.



In the event, it had negligible impact. Ferguson was given command of a corps of sharpshooters and sent to America; they served well at Brandywine (11 September 1777) but Ferguson was wounded so severely that he could not continue in his command, and his unit was broken up. (Before the battle Ferguson had had an opportunity to change the course of the war, but declined to let his men snipe George Washington, saying that it was not pleasant to target any 'unoffending individual!') Subsequently in command of a Loyalist unit, Ferguson was killed at King's Mountain in October 1780, and no attempt was made to persevere with his rifle. It probably did not have the potential first thought: by accommodating the screw-plug, the wooden stock was weak and liable to fracture, its small bore precluded use of the ordinary cartridge, and a modern test found its mechanism prone to fouling, so that it may never have been suitable for combat. Nevertheless some

Ferguson rifles appear to have been made by the London manufacturer Henry Nock for the East India Company, although their use is uncertain, and some privately made examples may have been carried by individual officers or used by volunteers in the early Napoleonic era.



ABOVE The Honourable William Stewart (1774-1827) as lieutenant-colonel in the Rifle Corps. Instrumental, with Manningham, in the formation of the regiment, he rose to become a lieutenant-general and a divisional commander in the Peninsula, but though a splendid battalion commander he was perhaps too impulsive to excel in a position of greater authority. Always popular with his men, he was known as 'Auld Grog Willie' from his issue of extra allowances of rum. In this portrait he wears the uniform, including pelisse, of the Rifle Corps. (Print after Sir William Ross)

THE FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY WARS

Following the end of the war in America, few British experiments were made with rifled weapons, although the gunmaker Durs Egg was commissioned in 1784 to produce cavalry carbines with half-rifled barrels, Hennem's patent screwless lock, and a breech-loading action copied from that of the Milanese Giuseppe Crespi, whose pattern was used by the Austrian cavalry until it was discarded because of problems with the breech. Egg's carbines were distributed to five light dragoon regiments, but no further orders for rifles or breech-loaders were forthcoming. Nor was there at this period any attempt to modernise the simple spherical lead bullet used by smooth-bored firearms, even though as early as 1747 Benjamin Robins had suggested that bullets 'of an egg-like form' would be more accurate.

Not only had rifled firearms fallen into disuse after the American War, but the whole concept of light infantry tactics had been allowed to decline. The concentration upon linear tactics and close formations was such that even Dundas's revolutionary drill manual of 1792 had only nine pages (out of 458) on light infantry service. Exactly the opposite policy was adopted by the French, whose skirmishing (by *tirailleurs* or sharpshooters) developed apace in the Revolutionary Wars, and became a principal feature of their system of tactics. Initially their opponents had little response; for example, as late as 1799 it was noted of the British troops in the Netherlands that they were 'perfectly unacquainted

with the system of sharp-shooting' and were thus 'galled on all sides by offensive weapons that did their mischief, partly unseen [and by] the long and mischievous shots of dispersed and lurking Riflemen'.⁶ The first remedy adopted by the British was to create a number of 'foreign corps', a considerable number armed with rifles, some of which gave a good account of themselves in the Netherlands in 1793-95. Most, however, were disbanded even before the temporary cessation of hostilities at the Peace of Amiens, and a more permanent solution was the creation of an efficient force of British light infantry, adept at skirmishing, to oppose the tirailleurs on their own terms.

The British concept of light infantry was different from that of some European armies, whose light troops were primarily skirmishers and not much more. Like the French light infantry, the British light troops were to be equally skilled in the tasks of the line infantry, but with enhanced skirmishing ability. Sir John Moore,

a great advocate of light infantry, made the point concisely. 'Our Light Infantry ... are in fact a mixture of the Yager [sic], and the Grenadier.'⁷ His mention of the 'Yager' (German *Jäger*, a rifleman) exemplifies the contemporary belief that riflemen were quite different from ordinary light infantry. Because rifles generally had a slower rate of fire than the ordinary musket, it was thought that at shorter ranges riflemen would be shot to pieces by ordinary infantry volley-fire, and that their shorter-barrelled weapons would be at a great disadvantage in a bayonet fight. Thus the rifle-armed troops of some European armies had only a portion of their personnel armed with rifled weapons, the remainder having smooth-bored carbines capable of producing as rapid a fire as the ordinary musket, thus protecting the riflemen. Alternatively, riflemen could be distributed in small units throughout the army, maintaining their sharpshooting capacity while being protected by the remainder.

The latter was a policy adopted from an early period by the British, with small numbers of rifles being distributed among forces on active service. An example occurred during the first British occupation of the Cape of Good Hope: in the Third Cape Frontier War (1801) a mounted rifle company was formed from personnel of the 22nd, 34th, 65th, 81st and 91st Foot and 8th Light Dragoons, commanded by Captain Effingham Lindsay of the 22nd. They were clothed in green and armed



ABOVE LEFT The first uniform of officers of the Rifle Corps, later 95th; this version resembles the Manningham portrait with the addition of shoulder wings. The jacket is green with black facings and silver buttons; the helmet bears a green turban and plume and silver badge. (Print from the *British Military Library or Journal* series, c.1799)

ABOVE RIGHT An officer of the 95th wearing the light cavalry-style pelisse, which like the jacket was dark green with black braid, and black fur edging. The sombre aspect of the uniform is relieved only by the silver buttons and helmet fittings and the crimson sash of corded light infantry pattern. (Print by P.W. Reynolds after a drawing by Captain A.D. Cameron, March 1804)

The first officer of the Rifle Corps, later 95th, to be killed in action was Lieutenant and Adjutant J.A. Grant, slain while assisting with the quarterdeck guns of HMS *Isis* at the battle of Copenhagen on 2 April 1801, when a detachment of the unit was serving with the fleet. The circumstances of his death were rather more gruesome than shown: his head was struck off by a roundshot 'as clean as if severed by a scimitar' (Cope, pp. 7-8). (Print after T. Crowther)



with rifles with browned barrels. Apparently the 91st also had a rifle company of its own, in addition to its ordinary light company.

The first regular unit armed entirely with rifles originated with the expansion of the 60th (Royal American) Regiment. Formed in 1755, the 60th was unique among the line regiments, having been created for service in the Americas, and in its recruiting of foreign personnel. Thus when certain of the ephemeral 'foreign corps' were dissolved in the later 1790s, their men often transferred to the 60th, including units armed with rifles. Some of these - notably from Lowenstein's Chasseurs and Fusiliers and Hompesch's Chasseurs and Fusiliers - were incorporated into a new 5th Battalion 60th, which was authorised in December 1797. The battalion — henceforth referred to here as the 5/60th — was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Francis, Baron de Rottenburg

(1757-1832), one of the major influences in the development of light infantry and 'rifle' tactics. Born in Danzig when that city was under Polish jurisdiction, he had served with the French and Neapolitan armies, had commanded a battalion during Kosciuszko's rebellion in Poland, and had entered British service with Hompesch's Chasseurs. His manual, *Regulations for the Exercise of Riflemen and Light Infantry, and Instructions for their Conduct in the Field*, published in 1799, was one of the principal influences in the system of training perfected under the aegis of Sir John Moore.

The 5/60th maintained a number of singular features throughout. Its composition remained largely German; of the Peninsular War veterans who survived to claim their Military General Service Medal, for example, about 80 per cent had German names, the remainder having British, Dutch or Polish names. Its men were armed with rifles, initially of foreign manufacture: probably at first those carried by those members of the 'foreign corps' incorporated in the battalion who had been armed with rifles; in Hompesch's Fusiliers, for example, ten men per company carried rifles, the others smooth-bored carbines. In 1798-99 the government ordered 5,000 rifles from Prussia, at 35 shillings each (a price later reduced because of the inferior quality of some of the weapons; one 'foreign corps', the Dutch Brigade, was so dissatisfied that it purchased its own, superior weapons). Finally, the new battalion was clothed in green, the colour that became associated

with rifle corps. At the same time, green-clad rifle companies were added to the other four (red-coated) battalions of the 60th, which were maintained throughout; in 1808, for example, these had about ten per cent of their men armed with rifles. A 6th Battalion 60th was added in 1799, including a green-clad rifle company, and in 1813 7th and 8th battalions were formed, each with two rifle companies, apparently with the whole battalions clothed in green. In December 1815 all the 60th's battalions were ordered to adopt green uniforms, although the 5/60th was still the only one armed entirely with rifles.

THE RIFLE CORPS

At the end of 1799 a plan was submitted to the Secretary at War by Lieutenant-Colonel, the Honourable William Stewart of the 67th Foot, advocating the formation of a corps of rifle-armed marksmen, perhaps influenced by his recent observation of Austrian Jägers campaigning in Italy. The Duke of York, Commander-in-Chief, was aware of the need for light infantry and accepted the proposal, but it was amended on the advice of Lord Cornwallis, who believed that riflemen fired too slowly to permit them to oppose ordinary infantry. Accordingly in January 1800 an order was sent to 14 line regiments (2/1st, 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, 29th, 49th, 55th, 69th, 71st, 72nd, 79th, 85th and 92nd) each to send four NCOs and 30 men for rifle training; significantly, they were 'not to be considered as being drafted from their regiments, but merely as detached ... they will continue to be borne upon the strength of their regiments, and they will be clothed by their respective colonels'.⁸ (Half the regiments chosen were Scottish: Stewart believed that the hardiness and independent spirit of the Scots and Irish made them ideal riflemen.) Thus the intention was for these men to be trained and returned to their units as experienced marksmen, and as an experiment for riflemen to be attached to each unit. Command of this 'Experimental Corps of Riflemen' was given to Colonel Coote Manningham of the 41st, a leading exponent of light troops (which he had led with distinction in the West Indies), with Stewart as his deputy.

The detachments assembled at Horsham in March 1800, but instead of sending the most suitable candidates, some colonels had tried to rid themselves of the most useless, and it was some time before these could be returned and suitable men supplied. The corps comprised 26 officers and 481 other ranks; although their training camp at Swinley was broken up subsequently, at Stewart's request three companies (from the 1st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, 79th and 92nd) were permitted to accompany the British expedition to Ferrol in Spain. Landing on 25 August 1800, they covered the advance, and some fighting occurred; but the expedition then re-embarked, with the Experimental Corps having suffered four officers and eight men wounded. The remainder went to Gibraltar and joined the expedition to Egypt, and at Malta they were ordered to return to their parent units.

Even before this first action, it had been decided that a regular regiment of riflemen should be formed, with Manningham as colonel, and in early July authorisation was given to recruit from fencible regiments serving principally in Ireland. Men from 26 regiments joined

the new Rifle Corps (59 per cent from Scottish regiments), and in September Manningham was permitted to request that he retain the men who had been supplied to the Experimental Corps. All but one of the officers of the new regiment had served with the Experimental Corps, and as their new commissions were dated 25 August 1800, that was taken as the date of the regiment's foundation. It was known simply as 'the Rifle Corps' until 25 December 1802 when it was allocated the rank of 95th in the sequence of line regiments, the number under which it became universally famous. Officially, its title appears either as the 95th (Rifle Corps) or the 95th Regiment of Foot (Riflemen).

WEAPONRY

Rifles

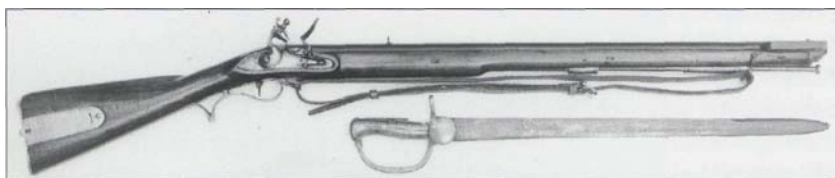
The principal defining feature of the Rifle Corps was the weapons they carried, so it is appropriate to consider them at this stage. Initially the rifles used were continental imports (which may have remained in use for some time, as suggested by a report of 1807 that a rifle company of the King's German Legion had weapons of three different calibres). In 1796 the Board of Ordnance had purchased some rifles from the famous gunmaker Durs Egg, which apparently resembled a musket but had a 39 in. rifled barrel of .704 in. bore (ordinary musket-bore was about .75 in.). The Ordnance, however, preferred a short-barrelled rifled carbine, and, anxious to procure rifles manufactured in Britain, held a trial in February 1800 between several English and foreign rifles. The winner was a weapon designed by the gunmaker Ezekiel Baker, and it was his pattern that was put into production and remained in use throughout the period.

Baker's rifle had a 30 in. barrel with quarter-turn, seven-groove rifling. It was easier to load but inferior in performance to the best target rifles, but as Baker contended, was best suited for the military purpose required. To utilise existing ammunition, it was of 'carbine bore' (.625 in.); to use standard infantry ammunition, Baker produced some weapons of musket-bore, but Manningham rejected them as too heavy (the ordinary Baker rifle weighed just over 9 lb). It was a sturdy weapon with brass furniture, including a scroll-shaped trigger-guard, and a brass flapped box in the butt to hold both cleaning tools and the greased patches employed when loose balls were used as ammunition. Later models had the butt box reduced

from 6 to 4.5 in. in length, with provision just for the tools, suggesting perhaps that the use of 'prepared cartridges' had become much more common. It had both front and back sights, the latter originally adjustable for different ranges, though latterly fixed sights were more usual. Other progressive variations included a slit in the stock,

BELOW TOP A Baker rifle. Although of characteristic appearance (including the original swan-neck cock, later style of butt box, and fixed back-sight), this example is of private manufacture, made by T. Richards, with a larger calibre than usual (.70 in.). The sword bayonet is of the standard pattern. (Wallis & Wallis).

BELOW BOTTOM A regulation Baker rifle of later style, with the second type of butt box and ring-neck cock. (Wallis & Wallis).





A Baker rifle manufactured by W. Ketland, of the usual dimensions and calibre, but made without a butt box. (Wallis & Wallis)

reinforced 'ring-neck' cock, a flat lock with safety bolt and raised pan, and finally a return to the rounded lock.

The quantity of weapons required necessitated the contracting of a number of manufacturers; in the period 1805-8, for example, the Ordnance received into its stores no fewer than 10,078 rifles manufactured in Britain, and at the end of the Napoleonic Wars had some 14,000 in store. In addition, weapons were produced to equip the many volunteer corps who were trained as riflemen, some of whom purchased their weapons privately. This produced more variations: for example, the gunmaker Henry Nock produced rifles with his patent enclosed or 'screwless' lock design, and with the barrel smooth-bored for several inches from the muzzle; some rifles were produced without butt boxes, with a variety of bayonet-fittings, and in superior quality for officers. A variation was made by Baker as a cavalry carbine, a number being issued to the Life Guards in 1801, for example, and others produced subsequently, presumably for men designated as 'flankers' (cavalry skirmishers or sharpshooters). Initially these resembled the infantry rifle but with a 20-22 in. barrel, and from 1813 at least some issued to the 10th Light Dragoons (one of the few regiments known to have carried rifled weapons) had the scroll-shaped trigger-guard replaced by an extension to the wooden stock resembling a pistol grip, which Baker claimed provided a better hold for the hand.

The principles of firing a flintlock rifle were the same as for the ordinary musket, though the process of loading took longer if the rifleman used separate powder and ball, greater care resulting in greater accuracy. For this he used a powder horn with a nozzle that dispensed a measured charge, a separate ball and a greased patch or 'plaster' to hold it in place, and finely ground priming powder from another flask. Because of the very tight fit of the ball in the barrel, Baker initially supplied small mallets to drive down the charge, but practice proved them to be unnecessary and the mallet was discarded. This process slowed the rate of fire, a great concern at the time, though as one manual emphasised, for accuracy it was more important that a rifle be properly loaded than quickly loaded. (One officer claimed that the use of loose powder improved accuracy by allowing a rifleman to judge the quantity of powder needed for a particular shot, thus eliminating unnecessary recoil.) Nevertheless it seems that 'prepared cartridges' - as used with the ordinary musket - came to be used very widely in combat, which thus reduced loading-time very considerably. A rifleman equipped with both cartridges and loose balls would be able to choose whether it was more important to fire quickly (using cartridges) or more accurately (with loose balls), according to the circumstances of the moment.

The reduced length of the rifle barrel made it easier to use and load when kneeling and lying prone. One of the contemporary manual writers, Sergeant Weddeburne of the 95th, described the ideal pose for firing the rifle as upright, with no bend of the left knee nor with the body inclined



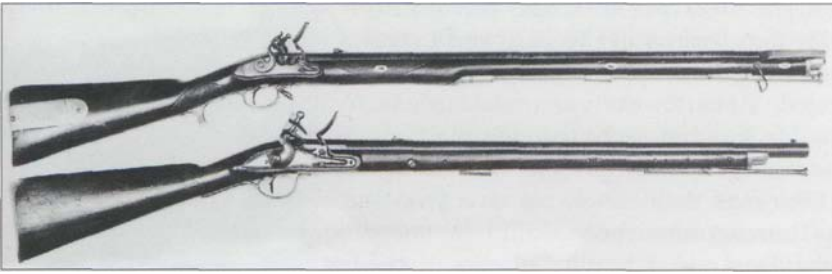
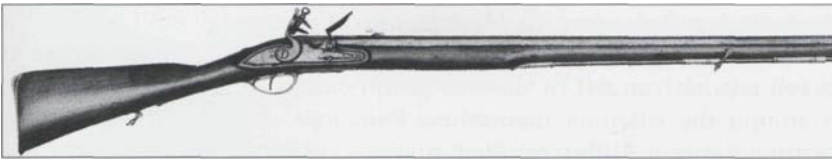
A Baker rifle with provision for a socket bayonet, with the bayonet locking-lug beneath the barrel; it has the first type of butt box and a folding back-sight. (Wallis & Wallis)

guard and within the sling, and the breath held until the shot was fired. Another expert writer, Mark Beaufoy, noted that the rifle would be held more firmly against the shoulder if the left hand pulled the sling tight against the stock, although Ezekiel Baker's illustration of a standing pose shows the sling looped around the left arm, with the left hand considerably forward of the trigger-guard. Beaufoy recommended that three fingers of the left hand should pull the sling tight, the thumb support the trigger-guard, and the index finger be positioned below the stock, forward of the trigger-guard, to be moved to elevate or depress the barrel.

Other poses for shooting included kneeling (with the left elbow supported on the left knee) or sitting with knees drawn up and both elbows supported. In the prone position, a number of illustrations show the shako used as a rest for the barrel. It was always recommended that the barrel be steadied where possible, supported upon a rock or wall or braced against a tree, always firing to the right of the tree, so that it protected the riflemen's body. (At Badajoz George Simmons of the 95th discovered the hazard of using his shoulder as a rifle-rest for one of his men; mistakenly using the left shoulder, the ignition of the powder in the lock burned his ear.) Beaufoy described how the ramrod could be used to support the rifle: by bracing the thick end against the left side of the body and inserting the other end into the rear of one of the rammer-pipes, much of the weight of the barrel could be absorbed. Finally there was the supine position, in which the rifleman lay upon his back with the sling looped around the right foot, and which Beaufoy described as 'not only awkward but painful'.⁹ It was, however, employed in one of the most famous sharpshooting incidents of the period, when Thomas Plunket of the 95th killed General Auguste de Colbert at Cacabellos on the retreat to Corunna.

Contemporary statistics concerning the accuracy of rifles mostly concern tests conducted under ideal conditions, which could be very different from service in the field. The Prussian reformer Scharnhorst, for example, testing Prussian and Russian rifles, found them twice as accurate as the smoothbore at shorter range, and up to four times as accurate at longer range. Similarly, in testing one of his own rifles against a man-sized target, Ezekiel Baker fired 34 shots at 100 yards, and 24 at 200 yards, and every one hit. When the 95th were training, Major Hamlet Wade and two riflemen named Smeaton and Spurry were so confident in the technology of the rifle, and in their own skill, that they would *hold* the target for the others to shoot at, at 150- or even 200-yards range.

While the riflemen themselves had no doubts about the prowess of their weapon, the belief was not quite universal: G.B. Jackson of the 43rd Light Infantry, for example, stated that in combat the light infantry musket was equally as effective. At shorter ranges it may well have been, but Beaufoy expressed the common belief that the real advantage of the rifle was its accuracy at longer range, so that ideally riflemen should only shoot at targets beyond the range of effective musketry, or the musket's more



ABOVE TOP A privately produced military rifle by J. Probin, with an octagonal-sectioned 30.5 in. barrel, folding back-sight, brass fittings but iron sling-swivels, including one positioned a long way back under the butt. (Wallis & Wallis)

ABOVE BOTTOM Two rather more unusual types of rifled firearms. Top: a privately made, officer-quality Baker rifle, with chequered panels carved on to the stock, silver escutcheon bearing the owner's initials, and the butt box engraved with a bugle horn and a trophy of arms. Bottom: a rifled carbine made by Henry Nock for a yeomanry regiment, with 28 in. barrel, and an iron suspension bar and ring on the reverse side of the stock. (Wallis & Wallis)

rapid rate of fire would drive the riflemen from the field. He stated, however, that at 300 yards not one musket shot could be expected to hit a single man, whereas at least one in five rifle shots would, and with a skilled marksman, one in three.

A member of the Light Division in the Peninsula stated that the 'very trifling time longer' required to load a rifle was irrelevant, because even when compared to a skilled light

infantryman, 'in ninety-five cases out of a hundred, *two* rifle shots shall cause more death and destruction than *three* or *four* discharges from a musket, allowing both the rifleman and the light bob to be tolerably fair artists in their way'. He recalled a session of target practice in Kent involving a company of light infantry and one of rifles, each about 80 strong, each firing six shots, the light infantry target at 80- to 90-yards range, the rifle target at 200 yards. At the end of the shooting, the light infantry target was still in a decent state of repair, but the rifle target was shredded to pieces. ° It was remarked, however, that a rifled barrel became more easily fouled with burned powder, thus reducing efficiency, and it was observed that after only 25 shots in dry weather the accuracy of a rifle could be expected to deteriorate. With all factors considered, William Surtees of the 95th believed that one rifle shot in 20 took effect, which he estimated was about ten times the accuracy of a smoothbore.

One potential disadvantage of the rifle's smaller bore was the matter of re-supply, as ordinary infantry ammunition could not be used. Nevertheless there are few recorded examples of riflemen running out in action, although Captain George Miller of the 95th recalled that the counter-attack of Paget's Division at Corunna stalled when the riflemen leading it ran out of shot, even though the French were beginning to waver: 'I believe very little would have sent them off. ... Oh! for a few thousand rounds of ammunition, then!'¹¹ (This was confirmed by John Dobbs of the 52nd, whose regiment was following.) A more famous case concerned the King's German Legion 2nd Light Battalion at Waterloo, which ran out of ammunition when defending La Haye Sainte (see text to Plate J). In extremis, as with a smoothbore, all manner of projectiles could be fired from a rifle: having run out of balls, Rifleman Brotherhood of the 95th at Vimeiro fired his razor at the French!

In some quarters there still remained the 18th-century distaste for deliberately aiming at an individual, as somehow contrary to the morality of war. For example, Moyle Sherer overheard two British soldiers lamenting the death of a brave French officer, shot by one of them. The other stated, 'By God, I could not have pulled a trigger at him. No; damn me, I like fair fighting and hot fighting; but I could not single out such a man in cold blood.'¹² There is some evidence that soldiers were less tolerant of enemy sharpshooters than others, presumably on account of

the perceived underhand nature of sniping; thus when La Haye Sainte was captured, two wounded riflemen were killed by the French who declared, 'No quarter for these green *coquins* [rascals].'³

There were few reservations among the riflemen themselves. For example, on the retreat to Corunna George Miller recalled how a high-ranking French officer came within range to water his horse: 'The opportunity was not to be lost. I got hold of a rifle, and my officers did the same, to have a go. ... My gun flashed in the pan, and I shall probably never have such another opportunity of smiting a General. Before I got my touch-hole cleared, a man by the name of Matthews, standing by me, had floored him. He shot him right through the body, and the gallant fellow fell dead from his horse.'¹⁴ Similarly, George Landmann recalled watching a 60th man deliberately aim at a French officer, not for tactical reasons but because there would be more plunder upon an officer's body! Even so, Edward Costello of the 95th recalled how he exchanged shots with a particularly bold Frenchman, and felt like a criminal when he killed him.

Bayonets

Because of their perceived slow rate of fire, it was believed by some that riflemen required especial protection, hence the continental practice of combining riflemen in the same units as men armed with smoothbores. Others advocated a resurrection of the ancient pike, either in place of a bayonet or as a defence for a rifleman. (Indeed, in 1777 in America folding pikes had been designed for use by Morgan's Riflemen, but there is no evidence of their use in the field; though in 1816 the US Army's Rifle Regiment was ordered to use pikes in the defence of fortifications.) A combined pike- and rifle-rest had been used by the Austrian *Grenzers* (frontier light infantry), and it is significant that a number of volunteer rifle corps formed in Britain in the early 1800s were associated with units of pikemen, conceivably in pursuance of this tactical theory. Even after the Napoleonic Wars the pike still had its adherents as a protection for riflemen, and as late as 1831 an experienced rifleman was advocating an 'infantry lance' as being more effective than a bayonet.

In practice, however, the rifleman relied upon his bayonet as a weapon of last resort, even though there were very few bayonet fights during the period. Some rifles - notably those designed for hunting - had no provision for a bayonet, but most continental military weapons were equipped with knife-like bayonets derived from the German hunting-sword (*Hirschfänger*), with a long blade intended to compensate for the short length of the rifle when compared to an ordinary musket. These often clipped on to the side of the stock, as a conventional socket bayonet would have obscured the front sight. (Shooting with any kind of fixed bayonet would have been practised only in an emergency, as the weight of the bayonet would have so altered the balance of the rifle that aiming would have been affected.) Nevertheless some patterns of British rifle did use socket bayonets; for example, the dismounted companies of the London and Westminster Light Horse Volunteers had 'Broad Swords ... so contrived to serve occasionally as Bayonets', according to Rowlandson's *Loyal Volunteers of London & Environs*. These had a straight, spear-pointed blade about 30 in. in length and a hilt like



Many militia and volunteer corps emulated the uniform, and often the equipment, of the regular riflemen. This is a typical example: a portrait by Robert Dighton of Captain the Honourable John Thomas Capel (or Capell) (1769-1819), in the uniform of the light company of the Sussex Militia, c.1803. Capel was the second son of the 4th Earl of Essex, and brother-in-law of Henry William Paget, 1st Marquess of Anglesey. The uniform is dark green with black facings, braid and belts, silver buttons, crimson light infantry sash, and a fur-crested 'round hat' with dark green cockade. (The Royal Collection © 2001, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II)

that of the 1796 light cavalry sabre, with the rifle muzzle fitting through the knucklebow.

With its wooden stock extending virtually to the muzzle, the Baker rifle could not accommodate a socket bayonet, so the original pattern was of 'sword' type, attaching to the side of the stock by a metal bar and spring clip. It had a 23 in., straight, unfullered blade, double-edged for three inches nearest the tip, a spear point, and a cast brass stirrup-hilt with ribbed grip and single langet. Early in 1801 it was replaced by a similar pattern with a curved knucklebow, which remained in use throughout the Napoleonic Wars. In a memorandum of 1816 to the Horse Guards concerning rifle corps equipment, Lieutenant-Colonel Amos Norcott of the 95th recalled that the bayonet was so heavy as to be an impediment to marching, and that he hardly ever knew of it being used except for chopping meat and clearing undergrowth for camping. It was also reported that firing the rifle with bayonet fixed tended to damage the clip, confirmation of which was provided by the recollections of Captain John Dobbs of the 52nd, who recalled the 95th's commander at Corunna, Sir Sidney Beckwith, calling to the 52nd, 'Come here with your bayonets' as most of the 95th's bayonets were 'out of order' after the rigours of the campaign.¹⁵ Consequently, in 1815 a socket bayonet was ordered for the Baker rifle, which required a shortening of the stock, the moving of the front sight and the addition of a locking lug to the underside of the barrel. It was not introduced until August 1815, however, after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, and in 1823 was itself replaced by a side-fitting bayonet. The original design of bayonets led the 95th to refer to them as 'swords', a term retained by the Rifle Brigade to describe all bayonets they carried, of every succeeding pattern.

Officers

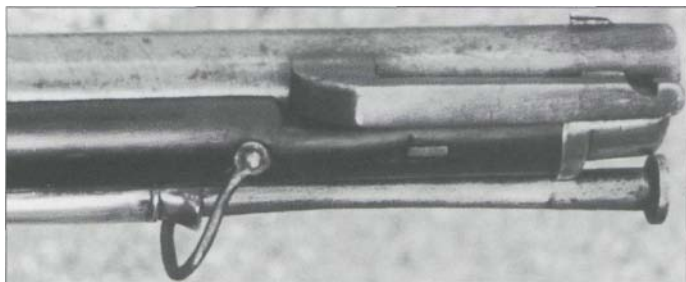
Officers of rifle corps usually carried only a sabre, and sometimes (as had been intended officially) one or more pistols according to personal preference. Curved-bladed sabres were a distinction of light infantry officers, and although numerous patterns existed, probably the most common was the 1803 regulation flank company sabre, with its lion-head pommel and a knucklebow incorporating a crowned 'GR' cypher (and sometimes the light infantry bugle-horn insignia). It was carried on slings in a gilt-mounted, black leather scabbard, and although a handsome weapon it was described



BELOW A volunteer rifleman in a uniform styled upon that of the 95th, but dark green throughout, derived from illustrations of the 'Manual Exercise' for riflemen by J. Jones, 1804; this pose is 'Stand at Ease'. (Print after P.W. Reynolds)



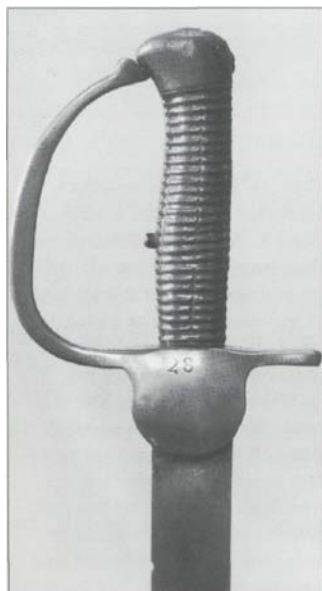
LEFT An early version of the uniform of the 95th, c.1806, from John A. Atkinson's *Picturesque Representation of the ... Costumes of Great Britain* (1807). It includes the white piping to the facings, and also a white stripe on the breeches, not confirmed elsewhere. The men wear the queue, abolished in 1808. Note also the position of the powder horn atop the cartridge box, held by the cord which ran along the shoulder belt. The man on the right has his rifle 'slung'.



The muzzle of a full-stocked Baker rifle, showing the iron bar attached to the side of the barrel, on to which the sword bayonet fitted. (Robert Cooper)

BELOW, LEFT Hilt of the 2nd pattern sword bayonet for the Baker rifle, showing the langet.

BELOW, RIGHT Hilt of the 2nd pattern sword bayonet for the Baker rifle, showing the slot into which the rifle's bayonet bar fitted. The stud on the inside of the grip released the locking mechanism.



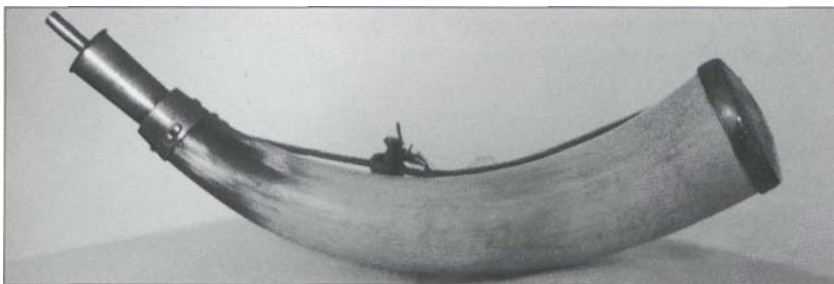
EQUIPMENT

Although officially the most active of light infantry, the burden carried by riflemen on campaign was little different from that borne by the ordinary infantry, which was so heavy that Sergeant John Cooper of the 7th Foot remarked that 'the government should have sent us new-backbones' to bear it! Edward Costello described the typical load carried by a rifleman: rifle and bayonet, knapsack and belts containing two shirts, a pair of shoes and one of soles and heels, three brushes, a box of blacking, soap box, razor and strap, a pair of trousers, mess-tin, haversack with three days' bread and two days' beef, greatcoat, blanket, belt and pouch containing 50 rounds of prepared cartridges, powder flask, ball bag containing 30 loose balls, and a full canteen. Each squad had four bill-hooks, weighing 6 lb each, so that every other day a man had to carry one. The total load, according to Costello, was officially between 70 and 80 lb, but reduced on campaign by the discarding of non-essential items; at the end of the Peninsular War, he noted, there was probably not a spare shirt or pair of shoes in the regiment. (For skirmishing, riflemen might be ordered to remove their knapsacks; indeed, on at least one occasion they were ordered to be carried by accompanying cavalry.)



The 1802 draft of the official clothing regulations specified that for riflemen, pouch and waist belts were to be 2.5 in. wide, the latter supporting the frog for the sword bayonet and the ball pouch at the front. The pouch or cartridge box was to include a wooden box to hold 12 rounds, and another of tin to hold 24; the powder horn, affixed to the belt by a green cord, was to rest on top of the cartridge box, and a small flask of priming powder was to be 'kept on the breast' and suspended from a green cord from the neck. Sergeants were to carry similar equipment, but

by John Kincaid of the 95th as the 'small regulation half-moon sabre, better calculated to shave a lady's-maid than a Frenchman's head'.¹⁶ Few officers appear to have carried rifles, although some certainly did, such as the noted marksman Lieutenant John Strode of the 95th, who was mortally wounded at Casal Nova in March 1811.



A typical powder horn, with brass mounts including the nozzle, which delivered the charge of powder. This example bears the badge of the Percy Tenantry Volunteers, a large Northumberland volunteer corps.



A flask for priming powder. This example has a body covered with brown leather, and a horn viewing-panel with brass nozzle. It bears the crescent badge of the Percy Tenantry Volunteers.

with a smaller pouch, and like officers were to carry a green ivory whistle for signalling.

The experience of campaigning caused some changes to the regulation equipment. Norcott reported that the powder horns were easily damaged, losing

the measuring nozzle, which at times in the Peninsula were replaced by corks, and that broken horns were so inconvenient that it was found preferable to rely upon prepared cartridges. The small flask for priming powder was found to be inconvenient, and instead of it being carried in a pocket as was usual, he recommended the practice adopted by the two companies he had commanded at Cadiz of carrying the flask in a leather case at the left side of the waist belt. The later pattern of cartridge box, containing 12 cartridges in a drilled wooden block and 40 more in paper packages, he claimed led to the cartridges becoming damaged, and that 52 rounds was too few for a rifleman to carry. He thought that if the use of powder horn and loose balls were to be resumed (implying that the use of prepared cartridges had become almost universal), the original pattern of cartridge box was preferable, but that if the use of cartridges were to continue, a new box had to be designed. He recalled that in the Light Division each captain had provided small felling axes, which had proved much more efficient than the official billhooks. Norcott also commented upon the waterproof lock cover that kept rifles dry; a second pattern, edged with sponge intended to prevent rain running into the lock, had had the reverse effect, soaking up the water and directing it into the lock. (An experimental pattern of lock cover was sent to the Peninsula in 1811, ten to be tested by each of ten regiments, including the 95th, which it was claimed permitted the soldier to prime and fire, while still keeping the lock dry.) Lock covers were apparently used at all times, and produced one telling anecdote: when in September 1815 the victorious Allied powers decided to repatriate many of the works of art appropriated by Napoleon and deposited in the Louvre, it caused great public unrest. The crowd was quelled, however, by the sight of a small detachment of British riflemen posted in pairs throughout the building, who signified their determination to shoot if necessary by untying the oilskin covers and uncovering their locks!

Officers' equipment was of course much more extensive than that of the other ranks, but as much of it was often carried with the regimental baggage at the rear, they too were limited to what could be carried on the person. John Kincaid noted that 'there is marvellous small personal comfort in travelling so fast and so lightly as I did' in the fortnight after Busaco! He noted that, for an officer, 'a haversack on service is a sort of dumb-waiter ... a well-regulated one ought never to be without the following furniture, unless when the perishable part is consumed, in consequence of every other means of supply having failed, viz. a couple of biscuit, a sausage, a little tea and sugar, a knife, fork, and spoon, a tin cup (which answers to the name of *tea-cup*, *soup-plate*, *wine-glass*, and



ABOVE An example of the hilt of an 1803 Flank Company officer's sabre, typical of the weapons carried by rifle corps officers. The knucklebow incorporated the cypher and crown of King George III, but provided very little protection for the hand. This example has an ivory grip.

tumbler), a pair of socks, a piece of soap, a tooth-brush, towel, and comb, and half a dozen cigars'.¹⁷

UNIFORMS

Although green uniforms had been used by the British in America - for example by the Queen's Rangers and Tarleton's British Legion - it is likely that the green colour adopted by the 5/60th, and the rifle companies of that regiment's other battalions, was derived from the uniform of Hompesch's units (Lowenstein's Chasseurs wore blue-grey with green facings, Lowenstein's Fusiliers red with green facings). It has been claimed that the first truly British light troops to wear green were the two companies of 'light armed marksmen' added to the North York Militia in 1795, although that colour seems to have been adopted for no more profound a reason than to match, or to use cloth already purchased for a corps of fencible cavalry which was planned but never formed. (These two companies were certainly not the army's first green-clad riflemen, for it seems the 'light-armed marksmen' were only equipped with rifles in about 1805.)

With the green uniform, the 5/60th wore red facings (the rifle companies of the other battalions were supposed to wear green facings with red piping with their green jackets), but an even more subdued





ABOVE Frederick Augustus, Duke of York (1763-1827), the illustrious colonel of the 60th Royal American Regiment from 1797 until his death in 1827. (Engraving by Skelton after Sir William Beechey)

LEFT Illustrating the theory that riflemen needed pikes to protect themselves is this painting by John A. Atkinson. The rifleman on the left, firing his pistol at a French hussar, holds a short pike with an attached hook on which to rest the rifle, similar to the *Hackenlanze* of the Austrian *Grenzers* (border troops). The rifleman is portrayed in the usual dark green with black facings, and his pike has a red pennon. Although pikes of this nature were never employed in British service, this illustration is presumably evidence that the theory was advanced. (The Royal Collection © 2001, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II)

colour scheme was adopted for the Rifle Corps, later the 95th: dark green with black facings and black leather equipment. From the beginning their jackets were rather singular, having three rows of buttons on the breast, and the short skirts 'cut to slope off behind', without turnbacks; breeches were also dark green, worn with short black gaiters by the rank-and-file (sergeants were ordered to have half-boots instead). Officers originally wore the 'Tarleton' light dragoon helmet, but the 1802 regulations specified that they should wear caps (shakos) like the rank-and-file when on service. Their green plumes and bugle-horn badges were distinctions of light infantry in general. Variations mentioned in the 1802 regulations include the design of sergeants' sashes - crimson, black and green - and white lace for buglers of rifle corps.

The dark green uniform, often with black facings, came to be worn by almost all units equipped as riflemen, including the many volunteer rifle corps. Most had some regimental distinctions, and in at least one case the uniform involved some controversy. In 1804 the commandant of the Norwich Rifles attributed the unrest within his unit to the uniform, the 'source of almost all our vexations'. 'There are some in finer feathers, some in finer caps, and some in finer cloth than their comrades.' As this was 'destructive of all subordination' he ordered that henceforward strict "regulation dress was to be observed!"¹⁸ Less common was a copy of the green with red facings of the 5/60th, but that uniform was copied by the Royal Corsican Rangers, one of the 'foreign corps' of the post-1803 period, a unit that appears to have been equipped with rifles.

The dark green rifle uniform was certainly of significance on the battlefield as a form of camouflage, although it may not have been the most effective colour. In 1800 Colonel Hamilton Smith employed the 6/60th rifle company in an experiment involving shooting at targets of red, dark green and iron grey (the latter as worn by the Austrian *Jägers*) at a range of up to 150 yards. The red target was destroyed, the green one badly damaged, but the grey proved the most difficult to hit, and thus the superior colour for camouflage. The precise effect of the green uniform as camouflage is difficult to gauge, although Edward Costello recalled one pertinent incident, when at Fuentes de Oñoro his battalion of the 95th was sent to support the 85th Light Infantry, which had suffered severely against French skirmishers. Costello attributed their losses at least in part to their conspicuous red uniforms, but when the dark-clad 95th with what he described as 'murderous' rifles arrived, the French were soon driven back; the 85th suffered 95 casualties, whereas the 95th's loss was trifling. Further evidence of the camouflage value of the green uniform is provided by the Glengarry Light Infantry, a Canadian unit serving in the War of 1812, which wore a 95th-style uniform but was armed with ordinary muskets. It was reported that they 'always skirmish in a partly cleared country, better than our red jackets. The Yankies [sic] used to call them "Tarnation black stumps" as they could stand in a field with the stumps, and at some distance scarcely be distinguished from them, owing to the colour of their uniform.'¹⁹

Conversely, the green uniform could have the disadvantage of not being recognised as British; there were cases of riflemen being fired upon in error by their own side, and George Miller recalled how at the

beginning of the Peninsular War, on being sent alone on a reconnaissance mission, he was once in danger of being killed by Spanish patriots who presumed that because he did not wear a red British uniform, he must be a Frenchman!

RECRUITING

While the 5/60th continued to recruit largely from foreigners throughout the period, recruiting for the Rifle Corps, later the 95th, soon changed from the original method of selecting men from other regiments. In February 1801 Coote Manningham sought to regularise the status of his regiment by recruiting in the usual way, and though this was at first rejected, in the following year it was permitted. Unlike some states, Britain had no reservoir of rifle-trained civilians upon which to draw, although it was proposed in 1807 that the South Hampshire Militia might be converted to a rifle corps, as 'a great proportion of our men coming from the New Forest and Forest of Bere ... are mostly expert marksmen, and from their early habits feel a partiality to that kind of service.'²⁰ Such men would make excellent riflemen, but the majority were recruited in the usual way, either directly from civilian life (see text to Plate D), or by attracting volunteers from the militia, a very important source of recruits in that such men were already trained in the use of arms and were used to military discipline. Recruits had to be at least 5 ft 2 in. tall; an analysis of 300 riflemen who fought at Waterloo established an average height of 5 ft 7 in.,²¹ and indeed Benjamin Harris stated that the smaller men withstood hard campaigning better than the tall.

The unique status and dress of the rifle corps led to a plentiful supply of recruits, for it was obvious that they were very different from the ordinary redcoat. It was said that militiamen were especially attracted by the absence of any item of equipment that needed pipeclaying, and on one recruiting party the redoubtable Tom Plunket made capital of the regimental nickname 'The Sweeps' (derived from the 95th's sombre dress). To attract recruits Plunket danced on the head of a cask of beer, but it gave way and he fell in; thus soaked, he climbed up the inside of a chimney, emerged covered in soot, and shouted that damn the pipeclay, he was ready for parade! The 95th was so successful in recruiting that a 2nd Battalion could be formed in 1805 and a 3rd in 1809. In addition to ordinary recruits, during the later Peninsular War the 95th was permitted to enrol some ten or 12 Spaniards per company, who proved themselves as good soldiers as their British comrades.

Given the nature of rifle corps service, the highest calibre of NCO was required. An example was Sergeant Robert Fairfoot of the 95th, an experienced Peninsular campaigner who was a faithful follower of Lieutenant George Simmons of the same regiment. Fairfoot survived a wound at Badajoz, and had his right arm broken by a shot on the retreat from Quatre Bras, but before going to the rear he insisted on taking a last shot at the enemy, left-handed, using his officer's shoulder as a rest. Even so he did not quit the regiment, and on the following day helped save Simmons's life by procuring a horse for the wounded officer to ride to safety on. The worthy Fairfoot eventually rose to the rank of



General Sir David Dundas Bt. (1735-1820), who succeeded Coote Manningham as colonel-in-chief of the 95th in 1809. Commander-in-chief from 1809 to 1811, he was responsible for the army's drill book of 1792, from which he took the nickname 'Old Pivot'. Ironically, it included very little on light infantry service. (Print after R. Owen)

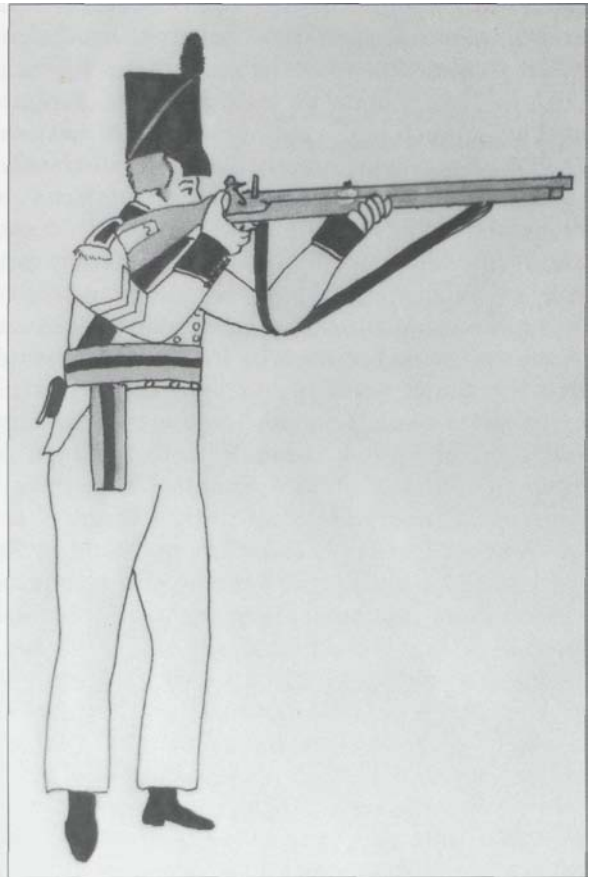
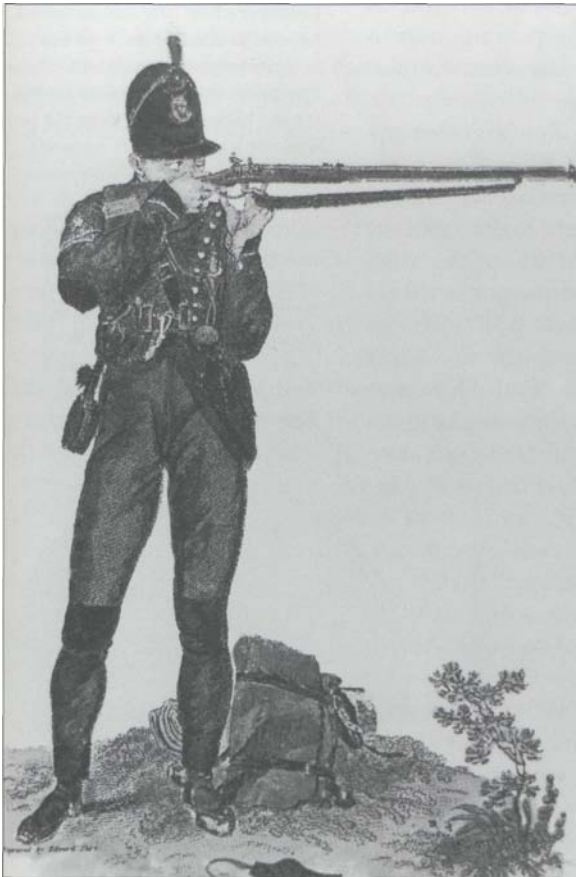
quartermaster, and was commemorated by a memorial tablet in Galway Cathedral, erected by the regiment's officers.

Despite the elite status of the rifle corps, they did not attract members of the highest echelons of society in the way that the Foot Guards or cavalry did; instead, their officers were among the most professional. William Stewart, son of the 7th Earl of Galloway, was an obvious exception to the general dearth of aristocracy in the rifle battalions, and for example, of the 95th officers who served at Waterloo, only one possessed a title, Sir Andrew Barnard, who had won his knighthood of the Bath. The remaining officers came from the military families and country gentry that provided the bulk of the officer corps in general. (Perhaps the Waterloo officer with the most distinguished ancestry was Lieutenant Elliott Johnston, son of a general in the service of the East India Company, although John 'Scamp' Stilwell was supposedly a natural son of the Duke of York. Both were killed.) Of the officers of the 5/60th at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, more than one-third bore what appear to be non-British names, mostly German.

Perhaps indicating the regard in which they were held, both the regular rifle corps had important persons as their colonel. As a regiment with several battalions, the 60th had a colonel-in-chief, who from 1797 until his death in 1827 was Frederick Augustus, Duke of York, who but for the period 1809-11 was the army's Commander-in-Chief. Colonels of the 5/60th were Generals William Morshead (1797-1800), Thomas Stanwix

BELOW LEFT A pose for shooting in which the weight of the rifle is supported by the right hand and left thumb. Although this illustration from Beaufoy's book *Scloppetaria* has been coloured to represent the 95th, it does not show an actual uniform so much as an 'ideal' costume for a rifleman; it has, for example, leather knee and elbow pads and a domed-top shako. The item at the man's feet is presumably his lock-cover. (Engraving by E. Shirt after Craig)

BELOW RIGHT A pose for shooting. This facsimile of a naive illustration of a sergeant of the 95th is derived from the pose recommended by Ezekiel Baker and depicted in his book, with the rifle sling looped around the left elbow.



(1800-6), Sir George Prevost (1806-13) and John Robinson (1813-18). Upon the death in 1809 of the 95th's first colonel, Coote Manningham, it was decided that as a multi-battalion regiment it too should have a colonel-in-chief, a position held from then until 1820 by Sir David Dundas, one of the most eminent generals and Commander-in-Chief from 1809 to 1811. The 1st-3rd Battalions had as colonels General Forbes Champagne, Sir Brent Spencer and Sir William Stewart respectively.

TRAINING

The two principal parts of the training of a rifleman were in the techniques of shooting, and in the wider aspects of light infantry service. Marksmanship was taught by encouragement and reward: when William Surtees first fired at the target after joining the 95th, and scored ten hits out of ten at fifty yards, his officer gave him sixpence and excused him duties for the rest of the day! Shooting with the rifle was apparently not difficult to learn; the artist and cartoonist George Cruikshank, having learned the basic exercise and firing drill by copying his father (a volunteer), remarked that when he joined a rifle company he needed only to learn the calls of bugle and whistle and 'I was a tolerable rifleman in one week after I had entered.'²² Other skills only came with experience, notably the ability to take account of wind in long-range shooting. Surtees believed that the most important tuition was the estimation of distance, so that a rifleman could allow for the effect of gravity upon the ball, and it was to ignorance of this that he attributed much of the poor performance of the smooth-bore musket.

The wider light infantry skills are summarised in the section on tactics, but arguably a more important factor is often held to have originated with the training of the 43rd, 52nd and 95th at the camp at Shorncliffe under Sir John Moore. Moore was certainly one of the most enlightened military thinkers, but was essentially a developer rather than an innovator. Much of his light infantry instructions of 1797-99, for example, were taken from de Rottenburg's manual, and it seems likely that the actual developer of light infantry tactics at Shorncliffe was Lieutenant-Colonel Kenneth Mackenzie of the 52nd, acting with Moore's support. How far this training extended to the 95th is unclear, for Coote Manningham had already instituted something similar himself. He delivered a series of lectures to the officers of the 95th in 1803 in which he recognised that light troops should be able to perform all infantry tasks, not just skirmishing. He also recommended that officers should maintain discipline 'without harassing the soldier, and the officers should set the example'.²³ In his *Regulations for the Rifle Corps* (1800) he stressed the importance of the independence of the individual company, because 'Riflemen, being liable to act very independently of each other, and in numerous small detachments in the field, will feel the comfort and utility of their own officer, non-commissioned officers, and comrades with them, and the service will be benefited by the tie of friendship', a fairly radical theory for the time.



The position for firing from a kneeling pose is illustrated on this silver medal awarded for proficiency in target shooting by the Dukinfield Independent Riflemen in September 1805. This Cheshire volunteer corps was formed in 1804 and was one of those attached to a corps of pikemen, perhaps an example of the theory that rifle-armed troops needed protection from an assault by conventionally equipped infantry. The rifleman on the medal carries a curved hanger, so perhaps the unit was not equipped with bayonets, making the pikes more necessary.

BELOW An alternative position for shooting from a kneeling pose is shown on this medal of the Nottinghamshire Riflemen, a group formed in 1810. In this version the rifle sling is pulled tight and the left hand positioned further down the stock.



This relationship was perhaps the most significant part of Moore's theory, certainly in relation to light infantry service, which required of its men a much greater degree of initiative and independence than for the line soldier in close-order formation. Jonathan Leach of the 95th stated that the principal task was 'to instil into the mind of the soldier, that he must act for himself, and on his own judgment, in taking every advantage of the ground on which it may be his lot to engage the enemy; and that, in the desultory nature of our warfare, it is impossible that an officer or sergeant can always be at his elbow to set him right'.²⁴ Moore termed it the discipline of the mind: the soldier should be contented and determined to do his best, deriving inspiration from personal and regimental pride and comradeship, encouraged by officers using emulation and explanation rather than punishment to obtain obedience. Thus the officers had to know their duty thoroughly before they could instruct their men, and by treating them kindly would gain not only obedience but a far higher level of morale and *esprit de corps*. By following this example, most if not all the officers of the rifle corps enjoyed a much closer relationship with their men than in many other units.

Typical of the enlightened leaders of the rifle corps was Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Sidney Beckwith of the 95th, supremely professional but 'always averse to tease and torment the old soldier with more than a certain quantum of drill', and who realised that to allow 'every possible indulgence compatible with the discipline of the battalion ... was the surest way to make the soldiers follow him cheerfully through fire and water, when the day of trial came; for they well knew that he was the last man on earth who would give them unnecessary trouble, or, on the other hand, would spare either man or officer, when the good of the service demanded their utmost exertions'.²⁵ Many other rifle corps officers followed his example, so that there developed a great rapport between officers and 'other ranks', which if not unique in the army was highly unusual.

This, together with the knowledge that their special skills made riflemen an elite body, produced a level of morale that remained high even during the greatest trials, as was appropriate for a corps which, as John Kincaid of the 95th remarked, 'fired the first and last shot in almost every battle, siege and skirmish in which the army was engaged'. He described the 1/95th: 'they were all that a soldier could love to look on; and, splendid as was their appearance, it was the least admirable part about them, for the beauty of their system of discipline consisted in their doing everything that was necessary, and nothing that was not, so that every man's duty was a pleasure to him, and the *esprit de corps* was unrivalled.' This extended throughout the ranks: 'We lived united, as men who are daily staring death in the face on the same side, and who, caring little about it, look upon each new day added to their lives as one more to rejoice in.'²⁶ This attitude was exemplified by a rifleman named Burke who, though considerably unwell, took his place in the

A number of contemporary pictures show the prone position for shooting, resting the rifle upon the shako to steady it. This is an example depicting a rifleman of (probably) the 6th Loyal London Volunteers in the background of a uniform study. This somewhat unusual pose contrasts notably with the three-rank, linear volley fire of the 3rd Loyal London Volunteers in the background. (Engraving by Meyer & Lewis after James Green, 1804)



ranks prior to a severe forced march in the Peninsula. Beckwith noticed how ill he looked and told him to fall out; Burke declined, remarking that though ill, 'I still have the heart of a man, and will keep up with my comrades as long as my legs will carry me.'

DISCIPLINE

Despite acknowledged elite status and high *esprit de corps*, the rifle corps still had recourse to the savage system of discipline that pertained throughout the army. As the mode of recruiting was not much different from that of the line, it is likely that a similar proportion of bad characters were enlisted, like the draft of 95th recruits joined by Benjamin Harris, whom he described as 'incorrigible blackguards', drunk much of the time, and who had to be threatened with loaded muskets by the volunteers in Andover before they would be quiet!

Nevertheless, under the enlightened system of command that pertained in the rifle corps, the common mode of imposing discipline, the threat of flogging, was used more sparingly than in many regiments. The admirable Beckwith was typical: he punished misdemeanours by extra drill, and for persistent offenders chained a 6 lb roundshot to their ankle. When one 'incorrigible', Tom Crawley, virtually ignored the shot and walked around with it tucked under his arm, Beckwith made him wear a smock with a green cross painted on back and front. Even this failed to shame Crawley, who would sneak out of barracks to the nearest town and explain his bizarre costume by saying that it was the new regulation and had to be worn by all Roman Catholics!

Nevertheless flogging was used for the most serious crimes, even though the regime was more lenient than elsewhere. For example, when the regimental hero Thomas Plunket was found guilty of intending, while drunk, to shoot his officer, he was reduced to the ranks and



It is somewhat ironic that, light troops apart, the volunteer forces seem to have paid more attention to target practice than did the regular infantry. A rare contemporary depiction of a shooting target appears on this silver medal of the Bermondsey Volunteers, a unit formed in 1794.



sentenced to 300 lashes; but Beckwith ended the punishment after only 35 lashes had been delivered, bowing to the will of the entire battalion to spare such a universal favourite. Contemporary writers suggest that however much the lash was disliked, the ordinary soldiers recognised its necessity, having no sympathy especially for cowards or those who stole from their comrades. Benjamin Harris recalled how one man who had tried to hang back in combat was so ostracised that he had to leave the regiment, and he also commented on the extreme measures taken by the great disciplinarian Robert Craufurd during the retreat to Corunna and Vigo. During this appalling march Craufurd flogged men for falling out, of which Harris remarked, 'it was quite necessary. No man but one formed of stuff like General Craufurd could have saved the brigade from perishing altogether; and, if he flogged two, he saved hundreds from death by his management. I detest the sight of the lash; but I am convinced the British army can never go on without it.'"

TACTICS

As Kincaid remarked, the rifle corps fired the first and last shots in virtually every action in which they were engaged. In many respects their duties in the field resembled those of the light infantry, as described by Thomas Cooper in his 1806 manual: 'they conceal from the enemy the most important manoeuvres. ... As the forerunners of an army, the Light Infantry are vigilant day and night, and alert in the extremest degree; they are accustomed to the opposites of concealment in ambush, and exposure in open plains ... they can pursue their course with order and regularity over steep hills, and rugged precipices; and through woods and thickets, relying upon the activity and gallantry of their files. ... When an army advances in the presence of the enemy, the Light Infantry are in front; retreating, they are in the rear; foraging, they protect.'⁸ To these skills the riflemen added the enhanced accuracy of their firearms, so that in action they usually preceded even the light infantry, and thus were the first to engage the enemy's sharpshooters.

If superior intelligence and self-reliance were required of light infantry, this was even more the case with riflemen. In skirmishing they were expected to use initiative and training to take advantage of natural cover, and to operate just as effectively out of sight of their officers and NCOs as when under their supervision, their dispersal over wide areas requiring the transmission of orders by bugle calls and whistles. The essence of their duties was given in a manual of 1803:

Vigilance, activity, and intelligence, are particularly requisite ... [the light infantrymen] should know how to take advantage of every circumstance of ground which can enable him to harass and annoy the enemy, without exposing himself. ... In some situations they must conceal themselves by stooping, in others they must kneel, or lie flat upon the ground ... load and fire with accuracy in every posture. ... To fire seldom and always with effect should be their chief study ... Noise and smoke is not sufficient to stop the advance of soldiers accustomed to war: they are to be checked only by seeing their comrades fall ... a considerable proportion of

LEFT A rare contemporary depiction of target practice with rifles. This print, 'The Cumberland Triumph', depicts a competition at Stamford in August 1811, in which the Duke of Cumberland's Sharpshooters (shown wearing shakos) beat teams from the Nottinghamshire Riflemen (wearing 'round hats') and the *Jägers* of the Honourable Artillery Company. (Print by Fores)



Riflemen in ambush, taking advantage of natural cover. The unit depicted is the Duke of Cumberland's Sharpshooters, a London volunteer corps. The officer in the foreground, displaying prominently his rifle, whistle, powder horn and ball pouch, is the regimental adjutant, Charles Random de Berenger, a noted marksman and artist. He was also one of the leading perpetrators of the Stock Exchange fraud of 1814! (Aquatint by Reinagle after Berenger)

their force should at all times be kept in reserve. The men who are scattered in front ought to be supported by small parties a little in their rear; and these again should depend upon, and communicate with stronger bodies, further removed from the point of attack.⁹

This was confirmed by a Peninsular veteran who regarded any perceived slower rate of rifle fire as irrelevant: 'the rifleman should by no means attempt to keep up the same random, and too often, ineffectual fire, which I have often witnessed by light companies; but that if ... he takes proper advantage of the weapon he bears, and expends few shots without *actually hitting* or *going very near* [the enemy], nothing will so much tend to make them keep at a respectable distance, or to cool their ardour.'³⁰

These themes were repeated in instructions written more specifically for rifle corps: that their principal attribute was the ability to deploy rapidly into skirmish order and to fire when both advancing and retreating. Officially, 'open order' had the files two feet apart, 'extended order' two paces, but taking advantage of the cover provided by the terrain meant that there was often much less order in the appearance of a skirmish line than the regulations suggested. Skirmishers almost always operated in pairs, firing alternately, so that one man of the two was always loaded and ready to protect his comrade. The skirmish line was

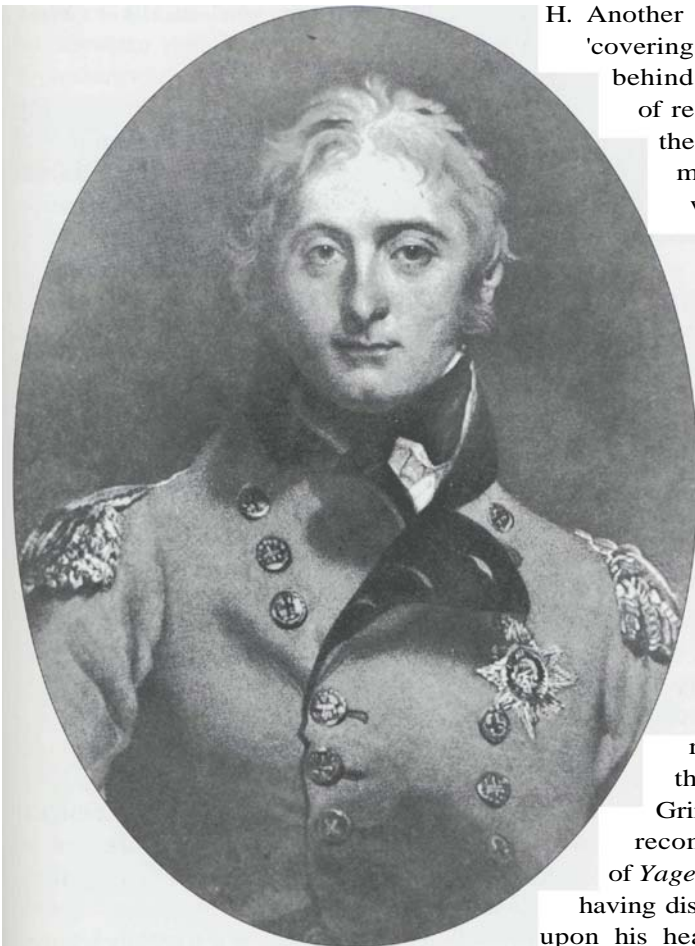
usually composed of two ranks, with one man of each pair in each rank, the ranks staggered by the rear-rank men taking half a pace to the right, so that the rear-rank men moved and fired through the gaps in the front rank. When firing in a stationary position, the rear-rank man picked his target and fired, and when reloaded tapped his front-rank man on the shoulder as a signal that he could fire. When the rear-rank man had observed his comrade reload, he then fired again himself, and the process began again.

When advancing, the rear-rank men passed on the right of the front-rank men, moved ten paces forward, and halted to fire, whereupon the men now at the rear moved up, passing the left side of their comrade and going a further ten paces until they fired. In retreating - signalled by the call 'Fire and Retire' which Benjamin Harris said was a fine sound but one which was not at all popular - the front-rank men fired, swung their rifle under their left arm, barrel downwards, and retired 20 paces before turning and reloading, whereupon the rank now at the front did likewise, all movement being controlled by the whistles of the officers and NCOs. Usually the front rank was controlled by the subalterns of the company, the rear rank by the sergeants, with the company commander - presumably with his bugler - stationed between the two ranks. Another method of skirmishing was 'chain order', as described in the text to Plate

H. Another system of advancing and retreating was by 'covering', in which the rear-rank men moved directly behind their comrade, which would have the effect of reducing the size of the target against which the enemy could aim. It was ordered that manoeuvres in the field should be conducted with shouldered arms, until men were ordered into the skirmish line, when arms were trailed, though it was noted that those men in reserve might keep their arms supported or slung. Judging from contemporary illustrations, the latter position was commonly to have the rifle slung over the left shoulder by the sling, with butt uppermost.

The use of natural cover might see men in a skirmish line sheltering behind trees or walls, kneeling or lying in declivities of the ground; this was so different from conventional linear tactics that it produced facetious comments like this from the *General Evening Post* newspaper of 22 January 1807, which referred to Joseph Grimaldi (1779-1837), the greatest theatrical clown of the age: 'Mr Grimaldi, of Covent Garden Theatre, has been recommended, we understand, to the new corps of *Yagers*, about to be raised, as their posture-master, having displayed so much ingenious ability in walking upon his head, standing upon his shoulders, crawling

Sir John Moore (1761-1809), one of the most important influences in the development of light infantry tactics through his training at Shorncliffe camp of the regiments that subsequently formed the Light Division, including the 95th. (Engraving by Turner after Sir Thomas Lawrence)





British light troops. The sombre colouring of the uniform of the 95th (left) is in marked contrast to the costumes of the 23rd Light Dragoons (centre) and 43rd Light Infantry (right). (Print from Goddard & Booth's *Military Costume of Europe*, 1812)

upon his belly, running on his back, and hopping on his knees, in the new Pantomime.'

When a unit was sent forward to skirmish unsupported, it was recommended that half the men be kept back as a main reserve, 140 paces behind the front line. Sixty paces in advance of them stood a quarter of the unit, acting as a more immediate reserve to the remaining quarter of the unit in the skirmish line, 80 paces further on. However, the size of the reserve and the distances involved could be varied according to circumstances. When, as often occurred, riflemen were used as the extreme front line, they might all be committed to skirmishing if the light infantry of the following formation could act as their reserve. This was probably the best utilisation of the special skills possessed by the rifle corps.

Skirmish lines formed one of the cornerstones of Wellington's system of tactics, both in opposing the strong bodies of French skirmishers, and in shielding the British main body. With the latter ideally positioned upon the reverse slope of rising ground, with only skirmishers in view, the French when advancing were unable to judge the correct moment for deploying from column into line, and were thus at a disadvantage when the main bodies finally came into contact. British skirmish lines were often so strong that they might be mistaken for the main body, and although they were formed principally from regimental light companies, the rifle companies attached to each division of the Peninsular Army formed a vital component. Very rarely, however, were they opposed by rifle-armed troops; rifles were virtually unknown in the French Army, although the French skirmishers were usually very effective with their smoothbores.

Some light infantrymen in fact claimed that in combat conditions expert light infantry were as effective as riflemen, and there were occasions when riflemen were held at bay by the sheer volume of enemy skirmish fire (evidence perhaps that riflemen may have engaged at too short a distance to take advantage of the longer range of their rifles); but the effect of rifle-armed troops could be profound. Using the prowess of 'forty as prime fellows as ever pulled a trigger', George

RIGHT French light infantry, 1809. Although most French infantry was trained in skirmish tactics, British skirmishers were often opposed by members of regimental elite companies, as illustrated here: a *voltigeur* (left) and *carabinier* (right). (Engraving after Hippolyte Bellange)



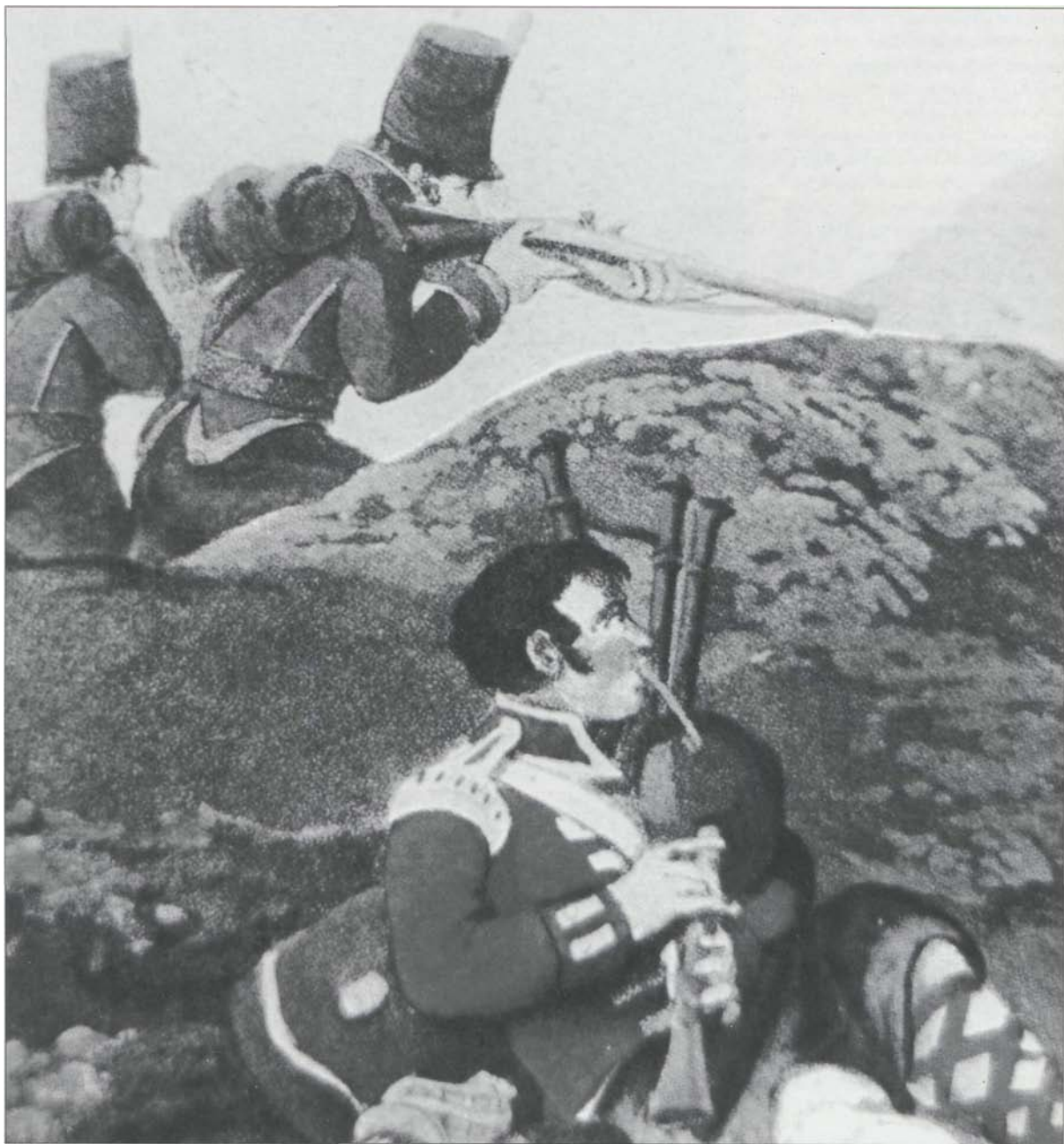
BELOW A member of one of the two rifle companies of the North York Militia, whose dark green uniform with black facings resembled that of the 95th, although their buttons were blackened. The man illustrated is ramming down the charge. Note that his powder flask is in a breast pocket. In the background is a prone sharpshooter using his shako as a rest. (Print after George Walker; the artist's brother Samuel was killed at Talavera as a captain in the 3rd Foot Guards) *



Simmons of the 95th silenced a French battery at Badajoz, from dawn until dark, a feat emulated by Kincaid at Waterloo. At Walcheren, Benjamin Harris recalled how a rifleman named Jackson dug a hole for himself with his sword and from it killed 11 French gunners, one after another, before running to safety. Firing from a roof at Buenos Ayres, Tom Plunket claimed to have killed about 20 of the enemy, including one bearing a flag of truce! The ability to hit enemy officers and NCOs, whose loss would be felt most keenly, was also potentially devastating. George Simmons reported the account of Vimeiro by a French officer: 'I was sent out to skirmish against some of those in green - grasshoppers [the common French nickname for British riflemen] ... they were behind every bush and stone, and soon made sad havoc among my men, killing all the officers of my company, and wounding myself without being able to do them any injury. This nearly drove me to distraction.'³¹

Riflemen in action at Vimeiro. Although the uniforms are not rendered with great precision, the artist has shown members of the 5/60th correctly operating in pairs and carrying a form of light marching order in which a few necessities were carried in a rolled blanket, relieving troops of carrying the heavy knapsack while skirmishing. (Print by Clark & Dubourg after Manskirch)

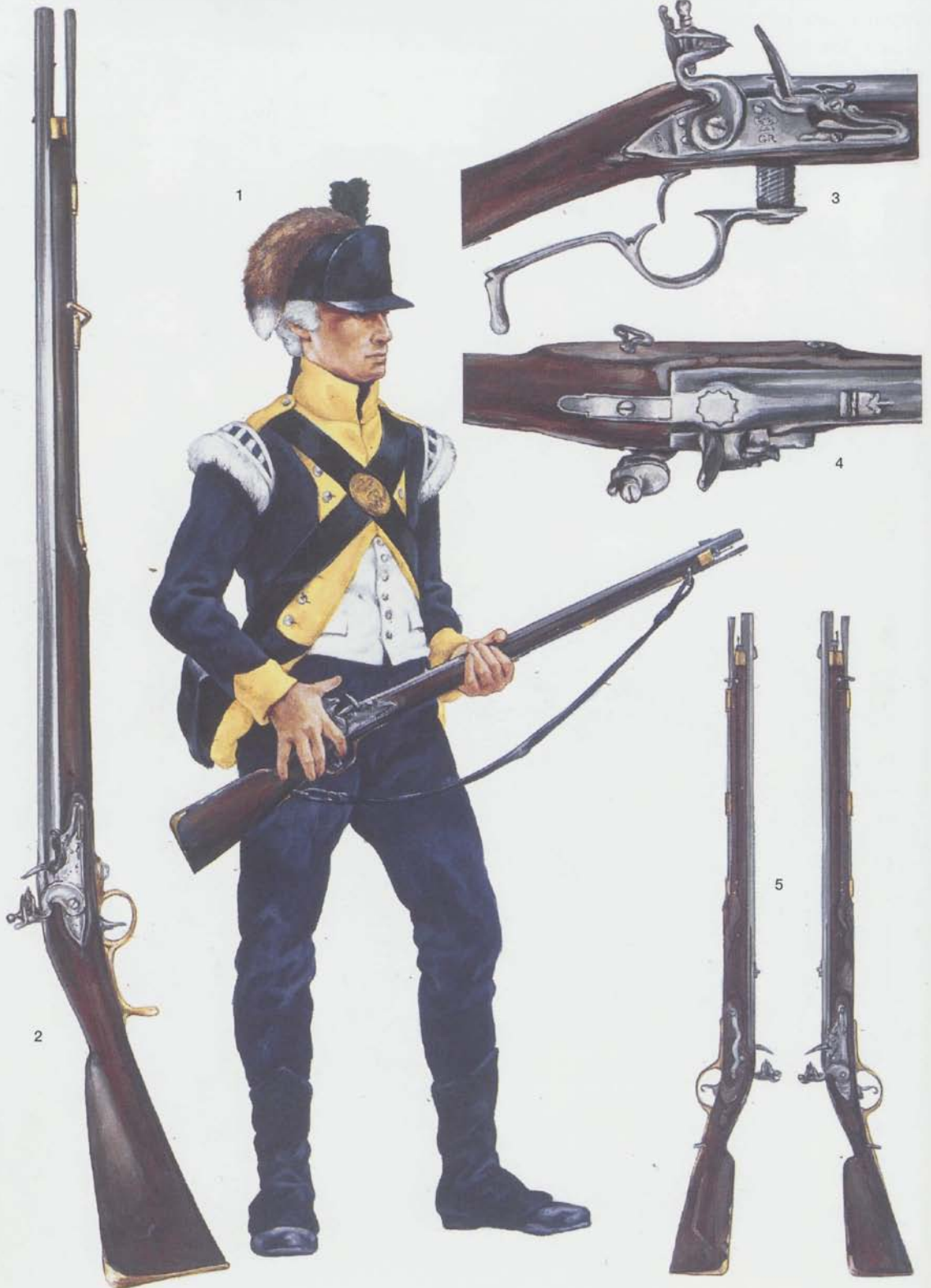
A similar point was made by Marshal Soult in a letter to Minister of War Clarke in September 1813. Referring specifically to the 5/60th, he attributed the excessive loss of French officers to the activity of British sharpshooters, stating that officers who went to the front to encourage their men were almost always hit, and that after two actions a battalion might be almost leaderless. He reported some units with only two or three officers left. It has been suggested that the real reason for high officer casualties was their foolhardy bravery, but whatever the truth it was widely believed that sharpshooting riflemen were largely responsible.



The first Rifle Corps



Early rifles c.1796



Weapons and equipment of a private c.1812





Recruiting

D



Training

Weapons and equipment and a private of 5/60th c.1811



Weapons and equipment and a private of 1st Light Battn., King's German Legion





Tactics





Le Haye Sainte

Perhaps one of the most accurate reflections upon the skill of the British riflemen was written by an officer in Portuguese service, John Blakiston, concerning the hard-fought action at Tarbes in March 1814, when all three battalions of the 95th led the attack of the Light Division:

Our rifles were immediately sent to dislodge the French from the hills on our left, and our battalion was sent to support them. Nothing could exceed the manner in which the ninety-fifth set about the business. ... Certainly I never saw such skirmishers as the ninety-fifth. ... They could do the work much better and with infinitely less loss than any other of our best light troops. They possessed an individual boldness, a natural understanding, and a quickness of eye, in taking advantage of the ground, which, taken altogether, I never saw equalled. They were, in fact, as much superior to the French voltigeurs, as the latter were to our skirmishers in general.³²

OTHER RIFLE CORPS

In addition to the 5/60th, 95th, and rifle companies of the other battalions of the 60th, a considerable number of other units were armed with rifles. Probably the best-known are the two Light Battalions of the King's German Legion, the force formed from the king's Hanoverian subjects following the French occupation of Hanover. Although uniformed in green 'rifle' style, initially only a minority of the Light Battalion personnel carried rifles, though it was noted the rifles of casualties were always taken by the able bodied, to maintain the maximum number of rifles in the ranks (see the text to Plate G). The Legion's line battalions each had a sharpshooter company also armed with rifles, although they retained the red infantry uniform.

With the regular rifle corps occupied in the Peninsula, rifle-armed companies were formed in other regiments to provide a rifle capability in other campaigns. At the time of the capture of Martinique and Guadeloupe (1810), for example, there were two rifle companies in each of the Royal York Rangers and Royal West India Rangers, the rifle companies of the 3/ and 4/60th, and a rifle company maintained by the 1/23rd Royal Welsh Fusiliers. In Java in 1810-11 the 14th, 59th, 69th, and 78th Foot all had rifle companies in addition to their ordinary flank companies.

In the Peninsula, the rifle capability of the Portuguese brigades integrated into Wellington's army was provided by the Portuguese Cacadores. There were originally six battalions of these brown-clad light infantry, increased to 12 in 1811, and although probably a majority were armed with muskets, their sharpshooters carried Baker rifles. Further rifle companies were provided by the Jägers of the Brunswick Oels Corps, part of the Duke of Brunswick's force which had been evacuated from Europe by the British navy in 1809 and which was taken into British pay. Most of the Brunswick Corps were dressed in black, but the Jägers wore dark green with light blue facings and the distinctive skull badge on their shakos, which gave rise to their nickname of 'Death or Glory Men'. The original



Major-General Robert 'Black Bob' Craufurd (1764-1812), the stern disciplinarian who led the Light Division in the earlier part of the Peninsular War and who was killed at its head at Ciudad Rodrigo. Though he was never especially popular, he was trusted by his men; as Benjamin Harris remarked, he was 'the very picture of a warrior. I shall never forget Craufurd if I live to a hundred years.'

character of the force was subsequently diluted by the enrolment of ex-prisoners and miscellaneous foreigners, so that they acquired a bad reputation for desertion. Jonathan Leach of the 95th stated that 'They deserted to the French in such numbers, that we had a *lease* of them but for a few weeks,³³ while Craufurd announced publicly that if any wanted to change sides he would give them a pass to go over to the French, 'for we are better without such'.

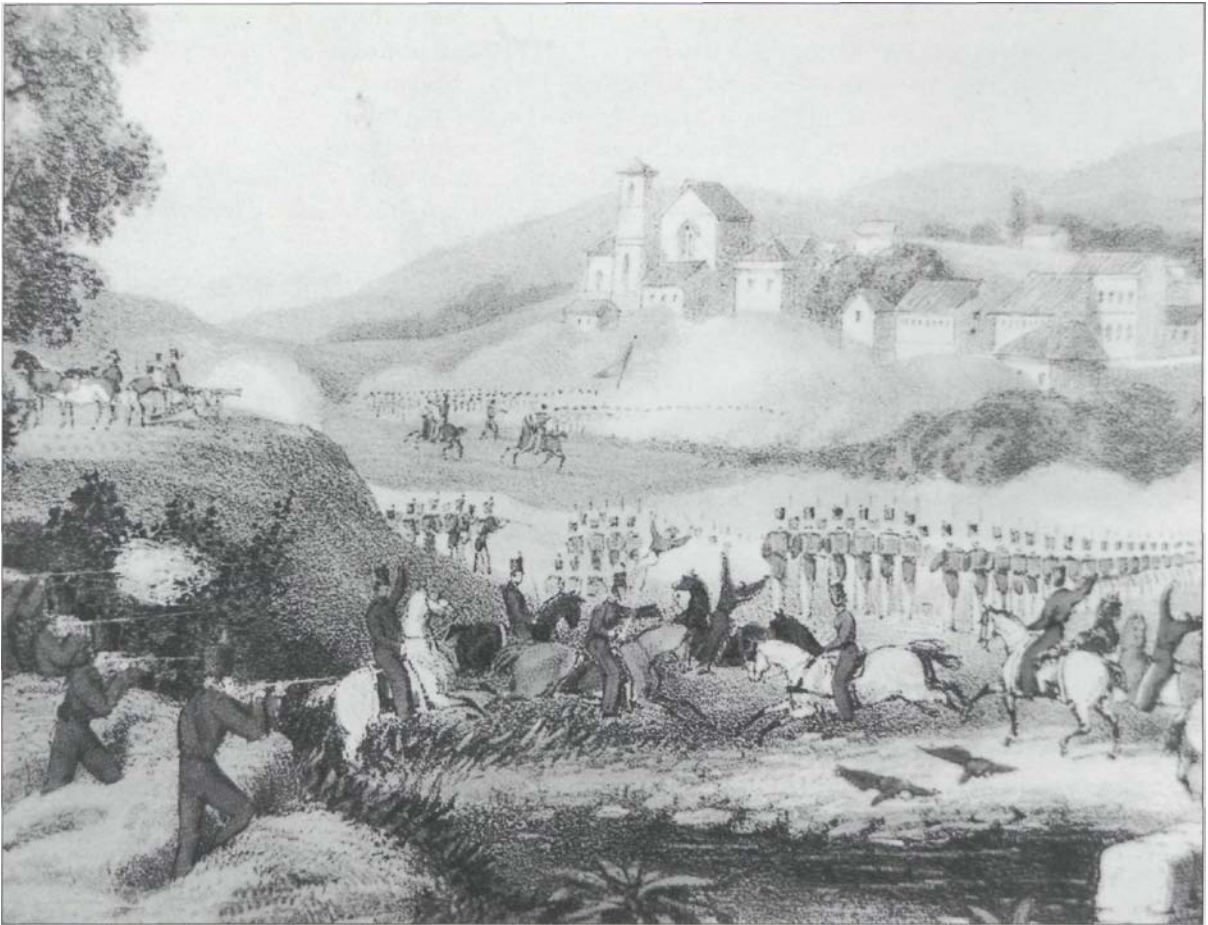
A considerable number of auxiliary corps were equipped as riflemen. Their value for home defence was realised, so many of the local volunteer units were formed as rifle corps. In strength they varied from single companies or platoons attached to larger corps of ordinary infantry, to battalion-sized formations like the Manchester Rifle Regiment. Rifled carbines also seem to have been carried by some yeomanry corps. In addition to the rifle companies of the North York already mentioned, four militia regiments were converted to rifle corps, presumably as weapons became available: the Royal Pembroke Militia was converted in 1811, the Royal Caernarvon and Royal Flint in 1812, and the Royal Denbigh in 1813. Their uniforms resembled those of the 95th, except for the Royal Denbigh, which retained its dark blue facings.

In addition to rifle-armed units, a number of individuals seem to have carried rifles on campaign: in the Peninsula, for example, Ensign Joseph Owgan of the 88th Foot was known as a crack shot with the rifle he always carried in action.

SERVICES OF THE RIFLE CORPS

Following its creation as the first regular rifle corps, the 5/60th served in Ireland during the rebellion of 1798; during the action at Vinegar Hill its 11 casualties (including five dead) were more than any other unit. From there it proceeded to the West Indies, returning to England in 1806 following the passing of an Act that permitted foreign troops to serve there. In June 1808 the battalion went to Portugal with the British expedition, and together with the 2/95th fired the first British shots of the Peninsular War at Obidos on 15 August 1808, a skirmish in which the first British officer fatality of the war occurred: Lieutenant Ralph Bunbury of the 95th.

Following the expedition to Ferrol, the next active service of the Rifle Corps was at sea, when Beckwith's company was sent to serve aboard the British fleet in the Baltic; they fought at Copenhagen, losing their first



Riflemen skirmishing on the enemy's flanks: the 95th depicted in a battle scene, supposedly showing Vimeiro. (Lithograph by Madeley)

officer at that battle, Lieutenant and Adjutant Grant. Numbered as the 95th in December 1802, they trained under Moore at Shorncliffe alongside the 43rd and 52nd Light infantry, the three regiments that were to form the Light Division of the Peninsular War. Increased to two battalions in 1805, part of the 1st Battalion served in the expedition to north Germany (1805-6), while three companies of the 2nd Battalion went on the expedition to Montevideo, where in 1807 they were joined by five companies of the 1st Battalion. They returned home at the end of the disastrous South American adventure, while in the meantime five companies of each battalion served with the expedition to Copenhagen. Elements of both battalions served in the first British campaign of the Peninsular War, including the battles of Roleia and Vimeiro.

Both battalions of the 95th participated in Moore's Spanish campaign, but the 5/60th was sent back to Portugal: after Vimeiro it had enlisted so many French deserters that it was no longer regarded as reliable (although the situation was soon remedied). When Moore reorganised his army the 1/95th was posted to Edward Paget's reserve, and the 2/95th joined a Light Brigade (also including the 1/43rd and 2/52nd), commanded by Robert Craufurd. (Another Light Brigade was formed by the two KGL Light Battalions.) The remarkable Craufurd was an iron disciplinarian who held his command together by willpower, inspiration and the threat of punishment during the terrible conditions



'The Rearguard'. Members of the 1/95th in the foreground of Edward Paget's Division, which provided the rearguard for Moore's army that retreated to Corunna. This painting by James Beadle exemplifies the appalling conditions under which the retreat was carried out. (Royal Green Jackets Museum)

of the retreat to Vigo. If not popular, Craufurd was respected greatly, as Benjamin Harris recorded: 'He was in everything a soldier ... he seemed an iron man; nothing daunted him - nothing turned him from his purpose. War was his very element, and toil and danger seemed to call forth only an increasing determination to surmount them.'³⁴

An even worse trial was endured by the 1/95th during the retreat to Corunna, over mountains in bitter cold, for unlike those who retired to Vigo, they were harried by the pursuing French, and as part of the rearguard the 95th had to fight for much of the way. At the battle of Corunna the battalion led Paget's counter-attack. The campaign subsequently claimed the life of the 95th's colonel, Coote Manningham, who died on 26 August 1809 of privations endured while commanding a brigade in the retreat.

In 1809 the 95th was increased to three battalions, and with the 5/60th formed the primary rifle-armed element of Wellington's Peninsular Army. Upon his reorganisation of this into four divisions in June 1809, in order to provide each with a small force of riflemen to supplement the divisional light companies, five companies of the 5/60th were posted, one per brigade, to all but the 3rd Division, which retained the remaining five companies. When the 95th joined the army, their battalions were not divided in the same way, although some veterans advanced the theory that they would have been more effective had they been deployed as individual companies throughout the army; but by concentrating them into what became the Light Division, an elite formation was created.

Apart from some riflemen who served with the 'battalions of detachments' (mostly recovered invalids), the 95th missed the battle of

Talavera, the 1/95th along with the 1/43rd and 1/52nd in Robert Craufurd's Light Brigade arriving just too late for the action. In their attempt to join the army, however, they performed a quite remarkable feat, a forced march of some 42 miles in full equipment and in burning heat in only 26 hours. (The length of the march has been exaggerated, but its true circumstances were sufficiently extraordinary not to need enhancement.) Jonathan Leach recalled that as they approached, 'The constant cannonade heard in front was a stimulus which had a most beneficial effect, and made them forget, for a time, their extraordinary fatigue.'³⁵ A more prolonged ordeal was inflicted upon the 2/95th during the expedition to Walcheren, where after barely six weeks' service they were reduced to a wreck by fever.

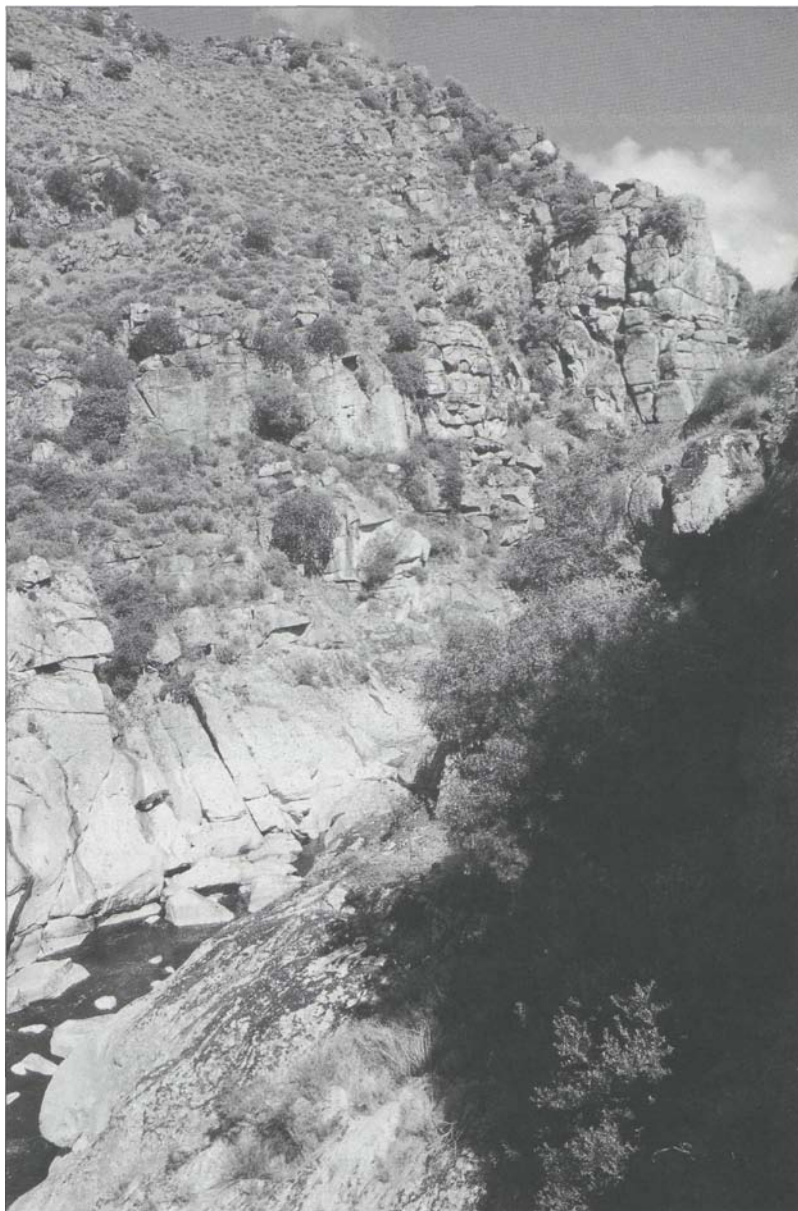
Early in 1810 the 5/60th was further dispersed throughout the army, only three companies remaining with the 3rd Division, while in February Craufurd's brigade was expanded to form the Light Division by the addition of two Cacadore battalions, with the 1/95th being divided between its two brigades (the first brigade, then commanded by Sidney Beckwith, was augmented later in the year by a company of the 2/95th). From this time the Light Division was acknowledged as an elite formation, and with a small force of light cavalry was given the task of providing a buffer between the army and the French, and of watching the movements of the enemy, a task fulfilled to perfection. Covering some 40 miles along the line of the river Agueda, Craufurd watched 15 fords, and though greatly outnumbered his line was never pierced, his scouting parties never cut off, and his whole system able to react at a moment's notice. On 19 March 1810, however, there occurred an action that had consequences greater than might have been expected from the numbers involved.

Four companies of the 1/95th under Beckwith were posted to hold the bridge at Barba del Puerco, the only crossing-point over the Agueda for

BELOW Thomas Plunket, one of the 95th's most notable characters, kills the famous French cavalry general Auguste de Colbert by sharpshooting in the supine position, at Cacabellos in the retreat to Corunna. Note the use of the rifle sling, looped around the leg. Various stories are associated with this incident, including the claim that Plunket was offered a cash prize if he could hit the French officer! (Print after Harry Payne)



horses or transport for some miles, the river running through a narrow, rocky gorge. Upon this post the French general Claude-Francois Ferey determined to make an assault with some 600 picked men, plus a reserve of 1,500 more. His approach was concealed by a dark and stormy night, squalls of rain and the roar of the torrent. Beckwith and three companies were billeted in the village, about half a mile from the bridge; the fourth company had about 30 men in a small chapel near the bridge, with two sentries beside the bridge and an 'alarm post' of a sergeant and a dozen men within 50 yards. One of the sentries fired a warning shot as the French rushed over the bridge, and the men at the alarm post began to fire as they retired up the hillside. Most of the 95th's bridge company rushed from the chapel and engaged at close range, sometimes virtually hand-to-hand. The white belts of the French attackers formed aiming marks for the riflemen in the blackness of the night; conversely, the dark uniforms and black belts of the 95th gave the French only their muzzle flashes to aim at, and most of their shots went wide.



The gorge of the river Agueda at Barba del Puerco. Such difficult terrain was ideal for the form of skirmishing, taking advantage of natural cover, at which the 5/60th and 95th were so skilled. (Ian Fletcher Battlefield Tours)

The 95th's senior officer present, Lieutenant James Mercer, exclaimed 'Our brave fellows fight like Britons!', but was shot dead as he tried to put on his spectacles. The company commander, Captain Peter O'Hare, who had earlier retired ill to bed, arrived shortly after and took command, and for perhaps half an hour the riflemen crouched behind cover and blazed away at the French, who had to be urged forward by blows from the flat of their own officers' swords. The 45-odd riflemen held up the 600 until Beckwith arrived with the other three companies, presumably having delayed his approach until he had reconnoitred the action. Faced with an increased volume of fire, the French retired. Casualties were relatively light: the French loss was stated to have been 45, though they may have suffered as many as 100. It was noticed that some of the dead left on the field had been shot six or seven times,

suggesting that when they had become visible during the fight they had been targeted by at least that number of riflemen. The 95th suffered about 23 casualties.

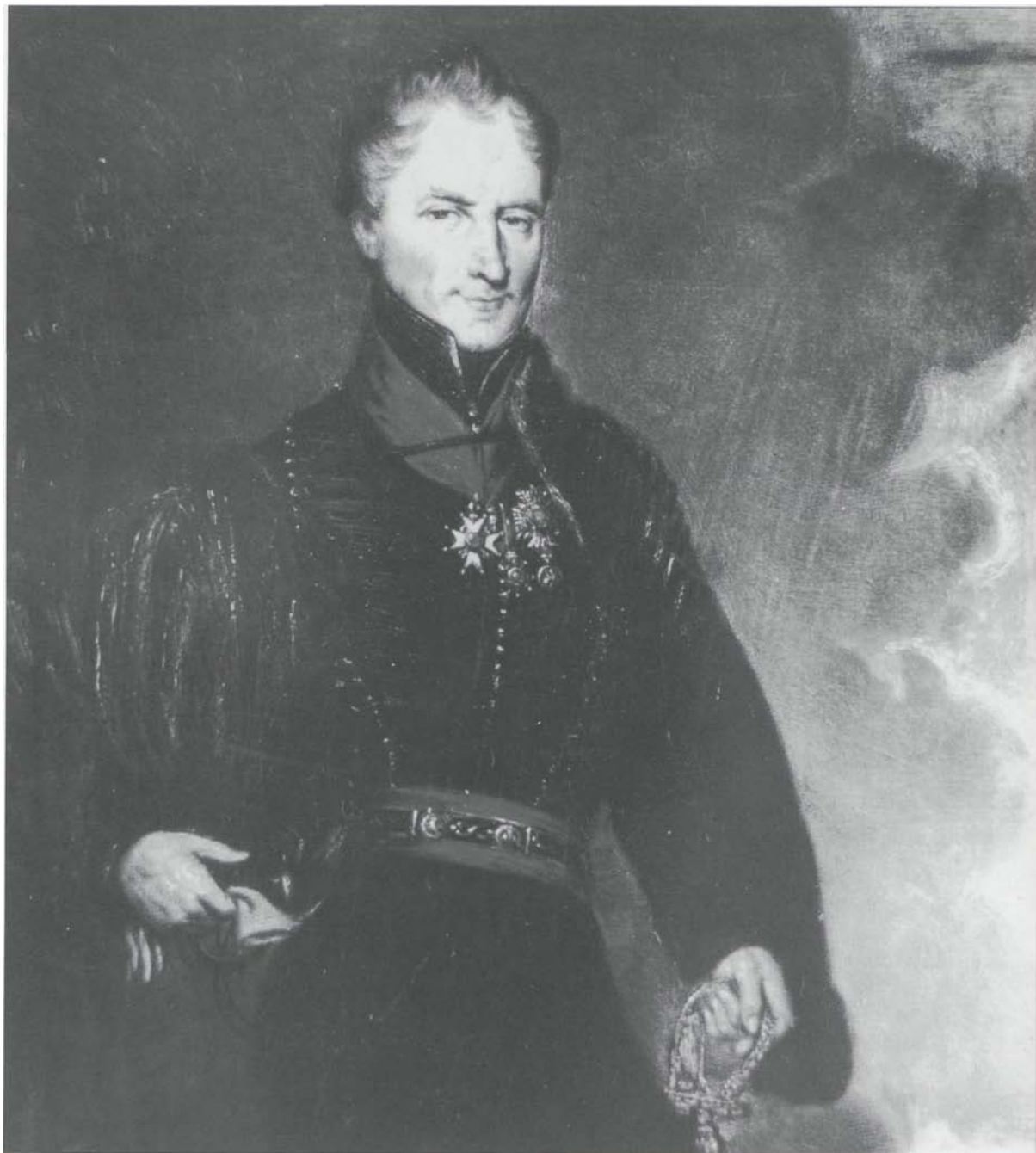
The action at Barba del Puerco was a relatively minor skirmish, but it demonstrated that, contrary to some popular opinion, riflemen could engage ordinary infantry with success, even though the riflemen had had the advantage of terrain and weather. The action was praised by Wellington and was regarded by the 95th themselves, as Kincaid noted, 'as no inconsiderable addition to our regimental feather'. Craufurd's comment was succinct: 'the action ... was of a sort which the riflemen of other armies would shun. In other armies the rifle is considered ill-calculated for close action with an enemy armed with musket and bayonet; but the 95th Regiment has proved that the rifle in the hands of a British soldier is a fully sufficient weapon to enable him to defeat the French in the closest fight in whatever manner they may be armed.'³⁶

The Light Division fought a desperate action at the Coa (24 July 1810) in which the 95th was especially distinguished, but was less seriously engaged at Busaco. Two companies of the 2/95th served in southern Spain, at Tarifa and Cadiz, and with that part of the newly formed 3rd Battalion that had also been sent to Cadiz under the command of Sir Andrew Barnard, they fought together at Barrosa (5 March 1811). The rifle capability of Wellington's army was enhanced in the autumn of 1810 by the arrival of the Brunswick Oels Corps, of which some companies were armed with rifles and distributed among the divisions. At the beginning of 1811, for example, to supplement their own light companies, each division had the following rifle-armed troops attached: 1st Division, one 3/95th and two 5/60th companies and a detachment from the KGL light battalions; 2nd and 3rd Divisions, three 5/60th companies each; 4th Division, one 5/60th and one Brunswick company; 5th Division, two Brunswick companies; 6th Division (consisting initially of only one brigade), one 5/60th company. Later in the year the 3/95th company from the 1st Division united with the four companies of the same battalion that joined the Light Division from Cadiz. When the 7th Division was formed in spring 1812, it included the two KGL light battalions.

For the remainder of the Peninsular War the riflemen were in the forefront of virtually every action, most notably in 1811 at Sabugal. There, due largely to the failings of their general (Sir William Erskine, who was generally regarded as insane, and who was commanding while Craufurd was on leave), the Light Division fought fiercely against

William Gabriel Davy, who commanded the 5/60th in the early Peninsular War. He joined the 60th from the 61st as a captain in 1802, and became major in 1807; he received the Army Gold Medal for Rolica, Vimeiro and Talavera, and transferred to the 7th Garrison Battalion in December 1809. He became a knight of Hanover, a general in 1854, and was appointed colonel of the 1/60th in November 1842. He died in Gloucestershire in January 1856. This portrait shows the black lacing on the officer's scarlet collar of the 5/60th. (Royal Green Jackets Museum)





overwhelming numbers, an action described by Wellington as 'one of the most glorious that British troops were ever engaged in'.³⁷ This seesaw fight was one of Beckwith's finest moments: bleeding from a head wound, and with a horse shot from under him, he commanded his brigade with inspiring assurance: 'his calm, clear, commanding voice was distinctly heard amid the roar of battle, and cheerfully obeyed ... nothing more than a familiar sort of conversation with the soldier ... "Now, my lads, we'll just go back a little if you please ... we are in no hurry - we'll just walk quietly back, and you can give them a shot as you go along."³⁸

LEFT Sir Thomas Sidney Beckwith (1772-1831), one of the most expert and justly famous officers of the 95th, 'a man equal to rally an army in flight' as Napier described. An enlightened battalion commander, he led a brigade of the Light Division with great distinction in the Peninsula until he returned home ill in 1811. Subsequently he served in the War of 1812 in North America, was appointed commander-in-chief at Bombay in 1829, lieutenant-general in 1830, and died in India. He was colonel of the 2/95th from 1827. (Royal Green Jackets Museum)

Despite their unique abilities, the riflemen were not shielded from the most dangerous duties: as well as sniping the enemy during sieges and providing covering fire for the attack, volunteers from the Light Division took part in the bloody storming parties at Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz. Robert Craufurd, having returned to command of the Light Division, was killed at the former.

Throughout the remainder of the war, the riflemen maintained their reputation as among the elite of the army. The composition of the Light Division varied slightly, but in 1812 its 1st Brigade comprised the 43rd, 1st Cacadores, four companies of the 1/95th, two companies of the 2/95th and five companies of the 3/95th. The 2nd Brigade comprised the 52nd, 3rd Caçadores, and four companies of the 1/95th. In 1813 the 1/95th companies were united in the 1st Brigade and, augmented to six companies, the 2/95th transferred to the 2nd Brigade.

The privations endured during the war were legion; when acting as advance and rearguards it was often even more difficult to procure supplies than for the rest of the army. Costello of the 95th joked that it was called the Light Division because they were so often light of provisions, which proved that it was possible to fight upon an empty stomach! Jonathan Leach provided an example, recalling how for two weeks his men lived on nothing but small quantities of bad flour mixed with bran and chopped straw, baked into pancakes on the lid of a camp kettle, plus an occasional morsel of aged goat. Such conditions produced hardened campaigners dismayed by nothing; George Simmons of the 95th remarked that 'I feel great pleasure to be with such fighting fellows and hardy soldiers. The men are so seasoned, that rain or any other kind of weather makes no impression ... we have been in want of tents for months together, sleeping on the ground without any other covering than the canopy of heaven. I never slept better than in such places. This is the regiment to make the soldiers. ... Campaigning is the life for me. I have never felt such happiness since I became a soldier. I often think that to be living in England after this wild, romantic existence would not give me half so much satisfaction.'⁹ His comments were an accurate reflection of the high morale of the men; as Kincaid stated, the sight of the French always 'acted like a cordial' upon their spirits, and fatigue was forgotten as they engaged the enemy with enthusiasm.

In addition to Wellington's army, rifle-armed units continued to serve in other areas of campaign: the rifle company of De Roll's (originally Swiss) Regiment served in eastern Spain, for example, and for Sir Thomas Graham's expedition to the Netherlands, four weak companies of 95th were drawn from the regimental depots at Shorncliffe (one each from the 1st and 2nd Battalions, two from the 3rd). Five companies of the 3/95th served in the expedition to New Orleans, which included one significant action in an otherwise unsuccessful operation. Prior to the battle of New Orleans there was an outpost skirmish at 'Hallen's Piquet' (named after the commander of the 95th company involved, William Hallen), which demonstrated again how skilled riflemen could frustrate conventional tactics. Hallen's company was very heavily outnumbered by American troops firing volleys on word of command, as if at drill. When they heard the command 'Ready! Present!' in the American ranks, the riflemen would

drop flat, the American shots went over their heads, and the riflemen sprang up and resumed firing while their opponents tried to reload.

All three battalions of the 95th were represented in the Waterloo campaign, six companies of the 1/95th (commanded by Sir Andrew Bernard) in Kempt's Brigade of Picton's Division, and six companies of the 2/95th and two of the 3/95th in Adam's Brigade of Clinton's Division. The 5/60th were not in the Netherlands, the other rifle-armed troops in the Anglo-German part of Wellington's army consisting of Hanoverian and Brunswick Jägers and elements of the King's German Legion, the two Light Battalions in Ompteda's Brigade of Alten's Division, and the sharpshooter companies of the line battalions. The 1/95th fired the first British shots of the campaign at Quatre Bras (Lieutenant John Fitzmaurice claimed to have fired the very first with a rifle borrowed from one of his men), and appropriately the 1/95th and 2nd KGL Light Battalion provided the army's rearguard in the retreat from Quatre Bras. At Waterloo Adam's Brigade was on the right of Wellington's position, where during the great French cavalry attacks Captain William Eeles's company of the 3/95th defied conventional wisdom by meeting a charge not in square but in line, Eeles standing in front of his men to prevent them firing until the cavalry were within 30 or 40 yards. They delivered such a volley that, together with the fire from the adjoining square of 71st Light Infantry, fully half the approaching horsemen were brought down. The other riflemen helped hold the very centre of the Allied position, the 2nd Light Battalion suffering severely in their attempt to hold La Haye Sainte (see text to Plate J), with the 1/95th supporting them, including two companies that held the sandpit by the side of the farm. The ordeal of the units involved is exemplified by Kincaid's remark that whereas it was usual at the end of a battle to ask 'Who's dead?', at Waterloo the question was, 'Who's alive?'

An idea of the effects of being constantly in the forefront of the action in all the campaigns in which the riflemen participated may be gauged from Kincaid's description of the officers of the 95th who appeared on parade at the end of the war, their condition representing the regiment's hard service: 'Beckwith with a cork-leg - Pemberton and Manners with a shot each in the knee, making them as stiff as the other's tree one - Loftus Gray with a gash in the lip, and minus a portion of one heel, which made him march to the tune of dot and go one - Smith with a shot in the ankle - Eeles minus a thumb - Johnston, in addition to other shot holes, a stiff elbow, which deprived him of the power of disturbing his friends as a scratcher of Scotch reels upon the violin - Percival with a shot through his lungs. Hope with a grapeshot lacerated leg - and George Simmons with his riddled body held together by a pair of stays.'⁴⁰

Not included in this list was the remarkable Captain John McCulloch, who lost the use of one arm by a wound in the Peninsula, and lost the other arm at Waterloo. Displaying typical regimental spirit, he appeared subsequently before Wellington, declaring that although he no longer had an arm left to wield for his country, he still wished to serve it as best he could.

Following the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the rifle-armed element of the British Army was reduced to three battalions, including two from the old 95th. The 5/60th was disbanded in 1818 but the 2/60th took

RIGHT Sir Andrew Francis Barnard (1773-1855), one of the best battalion commanders in the army. He joined the 95th in 1810, was severely wounded commanding the 3/95th at Barrosa, commanded a brigade of the Light Division from August 1811, was wounded at the Nivelles and again when commanding the 1/95th at Waterloo. Jonathan Leach explained his universal popularity by referring to his thorough knowledge of his profession; 'calm, cool courage, great presence of mind in action, frank and gentlemanly manners, and the total absence of what may be termed teasing [sic] those under [his] command' (Leach, p. 262). (Royal Green Jackets Museum)





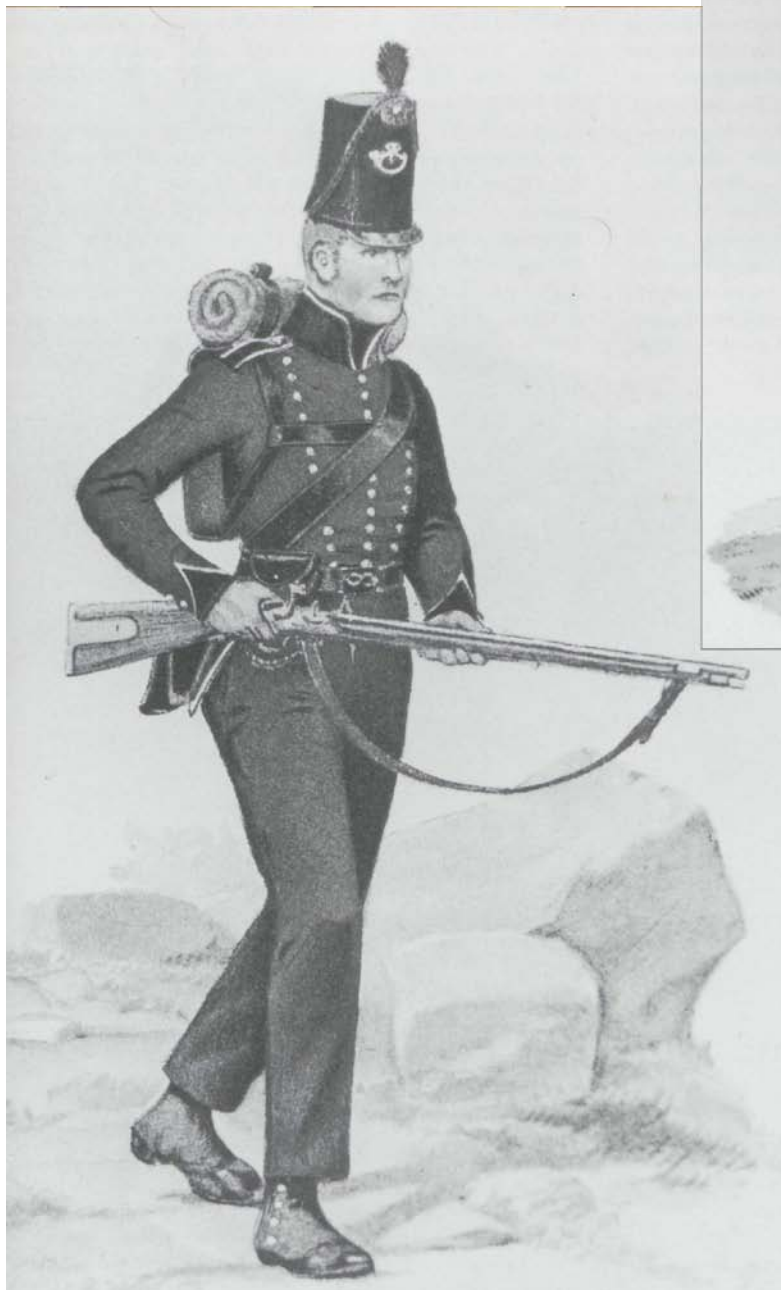
The bridge at Barba del Puerco, scene of the action of 19 March 1810 when a detachment of Sidney Beckwith's 1/95th repelled a French attack and proved that rifle-armed troops could oppose conventional infantry at close range. (Ian Fletcher Battlefield Tours)

over its role as a rifle corps; the regiment lost the foreign element of its composition, and in 1830 was granted the title of The King's Royal Rifle Corps, which remained in use after the number '60' was discontinued in 1881. The 3/95th was disbanded in January 1819, by which time that regiment's title had changed: by an order of 16 February 1816 it was taken out of the numbered sequence of regiments and renamed The Rifle Brigade, testimony to its unique abilities and exemplary service. Nevertheless, the rifle continued to be regarded as a 'specialist' weapon, and some advocated that it should be restricted to a few picked marksmen in every battalion. Despite such opinions, the first rifle intended for universal issue to all infantry was the Model 1851 or Minie, itself superseded by the superior Enfield of 1853. Similarly it took some decades for the tactics of rifle corps to be recognised as the future of infantry service, as linear tactics continued to be used; but experience in

colonial campaigns, and the adoption of a weapon accurate at much greater distances than the old smoothbore, proved that the method of operation and the enlightened discipline of the light infantry and riflemen were the most powerful influences that modernised infantry tactics. This would probably have come as no surprise to those who had adopted the old tribute to the most famous of the rifle corps of the Napoleonic Wars: 'Hurrah for the first in the field and the last out of it, the fighting ninety-fifth!'



ABOVE An officer of the 95th, as depicted in Goddard & Booth's *Military Costume of Europe* (1812). It shows the use of the pelisse, a garment of light cavalry style worn only by officers, and the officer's cap, a shako with a square-cut peak that folded up against the body of the head-dress. Square-cut peaks are shown in a number of contemporary sources as being worn by all ranks.



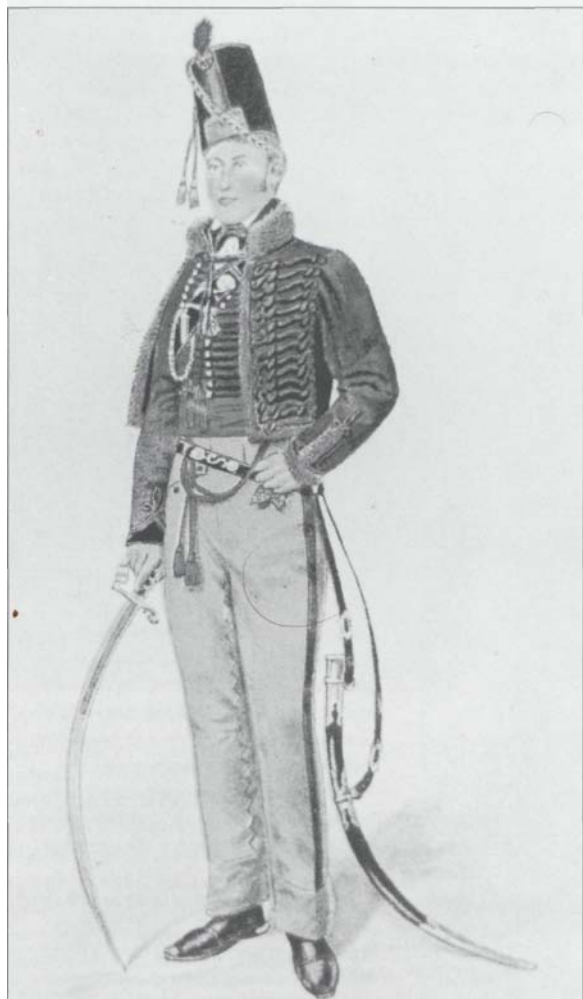
LEFT A private of the 95th in full field equipment, c.1812. Based in part upon the illustration in Goddard & Booth's *Military Costume of Europe*, it omits the black worsted tufts that are usually depicted upon the shoulder straps. The uniform is dark green throughout, with black facings, white piping, white metal buttons and black leather equipment. (Print after P.W. Reynolds)

COLOUR PLATE COMMENTARY

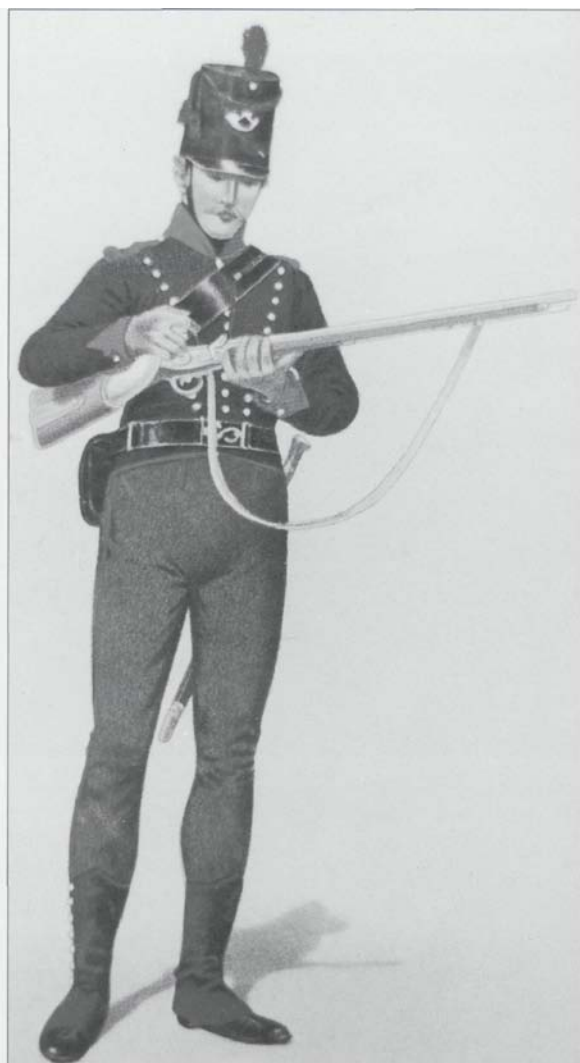
A: THE FIRST RIFLE CORPS

This plate illustrates the first regular rifle corps of the British Army, the 5/60th, formed in 1797. It depicts Francis de Rottenburg, in the uniform of an officer of the battalion, who has called out from a line one of his men to show his rifle to a lieutenant-general, who represents the more 'traditional' aspects of the army of the time. The uniform, taken principally from an illustration by Charles Hamilton Smith, shows why the battalion was described as 'very foreign-looking' in 1799. The first official mention of the green jacket appears to be in a

clothing warrant of 1800, and more extensive details appear in the 1802 regulations, including the nine buttons on the breast and two at each cuff, green turnbacks and shoulder straps edged red, and wings with six 'darts' of red cloth. White, sleeved waistcoats are also mentioned. The shako appears to have been of a rather unusual pattern, slightly wider at the top. Officers' uniforms included a braided dolman, green instead of the blue breeches of the other ranks, and the Tarleton light dragoon helmet. Also shown is the 'Maltese cross' device, actually a 'cross pattee', which became a distinctive insignia of many rifle corps. Its origin is obscure, although it appears to have been introduced into the 5/60th by Francis de Rottenburg, who may have derived it from Hompesch's Corps in which he had served, which possibly



An officer of the 95th in campaign dress, including a pair of non-regulation overalls with leather reinforcing a black (facing-coloured) stripe on the outer seam; this illustration is derived from a contemporary portrait of Captain E. Kent, c.1811.



Private of the 5/60th, c.1812, shown in the act of pouring powder into the pan of his rifle lock. Like the illustration by Charles Hamilton Smith, this shows a sword bayonet without a knucklebow, although it is likely that the ordinary Baker sword bayonet was used. (Print after P.W. Reynolds)

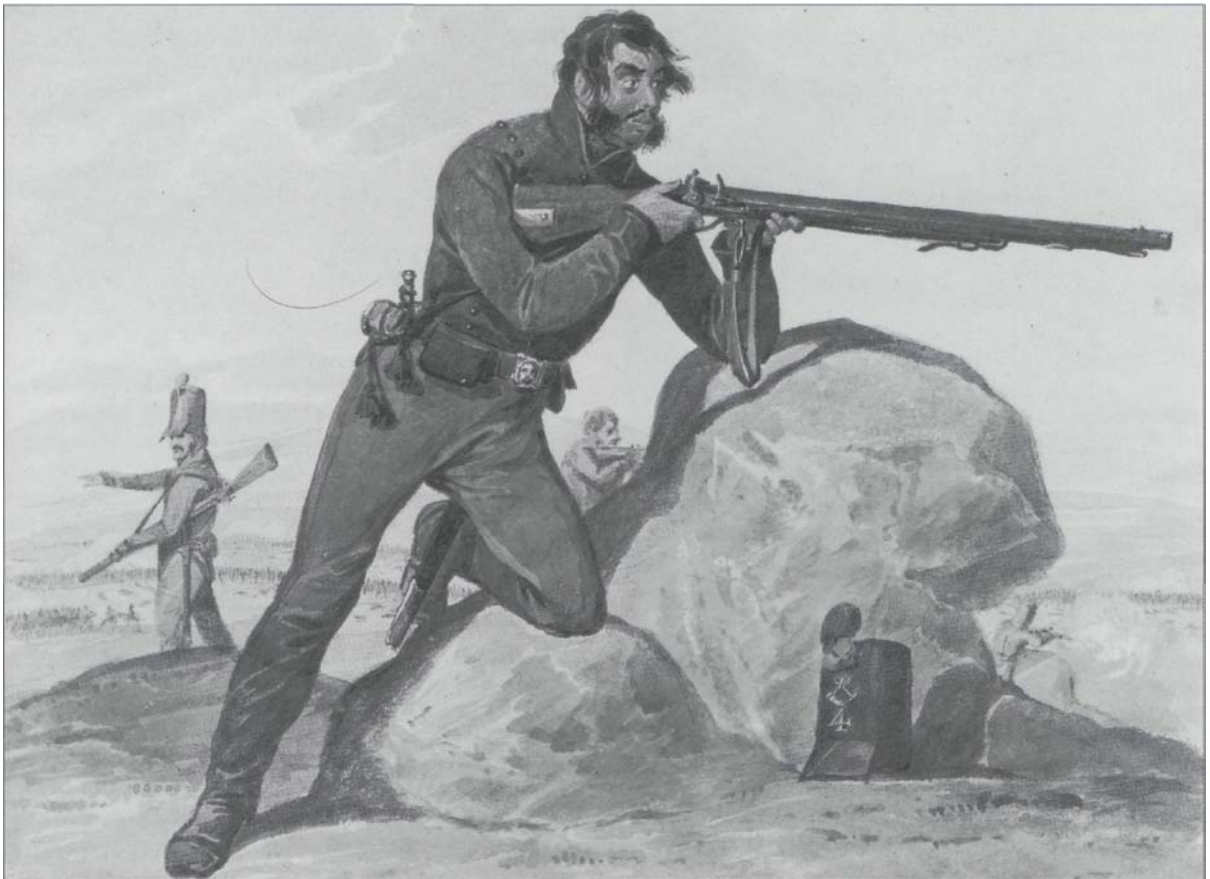
may refer to a connection between the founder of those units and Ferdinand von Hompesch, the last Grand Master of the Knights of St John, who was deposed after Napoleon's occupation of Malta, but the association is probably very tenuous.

B: EARLY RIFLES C.1796

Shown here are some of the early rifles used by the British Army, together with a member of one of the early rifle-armed units. The York Rangers were formed in 1793 by Captain G.W. Ramsey, formerly of the light company of the 30th Foot, who had had experience of commanding light troops during the American War of Independence. By April 1795 the original establishment had been increased to battalion strength (800 rank and file). Initially many of its officers were French and the other ranks largely German, and it was recognised as a 'foreign corps' of the British Army rather than just an emigre corps in British pay. The unit served well in the Netherlands, where it lost heavily, in 1796 was sent to the West Indies and in the following year was drafted into the 60th Foot. Originally the uniform appears to have been dark green, but this changed to blue with yellow facings, sometimes shown with white or yellow lace. The head-dress was a light infantry cap with a fox's brush across the top and a green plume, and while Hamilton Smith shows no badge and apparently a peak (Fig. 1), other sources depict a peakless cap with a star over the scroll badge on the front.

Also shown here (Figs. 2-4) is the Ferguson rifle, of which a number of variants were produced, not just for Ferguson's experimental company but later examples perhaps for volunteer riflemen. The breech opened on the upper surface of the barrel by rotating the trigger-guard which lowered a screw-plug, the 'detail' illustration here (Fig. 3) showing the screw unwound and the breech open. Produced by such famous gunmakers as Durs Egg and Henry Nock, the Ferguson is recorded either stocked to the muzzle, or as here with provision for a socket bayonet, and with brass or white metal furniture. Fig. 5 is an example of the type of rifle carried by some European armies, the Prussian model of 1787.

Portuguese Cacadores skirmishing, as portrayed by Denis Dighton in a picture dated 1812. The uniform of this important element in Wellington's light infantry force was not unlike that of the British 95th in style, especially after the adoption of the 'stovepipe' shako about 1809-10, but was dark brown throughout. This appears to represent a rather simplified uniform without braid and with non-regulation grey trousers; if this is the 4th Regiment, as suggested by the number on his shako, according to regulations he should have had light blue facings instead of the black shown. Although a portion of the Cacadores carried ordinary muskets, this man is one of those armed with Baker rifles. (The Royal Collection © 2001, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II)



C: WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT OF A PRIVATE C.1812

The figure shows the uniform of a private of the 95th, c.1812, wearing full equipment including knapsack, shoulder belt with cartridge box and flask cord supporting the powder horn, waist belt with bullet pouch at the right front, and bayonet-frog, haversack and canteen (Fig. 1). The clothing warrant of May 1801 specified only 'a Green Coat without Lace', a kersey waistcoat, shako and green pantaloons, but the 1802 regulations were more specific. The dark green jacket was described as having three rows of 12 white metal buttons, 7.5 in. apart at the top, converging to 2.5 in. apart at the bottom, black collar and pointed cuffs 'feathered' (piped) white, the cuffs opening at the side with four buttons, short skirts without turnbacks but cut to 'slope off' behind, and green pantaloons extending to the ankle. The shako was to bear a crown and bugle device (contemporary pictures do not seem to show the crown), green cord and green tufts (green feather plumes for sergeants and buglers). This uniform remained substantially unchanged, although minor variations are shown in contemporary pictures.

Also shown here are two patterns of Baker rifle, the earlier (Fig. 2) with larger butt box and swan-neck cock, the later (Fig. 3) with smaller butt box and ring-neck cock; the detail illustration of the lock (Fig. 6) shows the latter. The waist belt with bullet pouch and bayonet-frog (Fig. 4) shows the second



A skirmishing exploit. While advancing at Vittoria, at Arinez, Lieutenant John Fitzmaurice of the 1/95th outdistanced his company (not being burdened with full equipment) and flung himself upon a retreating French artillery team. One of the drivers fired a pistol ball through his cap, but with the assistance of two riflemen and a Portuguese corporal who had followed him, Fitzmaurice captured four gunners and three drivers, and by cutting the traces of the team's harness prevented the French from recovering the gun. (Print after Harry Payne)

pattern of sword bayonet; the first pattern with stirrup-hilt is also shown (Fig. 5). The folding back-sight (Fig. 7) was fitted to some earlier Baker rifles, allowing for variation in range, although fixed back-sights became more usual. Fig. 8 - the 95th's regimental insignia.

D: RECRUITING

From April 1802 the Rifle Corps, later the 95th, was permitted to recruit in the usual way instead of selecting men from other regiments. Although many of the best recruits were obtained subsequently from men already serving in the militia, recruitment from the civilian population also took place, recruiting parties being sent out to centres of population or country fairs, where civilians might be persuaded to enlist in return for a substantial cash bounty. The 95th had an advantage over ordinary regiments, the green uniform and special status of the rifle corps being great attractions. The recruiting parties (which could benefit financially from the acquisition of a recruit) strove to create the best impression. Benjamin Harris recalled how a sergeant-major on recruiting duty had made himself appear more impressive by wearing an officer's sword and pelisse, had a huge green plume in his shako, and displayed his whistle and powder flask most prominently. Recruiters would ply likely candidates with alcohol (very often with the connivance of publicans who might also receive a cash sum for each man they brought to the recruiting party), and it was not uncommon for men to enlist under the influence of drink, and then reconsider when sober. Harris recalled that the first man he enlisted - a chimney-sweep from Rye - was thought so likely to run off that Harris had to sleep in the same bed with him that night, handcuffed to the recruit.

This scene depicts a recruiting party of the 95th at work, led by a sergeant. Recruiters commonly wore bunches of ribbons in their head-dress, and would give others to men they had enlisted. On such occasions gullible civilians would be regaled with stories of army life and the promise of promotion - often exaggerated to the point of absolute deception - and would be permitted to handle the recruiters' weapons so that they might be persuaded that they were suited to a military life. Also present here is a bugler, whose uniform is indistinguishable from those of his fellows: this is taken from a contemporary illustration, although the 1802 clothing regulations stated that the seams of their coats should be piped white, and that their shoulder straps should have black and white worsted tufts.

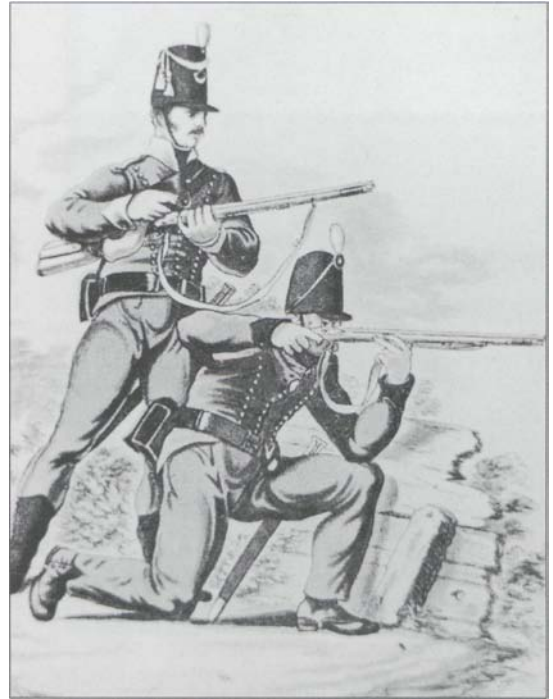
E: TRAINING

This shows recruits to the 95th receiving instruction in the use of the Baker rifle. As a corporal superintends, one man rams the ball and propellant charge into his rifle (the tight fit required some pressure to ram it down, hence the use of the palm or heel of the hand instead of the fingers), while the other, having primed his rifle, closes the priming pan and pulls the hammer or cock back on to 'full cock' preparatory to firing; the angle at which the rifle is held is taken from a contemporary manual. Elsewhere two riflemen demonstrate preferred positions for shooting - the rifle sling braced around the left elbow when standing, or pulled tight by the left hand when kneeling, with the left elbow resting upon the left knee. Distinctions for marksmanship were introduced from an early period: the lowest standard of marksmen (1st class) had black cockades



LEFT Officer, 5/60th, c.1812.
The uniform is dark green throughout, with scarlet facings and silver buttons. Documentary sources for this period also mention blue overalls and blue pantaloons (matching those of the other ranks), white pantaloons for full dress, a sable-trimmed green pelisse and a green-sash with scarlet barrels. (Print after P.W. Reynolds)

RIGHT Riflemen of the 5/60th (left) and 95th, as portrayed by Charles Hamilton Smith in his *Costume of the Army of the British Empire*. This particular print in the series was published in May 1813. Curiously both men are shown with sword bayonets without knucklebows, whereas the ordinary Baker sword bayonet was that used.



on their shakos, 2nd class white, and 3rd class (the best shots) green. Another distinction unique to the regiment was the use of a white lace ring around the right upper arm, identifying a 'chosen man', or what might approximate to a lance-corporal. Chevrons of ordinary NCO rank (corporals two, sergeants three) were white, and it seems that the four chevrons of a sergeant-major were silver. One of the 95th's NCOs, Sergeant Weddeburne, wrote a manual, *Observations on the Exercise of Riflemen and on the Movement of Light Troops in General* (1804), that set out British systems, as distinct from previous works which had been based upon German practice. The sergeant's work was so good that *The Gentleman's Magazine* (March 1805) recommended it as 'the best treatise on the subject that has hitherto come to our knowledge'.

F: WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT AND A PRIVATE OF 5/60TH C.1811

The figure illustrated wears the uniform of the 5th Battalion 60th which succeeded the single-breasted jacket of Plate A; like that of the 95th, it had three rows of buttons on the breast, and retained the scarlet facing colour. The uniform shown is substantially that depicted in Charles Hamilton Smith's plate published in May 1813, although he omits the bullet pouch on the waist belt and shows a sword bayonet without a knucklebow (Fig 1).

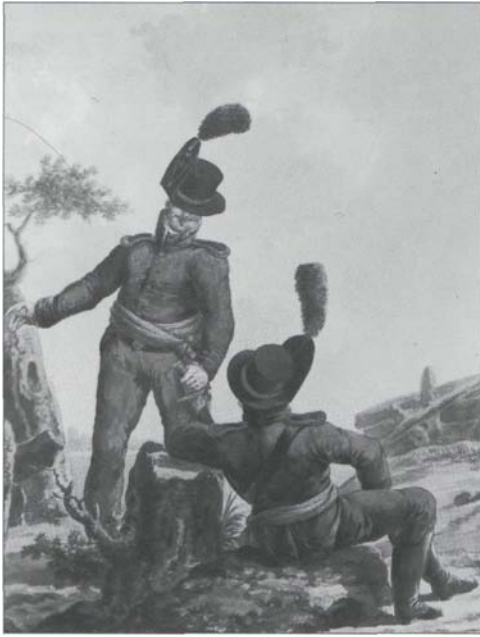
The detail illustrations show variations in the design of rifles, including a full-stocked example without the butt box (Fig. 2), examples of which are known marked to volunteer corps and may have been private purchases. Among the gunmakers who manufactured rifles was the famous Henry Nock, one of whose most noted productions was his enclosed or screwless lock (Fig. 4), in which the working mechanism was concealed behind the lock plate. (Fig. 3) shows a rifle fitted with such a lock, and with a conventional trigger-guard instead of the

scroll-shaped guard found on most rifles; other variations encountered on Nock rifles include an octagonal breech-end to the barrel, and a barrel smooth-bored for five or six inches from the muzzle. Figs. 5-7 depict typical riflemen's accoutrements: a powder horn with brass nozzle (Fig. 5), a leather-covered flask for priming powder with a transparent horn panel through which the remaining amount of powder could be seen (Fig. 6), and the 'picker' and brush, as used with an ordinary musket - the stiff brush to clean burned powder from the priming pan and the wire rod or 'picker' to clear the touch-hole. Fig. 8 shows the cross-shaped plate carried on the pouch belt of officers of the 5/60th.

G: WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT AND A PRIVATE, 1ST LIGHT BATTN., KING'S GERMAN LEGION

Shown here is a member of the 1st Light Battalion of the King's German Legion, who wore single-breasted dark green jackets with black facings and the wings illustrated; the 2nd Light Battalion wore a jacket more like that of the 95th Rifles, dark green with black facings and shoulder straps, three rows of buttons on the breast, and a ball pompon on the shako. As late as 1814 only some 60 per cent of the light battalions were armed with rifles; the remainder carried smoothbore muskets and had ordinary infantry-style equipment in black leather.

Also illustrated is a rifle with the stock cut away from the muzzle (Fig. 2), allowing a socket bayonet to be affixed. Although it was only in 1815 that the 95th's rifles began to be adapted to take socket bayonets, weapons with such fittings had existed before, and some volunteer corps are known to have used socket bayonets. The version illustrated (Fig. 5) is believed to be the type used by the London and Westminster Light Horse Volunteers: it had a 30.5 in. blade



LEFT Among the rifle-armed troops deployed by the British in the Peninsula were the Jagers of the Brunswick Oels Corps. The association was continued when the re-formed Brunswick Corps fought alongside the British during the Waterloo campaign. This painting by J.A. Langendyk depicts Jager officers, in grey uniforms with green facings and white metal buttons. (The Royal Collection © 2001, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II)

RIGHT A rifleman of the 95th, c.1815, as seen by a French artist. The uniform is rendered accurately, though the shako cords are rather longer than normally depicted, and the badge is a French-style hunting horn rather than the British bugle horn with strings. Note the 'picker' and brush suspended from the waist belt, alongside the ball pouch. He carries his rifle in the 'slung' position. (Print published by Genty)



and a hilt resembling that of the 1796 light cavalry sabre, with the end of the rifle barrel fitting through slots in the knucklebow and being secured by a locking-ring. Other socket-fitting sword bayonets had simpler knucklebows. Also shown here (Fig. 4) is the reverse side of a Baker rifle, illustrating the brass side-plate and the cheek-piece carved on the butt, also shown in detail are the brass plates (Fig 4a). Fig. 3 shows a Baker rifled carbine, with the pistol-style grip used by the 10th Hussars; earlier carbines had resembled short-barrelled infantry rifles instead. Further distinctions on the carbine were ramrods attached by a swivel (to prevent loss when the rifle was loaded on horseback), as shown here, and locks with a safety bolt. Fig. 6 depicts the 1803 flank company sabre commonly carried by officers of light infantry and rifle corps. Fig. 7 is an officers shako-badge of the 2nd Light Battn.

H: TACTICS

Illustrated here is a variation on the ordinary method of skirmishing, known as 'chain order'. Used to drive away enemy skirmishers, this tactic employed bodies of men somewhat more solid than ordinary skirmish lines, and so it was calculated to require a smaller reserve. To form a chain, three-quarters of the unit were deployed, with the remaining quarter forming the reserve between 50 and 120 paces in the rear (different distances were recommended by different writers). The chain was formed of men in groups of four (two files each), each group separated from the next by ten paces. The whole moved forward (the reserve keeping pace but maintaining its station) until contact was made with the enemy. To engage, the right-hand man of each group then took three paces forward and fired, before returning to the group, whereupon the second man did likewise, followed by the third and fourth, by which time the first man would have reloaded and be ready to begin the process again. Thus a continuous fusillade was maintained by the chain. Alternatively, the front-rank men might fire together, followed

by the rear-rank men, exactly as in ordinary skirmishing. In this illustration a chain advances over broken terrain, the men taking advantage of natural cover in the usual way, while the remaining one-quarter of the unit follows in reserve.

I: SKIRMISHING

This scene from the Peninsular War depicts members of the 95th Rifles engaging French light infantry in a skirmish; it is derived in part from a well-known painting by Denis Dighton. The riflemen are following two cardinal rules of effective skirmishing by rifle-armed troops: taking advantage of natural cover and using aimed fire against selected targets. A feature of Dighton's painting - and other contemporary pictures - is the fact that several of the riflemen depicted have removed their head-dress, presumably to minimise the target they presented to the enemy. Officers are usually depicted directing the fire of their men, though a few carried rifles themselves.

J: LA HAYE SAINTE

The defence of the farmhouse of La Haye Sainte was one of the epics of the battle of Waterloo. Occupying a vital position just forward of the centre of Wellington's line, on the Brussels-Charleroi road, the post was entrusted to Major George Baring and six companies of the 2nd Light Battalion, King's German Legion (initially by 376 other ranks). Although by conventional wisdom the defence of a static post might not be the best way of utilising the special skills of rifle-armed troops, it does demonstrate the flexibility of the British Army's riflemen at the time. The farm and its outbuildings were held until the great French attack late in the day, Baring having been reinforced by the skirmishers of the 5th KGL Line Battalion and some 200 Nassauers, together with support from two companies of the 95th in the sandpit by the highway. For an unaccountable reason, Baring's requests for ammunition went unheeded; and his rifles could not use ordinary infantry ammunition. The French



assaulted with great determination, and set the farm's barn on fire, yet the riflemen clung on. Even the wounded refused to quit their post. One of them, Frederick Lindau, remarked to Baring that 'he would be a scoundrel that deserted you, so long as his head is on his shoulders'. As the ammunition ran out, Baring's men declared that 'No man will desert you - we will fight and die with you.'⁴¹ Baring was overcome: it showed, he recalled, what the word 'comrade' really meant, and his feelings at such a moment were quite beyond words. With ammunition gone, the French were held off with bayonets and rifle butts, the fighting becoming ever more desperate. Private Ernst Lindhorst, for example, blocked a gap in the wall with his bayonet, and finally was reduced to fighting the attackers with a piece of wood, and then a brick. Finally the French gained footholds on the roof and walls and began to shoot down into the courtyard, against which the defenders were powerless to reply, so Baring finally ordered the post to be evacuated. When the defenders mustered in the evening only 42 were found capable of bearing arms. This plate depicts a moment in the defence, with an officer and men of the 2nd Light Battalion and a sharpshooter from the 5th Line Battalion, whose equipment was of 'rifle' style but in whitened leather.

An officer and riflemen (right) of the 2/95th advance alongside the 52nd Light Infantry as Adam's Brigade makes its counter-attack at the climax of the battle of Waterloo. (Print after Captain George Jones)

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