

THE BRITISH ARMY OF THE AMERICAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Bill Brabam

British Army & Loyalist Provincial Corps

At the close of the Seven Years War the British Army was reduced in size despite the fact that its military commitments had grown as a result of the territorial gains won by the force of British arms. As a consequence on the eve of the American War the British Army comprised 15,000 troops in England (which included Wales) on the English Establishment, 12,000 in Ireland carried upon the Irish Establishment and 8000 in North America. In addition there were approximately 10,000 troops distributed throughout garrisons in the West Indies, Africa, Minorca, Gibraltar and Scotland.

The army was composed of two kinds of troops, those of the Household (troops of Life Guards, Horse Grenadier Guards, the Royal Regiment of Horse Guards and the three regiments of Foot Guards) and the regiments of the line. The latter encompassed variously 25 regiments of Horse, Dragoon Guards, Dragoons and Light Dragoons with 70 regiments of infantry. In addition there was the Royal Artillery, which although a part of the army was administered by the Board of Ordnance which provided for all the army's ordnance needs.

Due to the nature of the terrain in North America the burden of service fell primarily upon the marching regiments of foot. By the end of the war the army had expanded considerably to over 100 marching regiments of foot of which nearly 58 eventually saw service in North America. In contrast to this only two regiments of Light Dragoons (the 16th and 17th) served in America between 1775 and 1783.

Regimental Structure

At the outset of the war an infantry regiment had a rank and file strength of 477 divided into 10 companies that is 8 battalion companies, 1 light company and 1 grenadier company. To this figure of 477 must be added the officers, sergeants and drummers which would take the nominal strength to over 500. Grenadier companies originally had been organised in the late C17th to throw 'grandoes' and as a consequence had evolved a distinctive uniform style and called for the biggest and strongest men. By 1775 grenadiers no longer wielded hand grenades as a matter of course but they still retained a distinctive mode of dress and the company tended to include not only large strong men but also steady and reliable soldier from the 'hatmen' or battalion companies. The Light Company was a relatively new phenomenon introduced to the army as a whole in 1771 although some regiments in America and Europe had deployed light companies in the previous war. The Light 'Bobs' as they were nicknamed were supposed to be younger, nimble men who were expected to practice marksmanship.

British Army & Loyalist Provincial Corps

At the close of the Seven Years War the British Army was reduced in size despite the fact that its military commitments had grown as a result of the territorial gains won by the force of British arms. As a consequence on the eve of the American War the British Army comprised 15,000 troops in England (which included Wales) on the English Establishment, 12,000 in Ireland carried upon the Irish Establishment and 8000 in North America. In addition there were approximately 10,000 troops distributed throughout garrisons in the West Indies, Africa, Minorca, Gibraltar and Scotland.

The army was composed of two kinds of troops, those of the Household (troops of Life Guards, Horse Grenadier Guards, the Royal Regiment of Horse Guards and the three regiments of Foot

Guards) and the regiments of the line. The latter encompassed variously 25 regiments of Horse, Dragoon Guards, Dragoons and Light Dragoons with 70 regiments of infantry. In addition there was the Royal Artillery, which although a part of the army was administered by the Board of Ordnance which provided for all the army's ordnance needs.

Due to the nature of the terrain in North America the burden of service fell primarily upon the marching regiments of foot. By the end of the war the army had expanded considerably to over 100 marching regiments of foot of which nearly 58 eventually saw service in North America. In contrast to this only two regiments of Light Dragoons (the 16th and 17th) served in America between 1775 and 1783.

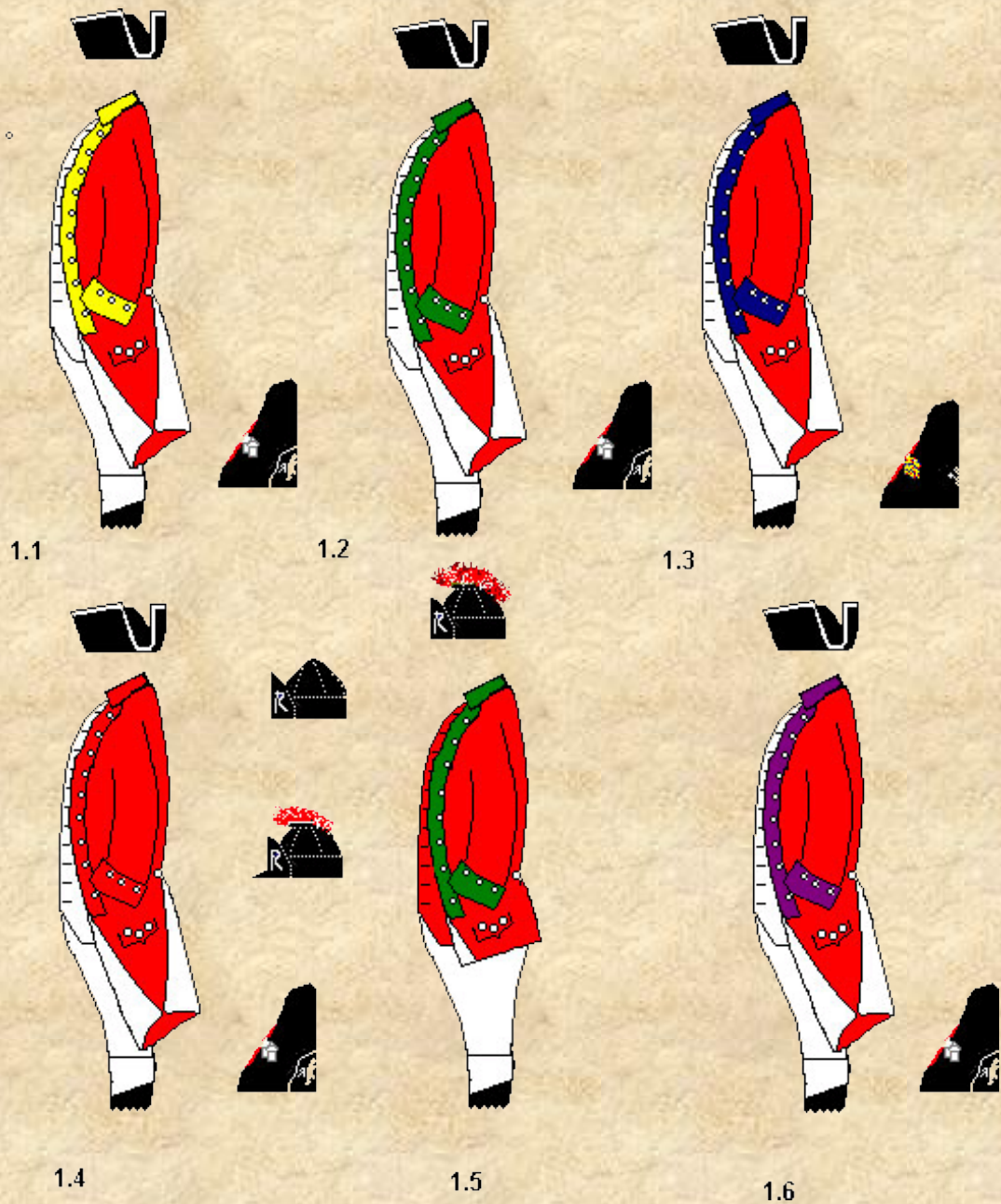
Regimental Structure

At the outset of the war an infantry regiment had a rank and file strength of 477 divided into 10 companies that is 8 battalion companies, 1 light company and 1 grenadier company. To this figure of 477 must be added the officers, sergeants and drummers which would take the nominal strength to over 500. Grenadier companies originally had been organised in the late C17th to throw 'grandoes' and as a consequence had evolved a distinctive uniform style and called for the biggest and strongest men. By 1775 grenadiers no longer wielded hand grenades as a matter of course but they still retained a distinctive mode of dress and the company tended to include not only large strong men but also steady and reliable soldier from the 'hatmen' or battalion companies. The Light Company was a relatively new phenomenon introduced to the army as a whole in 1771 although some regiments in America and Europe had deployed light companies in the previous war. The Light 'Bobs' as they were nicknamed were supposed to be younger, nimble men who were expected to practice marksmanship.

General comments:

All line units are shown with the the ankle length half gaiter that became more common from the early months of the war and in due course this was superseded by the gaitered trouser in summer months. All equipment was pipeclayed white with black bayonet scabbard and cartridge pouch, metal (tin) water bottle and a white linen knapsack. The exception this general rule were Light companies and Highland regiments were distinguished by having black leather equipment throughout and those units with buff facings who besported buff equipment.

Drummers and fifers wore reversed colours with red-faced coats in the regimental facing colour with a bearskin grenadier cap. There were two exceptions. Regiments with blue facings had red coats with lace in the royal livery of red, gold and blue. Drummers from regiments with red or white facings wore white coats faced red with red small clothes. Units with buff facings obeyed the reversed coat rule but had red small clothes as a further distinction.



1.1 Yellow facings: 6th, 9th, 10th, 12th, 15th, 16th, 20th, 26th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 34th, 37th, 38th, 44th, 46th 57th Regiments

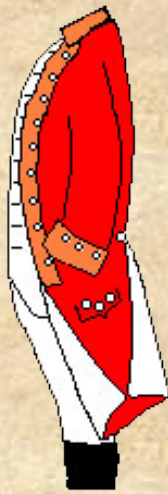
1.2 Green facings: 5th, 11th, 19th, 24th, 45th, 49th, 54th, 55th, 63rd, 68th & 69th Regiments

1.3 Blue facings: 1st & 2nd Guards Battalions, 1st, 4th, 7th, 8th, 18th, 21st, 23rd, 42nd, 60th Regts. Fusiler cap of 23rd Royal Welch Fuzileers.

1.4 Red facings: 33rd, 53rd Regiments

1.5 Light Infantry Company of a regiment with green facings, early uniform showing red waistcoat with various forms of light infantry helmet.

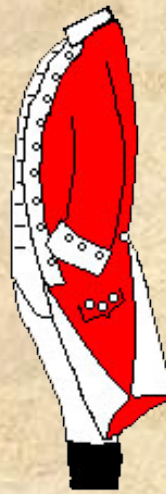
1.6 Red (purple) facings: 59th Regiment



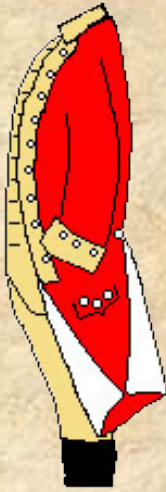
2.1



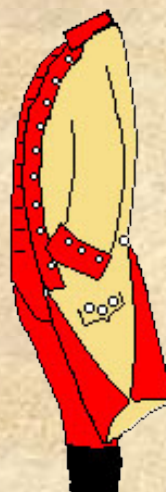
2.2



2.3



2.4



2.5



2.6

2.1 Orange facings: 35th Regiment

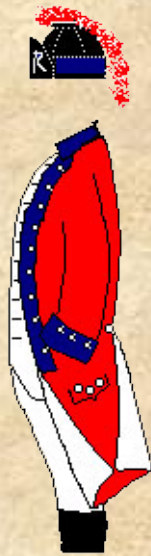
2.2 Black facings: 64th & 70th Regiments

2.3 White 17th, 43rd, 47th, 65th, 71st & 74th Regiments

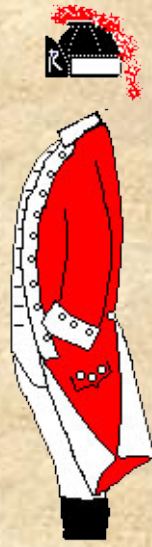
2.4 Buff facings with buff small clothes: 3rd, 14th, 22nd, 27th, 31st, 40th, 52nd, 62nd Regts

2.5 Drummer regiment with buff facings

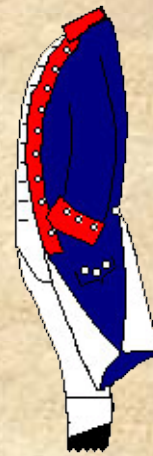
2.6 Drummer regiments with white or red facings



3.1



3.2



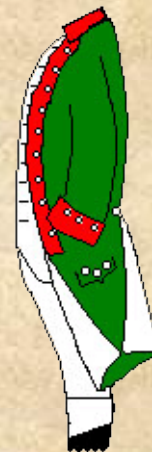
3.3



3.4



3.5



3.6

3.1 16th Light Dragoons (left inset "Tarleton" helmet believed to have been worn by the 16th LD in America)

3.2 17th Light Dragoons

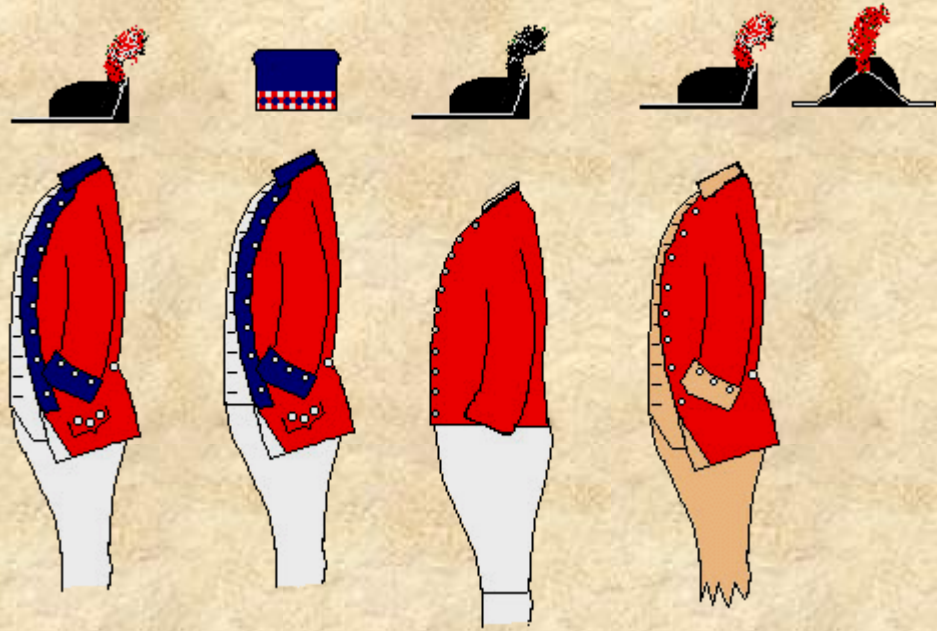
3.3 Royal Artillery, Royal Irish Artillery

3.4 42nd Highlanders, 84th Highlanders (Royal Highland Emigrants)

3.5 71st Highlanders

3.6 Drummer of a green coated regiment

Regiments which served in America for which I have been unable to discover the facings: 76th, 80th, 82nd & 105th (Volunteers of Ireland originally a provincial unit became one of the American establishment corps before placed on the Regular Army List had green facings)



Campaign Dress of the British Army in North America 1777 -1783

Campaign dress, cut off coat, slouch hat (cocked to left)

Campaign dress, highland regiment

Campaign dress, 'roundabout', sleeved waistcoat; Light Infantry Germantown 1777

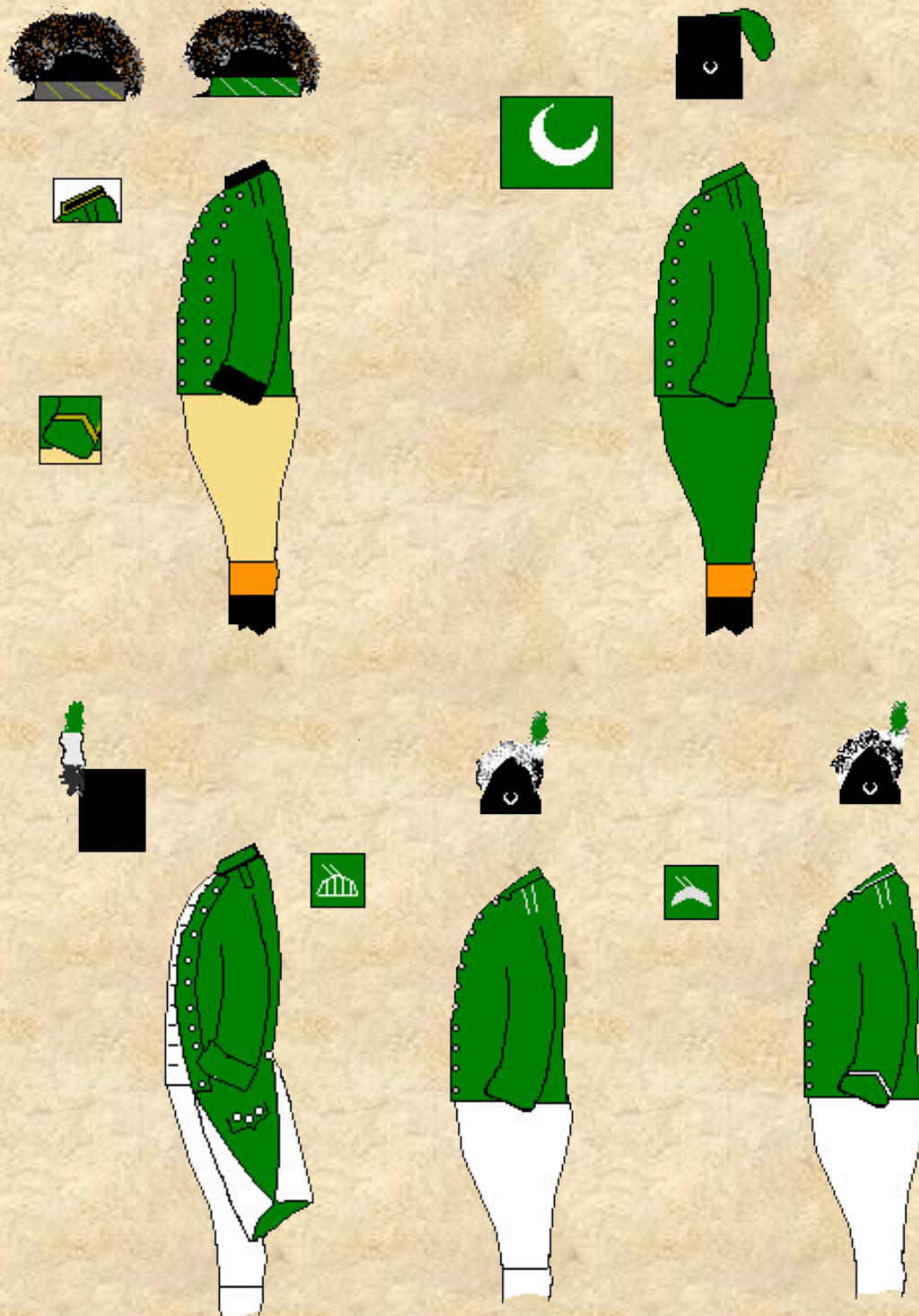
Campaign dress, 'roundabout', sleeved waistcoat; 40th Foot Germantown 1777

Inset campaign hats, upper: Burgoyne expedition, lower: Southern campaign

Guides and Pioneers

Inset detail for Corps of Black Pioneers

Campaign dress, Royal Artillery



Provincials

The first corps were not uniformed, wearing civilian clothing with issued military equipment. Initial issued uniforms were green with various facing colours but in 1779 it was decided that provincials would be dressed in red. Some corps e.g. Queens Rangers remained in green due to the influence of the its CO, John Graves Simcoe.