

# NAPOLEON'S IMPERIAL GUARD

Recreated in Colour Photographs



Stephen E. Maughan

EUROPA MILITARIA  
SPECIAL N°12



The ever-fascinating Napoleonic period is well represented in the hobby of historical "re-enactment"; and groups of knowledgeable enthusiasts in many European countries have been formed to recreate the uniforms and equipment, and to practice the drill and tactics, of these colourful armies. Perhaps the most legendary of all the Emperor's troops were the regiments of his Imperial Guard - picked veterans of his greatest victories, and the cream of the later conscripts. Enjoying elite status and many privileges, they provided Napoleon's bodyguards and his ultimate battlefield reserve: and when the Guard was finally driven back on the evening of

Waterloo, the world knew that the Empire was finished.

In this dazzling selection of nearly 200 new colour photos the best re-enactment groups in Europe recreate the splendid uniforms of these immortal troops: Foot Grenadiers and Chasseurs, Fusilier-Grenadiers, Polish and Dutch Lancers, Mounted Chasseurs and Grenadiers, and Foot Artillery. Completing the series established by "Napoleon's Line Cavalry" and "Napoleon's Line Infantry & Artillery", Stephen Maughan offers superb reference for modellers, war-gamers, collectors and illustrators, and a visual feast for all military history enthusiasts.



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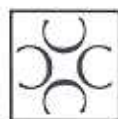


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# **NAPOLEON'S IMPERIAL GUARD**

**RECREATED IN  
COLOUR PHOTOGRAPHS**

**STEPHEN E. MAUGHAN**



**The Crowood Press**

**Dedication:**

For Alison Whing, a rare talent whose dedication, loyalty and ability constantly surprise me.

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**Contact addresses:**

*La Garde Impériale (Grenadiers & Artillery)*  
Derek Mellard  
8 Pippins Green Avenue  
Kirkhamgate, Wakefield  
W. Yorks WF2 0RX  
UK

*1er Lanciers de la Garde (Polish Lancers)*  
George Lubonski  
10 Skipton Road  
Silsden BD20 9JZ  
UK

*Grenadiers à Cheval de la Garde*  
Morris Boakes  
12 Cranfield Road  
Aylestone LE2 8QQ  
UK

*2eme Lanciers de la Garde (Red Lancers)*  
Robert Marcus  
Elandstraat 16  
2513 ER Den Haag  
Netherlands

*Chasseurs à Cheval de la Garde*  
Jean-Francois Remy-Neris  
3 Place du General Catroux  
75017 Paris  
France



# Introduction

Since the dawn of recorded history, sovereigns have raised elite corps of soldiers to provide bodyguards of unwavering loyalty to the royal household and exemplary courage in battle. Napoleon Bonaparte's Guard regiments were the ultimate symbol of his sovereignty. Unable to adopt the title of King due to the very revolution which he had usurped, France's "First Consul" and future Emperor nevertheless deliberately set out to create the greatest Guard corps in the world. Immediately after Napoleon's *coup d'état* in November 1799 the Consular Guard's first commander, General Joachim Murat, issued a proclamation which embodied Bonaparte's vision for this elite corps:

"The First Consul intends that the Guard shall be a model for the army. Admission will be restricted to men who have performed heroic actions, have been wounded, or have otherwise given proof in several campaigns of their bravery, patriotism, discipline and exemplary conduct. They must be no less than 25 years of age, between 1.78 and 1.84 metres in height [5ft 9.5ins to 6ft], of robust constitution and exemplary conduct. They must have participated in three campaigns in the Wars of Liberation, and know how to read and write".

The Revolutionary predecessors of the *Garde des Consuls* - the *Garde du Directoire* and *Garde du Corps Législatif* - were to be merged to form the bulk of this new body, and the ranks were to be filled with suitable new recruits selected by merit alone. Martial talent was at last to be suitably rewarded. Those who were passed for entry would enjoy higher pay, better barracks and rations, splendid uniforms, and other privileges. Each rank in the Guard counted as the next higher rank in the Line; and Line units would be ordered to present arms when a unit of the Guard passed by.

With Napoleon's self-coronation as Emperor in May 1804 the title was changed to *La Garde Impériale*; thereafter the "cult of personality" was undisguised, and Napoleon used calculated and theatrical measures to bind his Guardsmen to him in personal allegiance. He demonstrated a close, paternal interest in even the most trivial details which affected their conditions of service, from the quality of their rations to the rewarding of individual rankers for acts of heroism. He pardoned, even invited, an occasional over-familiarity from his old "Grumblers"; and he was normally extremely solicitous of their lives in battle, though they were expected to endure all the other hardships of campaign with unflinching obedience.

His Guardsmen understood that it was in their best interests to serve and perpetuate the Empire, embodied in the one man who held it all together: Napoleon I, Emperor of the French. That he achieved his ambition for them is unquestionable; the senior regiments, at least, would repay his favour with unbending discipline, unshakeable morale, and devoted loyalty unto death.



The modest original establishment was just over 2,000 men in two battalions of *Grenadiers à pied* and a company of *Chasseurs à pied*, two squadrons of *Grenadiers à cheval* and a company of *Chasseurs à cheval*, and one light artillery company. Distinguishing themselves for the first time at the battle of Marengo in 1800, the Guard units were steadily enlarged and increased in number. The total strength by 1805 was nearly 10,000, of which more than 5,000 served in the first "Imperial" campaign - that of Austerlitz. Nominally an army corps of some 50,000 by the time of the disastrous Russian campaign of 1812, the Guard's actual strength thereafter did not reflect its paper establishment; e.g. in January 1814 only some 18,000 of a nominal 81,000 were actually under arms.

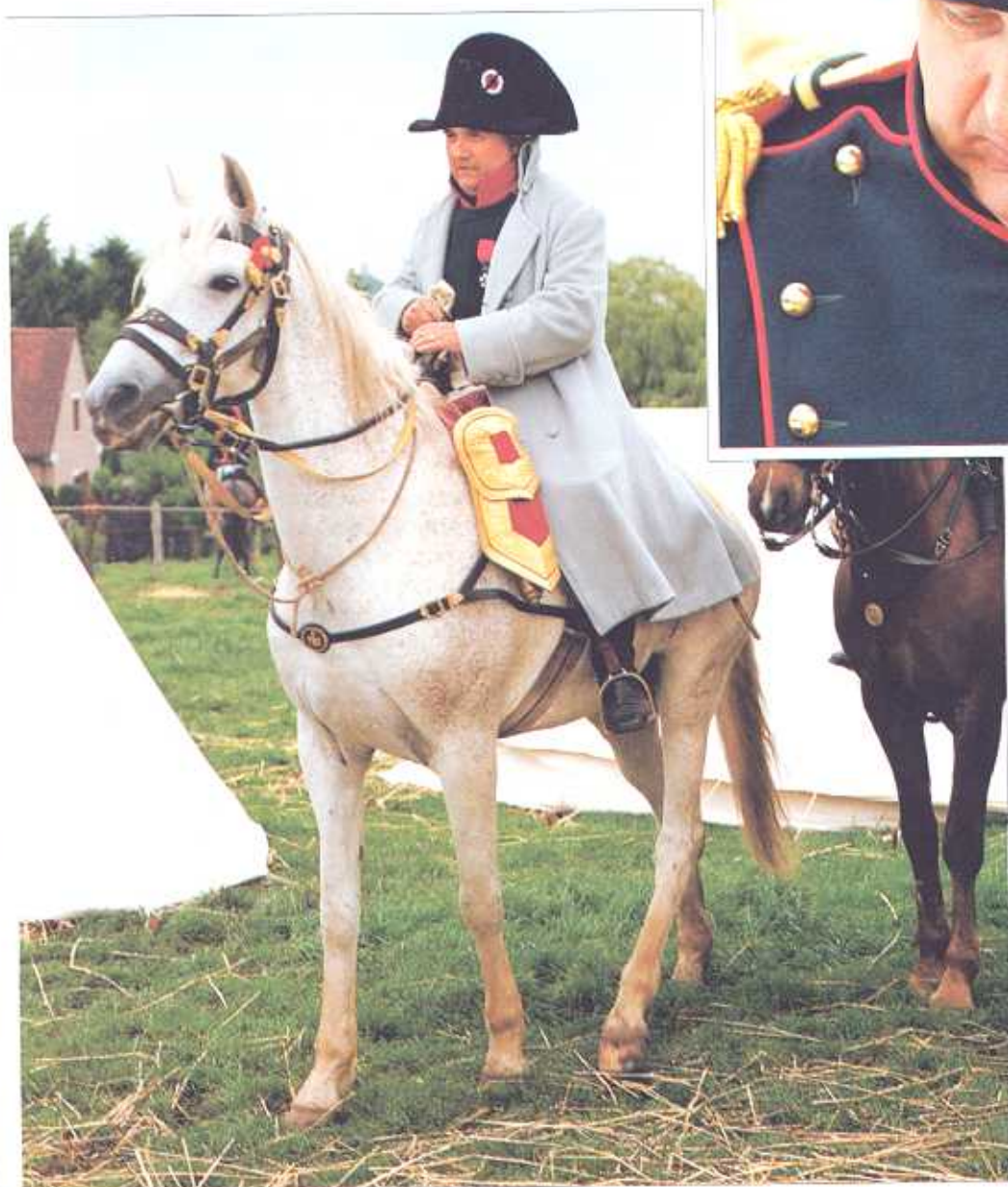
Although some dozens of units would be formed over the 15 years of the Guard's existence, many of them were short-lived, and a good number were "in the Guard, but not of it" - i.e. their administrative status as Guard units was not matched by their actual character. However, throughout Napoleon's reign the standards for recruitment to the Old Guard, at least, were never relaxed.

The distinction between the "Old", "Middle" and "Young" Guards has caused confusion ever since: in 3



(Below & right) One of the more convincing impersonations of "Le Tondou" ("the Shaven One", as he was nicknamed from his close-cropped hair) at the Waterloo re-enactment in 1995. Napoleon was often depicted wearing the undress uniform of colonel of the Chasseurs

à Cheval of the Guard. Before the establishment of the great camp of the Grande Armée at Boulogne in 1803 his overcoat was usually blue; thereafter he adopted his familiar grey coat, copied here from the original in the Musée de l'Armée at Les Invalides in Paris.



(Above right) These reconstructions of the Emperor's bridle, saddle and holster covers are based upon originals on display in the Musée de l'Armée.





1812 the seniority of the infantry was established as follows: *Old Guard*: Officers of Grenadiers, Chasseurs, Fusiliers & Sailors; captains and upward of Voltigeurs, Tirailleurs, Flanqueurs & National Guards; all ranks of 1st Grenadiers, 1st Chasseurs, Veterans & Sailors; NCOs of 2nd Grenadiers, 2nd Chasseurs & Fusiliers, *Middle Guard*: 3rd Grenadiers; rankers of 2nd Grenadiers, 2nd Chasseurs & Fusiliers; Vélites of Florence & Turin. *Young Guard*: Rankers of Voltigeurs, Tirailleurs, Flanqueurs, National Guards & Pupilles.

In the cavalry regiments the originally raised squadrons were designated as Old Guard, and some later additions as Middle (Polish Lancers) or Young Guards.

\* \* \*

Line soldiers of the later Empire often complained that the Guard was very rarely committed to battle, giving an ironic twist to the nickname "The Immortals"; but this was actually directed specifically at the Guard Gendarmes, and the Guard infantry were always regarded with respect. It is important to remember that it was not a closed, elitist corps; it always served as a training school for the leadership of the Line. An ordinary soldier might enter the Guard without rank; rise to sergeant within it; and then receive a commission in the Line.

Transfers and promotions within the Guard - from lower rank in senior regiments, to higher rank in junior regiments - were also commonplace (although promotion without transfer was slow). It was also through Napoleon's deliberate policy that the officer corps of his Guard was never restricted to the well-born, although this was urged in some quarters; many famous senior officers had risen from the humblest background by courage and energy.

This egalitarian aspect of Napoleon's system was one of



the few genuine survivals from the Revolutionary period; it was also shrewd, in that it bound the leaders of this elite force to Napoleon by chains of personal gratitude which would have weighed less heavily upon men of wealthy family and self-confident social status.

\* \* \*

All the Guard regiments suffered horrific casualties in the Russian campaign; the five regiments of Grenadiers and Chasseurs, which had recorded 6,200 all ranks as late as 10 October 1812, totalled less than 1,500 on Christmas Day. Rebuilt and even expanded for the subsequent defence of Germany and France in 1813-14, the Guard proved as reliable as ever - and it was the new Young Guard regiments which did most of the fighting. When Napoleon was forced to abdicate in April 1814, he was permitted to take with him into exile on Elba a picked battalion of Guard infantry and a weak squadron of Polish Lancers; the rest were disbanded, or transferred to the new Royal Guard.

After his return from Elba in 1815 Napoleon hurriedly rebuilt the Guard. The most senior infantry battalions were as impressive as ever - it is said that four-fifths of the 1st Grenadiers wore the cross of the *Légion d'Honneur* - but other units were of uneven quality. Of the Guard cavalry, the Mounted Grenadiers and Chasseurs and the Dragoons were in good strength, but only a composite unit of Polish and Dutch Lancers was ready for Waterloo. On that fateful 18 June Guard infantry fought the Prussians in Plancenoit and made the final attack on Wellington's line. The 1st Grenadiers marched off that last stricken field in good order amid the fleeing remnants of the Army of the North, as night fell on the Empire.



# Grenadiers à Pied

**B**oth the Grenadiers à Pied and the Chasseurs à Pied were officially formed on 2 December 1799, with the announcement of the new Consular Guard; as the heavy infantry Grenadiers had a strength of two battalions from the outset, and the light infantry Chasseurs only one company at that date, the former were the senior regiment. The Foot Grenadiers were always to represent the very soul and backbone of the Old Guard.

The original staff and establishment was as follows: one *chef de brigade*, two *chefs de bataillon*, two *capitaines-adjutant-major*; one *quartier-maitre-tresorier*, two *adjutants*, two *porte-drapeaux*, two surgeons; one *chef de musique*, one drum-major, two corporal drummers, 48 musicians; 48 officers, 24 drummers, and 1,128 grenadiers, in two battalions each of six companies. The recruits were drawn from NCOs and men of the Line with ten years' service and good records. At the end of 1801 the two battalions were enlarged to eight companies each, with a company strength of 110 men.

In 1804 company establishment was one *capitaine*, one *lieutenant*, two *sous-lieutenants*, one *sergent-major*, four *sergents*, one *fourrier* (quartermaster-corporal), eight *caporaux*, two *sapeurs* (pioneers), two *tambours* (drummers), and 80 *grenadiers*. The same year saw the raising of a five-company battalion of so-called *Vélites* - officer cadets serving as rankers, the best of whom could hope for eventual Guard commissions. (They were charged 200 francs for their place, which was itself a form of selection.) These companies had a similar command and NCO establishment but 172 rankers.

In November 1805 the *Vélites-Grenadiers* were strengthened to a two-battalion regiment. On campaign they were usually split up, numbers of *Vélites* being attached to each Grenadier company. In April 1806 a 2nd Regiment of Grenadiers was raised, with two battalions; and company strength was increased by 20 men.

In 1809 the 1st and 2nd Grenadiers were amalgamated, the composite regiment having two battalions each of four enlarged companies. The 2nd Regiment was recreated in September 1810 from the former Royal Guard of Holland, now incorporated into the Empire. In May 1811 the Dutch regiment was relegated as the 3rd Grenadiers, and a new 2nd Grenadiers was raised from younger veterans. The 3rd were annihilated in Russia, and disbanded in February 1813 - by which date the total strength of the Old Guard infantry, fit and bearing arms, was just 800 men.

The Guard was rebuilt for the campaigns of 1813-14, in which they served with unshaken spirit; and at the time of Napoleon's first abdication in April 1814 the Grenadiers



still counted 69 officers and 1,287 men. At the climax of his emotional speech of farewell to his Old Guard at Fontainebleau, Napoleon kissed the Eagle of the 1st Grenadiers.

Some hundreds of his *vieux moustaches* accompanied Bonaparte to Elba, and the restored Bourbon regime dismissed some 250 officers and men on grounds of age or political unreliability; the remainder briefly formed a three-battalion regiment of Royal Grenadiers for Louis XVIII. These rallied to Napoleon when he returned in March 1815, and four regiments were formed in April/May, the Elba Battalion and other veteran "Grumblers" in their mid-thirties forming the 1st and 2nd Regiments. The 3rd and 4th Grenadiers had some veteran cadre but were mostly new recruits from the former Young Guard and Line; and the 4th had only one 500-man battalion.

The Grenadiers advanced at the climax of the battle of Ligny on 16 June, but were not heavily engaged before the Prussians fell back. At Waterloo on the 18th the 1st Grenadiers remained in reserve near Rossomme; the 2/2nd fought the Prussians in Plancenoit; the 1/3rd and the 4th took part in the final attack, thrown back by Maitland's, Halkett's and Chassé's brigades; the remnants of the 1/2nd and 2/3rd fell back in square under cavalry and artillery attack. The 1st Grenadiers held firm until Napoleon had left the field, and then stalked off into the night, drums beating.





(Above) The very symbol of the Grenadiers à Pied: the bearskin bonnet dressed with white cords and a red feather plume, with a separate white tassel hanging at top front, above the 1804 brass plate bearing the crowned Imperial eagle and flaming grenades.

(Left) Foot Grenadier of c.1809-1815, wearing marching order (*tenue de route*) with greatcoat. Note the height of the bearskin - 33 to 35cm (12.9 to 13.7ins) - and the full dressing of cords and plume: these were often removed for campaign duty, and the bonnet might be protected by an oilskin cover. The superior blue double-breasted greatcoat - a very distinctive item in an army where rough greatcoats were worn in many colours and styles, and were not considered part of the regulated uniform - first appeared in December 1804. (All items reconstructed by Robert Cooper.)









(Left) Rear view of winter marching order. All rankers of the Grenadiers wore the brass-hilted *sabre-briquet* slung behind the left hip; and their fringed red epaulettes were worn on the greatcoat, as on the uniform coat. The long, loose blue campaign trousers (*pantalons de route*) worn over grey gaiters were introduced by Gen. Dorset, the Grenadiers' Commandant, from late 1805 and were worn until 1815; they, too, were distinctive of the Guard.

(Above) The rear of the bearskin. The red rear patch originally bore a white lace cross, changed to this grenade silhouette from 1808. The cords, scarlet before c.1801 and white thereafter, are shown sometimes with one tasselled oval *raquette* hanging at the right side, sometimes with two.

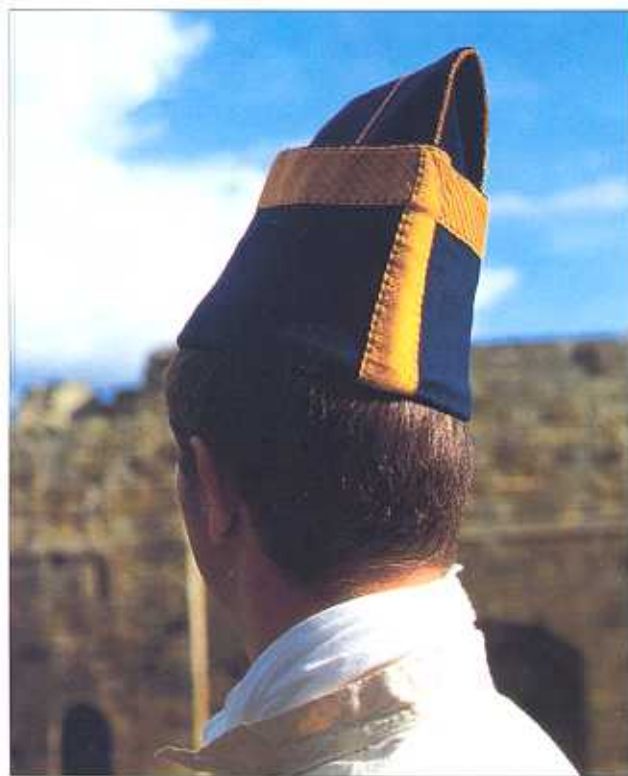
Note, on the uniform coat, details of the button; and the cloth strap (*bride*) for attachment of the red epaulette.

(Above right) The cockade in national colours, with post-1806 embroidered eagle at the centre, which was worn at the base of the scarlet plume.

(Right) The interior of the reconstructed bearskin, with adjustable cloth liner.

(All items reconstructed by Robert Cooper)





(Above left) Grenadier in work smock and forage cap. The smock (*sarreau*) was of white linen, loose cut, and buttoned at neck and wrist. It was worn with white linen or blue cloth trousers. The forage cap (*bonnet de police*) issued for fatigue and off-duty headgear was cut "*à la dragonne*", in blue cloth with trim, tassel and grenade badge in the peach/orange colour then called *aurore* - "dawn"; hereafter in this text we simply call this orange.

(Above) A long-sleeved white waistcoat with 12 brass buttons was worn underneath the uniform coat, exposed by its cutaway front. It was also worn alone, either as a drill jacket or even a summer combat jacket, in which case it might have the red epaulettes attached. The stock colour was supposed to match that of the gaiters

being worn - white or black, according to season; but Grenadier Coignet mentions a "double cravat", white on one side and black showing a narrow white edge on the other.

(Left) Rear of the *bonnet de police*.

(Right) Collection of reconstructed items, displayed with musket balls and canister shot found on the field of Waterloo. The bicorne hat (*chapeau*) was worn for walking-out and, before 1809, on the march. Of black felt, the hat displayed orange cord ties through the front and back of the cocked brim, and a loop of orange braid secured the national cockade at left front, surmounted by a scarlet carrot-shaped pompon. See also pages 22-23. (All items reconstructed by Robert Cooper)









*Tenue de grande parade:* the fully dressed bearskin bonnet, uniform coat (*habit*), white waistcoat and breeches, white gaiters with white buttons, and the white gloves sometimes added. It is worn here with full equipment - calfskin pack with stowed greatcoat, and crossbelts supporting cartridge box, bayonet and sabre. It cost the then-considerable sum of 258 francs to uniform and equip a Guardsman.

Note the details of the September 1800 pattern habit: of fine blue woollen cloth, it has a blue collar; white lapels and cuff flaps; scarlet lining, turn-backs, vertical pocket piping, epaulettes and brides; 22 large and 11 small brass buttons; and orange turn-back badges on white backing. This reconstruction by Robert Cooper fits perfectly, even down to the gaiters - then, as now, notoriously difficult to fit snugly to the leg.

According to Coignet, dress discipline was not at first very severe in the Consular Guard: "We turned out to roll call every morning in our linen shirts and breeches with no stockings on our legs, and then went back to our beds". When Gen. Dorsenne joined the regiment things soon changed radically, and an extraordinary standard of discipline and smartness was enforced. But Dorsenne was also utterly fearless in battle, and his Grenadiers worshipped him.









(Left) Napoleon's soldiers were not issued with water bottles, and had to provide for themselves. A cheap and popular type of flask was made from a natural vegetable gourd - trained to grow to shape, with the pith scooped out, the husk dried, and fitted with a stopper, a prepared gourd resembles thin, light wood.

(Above) Uniquely in Napoleon's army, the Old Guard retained the 18th century powdered queue, even on campaign. The hair was pulled back and bound with a black worsted ribbon - note the silver grenade pin. Sideboards were grown to earlobe length and were not powdered. Moustaches were at first worn from 1 March to 1 December but, after 1806, all year round. Gold earrings were almost universally worn.



(Left) The greatcoat was folded in a regulation manner to make a neat shape, and stowed on top of the knapsack by means of three straps, their loose ends neatly rolled.



(Left) The scarlet coat lining exposed on the turn-backs, which are decorated with grenade badges embroidered in orange on white. The leather cartridge box bears brass Imperial eagle and grenade badges, and has a leather strap cut in grenade shape to engage with a leather button on the crossbelt, holding the box steady in action and on the march. Note the honnet de police rolled and strapped below the box, its tassel hanging; the double frog on the crossbelt for the sabrebriquet and bayonet; the red-tasselled white sword knot, and red-dyed fleece in the mouth of this scabbard.

(Above) The Guard's superior equipment included whitened buff leather crossbelts with stitching along the edges - *buffleterie piqué* - rather than the usual raw-cut style. This helped prevent stretching and shrinking when long exposed to the weather. Note the prick for cleaning the musket lock, hung by a chain from a buttonhole.



(Left) Cartridge box outer flap lifted to show the inner flap, fastened with a leather toggle. Note the forage cap rolled and strapped beneath.

(Right) The wooden former and tools; note the "worm" end which screws onto the ramrod, for drawing the charge in case of misfire.



(Left) The inner flap lifted, exposing the drilled-out wooden former to hold cartridges and, here, a tin oil bottle. The small front pocket holds spare flints and basic tools.

(Right) Wrapped paper musket cartridges, containing a measured powder charge - usually about 1oz (28g) or rather less - and a lead ball of similar weight. They were issued to French troops in packets of 15 rounds.









The Guard were blooded against the Austrians at Marengo in northern Italy on 14 June 1800. Nine hundred "bearskin bonnets" advanced in square at a critical point in the action; they repulsed attacks by Austrian cavalry, and withstood infantry volley fire at a hundred paces. They held their ground for some time after running out of ammunition, and only fell back at last as the Austrians began to outflank their position; but they had bought Napoleon enough time. Desaix's division were arriving to even the odds, and Kellerman's cavalry launched a successful charge. Marengo would go down in history as one of Napoleon's decisive victories.

(Left & opposite) An imposing sergeant of Old Guard Grenadiers in *grande tenue*. His rank is marked by the gold lace diagonal stripe on each forearm, and the gold mixed with the red of his bonnet cord, epaulettes, and sword knot.

(Below left) Details of sergeant's epaulette.

(Below) Details of insignia of rank and service, in gold lace backed with red. The two gold chevrons on his left upper sleeve are length of service stripes: one marked ten years; two, between 15 and 20 years; three, more than 20 years.









Sergeant of Grenadiers demonstrating bayonet drill. The Guard pattern musket was essentially similar to the Line infantry's model 1777/1802 Charleville flintlock of 17.5mm (0.69in) calibre, but

was slightly longer at 152cm (59.8ins), and had brass fittings and a more decorative butt plate. The steel socket bayonet was 45.6cm (18ins) long and of tapering triangular section.

Full dress uniform was normally taken on campaign, packed in baggage wagons; and when circumstances allowed, the men were ordered to change into it immediately before going into battle.

At Borodino in 1812 a German officer of the Vistula Legion described how strikingly they stood out from the rest of the line, their red plumes and epaulettes "showing across the fields like a stripe of blood".











(Left & below) Grenadiers in *tenu de sortie d'été* - summer walking-out dress - of bicorne hat, uniform coat and waistcoat, breeches, stockings and buckled shoes; a single crossbelt is worn to support the sabre, and canes are carried. After a few brandies in a dockside tavern

our heroes will no doubt be in the mood to remind any humble *lignard* or despicable sailor that the gentlemen of the Guard are entitled to be addressed as "Monsieur"... Note side views of hat, showing the *passants* holding up the brim, and the tasselled "pulls" at the corners.



(Above) Dress shoes with buckles. (It was not unknown for a thin-legged man to wear "false calves" inside his stockings if he wished to cut a dash with the ladies. . .) On campaign, the importance of shoes to a Napoleonic soldier

cannot be overstated. Without good, comfortable shoes he might easily be lamed and unable to keep up with his battalion on the march; and stragglers faced a real risk of capture at best, or even murder by vengeful peasants.







(Left) A long-service *sapeur* takes a little refreshment from a *cantinière*. The canteen woman of the 1st Grenadiers, "Marie Wooden-head", was a legendary example of this tough breed. She followed the drum throughout the years of the Consulate and Empire; her husband and her son, both drummers, were killed in the French campaign of 1813-14, and she herself was killed by a cannonball at Waterloo.

(Below) A Grenadier officer provides himself with necessities in a dockside shop. (This is, in fact, not Toulon or Brest but England, at Hartlepool Historic Quay, where the early 19th century frigate HMS *Trincomalee* is preserved.)







(Above) A drummer corporal, his rank marked by two orange stripes on the forearm; for ranks below sergeant the service chevrons were also orange. This German re-enactment group were photographed in the bivouac at Montmirail during the recreated Campaign of France.

(Above right) Preparing to strike camp. The blue and white ticking bag on the pack contained the bicorne; when the bearskin was packed for the march it was carried in a cylindrical drawstring bag of the same material on top of the

knapsack. The bearskin seems to have replaced the bicorne as campaign headgear from May 1809.

(Right) Re-enactors carry camp necessities slung on the pack - on the march even the Old Guard relaxed their standards of smartness somewhat. In fact, few "Grumblers" would need a wooden dish; one of their small privileges was a personal issue of mess bowls, rather than dipping out of the communal pot. Wooden clogs were worn all over Europe in those days, so this is not necessarily a pointer to the 3rd (Dutch) Grenadiers.







(Above) A camping mess form up under the orders of the company's sergeant-major, identified by two gold forearm stripes; he carries the company *funion* - a small marker flag - stuck in the muzzle of his musket.

(Right) A long-service sergeant of Grenadiers knocking out his pipe. The cross of the *Légion d'Honneur* was far from a rare sight in the ranks of the Old Guard by 1815. When Grenadier Coignet received his cross at a ceremony at Les Invalides, Napoleon told him he had proved himself a brave defender of his country, and pinned it on his chest in person. As Coignet returned to his place he passed Col. Lepreux and Major Merle, awaiting their own decorations; both embraced Coignet in front of the assembled officer corps.

(This re-enactor was photographed at Jena - which in 1806 was one of those battles at which Napoleon infuriated his Old Guard by holding them in reserve all day.)









The *sapeurs* or pioneers of the Old Guard infantry, of which each company had two, wore the traditional distinctions of this appointment - bearskin, beard, felling axe and leather apron - with spectacular additional trim and insignia, and a special cockerel-hilted sabre. Note here the gold and red lace applied to the edges, lapel buttonholes, and seams of the coat from about April 1810; different sources show variations of insignia, including these NCO-style epaulettes and cap cords and gold-on-red badges.

This pioneer of Old Guard Grenadiers is being inspected by a major of the regimental staff; white plumes marked staff appointments. The battalion's pioneers were often massed as a single squad as part of the unit's *fête de colonne* - the ceremonial "head of the column", with the band and standard.

(Inset left) Detail of cuff and cuff flap trim.

(Inset below) Detail of turn-back trim and badges.







**(Left)** Detail of an early pattern of Guard pioneer sabre with cockerel's-head pommel and ram's-head quillons, and a lion mask on the quillon block. The back of the blade was saw-toothed.

**(Right, above & below)**

The axe case crossbelt is decorated with brass badges set on red cloth - crossed axes, grenade and Medusa mask. The pioneer's left sleeve badge is worn over the three service chevrons of a 20-year veteran, dating this figure to c.1812. Like the epaulettes, these are in the gold and red of sergeant's rank.

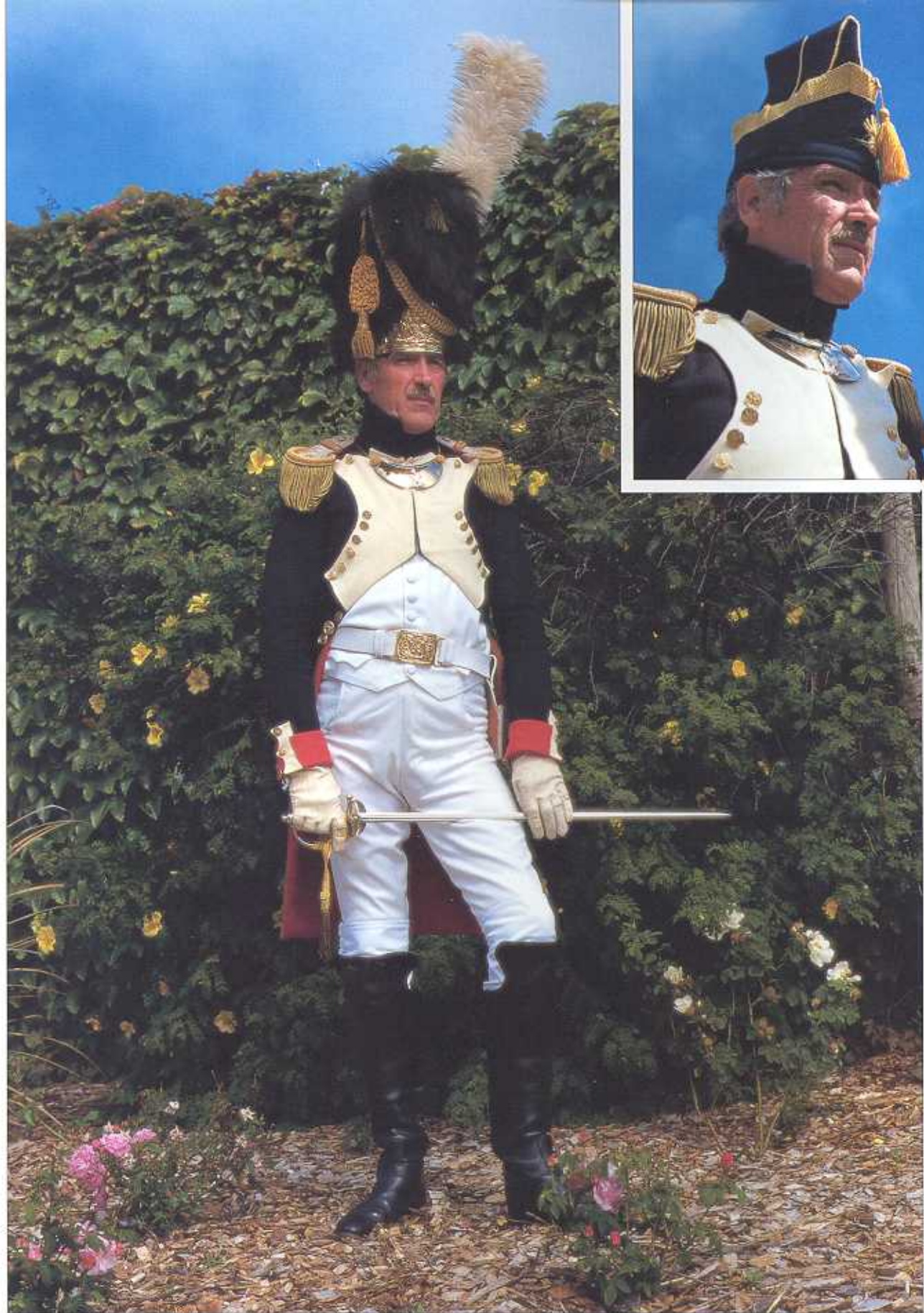
**(Below)** The handsome axe case worn by the pioneers on the upper, left-shoulder crossbelt, which had a loop on the rear to hold the axe helve upright. The small integral pouch with axe and grenade badges held cartridges for the carbine which pioneers carried in action.















**(Opposite)** This Old Guard Grenadiers major presents a stern and soldierly figure in his austere uniform, closely resembling that of his men but in finer materials and with gold lace. Note the gorget worn by officers on duty; the straight épée sword was prescribed for walking-out dress, but officers largely pleased themselves in such matters. Senior officers were mounted - note his riding boots. Majors in the Guard were paid 416 francs as opposed to 300 for Line majors; Guard officers also received substantial bonuses along with double pensions and extra horse allowances.

**(Inset)** The officer's bonnet de police was cut like that of the rankers but had gold lace and tassel. (This impression of a Grenadier officer is recreated by Derek Mellard of the British-based group La Garde Impériale, who re-enact both the Grenadiers à Pied and the Foot Artillery of the Guard.)

**(Left)** The hilt of the officer's épée, with its gold lace fist strap.

**(Above left)** Field officer's epaulette; made of gold bullion wire, these were a considerable expense. Colonels wore two gold epaulettes; majors, two with gold crescents and fringes but silver straps; chefs-de-bataillon, a gold epaulette on the left and an unfringed contre-epaulette on the right shoulder. Company officers wore a gold epaulette with a thinner cord fringe on the left, and a contre-epaulette on the right; one and two red lines down the strap marked lieutenant and sous-lieutenant from captain.

**(Above)** Detail of gold turn-back badge, worn in all four positions.



# Chasseurs à Pied

By late 1800 the original single company of light infantry within the Garde des Consuls had been increased to a battalion, and by November 1801 to two battalions of Chasseurs à Pied. Apart from having a slightly smaller band of music the regiment was organised identically to the Grenadiers à Pied. Despite the difference in title the Foot Grenadiers and Chasseurs were employed tactically in exactly the same way: as a hand-picked elite reserve of line-of-battle infantry. They marched together, and fought side by side.

In summer 1804 the regiment acquired a battalion of cadets, Vélites-Chasseurs; this was increased to regimental size by 1806. Among the Guard Vélites was a 15-year-old lad named Thomas Bugeaud de la Piconnerie, of aristocratic birth but already a survivor of a hard upbringing during the Revolution. He wrote home that "There are a great many boys here who do not come of good family, sons of peasants and workmen. There are a few who are quite well bred, but in general this corps is not what you would suppose". (Young Bugeaud learned fast; he was promoted corporal, served at Austerlitz in 1805, and was commissioned in 1806. A hero of the Peninsular War, he would earn a Marshal's baton in Algeria in 1843 as a hard-fighting frontier general who judged soldiers by other criteria than their birth.)

The Guard accompanied Bonaparte to Austerlitz in winter 1805, but were not engaged. In 1806 the Line units were ordered to supply recruits for an enlargement of the Guard: men under 35 years of age, at least 5ft 8ins tall for the Chasseurs, of good record and proven valour. The two-battalion 2nd Regiment of Chasseurs was raised on 15 April 1806. Jean-Baptiste Barrès, transferred from the Vélites, wrote that when he and his comrades were introduced into the ranks of these moustachioed veterans they "looked like young girls beside these swarthy, mostly hard-bitten faces, full of jealous resentment at having been given such youthful comrades".

At Jena in October 1806 the Old Guard infantry were again held in reserve, to their vocal frustration. At Eylau in February 1807 they saw hand-to-hand fighting, but not before coming under artillery fire while they awaited the order - Chasseur Barrès recalled: "Once the file touching me on the right was struck full in the chest; once the file to the right had their right thighs torn off. The shock was so violent that those next to the men struck were thrown down together with the poor wretches who were hit". At Essling in May 1809 Grenadier Coignet described seeing Guard bearskins thrown 20 feet into the air as cannon fire raked the ranks. There were good reasons, beyond pride, for the Guard to resent being held immobile in reserve - it made them an easy target. It was in the winter 1806-07 campaign



that Napoleon had dubbed his Old Guard the "Grumblers".

The battle history of the Chasseurs paralleled that of the Grenadiers. Like the Grenadiers, in 1809 the 1st and 2nd Chasseurs à Pied were amalgamated into one regiment of two battalions each of four large companies. The 2nd Chasseurs were reformed in May 1811; unlike the Grenadiers, this branch did not raise a new 3rd Regiment from the ex-Guardsmen of King Louis Bonaparte of Holland, although many individual Netherlanders and Belgians joined their ranks.

The two Chasseur regiments formed Boyer's Brigade of Lefevre's 3rd Division of the Imperial Guard Corps in the invasion of Russia in 1812. Their experience is eloquently summarised by their strength on two dates: *1st Chasseurs*: 10 October - 42 officers, 1,504 men; 25 December - 28 officers, 435 men. *2nd Chasseurs*: 10 October - 40 officers, 1,324 men; 25 December - 30 officers, 257 men.

Although reduced to some 400 effectives by February 1813, both regiments were rebuilt in time to distinguish themselves in the 1813-14 campaign; they showed their old spirit at Lützen, and particularly at Montmirail.

Like the Grenadiers, the Chasseurs raised new 3rd and 4th Regiments in April/May 1815; and all four were at Waterloo, the 3rd taking part in the final attack on the British right centre. All four regiments were disbanded after the Second Abdication, between 1 and 11 October 1815; the Chasseurs à Pied thus outlived the Grenadiers by a few weeks.



(Left & right) A company *fourrier* - quartermaster corporal - of Old Guard Foot Chasseurs, wearing a form of campaign dress with the plain, single-breasted *surtout*. After about 1802 the Old Guard infantry were issued one habit and one *surtout* instead of two habits; and it was the regulation campaign dress in 1806-07. From 1810 the *surtout* seems to have been limited to senior NCOs. It is worn here with the usual white waistcoat, blue marching trousers, and the Chasseur bearskin - this lacked both a brass front plate and (certainly after 1806) a cloth rear patch. The quartermaster-corporal's rank insignia are two orange chevrons on the forearm - their shape following the Chasseurs' pointed cuff, which was the most immediate difference from the Grenadiers' coats - and one gold diagonal on the upper sleeve, superimposed here on two long-service chevrons on the left arm. Green and red were the distinguishing colours of the Chasseurs, and are seen here mixed with gold in the NCO-style bearskin ornaments and sabre knot; the epaulettes have mixed red and gold fringes, gold crescents, and gold straps with a broad green centre stripe. Note that the fanion bears alternating corner badges of the grenade and the light infantry buglehorn.





(Right) Right and rear details of quartermaster corporal in field dress. The only visible colour on the surtout was the red lining exposed on the tail turn-backs; note the grenade and buglehorn badges of the Chasseurs. The Foot Chasseurs always seem to have worn two raquettes on the bonnet cords.

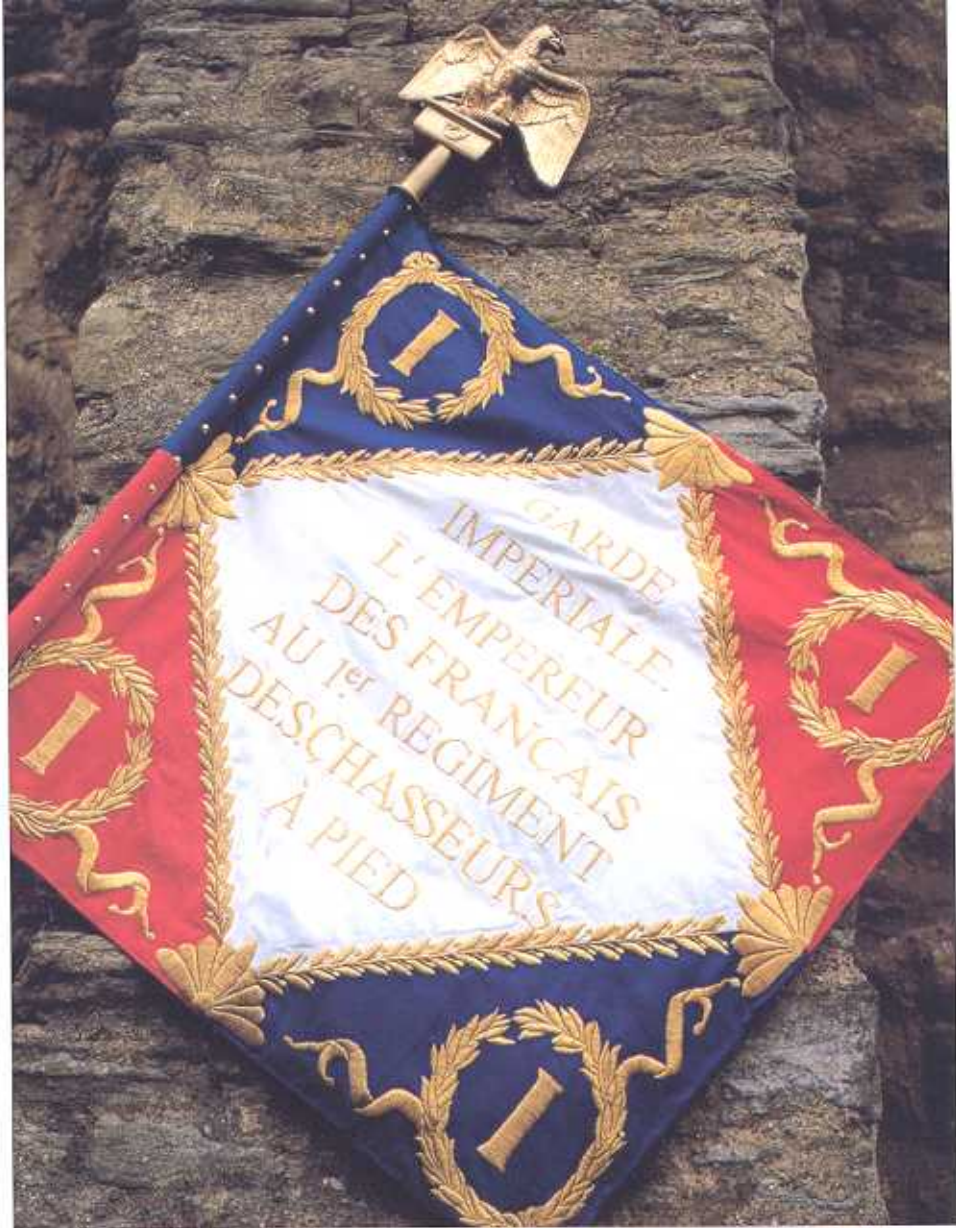
(Below) Close-up of the plateless Chasseur bearskin, here with NCO distinctions. The Foot Chasseurs had two tassels at the top front of the bonnet, in place of the single tassel of the Grenadiers. Other ranks' tassels, cords and raquettes were white instead of the NCO's mixed red, green and

gold; all ranks wore red over green plumes. (Sleeping in a stable during a march to Italy, Chasseur Barrès found a goat eating his bearskin. He recovered it, but so damaged that he received two days in the guardhouse. . .)

(Below right) Chasseur sergeant taking aim - note single gold-on-red chevron of rank above cuffs. This combination of bearskin and surtout with the white breeches and black gaiters of "ordinary full dress" (*grande tenue habituelle*) is shown in a period watercolour from Wiesbaden by an eyewitness of the 1806-07 German campaign.







Reconstruction of the Eagle of the 1st Chasseurs, with the 80cm-square flag originally of 1804 pattern. One was presented to each battalion of the 1st Grenadiers and 1st Chasseurs late that year. In 1811 this slightly modified form was presented, at a scale of only one per regiment, to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Grenadiers and 1st and 2nd Chasseurs (though still bearing this 1st Bn. title on the reverse). One of a

different 1812 pattern, based on the conventional vertically striped tricolour (see pages 82-83), was presented to the 1st and 2nd Grenadiers and Chasseurs in spring 1813; and simplified replacements, to the 1st Grenadiers and 1st Chasseurs only, in 1815.

All French regiments revered their Eagles, and the Guard's battle history included several episodes of dramatic fighting in their defence.



# Middle & Young Guard Infantry

In 1806 Napoleon decided to further increase his Imperial Guard, by raising junior (and cheaper) regiments. These were commanded by experienced officers and NCOs from the Old Guard and the Line; and the rankers would, in theory, progress in due course to the Old Guard regiments. These junior regiments proliferated throughout the period 1806-13, with a huge expansion in 1809 as Napoleon declared his aim of increasing the Guard into a full army corps. Various changes of title make this a confusing picture, but in simplified summary the units were as follows:

**Fusiliers-Chasseurs:** Regiment of two battalions, each of four companies, raised October 1806; 1st Bn. from 2nd Bns. of Vélites, 2nd Bn. from conscripts, January 1811, 5th (Fusiliers-Sergents) Coy. added to each bn.; December 1813, 6th Coy. added to each battalion.

**Fusilier-Grenadiers:** Regiment of two bns. each of four coys., raised December 1806 from 1st Bns. of Vélites; 5th and 6th Coys. added, as above.

The Fusilier units were at first termed the "Young Guard", but from about 1811, after further expansions, "Middle Guard" (see list, page 5). In 1809 many further units were raised, mostly from the cream of the available conscripts with veteran cadre from the Guard or Line, and collectively known as the "Young Guard" from c.1811 onwards:

**Tirailleurs-Grenadiers:** January 1809, 1st Regt. of two bns. each of six coys.; April, 2nd Regt.; units renamed 1st & 2nd Tirailleurs of the Guard, December 1810.

**Tirailleurs-Chasseurs:** March 1809, 1st Regt.; April, 2nd Regt.; units renamed 1st & 2nd Voltigeurs of the Guard, December 1810.

**1st & 2nd Conscript-Grenadiers:** April 1809; renamed 3rd & 4th Tirailleurs, February 1811.

**1st & 2nd Conscript-Chasseurs:** April 1809; renamed 3rd & 4th Voltigeurs, February 1811.

It was intended that after several years of good service rankers of the Fusiliers would be accepted into the Grenadiers and Chasseurs; and men from the Tirailleurs and Voltigeurs into the Fusiliers. The junior regiments were also intended as schools for NCOs, to provide cadres for - potentially - up to 100 Line battalions. In 1811 5th and 6th Regts. of Tirailleurs and Voltigeurs were raised; and by the end of the Empire both branches had reached 19 regiments - on paper, at least. A number of other units were also formed at various times from 1809: Vélites of Turin and Florence, National Guards, Flanqueurs, and Pupilles.



(Above) Field officer of Fusiliers-Grenadiers, a decorated veteran of the Old Guard or Line promoted into the new regiment. The square-cut coat lapels and the stars round the top band of the officer's gold-laced shako identify the Grenadier unit. This shako plate was worn by all the junior regiments.

(Right) Front and rear views of the Fusiliers-Grenadiers ranker's uniform. Apart from the shako, epaulettes and turn-back badges it closely resembles that of the Grenadiers à Pied. (All items reconstructed by Robert Cooper.)

Blooded at Essling and Heilsberg, the Fusiliers showed their value at once. Middle and Young Guard units went on to serve in Spain; and in 1812 the Fusiliers, the 1st, 4th, 5th & 6th Tirailleurs, and the 1st, 5th and 6th Voltigeurs marched into Russia with the five senior regiments of Foot Grenadiers and Chasseurs. The Young Guard was massively expanded in 1813-14 for the last defensive campaigns; and throughout the Empire the junior regiments saw a great deal of hard fighting and heavy casualties. Napoleon always committed them to battle before the Grenadiers and Chasseurs, of whom he wrote: "being so precious, one fears to expose them".



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**(Above left)** A tall parade plume replaces the red carrot-shaped pompon worn for everyday duty - see previous page. Originally the cuff flaps were red piped in white; the white lapels were piped red; and blue shoulder straps piped red were worn instead of epaulettes. The details illustrated were adopted between 1807 and 1809.

**(Above)** Lapel and button details. The Fusiliers-Chasseurs wore lapels cut pointed at the bottom.

**(Left)** White eagles were worn as turn-back badges in the ranks of the Fusilier, Tirailleur and Voltigeur units. Officers and NCOs transferred from more senior regiments were probably often seen still wearing their old uniforms.

**(Opposite top left)** Cuff and cuff flap detail.

**(Opposite top right)** The shako originally had a white top band and no chin scales, but appeared in this form by spring 1809. Senior NCOs' shakos are believed to have had a gold top band, and side chevrons of red edged with gold; their cords were mixed red and gold. These epaulettes are all white except for two red stripes on the straps; other sources also show white fringes, red or white crescents, and red straps with two white stripes.

**(Right)** Detail of crossbelt equipment; note Young Guard eagle on cartridge box flap.









(Above, right & opposite) Fusilier-Grenadier in field uniform and equipment - perhaps in Spain? Although more cheaply outfitted than the Old Guard, the junior regiments seem to have tried to maintain standards of smartness where possible. The greatcoat, of plain grey cloth, is notably well cut. The shako is protected by an oilskin cover (these sometimes had the Young Guard eagle plate attached, or painted in facsimile). Campaign trousers were made up locally, of blue, white, grey or brown cloth as available; they are worn here over the Guard's regulation grey marching gaiters. The superior water bottle is privately acquired.

The Guard's exchequer was

independent of the War Ministry's central budgetary arrangements, and they enjoyed some privileges over the mass of the conscript army. When Napoleon heard that the Fusiliers were being kept waiting for clothing and pay he wrote to the War Minister: "I learn that my Guard is in difficulties... Remove these obstacles promptly."

**(Overleaf, page 42)**

Relaxing in the sun with a pipe, our Fusilier-Grenadier protects the cloth of his uniform coat with a wooden buttonstick while doing his daily polishing.

(All items reconstructed by Robert Cooper.)













# Chasseurs à Cheval

Gloriously uniformed in green and scarlet in Hussar style, the Chasseurs à Cheval de la Garde took enormous pride in their privileged role as Napoleon's personal bodyguard, and in the fact that he usually wore the uniform of their colonel; in all the most famous paintings of his campaigns they are to be seen in close attendance on the Emperor.

General Bonaparte originally raised an elite bodyguard in 1796 under the title Guides de l'Armée de l'Italie, comprising both horse and foot. They accompanied him to Egypt in 1798, accordingly retitled Guides de l'Armée d'Orient. When he left the Army of the Orient to its fate and returned to France he took with him 180 hand-picked Guides à Cheval and 125 Guides à Pied.

Shortly after the coup of 9 November 1799 which made Bonaparte First Consul and effectively military dictator of France, a decree of January 1800 formed within the new Consular Guard a company of Chasseurs à Cheval, commanded by Bonaparte's stepson Captain Eugène de Beauharnais. This unit was formed from the troopers who had returned from Egypt; of the 133 men and four officers, 112 were veterans of Italy. By September 1800 the unit comprised a squadron of two companies.

The overall Commander of the Guard Cavalry - which also included the two-squadron Grenadiers à Cheval - was Chef de Brigade (later Marshal) Jean-Baptiste Bessièrès. At Marengo Bessièrès charged home with both regiments: with their rolled cloaks worn around their chests to help protect them from sabre cuts they swept forward at a gallop, jumped a ditch, reformed, and enveloped an Austrian cavalry column, sabring the two leading troops.

Of the Chasseurs' 115 horses at Marengo, only 45 remained at the end of the battle. Napoleonic armies regarded their horses much as modern armies view their mechanised transport - as an expendable asset to be used until they dropped. Continual severe attrition, particularly in 1812, would cause Napoleon serious problems during the later campaigns, as the difficulty of obtaining sufficient replacement horseflesh to keep his cavalry mounted became chronic.

A decree of 14 November 1801 confirmed the regimental status of the Chasseurs à Cheval de la Garde des Consuls, with a headquarters staff of one *chef d'escadrons*, one *adjudant-major*, two *porte-étendards*, one *brigadier-trompette* (corporal trumpeter) and four *maîtres-ouvriers* (specialists such as tailors, saddlers, armourers, etc.) On 1 October 1802 the regiment was increased to four squadrons totalling 56 officers and 959 men, Beauharnais being promoted to *chef de brigade* on 13 October. (In May



1805 Beauharnais was elevated to Viceroy of Italy, retaining nominal command of the regiment until 1808 while a *colonel commandant en second* exercised day-to-day command - initially, Major Morland.) The title changed to "...de la Garde Impériale" in May 1804. A squadron of Vélites were added in September 1805, four companies in strength; a second squadron existed between April 1806 and December 1809.

One of the Chasseurs' greatest charges was at Austerlitz (2 December 1805), where two squadrons and the attached Mamelukes inflicted heavy casualties on the Russian Imperial Guard and captured the commander of the Chevalier Guard, Prince Repnin. The cost of a cavalry charge could vary enormously depending upon circumstances, opposition and timing: some charges achieved spectacular success almost without loss; others were distinctly bloody affairs. At Austerlitz the Chasseurs officers alone suffered 19 wounded, and Col. Morland was killed leading the charge.

At the battle of Eylau (8 February 1807) the Chasseurs took part in Murat's mass cavalry charge of 80 squadrons, and again lost their commander. General Dahlmann had been promoted general in December 1806 but, lacking a new command, had requested to be allowed to lead his old regiment into battle, and was mortally wounded at their head - the glory of leading a cavalry regiment was often a fleeting honour in the Napoleonic Wars.

Where Napoleon went, the Chasseurs rode with him - to Spain in 1808, where they lost another commander captured at Benavente; to Wagram in 1809; augmented to five sabre squadrons by the incorporation of the Vélites, to Moscow and back in 1812; expanded to eight squadrons, to Dresden and Leipzig in 1813; to Châtea-Thierry, Craonne and Valcourt in 1814. Reorganised for the Hundred Days, four squadrons escorted Napoleon to his nemesis at Waterloo, where they took part in the cavalry charges against Wellington's squares with the Light Horse Lancers.









(Opposite top) A trumpeter and a trooper of the Chasseurs crests a ridge. Horses find it easier to canter uphill because of their conformation. When riding uphill the soldier sits forward in the saddle, when riding downhill he sits back to maintain his centre of gravity and make the going easier for his mount.

(Far left) A captain displaying some of the finery worn even on campaign by the Guard Chasseurs: the black bearskin *colpack*; dark green *dolman* jacket richly laced with gold (note three chevrons above cuff, denoting this rank); dark green overalls with gold lace stripes; green and gold barrel sash, and red Morocco sword belt and slings with gilt fittings. His expensive pouch belt is

buttoned into a red leather campaign cover.

(Left) Detail of the richly embroidered flap of the officer's *sabretache*, and the device in the rear corners of his gold-laced dark green *shabraque*.

(Above) Note red-tipped green parade plume; scarlet, gold-trimmed *flamme* of the officer's *colpack*; officer's pouch; and leopardskin saddle cover - a typical affectation for a rich cavalry officer.

(Above right) Detail of left side of the *colpack*, with cockade and gold tassels.

(Right) Capitaine Jean-Francois Remy-Neris addresses the Chasseurs before mounting up.







**(Above, right & opposite)**

The long-tailed dark green *habit*, dating back to the Guides, was worn on campaign in 1806 by all ranks; it was retained as an undress uniform throughout the Empire, and one source states that some of the regiment wore it at Waterloo. It is worn here by an officer as walking-out uniform. Note gold buglehorn badges on tail turn-backs, and single gold epaulette and aiguillette on shoulders.

The ranker's habit had the same scarlet piping in the same positions, but a green collar piped scarlet, orange turn-back badges, and an orange aiguillette on the left balanced by an orange trefoil shoulder knot on the right.

The officer's coat is worn here over a gold-laced scarlet waistcoat - *gilet*. The officer's bicorn has gold cords, tassels and loop; those of rankers had orange trim.













Near and off side views of mounted captain of Guard Chasseurs in campaign dress. Note that the valise and shabraque are edged with gold lace and piped scarlet; and the leopardskin cover has a red dagged edging. The colpack plume is removed, and the pouch belt covered, though the full dress sabretache is exposed.

In cold weather the regimental *pelisse* could be worn instead of the dolman (but not over it, despite some later artist's impressions - they were only seen together when the *pelisse* was slung to hang over the left shoulder). This was scarlet, with gold lace and frogging and white fur trim at collar and cuffs for officers; rankers wore it with orange lace and black fur or fleece. *Pelisses* were not taken on campaign by rankers in 1806-07, or after 1809, though individual officers may have done so. Even a trooper's dolman and *pelisse* cost 216 francs. Officers were told in the regulations to expect to pay around 1,500 francs, but their bill might come to a good deal more depending on the depth of their pockets or how high they rose in rank. Many officers of all Napoleonic armies lived (and sometimes died) in debt to their tailors.







(Above left) Dressing for action, note details of officer's *bonnet de police*. It was a period saying, especially in the cavalry, that it was impossible to be too well dressed when the cannons roared - at the very least you would make a pretty corpse....

(Above) Although the bright gold gilds this Chasseur's cap and dolman lace, it is in fact *auron* - the "dawn" orange worn by rankers.

(Left) Captain in dolman and *bonnet de police* enjoying a quiet moment with his wife and first child - who is wrapped in his *manteau capote*, the dark green sleeved, caped riding cloak worn from c.1812.

(Opposite) Surgeon of the reconstructed Chasseurs à Cheval. He has followed contemporary fashion by adopting a version of the regimental uniform - here a habit with added dark red collar and cuffs with gold lace loops. Note the correct period biting of his horse, comprising a small ringed bridoon and separate curb bit. If your horse bolted with you on the battlefield you were a dead man, so severe biting was very necessary.



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**(Left)** A trooper suffers the flat of a sabre across the seat of his overalls - from the grin of his comrades in the Boulogne camp, this is a recognized penalty for some infringement of camp custom? Note orange piping and tassel on the colpack bag, black pouch, white belts, and black leather overall reinforcement.

**(Below)** A comrade keeps up the tension while a Chasseur wraps the green and red barrel sash around his waist; like most chores in the cavalry, it is easier done when working in pairs. Again, note the ranker's orange dolman lace.

**(Right)** The setting sun darkens the orange lace of the trooper's uniform and saddlery. Note the plain oilcloth cover protecting his sabretasche.





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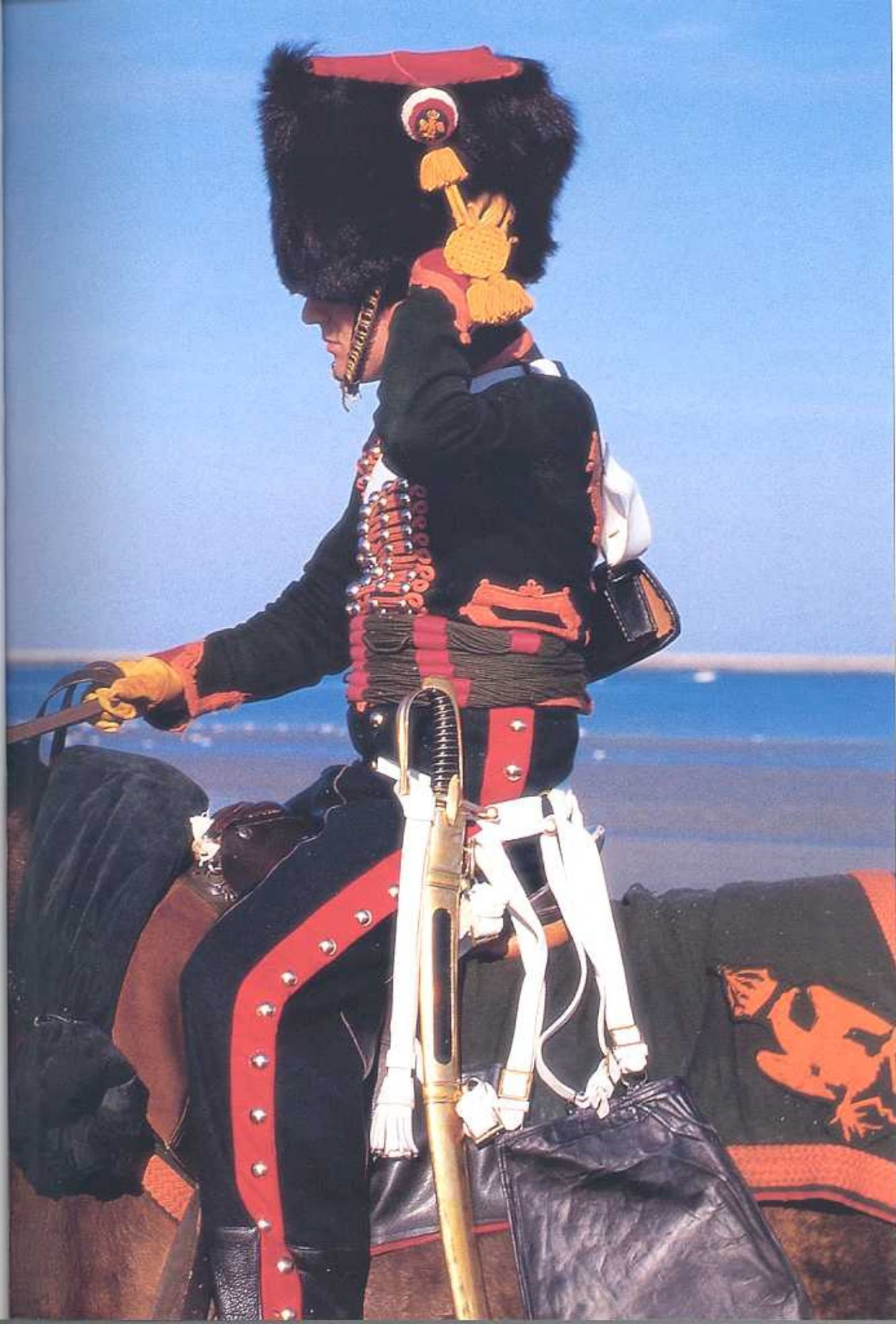
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**(Left)** The four squadrons of the 1802 expansion had a total of 24 trumpeters - three per company, six per squadron. They wore conspicuous pale blue uniforms faced with crimson and laced with gold and crimson. This one wears the long habit of the 1806 campaign, with the white full dress bearskin - a black bearskin would be worn for most campaign duties.

**(Below, & opposite top)** The Chasseurs trumpeter in the dolman uniform, again with the white bearskin. Note the mixed gold and crimson lace and frogging, and the chain pattern in the same colours round the edge of the shabraque.





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The trumpeter's distinctive pale blue uniform included his stable jacket and forage cap, the latter with gold lace and mixed piping. His grimace here is due to the halitosis suffered by Lasalle the bloodhound, which is deadlier than canister shot.





A headquarters staff captain of the Imperial Guard; junior officers were rotated between staff appointments and postings to regiments. That explains why the austere staff uniform worn by this gaunt veteran contrasts with the light cavalry panache of his horse furniture and Mameluke sabre. The winged "half-thunderbolt" turn-back badge was worn by most staff officers.

The Imperial Headquarters (*Quartier-Général Impérial*) embraced both the Emperor's Household (*Maison*) and the army headquarters (*Quartier-Général*). The latter, commanded in many campaigns by Napoleon's admirable chief of staff Marshal Berthier, consisted of the General Staff (*Etat-Major*) and the Commissariat department (*Intendance-Général*). Subordinate to the former were the Corps of Adjutant-Commandants, who fulfilled the duties of divisional chiefs of staff and corps deputy chiefs of staff. Under the authority of the *adjutant-commandants* were numerous more junior *adjoints*, their status marked - as here - by a single left epaulette and an *aiguillette*.

The bottom rung on the staff ladder was occupied by the mass of *aides-de-camp* - junior regimental officers on temporary attachment to the staffs of field commanders down to brigade level. Their duties depended on their personal connections and their aptitude: some were mere message-riders; others were their chiefs' personal intelligence officers; some were even trusted substitutes. For an ambitious subaltern an ADC's appointment was a way to get noticed.





# The Polish Lancers

Officially formed by a decree of 2 March 1807, the Cheval-Légers Polonais de la Garde (Polish Light Horse of the Guard) were raised from Polish volunteers, many of aristocratic background. Poland had lost its independence in the late 18th century, being dominated and eventually partitioned by Prussia, Russia and Austria. During Napoleon's wars against her occupiers Poland dreamed that he would restore her nationhood; but after his victories of 1806-07 he only sponsored the creation of a small rump state termed the Grand Duchy of Warsaw. Even so, thousands of Poles decided to follow his star in the hope of a better future, and they provided him with many regiments.

Impressed by the guard of honour provided by the local nobility when he entered Warsaw in December 1806, Napoleon ordered that a squadron of Polish light horse join his Guard. By raising the unit from the minor aristocracy he hoped to gain an impressive addition to his Guard without a great initial outlay: "By paying the Light Horse the same as my Guard, I intend to procure educated men and experienced horsemen, not peasants who need polishing, which would be a lengthy operation". Candidates were required to be landowners or sons of landowners between 18 and 40 years of age, who were to furnish their own horses, uniform, equipment and harness to a set pattern.

The wild-riding Poles were the heirs to a centuries-old cavalry tradition, and soon proved themselves daredevils worthy of their place among the swaggering light cavalry of the Guard. At first their discipline left something to be desired, but this was quickly rectified by Gen. Durosnel, Governor of the Corps of Pages. Their chief tactical instructor was the famous Hussar, Gen. Lasalle (whom the Poles considered vastly better qualified to command the Emperor's cavalry than Murat).

The original regimental formation of 1807 was four squadrons of two companies each. As their title suggests, they were initially equipped as conventional light cavalry, and did not receive the lance until after the battle of Wagram in 1809, when they were retitled Régiment de Cheval-Légers Lanciers de la Garde.

The lance was a novelty in Western armies; but Napoleon, impressed by its potential in the hands of his eastern European enemies, was willing to experiment. The success of, for instance, the Polish lancers of the Vistula Legion at Albuera in May 1811 led to the creation of a whole new Line cavalry branch that summer, mostly by the conversion of dragoon regiments.

By that time the Poles had already won a reputation for suicidal bravery at Somosierra in Spain in November 1808. A strong Spanish division held the pass of that name during



Napoleon's personal leadership of the re-invasion of Spain that winter. Angered when his Line cavalry failed to push the obstacle aside, he ordered the duty squadron of Polish Light Horse (3rd Sqn., Capt. Korjietulski) to take the position. It was an impulsive and foolhardy order; but they galloped up the steep slope into the mouths of four Spanish batteries, at a cost of more than half their strength. (The position was later taken by the rest of the regiment, the Guard Chasseurs, and a simultaneous infantry attack.)

The unit was retitled 1st Regiment from 1811, when the Dutch Lancers were incorporated into the Guard as the 2nd Regiment. A fifth squadron was added in 1812, when a second Polish regiment was also raised as the 3ème Régiment de Cheval-Légers Lanciers. After the horrific Russian campaign the 3rd Regiment was disbanded and its survivors were taken into the 1st Regiment; with other replacements, this allowed enlargement to seven squadrons in July 1813, but establishment was reduced again to four squadrons that December.

When Napoleon was forced to abdicate in spring 1814 a single squadron of 150-odd under Lt.Col. Jerzmanowski accompanied him to Elba. For lack of horses, only a troop of 22 men under the seven-foot-tall Capt. Schultz were mounted; Capt. Balinski led a 96-man foot dismounted company, and 35 men were detached to the ex-Emperor's undermanned artillery battery. When Napoleon returned to France a year later the Lancers marched north with him from Antibes, most of them carrying their saddles on their backs. The regiment could not be reformed for the Waterloo campaign; but, reinforced by Polish volunteers, the Elba veterans were incorporated as the senior squadron into the 2nd (Dutch) Lancers, in whose ranks they fought gallantly during Ney's great cavalry attacks on the British centre. The Poles retained their own uniforms in 1815.





(Right) Note the crimson seam and false pocket piping on the kurtka. Junior officers wore a silver left epaulette, and an aiguillette secured to a trefoil shoulder knot on the right. The officer's pouch - by now almost entirely decorative - was a superb item with a silver and gilt flap, worn on a crimson leather belt faced with silver lace and decorated with silver and gilt ornaments,

(Previous page; left, & right) Captain of Polish Light Horse Lancers, wearing the Turkish blue uniform with crimson facings and silver lace normally worn on campaign. In the field this would usually have the headgear undressed and covered and the plastron front of the kurtka jacket fastened across (see page 60); here the uniform is worn as if for parade. (Officers and trumpeters had a similar full dress order in white faced with crimson; this was seldom seen in the field, although one source states that some individuals

wore it at Waterloo.)

The Polish *czapka* headgear had a black leather skull and peak, the traditional Polish square crown in crimson (note special cockade on left front), a plate with brass or gilt sunrays and crowned N emblem, and lion-mask bosses for the chin chain. For full dress it was dressed with white cords and plume.

The tightly tailored kurtka and matching trousers were faced, piped and striped crimson, with elaborate silver lace at collar, lapels, cuffs and turn-backs.



buckle, keep and tongue. The broad, stitched white leather waist belt, with a square gilt plate, supported on slings an *An XI* light cavalry sabre (or, for officers, any preferred alternative).

The lace on this reconstructed kurtka was stitched in the south of France by nuns - a tradition going back to Napoleonic days.



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(Left & above) Another splendidly reconstructed impression of a captain, this time wearing his uniform in the usual campaign manner. The czapka is protected by a cloth cover; here the plume has not been removed but is covered with its own oilcloth tube - perhaps to make him conspicuous among his troopers? The kurtka lapel is fastened across the chest to hide the crimson facings, apart from a fashionably exposed corner. The laced pouch belt is protected by a buttoned sleeve of red leather. Note the careful tailoring of the tight-fitting trousers.





(Above & right) Details of the captain's uniform. Note that the reconstructed epaulette has a short strap, to accomodate the pouch belt. The loops on the lower leg slip through one another and fasten to the bottom button to adjust the fit over the ankle boots. The serpentine silver lace is set on, not above, the shallow crimson cuff.







Troopers of Polish Light Horse Lancers, with lapels buttoned across (above) and exposed (left). The kurtka was supposed to have silver lace trim on the lapels only, but sources often show it applied to other edges. Epaulette and aiguillette were white; before 1809 the epaulette was worn on the left, but they were transposed when the lance was adopted. Note also the rankers' black pouch with brass eagle badge. The second man (above) wears the plain dark blue stable jacket, and the regiment's distinctive bonnet de police.



(Below) Trooper in campaign dress with covered czapka; note the appearance of the edge of the lapel, which was always fastened towards the shoulder with the aiguillette.

He is practising lance drill according to the Krasinski manual, which was brought back from his leave in Poland by one Major Fredro. Lance instructors were brought in

from the Vistula Legion in 1809.

(Right) Rear view of trooper's uniform, with the czapka dressed for parade.







(Left & above) The manteau-capote was issued from 1809; it had sleeves and a shoulder cape, and both the body and the cape were partly lined with crimson. It replaced a simpler, sleeveless, capeless cloak worn until that date; this too was white, with a crimson collar. Note also the details of the black oilskin czapka cover.

The lance was 2.75m long (9ft), its blackened shaft noticeably thicker than the later French issue. Troopers were also issued sabres, at first of Prussian make but later French *An XI* pattern; a carbine, carried by a spring clip to a sling across the body; and one (usually) or two pistols carried in saddle holsters.





An officer in the informal undress uniform worn in quarters. The bonnet, called a *confederatka*, traced its origins to Polish noblemen's folk costume in previous centuries; the name referred to the unruly leagues of nobles who frequently used to rebel against their weak monarchy throughout much of Poland's history. It was worn with a dark blue surtout with crimson collar, cuffs, and front and turn-back piping, embellished with epaulette and aiguillette. A white waistcoat, visible under the high-cut front of the coat, and blue breeches with crimson stripes, completed the outfit.





(Left) A trooper prepares his czapka for inspection in a tented camp. Note riding overalls with black leather reinforcement, and crimson stripe and buttons up the outside closure. A piece of leather was sometimes sewn to the right outer thigh to protect the cloth from the chafing of the slung carbine.

(Below) The Polish troops were famous for their love of horses, drink and women, not necessarily in that order. This trooper in stable dress wears the forage cap in crimson and dark blue with white trim - note the method of wearing, with the "flame" folded and tucked into the "turban" to confine it. This, and the plain dark blue *gilet d'écurie* were sometimes worn for long marches - e.g. their ride from their Chantilly base to Spain in 1808 - with the oilcloth-covered czapka hung from the saddle. They are worn here with off-white fatigue trousers of undyed material.

The regiment's horses were between five and six years of age; they were grouped by colour, with squadrons of chestnut, bay, black and dark grey.





# The Red Lancers

**A**lthough they were relative late-comers to the French army, the lancers - their wicked weapons dipping into the charge, pennons fluttering - have left perhaps the most dramatic images of any Napoleonic regiments. They may evoke an echo of the chivalric past; however, there was nothing chivalrous about the use of the lance in battle - which almost invariably gave them a greatly superior reach with which to skewer helpless enemies. Period memoirs offer many descriptions of their terrifying effect on broken infantry or blown and labouring sabre-armed cavalry.

Napoleon was a realist, but he always had a flair for the dramatic; the satisfactory performance of his Polish lancers justified his decision to incorporate another regiment of this type into his Guard in 1810 (by a decree of 13 September). This period following the successful Wagram campaign was the high point of his power.

Part of the Netherlands had formed a French-protected Batavian Republic since 1794, and a puppet Kingdom of Holland (with Napoleon's brother Louis on the throne) since 1806; but in 1810 Napoleon decided simply to annexe Holland and a large area of north German coastal territory to France. (His attempt to deny British trade any access to Continental ports was ruinous for all concerned, and a huge volume of contraband had continued to pass through these coastlands, which Bonaparte was determined to seal off.) Holland also had an army of some 27,000 good quality troops, which would be a useful addition to his forces.

The former Dutch Régiment de Hussards de la Garde à Cheval du Roi became the 2eme Régiment de Cheval-Légers Lanciers de la Garde, with an initial complement of 58 officers and 881 men in four squadrons, and 865 horses. Further officers for the regiment were to be recruited from other Dutch cavalry regiments, and troopers from the 3eme Régiment de Hussards Hollandais and the Garde du Corps Hollandaise.

As with the other Guard regiments preparing for the Russian campaign of 1812, the "Red Lancers" (so called from their uniform colour) were increased in size that spring, receiving a fifth squadron. This was cobbled together from about 30 different cavalry depots and a squadron of the Dutch Garde Royale latterly serving in Spain with the French 1st Hussars. By September the régiment was recruited up to a strength of 1,406 men including 58 Vélites.

The Red Lancers emerged from the snows of Russia severely depleted; and in the remarkably fast process of replacement and expansion which Napoleon achieved early in 1813 they were to lose much of their national character. The desperate need for sheer numbers took precedence over such considerations, and many Frenchmen were drafted in.



The "paper" establishment was increased in January to eight squadrons each of 250; and by early March to ten squadrons - the senior five designated "Old Guard", the others "Young Guard".

Given the huge difficulties of mounting the cavalry after the losses in Russia, the regiment's strength in the saddle was probably a good deal less than establishment; even so, they apparently showed undiminished spirit. In March 1814 at Saint Dizier they manoeuvred with elements of the Guard Chasseurs against an 18-gun Russian battery, finally overrunning it by a classic frontal attack; Gen. Sebastiani reported to Napoleon that he had never seen a more brilliant charge in 20 years' cavalry soldiering.

Under the First Restoration in May 1814 the Young Guard element was disbanded; the senior squadrons were retitled Corps Royal des Cheval-Légers Lanciers de France, with 643 all ranks - strength was down to just over 500 by August.

The regiment rallied to Napoleon in April 1815 under the title Régiment de Cheval-Légers Lanciers de la Garde Impériale, incorporating the Elba Squadron of the Polish Lancers. Brigaded with the Guard Chasseurs under Lefebvre-Desnoettes, they fought with great gallantry at Waterloo.









(Previous page; left & far left & below) A senior field officer of the Red Lancers in camp at Boulogne. The regimental uniform closely resembled that of the Polish Lancers, but in scarlet faced with dark blue and laced with yellow or gold. Note that field officers wore two epaulettes with thick bullion twist fringes, the right one worn over the aiguillette.

For senior officers camp life had its comforts, even in the 1812 campaign. Gen.Colbert, who commanded the Red Lancers in Russia, spent his nights in a tent large enough for a dozen men to stand in it. His two ADCs were known for their fine singing voices, and Colbert often entertained guests of an evening.









(Left) Dutch troopers, in full service uniform with dressed czapkas. In this regiment the rankers always wore the yellow aiguillette on the left; and note tight breeches with dark blue side stripes and piping. The lance was 2.26m long (9.17ft) with a 216mm (8.5in) iron blade; the white-over-scarlet swallowtail pennon was made in silk for parade and serge for field use, and was rolled inside a black taffeta cover on the march.

Lancers were attested as riding horses of between 14 and 14.2 hands - one hand being four inches, measured to the top of the withers when standing on level ground.

(Right) Lancer from the rear, wearing the dark blue overalls - with black leather booting, and scarlet stripes and brass buttons down the outer closure - which normally replaced or covered the breeches on campaign. Note dark blue seam piping and tail turn-back on the kurtka; buttoned belt support loop; saddle valise; and shabraque (inset - embroidered shabraque corner badge).

Prior to 1813 the regiment carried the same brass-hilted sabre as the Guard Chasseurs, in a brass-covered black leather sheath. After that date this was replaced by the standard *An XI* light cavalry type.

The troopers depicted in this book do not wear slung carbines. These were issued during 1811; finding themselves clumsily over-loaded with weapons in Russia, the regiment are said to have largely discarded the lance, relying on the carbine, sabre, and saddle pistol.







(Above) Lancer at the charge. Originally both ranks of troopers were issued with the lance; but apart from the difficulty of handling so much equipment on horseback, it was felt that when the second rank charged home to reinforce a *mêlée* they were as dangerous to their own front rank as to the enemy. If a gap could be punched in the enemy line by the first rank, then a second rank armed with sabre, pistol and carbine were best able to exploit it or

to cover a retreat. From 1813 the Polish and Dutch Guard lancers' armament was rationalised in this way.

**(Right & opposite)**

A trooper adjusts his bridle; and, his chores over, enjoys a drink with comrades. Note the details of the *czapka*; the rankers' pouch and belt; the yellow epaulette with dark blue crescent; and the buttons and pocket piping on the front of the overalls.















(Left) Side views of the trooper's saddle furniture, with and without a rider. The sheepskin cover was a very necessary comfort for men spending weeks on end in the saddle. Normally only one flintlock pistol was carried, in the near side of the pair of holsters under the front of the saddle cover; pistols were always in short supply, although the Guard fared better than the Line in such respects.

(Above) An off-duty trooper wearing bonnet de police and manteau-capote passing the time of evening with two comrades on mounted and dismounted guard duty.

(Above right) Lancers in stable dress - the uniforms worn around the regimental

depot. The bonnet de police had a red flame and dark blue turban with yellow trim. The sky blue gilet d'écurie was unusual in having a red collar and two rows of nine brass half-ball buttons. The man on the left wears his jacket open over a sleeveless vest, with *charivari* or *pantalons à cheval*, and leather riding boots - as worn in winter or bad weather. The right hand lancer wears summer dress, with stable overalls and wooden clogs. Clogs were especially useful around the stables - they protected the foot if trodden on by the horse's ironclad hooves.

(Right) Elegant in off-duty costume, an officer has his queue dressed by a camp woman.







(Above) Practising duelling with light cavalry sabres.

(Left) Note detail of bonnet de police.

(Opposite) An immaculate trooper of "the Gods", holding the Grenadier à Cheval pattern sabre issued to this regiment and the Empress's Dragoons; note the grenade motif set into the hilt bars, and the slightly curved blade *à la Montmorency*. On the plain grenadier coat are worn two fringeless contre-epaulettes and an aiguillette on the right, all in "dawn" orange - as are the cord, raquette and tassel of the bearskin.



Lancers in camp at Boulogne enjoy a rare hour of leisure after the horses have been fed, groomed and watered, their tack cleaned, and their sweat-soaked shabraques hung up to dry. Reconstructions of period tents are used, complete with regimental stencils; but in fact the troopers rarely had the luxury of sleeping under canvas when on campaign. Tents are bulky and heavy; they were carried in the baggage wagons - if at all - but nightfall usually found the cavalry far ahead, on their usual outpost or foraging duties.



# Grenadiers à Cheval

The senior cavalry regiment of the Guard - and thus the senior regiment of the whole French army - the Mounted Grenadiers were known as "the Gods". (A less pretentious nickname was *les gros talons*, "the big heels" or "big boots", in reference to their general air of massive weight and size). As selectively recruited as their infantry opposite numbers, superbly uniformed and mounted, they represented the pinnacle of professional pride and excellence in the years before the First Abdication.

Raised originally as a light cavalry regiment on 2 December 1799, with an initial strength of two squadrons, the regiment was retitled Grenadiers à Cheval de la Garde des Consuls in December 1800. Their commander was Bessières, who was also Colonel-General of all the Guard cavalry.

Their baptism of fire came at Marengo in northern Italy on 14 June 1800. Bonaparte's army had been marching dispersed, and he had only about 14,000 men and three weak cavalry brigades - totalling some 2,000 sabres - when attacked by 28,000 Austrians. Driven back two miles, the French appeared beaten; but late in the afternoon Desaix's 9,000-strong detached corps came up in support, and Bonaparte launched a counter-attack in which the cavalry distinguished itself. Together with the Chasseurs à Cheval, Bessières led the Grenadiers forward. The foot guardsman Coignet described them going into action:

"Then the Emperor let loose his 'black horses' - his Mounted Grenadiers, commanded by General Bessières. They passed by us like a lightning bolt and fell upon the enemy". They smashed the Austrian cavalry who were attempting to cover their infantry's retreat; and in the regiment's first battle Grenadiers Millet and Leroy each captured an Austrian standard, which was considered a feat worth dying for. After the battle the exhausted Grenadiers were said to have slept on their blown horses.

With Napoleon's elevation to Emperor in 1804 the regiment were renamed the Grenadiers à Cheval de la Garde Impériale, with 1,018 troopers in four squadrons of two companies each. The recruits for this elite unit were hand picked for their size, strength and proven courage from the among the Cuirassier and Dragoon regiments of the Line. Their uniform was based closely upon that of the Foot Grenadiers, including the tall bearskin bonnet.

In keeping with the period belief that the darker a horse's colour, the stronger it was likely to be, the regiment was mounted upon the best "cavalry blacks" available. (This is not to say that the horses were all jet black - "black" in horse terms includes very dark bays - but whenever possible black horses were appropriated by the regiment.) The Guard cavalry naturally enjoyed priority in the constant search for mounts; in 1806 the Grenadiers took the



opportunity to appropriate captured Prussian horses of suitable colouring to help replace their losses. In the - for them - peaceful year of 1810 one source describes the Grenadiers as having black Normandy horses, purchased in Caen, between four and five years old and having full manes and tails. The best heavy cavalry horses came from Normandy and Flanders; they were immensely strong, though not particularly fast.

During late 1805 two further squadrons were added, of Vélites. In 1811 these were disbanded and the regiment was reorganized into five sabre squadrons. The Grenadiers were reduced to a "paper" establishment of four squadrons after the Russian campaign (but an actual strength of about one company - 127 of all ranks in February 1813). Two new squadrons of Vélites were quickly raised, and designated as Young Guard.

At the time of the First Restoration in spring 1814 the four senior squadrons of the Mounted Grenadiers were redesignated as the Corps Royal des Cuirassiers de France. Although their uniform coat was shortened into a *habit-veste* or jacket in anticipation of the issue of cuirassier armour and helmets, these never in fact arrived.

On 8 April 1815 "the Gods" resumed their old Imperial title, with a reported strength of just over 1,000 all ranks. At Waterloo they were brigaded with the Dragoons of the Guard, under Gen. Guyot: 13 squadrons in all, totalling some 1,500 sabres. One source states that the Mounted Grenadiers were not engaged during the battle; but it is clear that Guyot charged the British infantry line several times. At the end of the battle the Mounted Grenadiers were to be found drawn up behind the Old Guard infantry reserve between La Belle Alliance and Rossomme. It was there, during the general Allied advance that evening, that the British 12th Light Dragoons made the mistake of charging them - at some cost. Eventually, still in perfect order, they turned their tall black horses and left the field at an unhurried walk.







**(Left & below left)**

A sergeant - *maréchal des logis* - leads another, troopers and a trumpeter into line and advances, their sabres in the charge position.

Note that these re-enactors do not carry muskets. The Mounted Grenadiers were issued, from at least 1803, with a weapon 144cm long (56.7ins). This was carried in Dragoon fashion; with the butt in a small leather boot hung from below the saddle pommel on the right, the musket slanting up and back outside the right leg, the barrel supported by a looped strap from the cantle. The regiment also had the usual saddle pistols.



**(Above & left)** Details of the sergeant's tack. Rosettes are attached to the bridle and crupper; and note that the bridoon rein and bridle are made of orange webbing.







**(Above, left & right)**

The Mounted Grenadiers wore a black bearskin with a scarlet rear patch decorated with an orange cross. Their habit was dark blue, with white Grenadier-cut lapels, red cuffs, white cuff flaps, red turn-backs and orange badges. Rankers wore orange contre-epaulettes on both shoulders and an aiguillette on the right; sergeants (see the superb warrior at right), a single left epaulette, a right contre-epaulette and aiguillette all in mixed gold and red. Their bearskin cords were of the same colour.

Two alternative coats worn

on campaign or for everyday duty were the *surtout*, and the *habit de petite uniforme*. The former was a plain dark blue single-breasted coat faced only on the turn-backs; the latter resembled the full dress coat except for having plain blue round cuffs like the *surtout*.

The breeches were off-white deerskin for full dress, shaved sheepskin for everyday wear. They were covered on campaign initially with overalls of white duck, and from 1813 of grey cloth. The regiment wore the same white belting as the Dragoons of the Guard, complete with a bayonet frogged behind the









Beautifully reconstructed flag of the Mounted Grenadiers, of the much modified pattern decreed late in 1811 but not in fact presented to the Guard regiments until 1813. This regiment and the Mounted Chasseurs were then the only Guard cavalry to carry their standards in the field. The regulation cavalry flag was 60cm (23.6ins) square; it is mounted here on the regulation blue stave, but with a spearhead finial - its standard was actually the Eagle (as on page 35, but with a grenade badge on the plinth).

This pattern of flag coincided with the order

limiting each regiment to one Eagle; previously they had been presented to each battalion or squadron. The flags had originally been relatively less impressive, with motifs and inscriptions painted on a single layer of silk, perhaps to emphasise that the Eagle itself was the important part of the standard. When they were restricted to one per corps Napoleon ordered that expense was to be no object. Of a double layer of finest silk, richly embroidered and fringed with gold wire, the new flags were of elaborate appearance.

Down each edge of both

sides were embroidered Imperial symbols: a crown, a wreathed N. and an eagle. Across the top and bottom were bands of bees - the Bonaparte symbol adopted by Napoleon - with a wreathed grenade badge centred. On the obverse was the inscription "Imperial Guard. From the Emperor Napoleon to the Regiment of Mounted Grenadiers".

The reverse of these pattern 1811 flags bore an important innovation: a list of battle honours - the names of battles at which the individual regiment had been present in an army personally commanded by Napoleon.

By 1813 the battle honours on this and all other Old Guard flags read: Marengo, Ulm, Austerlitz, Jena, Eylau, Friedland, Eckmühl, Essling, Wagram, Smolensk, Moskowa, Vienne, Berlin, Madrid, Moscou (sic).

Few Eagles survived the First Restoration; and flags of simpler design had to be hurriedly supplied in spring 1815.

The veteran trooper who carries the flag here wears the undress headgear: the usual black felt bicorne with cockade, loop, button, and red Grenadier plume. Cavalry standards were usually carried in battle by experienced NCOs.









In common with other Guard cavalry regiments, the Mounted Grenadiers dressed their trumpeters in a uniform of pale blue faced with crimson, with gold and crimson trim; and mounted them on greys - both for

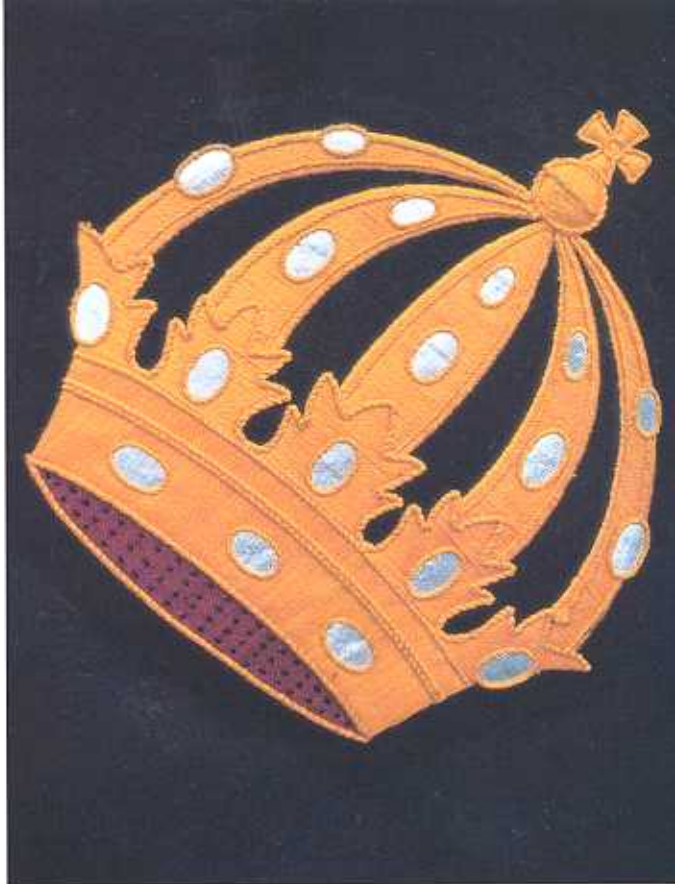
glamour, and because trumpeters needed to be instantly conspicuous to their officers in battle. The black bearskin bore a blue and white plume, as did the richly decorated bicorn. Note the superb trumpet banner.











Details of the excellent quality of embroidery achieved by the re-enactors of the Mounted Grenadiers.

(Above) Officer's full dress shabraque insignia.

(Above right) Sergeant's shabraque insignia.

(Right) Trumpeter's shabraque insignia.







Details of the full dress uniform of the Mounted Grenadier trumpeter. Like the troopers, trumpeters often wore the simple surtout on campaign. Theirs was pale blue, with 22mm gold lace collar trim. The bicorne is also richly laced and feathered.





A Mounted Grenadier, wearing the regiment's plain stable jacket and bonnet de police, uses a hooked hoof pick to remove dirt and small stones. Constant attention to the condition of his horse's feet and back is the price of riding to war, rather than stumbling along on foot behind the regiment.

Fodder was carried in cord nets. The mounts of the Guard cavalry were as relatively privileged as their riders; their daily ration was 6.5kg (14.3lbs) of hay or 5kg (11lbs) of straw, plus 8.5 litres of oats. Their rations also (usually) turned up, which was more than can be said of their Line comrades.

The Guard's privileges extended to taking their own generously established train of wagons on campaign. In 1805 this included 35 baggage wagons, 35 provision carts, six forage carts, 20 medical

supply carts, and 25 ambulances transporting the Guard's field hospital. Of the Eylau campaign the cavalry officer Marbot noted: "Only the Guard, having wagons, carried rations with them; the other Corps lived as well as they could - that is to say, they did without practically everything."

The mention of the field hospital reminds us how fortunate the Guard were in their Surgeon-General, Baron Larrey, the deviser of the "flying ambulance", and notable for his intelligence and compassion in an age when military medical departments were not over-supplied with those qualities. Napoleon wrote that Larrey was "the most honest man, and the best friend to the soldier that I ever knew...vigilant and indefatigable in his exertions for the wounded."



# Foot Artillery of the Guard

As a former gunner himself Napoleon was both an expert in the application of artillery, and an enthusiast for this arm of service. He oversaw its steady expansion throughout his career; by 1805 he already had a total of more than 7,300 light and medium guns and more than 8,300 howitzers for field service, without counting some 4,500 heavy and garrison guns and 1,700 mortars.

It was inevitable that he would include an artillery element in his Guard; and this was not merely a token "showpiece" unit. Through their priority equipment with the heaviest practical field piece - the 12-pounder - the Guard companies became, in effect, the army's artillery reserve, increasingly employed in massed batteries to achieve local tactical superiority on the battlefield. (Napoleon wrote that "the Guard furnishes artillery to the whole field.")

The decree of 2 December 1799 formed the Artillery of the Consular Guard, a single light company of eight guns and 110 men. In March 1802 the unit was enlarged to a headquarters and two companies, each of four officers and 85 men. In November 1803 this was reorganized into three divisions; each had two 6-pounder guns, two 12-pdrs., two 6-in. howitzers, and 20 vehicles, and there was a central reserve of 25 vehicles. In April 1806 this unit was transformed into a regiment of Horse Artillery, of three squadrons each with two companies, each of four light guns, two howitzers and 97 men. Reduced to two squadrons in April 1808, it was restored to three in March 1813, and a Young Guard company was added later that year.

The regiment of Foot Artillery of the Guard was formed in April 1808. The original organisation was of six companies of gunners and one of *ouvriers-pontonniers* (artisans and specialist bridging personnel). Each artillery company was a self-contained unit of gunners serving a battery, usually of eight pieces - six 6-pdr. or (increasingly) 12-pdr. guns and two howitzers. The company establishment was a captain commander, a captain second-in-command, two subalterns, a sergeant-major, four sergeants, a quartermaster-corporal, four corporals, 20 first-class and 48 second-class gunners, two drummers and four artificers.

These men were responsible for handling and fighting the guns. A company of the *Train des Equipages* - artillery transport corps - was attached to each battery, responsible for the guns and vehicles on the march. Each battery was thus able to operate independently, not under any regimental command. (The usual deployment of artillery in Napoleon's armies was one Foot and one Horse company attached to each infantry division, and a Horse company attached to each cavalry division.)

In June 1809 three Young Guard companies were raised,



numbered 7 to 9; each had four officers, six senior NCOs, eight corporals, 120 gunners and two drummers. Further Young Guard companies were formed in December 1811 (one), January 1813 (two), April 1813 (eight) and two more later. By May 1811 the Guard Artillery had 96 guns (72 Foot, 24 Horse); by March 1813, 120; by that April, 196 (36 Horse, 128 Foot deployed with Guard infantry brigades, 32 in reserve).

A single Consular Guard Artillery Train company was formed in December 1800; there were four in November 1803, six in April 1806, and several more were formed in 1808-09. During 1813 the Train was reorganized first into three battalions each of four companies, and later into four battalions.

Six Old Guard companies of Foot and four of Horse Artillery were raised in 1815 in time for the Waterloo campaign; nine Train companies were also available. Of the Foot batteries, two were attached to Guard infantry brigades and four 12-pdr. batteries fought with the massed reserve. One of these was supposedly the last French battery to remain in action during the rallying of the Guard infantry near Rossomme amid the final collapse of the Army of the North. Two Guard Horse Artillery batteries had earlier ridden forward in the gaps between the columns of the last Guard infantry attack to give close support.



(Left & below) Guard Foot Artillery wore a uniform similar in cut to that of the Guard infantry, but all dark blue - habit, waistcoat and breeches. The coat had scarlet cuffs, with blue flaps piped scarlet before 1810 and scarlet flaps thereafter; scarlet epaulettes; scarlet turn-backs with blue grenade badges; and scarlet piping. A red-furnished shako was worn before May 1810, when it was replaced - after repeated

requests by Lt.Col.Drouot - with the dignity of a form of Old Guard bearskin. This had a scarlet rear patch with a yellow grenade badge; a leather peak; brass chin chains (replaced by scales after 1811); and red cords, raquettes and plume. Infantry accoutrements were worn and weapons carried - gunners had to be prepared to defend their batteries (note here a white campaign cover on the cartridge box).







(Left) Reconstructed 4-pounder, 8-pounder and 12-pounder guns of the French Gribeauval system:

(below) close-up of the 4-pounder, with its sponge, worm and bucket, "Guns" - i.e. cannon with relatively long barrels, firing solid ball to longer ranges on a fairly flat trajectory - were classified by the weight of the shot they fired. "Howitzers" - short-barrelled pieces, firing explosive shells at a high angle to fall on masked targets - were usually classified by their calibre.

In the 1770s a far-sighted Inspector-General of Artillery had begun a programme of standardising,

lightening and improving the whole equipment of the French artillery - guns, tools, accessories, vehicles, system of transport, etc. Jean-Baptiste Gribeauval thus bequeathed to Bonaparte the most advanced artillery arm in the world.

Napoleon steadily replaced the light 4-pdrs. with 6-pdrs., including many captured Austrian and Prussian pieces; in some campaigns 4-pdrs. were brought out of the park and issued directly to infantry regiments for close support (like the old 18th century system of "battalion guns"). In the Foot Artillery 8-pdrs. were steadily replaced by 12-pounders.







Close-ups of the reconstructed 12-pounder gun. **(Above left)** Trunnions and lifting eyes; **(above)** breech, with elevating screw beneath; **(left)** trail, with trail chest holding nine rounds for immediate use. All gun carriages, limbers, and other wooden artillery equipment was supposed to be painted olive green (80 parts yellow ochre to one part black). All ironwork was supposed to be painted black to protect it from rust; some guns were cast from bronze, and were not painted. Gun tools and handspikes were carried on the gun carriage in brackets.

**(Right)** Sergeant-major of Guard Foot Artillery, c.1810 - the uniform is theoretically datable by the combination of red-piped blue cuff flaps and the bearskin bonnet. In practice, however, it would be some time before a new regulation such as the changed colour of cuff flaps worked its way through the army - old styles would be worn until a garment needed to be replaced. The rank is marked by the two gold lace diagonals, backed red, on the sleeves; and the mixed red/gold of the epaulettes and the bonnet ornaments. Corporals wore two orange stripes on both sleeves; first class gunners, two orange stripes on the left sleeve only.









Gun drill with the 12-pounder Gribeauval reconstruction. Fireable replica cannons are made in various ways. Some have original 19th century barrels which, having been cast originally to withstand the much higher pressures of full military loads and ball ammunition, are often found to be still safe when professionally proofed for reduced blank charges. Casting a sufficiently large and strong iron or bronze barrel "from scratch" would be prohibitively expensive today. Some groups therefore have externally accurate reconstructions made from high-pressure proof steel piping embedded in smoothly cast concrete finished with paint.

(Left) Gunner, apparently taking a fuze from a safety canister. Period fuzes were quills or copper tubes filled with fine priming powder; these were thrust down the touchhole above the breech of the gun, into the main charge rammed up from the muzzle of the barrel.

(Below) Ramming the charge home. Period ammunition was

"fixed" - a bag containing a measured powder charge fixed to a wooden disc, to which the ball was attached by tin straps. Note the senior NCO's bonnet de police.

(Right) The crew step clear of the muzzle and wheels; and on the order, the gunner touches the portfire - a staff fitted with burning match - to the fuze.

(Below right) The charge detonates.

For safety inside this bastion the gun is elevated; in battle it would be fired at a flatter angle. Depending on many variables, a 12-pdr. roundshot on a flat trajectory would hit the ground ("first graze") at about 600 yards, ricocheting to perhaps 1,100 yards. It would be travelling at below the height of a man the whole way, though gunners tried to achieve first graze immediately in front of the target.















The ever-fascinating Napoleonic period is well represented in the hobby of historical "re-enactment"; and groups of knowledgeable enthusiasts in many European countries have been formed to recreate the uniforms and equipment, and to practice the drill and tactics, of these colourful armies. Perhaps the most legendary of all the Emperor's troops were the regiments of his Imperial Guard - picked veterans of his greatest victories, and the cream of the later conscripts. Enjoying elite status and many privileges, they provided Napoleon's bodyguards and his ultimate battlefield reserve: and when the Guard was finally driven back on the evening of

Waterloo, the world knew that the Empire was finished.

In this dazzling selection of nearly 200 new colour photos the best re-enactment groups in Europe recreate the splendid uniforms of these immortal troops: Foot Grenadiers and Chasseurs, Fusilier-Grenadiers, Polish and Dutch Lancers, Mounted Chasseurs and Grenadiers, and Foot Artillery. Completing the series established by "Napoleon's Line Cavalry" and "Napoleon's Line Infantry & Artillery", Stephen Maughan offers superb reference for modellers, war-gamers, collectors and illustrators, and a visual feast for all military history enthusiasts.



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