

Recruiting the 68th.

by Keith Raynor.

Photos by Sue Brown

The subject of recruiting for the British Army during the wars with Revolutionary then Napoleonic France is a large and at times a confusing topic. This is especially so with reference to the varied Acts and Reforms by which the then British Governments tried to find men for the army without resorting to universal conscription. The whole panoply is enough to fill a book. The reader might find some indication of this in the following short article, which concentrates on the 68th Durham Light Infantry. As can be seen, recruiting was much more than the traditional Sergeant regaling a crowd of onlookers with tales of high deeds, full stomachs and copious amounts of ale.

After disembarking, the 68th marched by stages to Yorkshire where it was to stay for the next eighteen months, first at Leeds, then Ripon. Recruiting parties were sent out by the 68th within a short time of its return in order to bring the regiment back to strength again. These recruiting parties usually consisted of an Officer, Serjeant and a few trusted men, and sometimes a Drummer, the main work usually falling to the Serjeant.

By November 1806 fifteen recruiting parties were out, operating in in such diverse places as : Limerick, Tullamore, Dublin, Mullingar, Lisburn, Belfast, Edinburgh, Crieff, Glasgow, Sheffield, Wolverhampton, Preston, Doncaster, Blanford and Durham. Some of these recruiting parties travelled

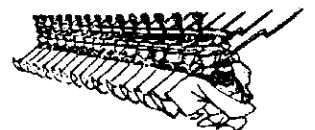


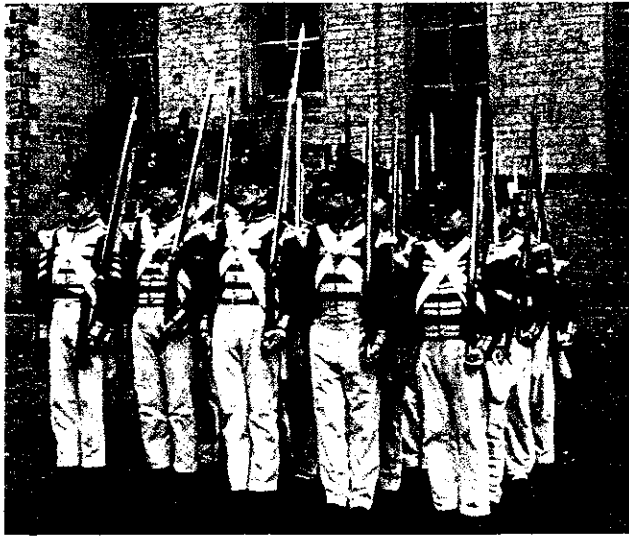
The 68th Foot had been one of those unfortunate Regiments which had suffered much in the West Indies during the earlier part of the Great War with France. In fact the Regiment had at one point been two battalions strong before disease and yellow fever had whittled its strength down. Between January 1801 and May 1806 the 1st/68th lost 1071 men whilst, before it was disbanded, the 2nd/68th lost between January 1801 and August 1802, 423 men out of a total of 1,494. It was thus a very depleted Regiment which landed at Portsmouth on the 16th August 1806. The return to England found the unit numbering just 23 Officers, 39 Sergeants, 15 Drummers and 109 Other Ranks. The Regiment would have to be rebuilt and that would take time.

from place to place, others became virtual fixtures in certain towns.' The recruiting parties had some success in bringing the 68th back to strength, by October 1808, the number of rank and file in the regiment stood at 436 men.

The 68th though, in common with the Army in general, would have found recruiting difficult for a variety of reasons :

1. A career in the army was looked down upon by many in society both rich and poor, which meant the " better " sort of recruit was hard to come by. This was possibly coupled with a distrust of the army. In the absence of a properly organised civilian police force the army had to be called in to keep order. This was particularly so during the





Luddite disturbances. The army was seen as enforcing the distress caused by the emerging factory system of the Industrial Revolution.

2. A further reason why recruiting was difficult was the relative poverty of the ordinary soldier.

For example, in 1800 the wage of a soldier was 7s 7d a week, while an artisan's was 18s. In 1806, the soldiers weekly wage was still 7s 7d, whilst an artisans had risen to 28s. It was suggested that if Britain was to have an army



by voluntary enlistment, then it had to improve the vocation of the soldier and bring it into fair competition with other trades and callings. The most simple way of improving soldiers conditions was to raise his pay. It was further suggested that any improvements in pay were to be coupled with improvements both in pensions and compensation for those disabled from further service. Nevertheless, it would take some time before these measures were endorsed. Britain, involved in an expensive war, and being paymaster of the Allies, was to maintain her own army on a tight budget.

3. Potential recruits also feared army service in the West Indies, where fever had taken an appalling toll of lives, as the 68th well knew to its cost. In just the first four years of the war with France, from 1793 to 1796, the West Indies had cost the army 80,000 men lost to the service, including 40,000 dead. No wonder some lads thought twice or more about joining.

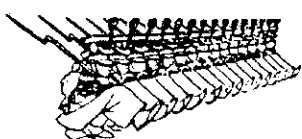
4. The army's discouragement of marriage was also detrimental to recruiting. There was no allowance for many regular soldier's wives or accomodation for them. And, though the era saw

a great expansion in barrack building, married quarters were virtually non-existent. Wives often had to share the communal barrack rooms with the rest of their husband's comrades. Wives were expected to help in camp or barracks by cooking, taking in laundry, sewing or even nursing if they wanted to stay on the regimental strength and qualify for an allowance. But many wives were left with no support if their husbands were posted overseas and they were not chosen to go with him. Orders printed in 1808² stated that : "Women, Only in the proportion of six to every hundred men, will be permitted to embark. They should be carefully selected as being of good character, and having the inclination and ability to render themselves useful : It is very desirable that those who have children should be left at home. All women above the number prescribed must be sent to their respective homes, previous to their Regiments marching for embarkation "³.

5. The greatest deterrent to recruiting though was the fact that men enlisted for life. It was a daunting prospect to sign all your life away. Once in,

that was it, unless fever, a bullet or some such soldier's bane put an end to future prospects. The survivors' careers ended when a Medical Board deemed them unfit for further service and returned them to civilian life.

Though in most cases a small pension was granted to such men many found themselves too old to learn a new skill or trade with which to supplement this entitlement⁴.



However, the 68th's return to Britain did coincide with the enactment by Parliament of the Royal Warrant of 7th October 1806. This, despite opposition by some senior generals⁵ meant that men could now enlist in the army for set periods instead of for life, thus hopefully encouraging more men to join⁶. John Green of the 68th who enlisted in October 1806 recalled being, "...sworn in for seven years and six months, if at the expiration of that time it should be peace, or three years longer, if war should continue, and not for an unlimited period".

Nevertheless, evidence from the 68th's Inspection Returns for between 1809 and 1813 indicates that a substantial number of the regiment was composed of men who had signed on for unlimited service. Whilst not denigrating the contributions made by the short service men, it would be the men who had signed on for unlimited service who would form the cadre of the Regiment and provide for the Regiment's long term experience⁷. The 68th's return to Britain in 1806 also coincided with the need by the British Army for new Light Infantry Regiments. The Order converting the 68th to a Light Infantry Regiment was issued on 10th September 1808; the 68th were to be, "...assimilated with regard to their clothing, arming and discipline to the 43rd and 52nd regiments, and that, in consequence thereof, an additional Lieutenant, sergeant and corporal per company be borne on the establishment...".

The 68th had no special Light Infantry qualifications which favoured their conversion to such a corps. The Regiment's C.O. Colonel Farley was aged 57 with 41 years service and according to Green was, "...highly respected and much beloved by the men". However Rottenburgh who inspected the Regiment in May 1809 reported that Colonel Farley, "...being a very old man, appears not well qualified for the command of a light infantry regiment". This view was enforced by the Inspecting-General John Hope at the end of May 1809, "...it would be of very great advantage to the service if Colonel Farley of the 68th could be removed from that corps, to a situation more suited to his age, & which would at the same time be adequate to his rank and service". Farley was tactfully removed and appointed to the staff in Jamaica. Lt. Colonel William Johnstone his replacement was 37 years old with 20 years soldiering experience, but still had no particular Light Infantry background. The reason for the change lay elsewhere.

The 68th were most probably chosen for conversion to Light Infantry because the unit now consisted of young new recruits who were more adaptable to the Light Infantry training. Sir John Moore had suggested such stating that the, "...service of light infantry does not so much require men of stature as it requires them to be intelligent, handy, and active, and they should in the first instance be young, or they will neither take to

the service nor be easily instructed in it".

This can be borne out by the returns of the 68th's Inspection Report at Brabourne Lees, 3rd May 1809. The majority of Privates, Drummers (actually Buglers) and N.C.O.'s were between the ages of 20 to 30⁸. The report also added that the general appearance of the men had improved, "...by the number of recruits and volunteers which that corps has received, the volunteers being particularly good and more adapted to the light service, than the old men of the Battalion". Finally, this same report criticised the 68th's recruiting service: the "...Officers require a great deal of instruction", nevertheless, there were eleven officers out on recruiting duty.

Notes.

1. The distribution & size of 68th recruiting parties between the years 1809 & 1813 can be seen as follows :

Inspection Return 3rd May 1809 : 20 Officers recruiting.

Inspection Return 16th May 1810 : 9 Officers recruiting.

Inspection Return 16th Oct. 1810 : 12 Officers recruiting.

Inspection Return 31st May 1811 : 9 Officers recruiting at, Maghara, Armagh, Omagh, Dublin, Mufsellburgh, Leeds, Bath, Ipswich & Durham.

Inspection Return 28th Oct. 1811 : 6 Officers recruiting at, (Depot Company) Dublin, Armagh, Edinburgh, Leeds, Ipswich & Durham.

Inspection Return 8th May 1812 : 6 Officers recruiting at, (Depot Company) Dublin, Armagh, Knaresborough, Southampton, Ipswich & Durham.

Inspection Return 17th May 1812 : 4 Officers recruiting at, Armagh, Leeds, Ipswich & Durham.

Inspection Return 21st Oct. 1812 : 3 Officers recruiting at, (Depot Company) Armagh, Dublin & Durham.

Inspection Return 9th Feb. 1813 : 3 Officers recruiting at, Dublin, Armagh & Durham.

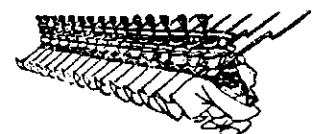
2. Booklet entitled, " General Orders applicable to The Troops destined for Continental Service " 12th July 1808. Printed by W. Clowes, Northumberland Court, Strand.

3. 68th Regiment. Inspection Return 16th May 1810 Hythe Barracks.

Number of women legally married	Male Children			Female Children		
	Under 10	Above 10	Total	Under 10	Above 10	Total
61	22	0	22	25	0	25

68th Regiment. Inspection Return 16th Oct. 1810 Hythe Barracks.

Number of women legally married	Male Children			Female Children		
	Under 10	Above 10	Total	Under 10	Above 10	Total
74	26	0	26	26	1	27



68th Depot Company Inspection Return 28th Oct. 1811 Silverhill.

Number of women legally married	Male Children			Female Children		
	Under 10	Above 10	Total	Under 10	Above 10	Total
20	12	1	13	16	1	17

68th Depot Company Inspection Return 8th May 1812 Bradbourne Lees.

Number of women legally married	Male Children			Female Children		
	Under 10	Above 10	Total	Under 10	Above 10	Total
21	14	1	15	12	2	14

68th Regiment. Inspection Return 17th May 1812 Castillo Branco.

Number of women legally married	Male Children			Female Children		
	Under 10	Above 10	Total	Under 10	Above 10	Total
73	41	4	45	26	1	27

68th Depot Company Inspection Return 21st Oct. 1812 Bradbourne Lees.

Number of women legally married	Male Children			Female Children		
	Under 10	Above 10	Total	Under 10	Above 10	Total
21	14	1	15	10	2	12

68th Regiment. Inspection Return 9th Feb. 1813 St. Martinha.

Number of women legally married	Male Children			Female Children		
	Under 10	Above 10	Total	Under 10	Above 10	Total
23	3	0	3	5	0	5

4. Edward Costello (95th Rifle Regt.) in his memoirs recalled the fate of a discharged comrade, " Any of my readers passing through Knightsbridge may chance to observe a tall military figure, bent with years, a bag thrown over his shoulders, stooping to pick up bones, etc. This person is no other than the once redoubtable Humphrey Allen, at that time one of the smartest and finest looking men in our Rifles ". This is not to say all ex-service men struggled in later life, Lawrence of the 40th, "...drifted between one or two trades and finally took a little public House ". Morris of the 73rd, " returned home...and soon unassisted attained a respectable position in civil society ". Costello himself, at first suffered near starvation after discharge but finished up a Yeoman Warder of the Tower of London. John Green after leaving the 68th at first took work as a book-hawker in Lincoln and Alford but, "...success was so indifferent, that I gave it up and returned to Louth ". Three weeks later he found, "...employment at the carpet manufactory " but " In consequence of our trade being very uncertain, and subject to continual change, I fixed myself in a small way of business, in which I have been the last six or seven years ". Nevertheless many Veterans did suffer hardship after being discharged, particularly the long term enlisted man. Short term enlisters could often return to their old trade.

5. One of those who distrusted the changes

bought about by the warrant of October 1806 was General Sir John Moore. In correspondence between himself and General Craufurd he listed arguments against short term emlistment. He much preferred the unlimited service soldier because of the experience gained and also argued that these soldiers should be rewarded. He also wrote, "...the service of the Line should be held so high that no service of any other kind should be substituted for it, nor any person entitled to the rewards it holds out by other than actual service in the Line ". He further added, " After twenty - one years service many men will be found able and willing to serve, and as soldiers of this description are invaluable, they should be encouraged to continue with their regts ". Moore went on, " The pay of the N.C.O.'s was not raised some years ago, in the same proportion with that of the men, it is by making their situation comfortable that a portion of the more respectable part of the population may be tempted into the army ". He then added why the present number of old or veteran soldiers was low, " It is thought, from the returns which have lately been called for, that a very small proportion of our soldiery ever attain 14 years service. The returns of the present army lead to this conclusion; but it must be recollected that we are now recovering from the effects of a very destructful St.Domingo and West India war, which together with the great augmentation made recently to the army, renders the number of old soldiers at this moment proportionally small ".

6. Extract from the Rules and Regulations, War Office 22nd October 1806.

For the better ordering of His Majesty's Army, and for improving the condition of soldiers, as contained in His Majesty's warrant of the 7th October 1806, and in certain Acts passed during the last session of Parliament.

Periods and Terms of Inlisting.

In the Infantry..... 7 years

In the Cavalry.....10 years

In the Artillery.....12 years

Men willing to engage for a second period of service will be re-inlisted,

In the Infantry..... 7 years

In the Cavalry..... 7 years

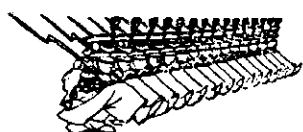
In the Artillery..... 5 years

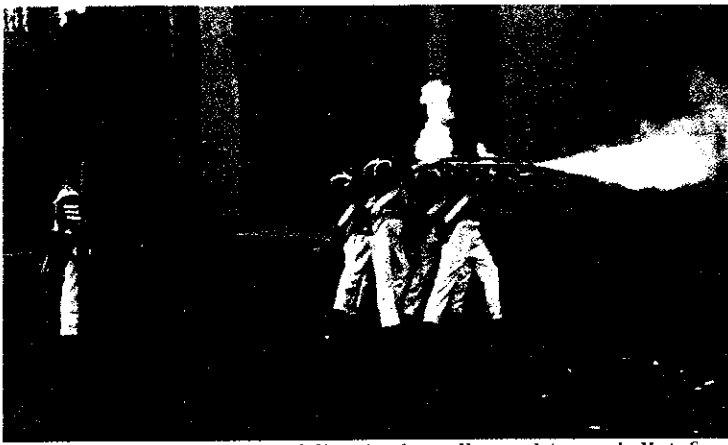
Men willing to engage for a Third period of service will be re-inlisted,

In the Infantry..... 7 years

In the Cavalry..... 7 years

In the Artillery..... 5 years





No N.C.O. or Soldier to be allowed to re-inlist for a second period of service, until within Twelve months of the end of his first period, nor for a Third, until within Two years of the end of his second. The new period in each case not to be considered as commencing until after the Expiration of the one proceeding.

7. As can be seen below, the percentage of "unlimited service" men remained more or less constant between 1809 & 1813. Taking each year in turn, the "unlimited service" men (O.R.'s) account for :

Inspection Return 3rd May 1809. 216 out of 656 men. 32.9%

Inspection Return 16th May 1810. 195 out of 578 men. 33.7%

Inspection Return 31st May 1811. 301 out of 715 men. 42.0 %

Inspection Return 17th May 1812. 184 out of 527 men. 34.9%

Inspection Return 9th Feb. 1813. 217 out of 525 men. 41.3%

The figures show that at anyone time at least one-third of the men in the 68th were of unlimited service, thus eventually providing a pool of experience men in the Regiment.

8. The complete age profile from the May 1809 Return is copied below. By way of comparison the age profiles from Returns in 1810 and 1811 are also shown prior to the regiments embarkation to Portugal in 1811.

68th Inspection Return 3rd May 1809 Bradbourne Lees.

	Serjeants	Corporals	Drummers	Privates
45 & upwards	1	0	0	1
40 & upwards	0	0	0	14
35 & upwards	8	3	0	50
30 & upwards	22	14	1	88
25 & upwards	14	22	3	220
20 & upwards	1	5	2	171
18 & upwards	0	1	7	85
Under	0	0	5	27
Total	46	43	18	656

68th Inspection Return 16 May 1810 Hythe Barracks

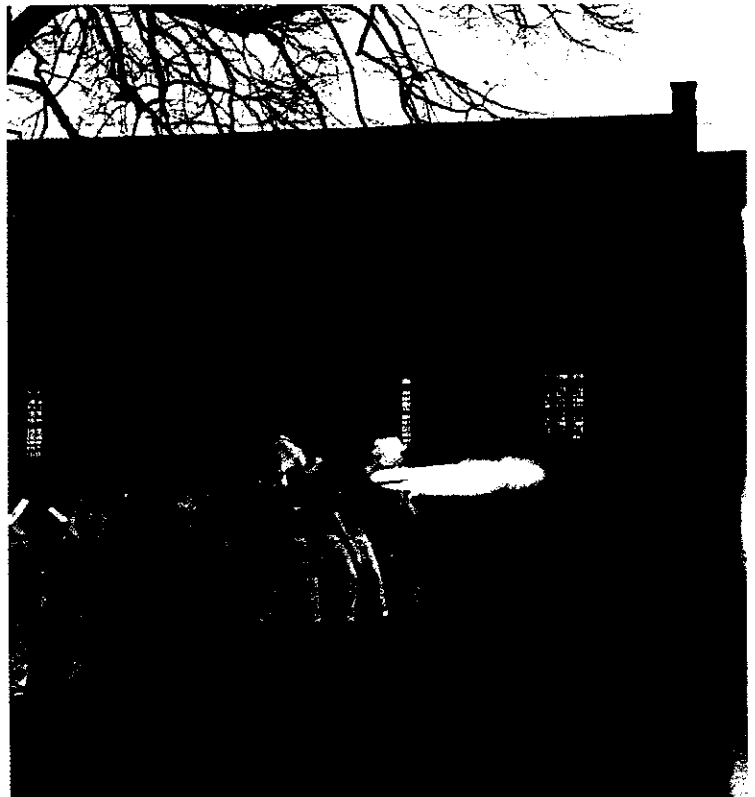
	Serjeants	Corporals	Drummers	Privates
50 & upwards	0	0	0	1
45 & upwards	1	1	0	7
40 & upwards	1	5	0	16
35 & upwards	13	2	0	36
30 & upwards	25	12	0	110
25 & upwards	8	25	6	219
20 & upwards	0	5	6	145
18 & upwards	0	0	4	37
Under	0	0	5	7
Total	48	48	21	578

68th Inspection Return 16 October 1810 Hyde Barracks

	Serjeants	Corporals	Drummers	Privates
55 & upwards	0	0	0	1
50 & upwards	1	0	0	0
45 & upwards	0	0	0	4
40 & upwards	3	1	0	23
35 & upwards	9	6	0	54
30 & upwards	25	11	0	81
25 & upwards	12	26	1	208
20 & upwards	0	4	10	172
18 & upwards	0	0	7	52
Under	0	0	4	11
Total	50	48	22	606

68th Inspection Return 31st May 1811 Lewis

	Serjeants	Corporals	Drummers	Privates
50 & upwards	1	0	0	1
45 & upwards	0	0	0	6
40 & upwards	1	2	0	8
35 & upwards	12	7	0	51
30 & upwards	25	12	1	81
25 & upwards	11	24	3	197
20 & upwards	1	9	7	258
18 & upwards	0	0	10	97
Under	0	0	2	16
Total	49	54	23	715



Recruiting the 68th.

Part 2

by Keith Raynor.

Images of the 68th DLI Display Team by Sue Brown

The majority of volunteers to the army came from the Militia, special instructions being issued by Horse Guards for their recruitment⁹. Indeed, Parliament made periodical demands on the Militia to supply volunteers to the Regular Army. In 1805, Pitt took 9,000 Militiamen for the army; In 1806, Windham took 4,000 from the Irish Militia. Castlereagh asked for 28,000 from the Militia in 1807 and then took another 28,492 in 1809, whilst Palmerston had 11,453 from them in 1811. Between September 1806 and June 1809, the 68th was to receive 925 men of whom 521 were from the Militia¹⁰. The largest contributor to the 68th was the Durham Militia at 168 men, giving some credence to the unit being a Durham Regiment¹¹. The geographical spread of these Militia volunteers to the 68th was, however, wide. For example, the pay books of the 68th (reference WO 12/7633 and WO 12/7634 P.R.O.) show that between March 1809 and June 1811 volunteers came from the following Militias :

ENGLAND

Durham East Devon East Suffolk East Yorks
Gloucester Northumberland Nottingham
North Yorks Oxford South Lincoln Suffolk
2nd Surrey Sussex Warwick Westminster
Wiltshire West Kent West Middlesex
2nd West Yorks

IRELAND

Donegal City of Cork City of Limerick Leitrim
Longford West Meath Wexford

SCOTLAND

Argyll Dumfries Fifeshire Perthshire

WALES

Merioneth

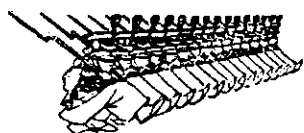
This diverse source of volunteers to the 68th led to a mixture of British Nationals. The figures for Other Ranks in May 1809 record that out of 656 men, 328 were English, 249 Irish, 78 Scotch and 1 foreigner¹². This diversity did have its advantages, as Kincaid of the 95th was to state, "The Irishman seems never to drink water when he can get whiskey, unless he likes it better - the Scotchman, for a soldier, sometimes shows too much of the lawyer - the Englishman too, has his besetting sin - but by mixing the three in due proportions, the evils are found to counteract each other...and for the making of a perfect regiment I should therefore prescribe one-half English, and of Irish and Scotch a quarter each. Yet...I love to see a National Corps, and hope never to see a

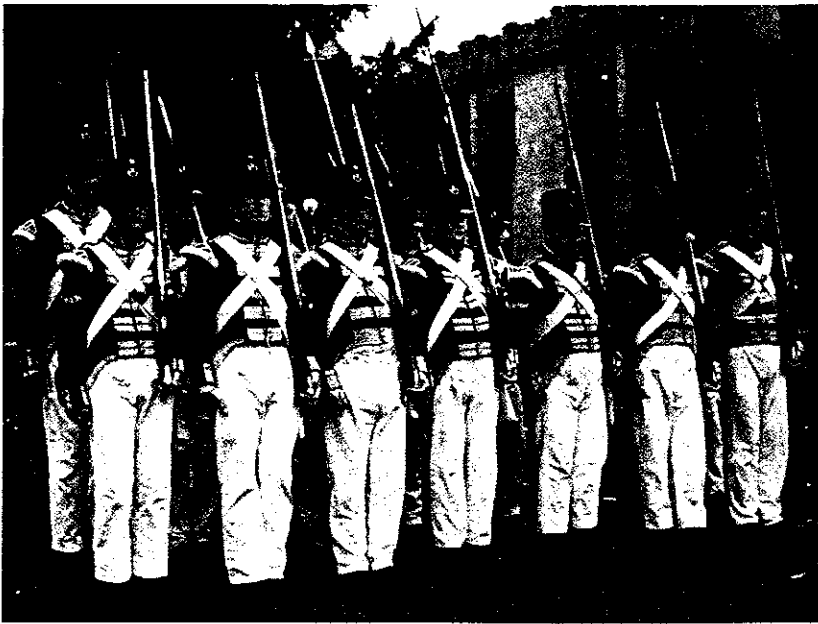
British Army without them".

John Green, the 68th's soldier diarist, remembered that at Ripon, Yorkshire, "...We received recruits every week. I was the first recruit that joined the 68th regiment after they left India (West Indies), the second was a youth called Forbes. In May and June 1807, we began to increase our numbers rapidly, In August a large draught from the Irish militia, and another from the Durham Militia, joined us. After this, another draught from the Second West York, besides several recruits from many parts of England, Scotland and Ireland. So that, at the end of 1807, we began to look like a regiment, before this we were only like a company".

Not all the Volunteers from the Militia were that eager to join a Line Regiment, and why should they? All the benefits the Army had to offer could be obtained without risking one's life overseas either from fighting or from fever in some tropical abode. Thomas Morris, himself a volunteer from the Loyal Volunteers of St. Georges, Middlesex, into the 2/73rd, would recollect in his memoirs a companion relating to him how various stratagems were, "...adopted in Militia Regiments to induce men to volunteer into regiments of the Line. The Militia would be drawn up in Line, and the Officers, or N.C.O.'s, from the regiments requiring Volunteers, would give a glowing description of their regiments, describing the Victories they had gained and the honours they had acquired, and conclude by offering, as a bounty, to volunteers for life £14, to volunteers for the limited period of seven years, £11. If these inducements were not effectual in getting men, then coercive measures were adopted, heavy and long drills, and field exercises were forced on them; which were so oppressive, that to escape them, the men would embrace the alternative and join the regulars".

The important point to note about the Militia volunteers was that they were volunteers, not pressed men and were probably the best material available in the country. Though having little combat experience these Militia men were trained soldiers with at least twelve months drill and discipline behind them. But the weakness with the Militia volunteers was that, though trained in the manoeuvres and drills needed, and having experience of the discipline required of them; it would take time for them to become part of a regular regiment. "The strength of a unit in action should be the strength of a team, in which the men know each other, their N.C.O.'s and their Officers..." and vice versa (Glover, echoing the sentiments of





General Sir William Napier). The Militia volunteers though trained would still take time to become part of this team.

The Militia volunteers and civilian recruits enlisted for a variety of reasons. John Green was an apprentice in a Louth carpet factory, "where in vain I tried to settle, having a disposition to wander". He ran away to sea serving on a privateer out of Hull. He soon returned to Louth where his friends, "...said they were sure I should soon become a soldier but I thought differently...how much better they knew the tendency of my restless disposition than I did myself". He enlisted not long afterwards at Leeds.

Some men joined for patriotic reasons, others for the bounty money, and some joined for adventure. Some joined to escape unemployment or even to secure a pension¹⁵. A number of men elected to "volunteer" to avoid prison¹⁴. More importantly for some, the army guaranteed clothing, regular meals and accommodation. Also, the army did offer fellowship and a sense of esprit de corps not equalled in the civilian world.

Recruiting posters emphasised the money to be earned, the glory to be won, the adventure of an easy life without dwelling on the grimmer side of soldiering. A recruiting poster for the 85th Foot in the Yorkshire Post advertised for, "... a number of bold aspiring Yorkshire lads to serve as Gentlemen soldiers... whose hearts beat high at the sound of the Drum and who have an inclination above servile employment...they will enter into present pay



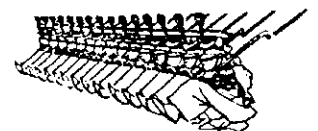
and good quarters. Now is the time my lads, step forth, the war will soon be over...What a liberal bounty you'll receive merely to go on a Party of Pleasure !!!"

The 73rd foot in 1813 produced a poster which among other appeals was a direct call to the Militia; "INDIA FOREVER, five shillings a day and a black servant, God prosper the 73rd or old Mangalore Regiment. All lads of spirit and true courage desirous to push their fortunes have now a glorious opportunity by entering from the Militia into the old seventy - third"¹⁵.

A volunteer from the Militia or civilian recruit received a bounty on joining up, a portion of which was kept back for "necessaries" or clothing. The bounty money did not last long. John

Green of the 68th recalled, "I received two pounds in part of my bounty, which was only eleven guineas instead of sixteen...My bounty was soon spent, although I was no drinker, I scarcely know how it went, but before one month had passed over not a shilling of it remained". Harris of the 95th when on the recruiting service remembered, "I may say that for three days and nights we kept up the dance and drunken riot. Every volunteer got ten guineas bounty, which, except the two kept back for necessaries they spent in every sort of excess, till all was gone".

Part of this deduction from the bounty was to cover the cost for a rudimentary uniform. Supplies of these clothing articles were sent to the Headquarters of each Recruiting District in Great Britain, "...in order that they may be delivered to every recruit on his being immediately approved, and the cost of them is to be defrayed out of the Bounty payable at that period"¹⁶. This clothing consisted of a white wool kersey Jacket and in 1808 a pair of white cloth Breeches. The idea was to dress the recruits into an identifiable uniform



as soon as possible, (in case of any second thoughts), and to get them used to military discipline. Also, as no soldier was permitted to have any civilian clothing, these articles of dress were sold off for their advantage. These profits helped to purchase from the Commanding Officers the required regimental clothing and other "necessaries".

It should be noted, though, that this rudimentary uniform was only given to civilian recruits. Volunteers from the Militia usually kept their own uniforms and necessaries until replaced by the regular regiment into which they had enlisted. For instance, whilst at Dublin, many men volunteered into regiments of the line from the Nottinghamshire Militia, "...and embarked direct for Spain in their Militia Uniforms" (Lowe). There is also surviving in the Musee Royal de l'Armee, Brussels, what is possibly a Militia coat worn by a soldier in the Coldstream Guards, at Waterloo 1815 (Military Illustrated no.19).

The constant flow of volunteers and recruits to the 68th can be seen in the comments found contained in the Inspection Returns for the Regiment:

I.R. 3rd May 1809: Recruits joined 59, Received from the Militia Regiments 131 (1st Sept to 1st March)

I.R. 16th May 1810: Volunteers from the Militia 154. Recruits joined 37 (1st Sept to 1st March)



Robert Yuill,
OC of the 68th DLI Display Team

I.R. 16th Oct. 1810: The Soldiers are a good serviceable body of young men. Volunteers from the Militia 39. Recruits joined 19 (25 March to 24 Sept)

I.R. 31st May 1811: The recruits and volunteers extremely good. Volunteers 127. Recruits 29.

I.R. 8th May 1812: They have had twenty three recruits since Depot Company last Inspection. They are an acquisition to the battalion & every attention is paid to perfect them in their duty.

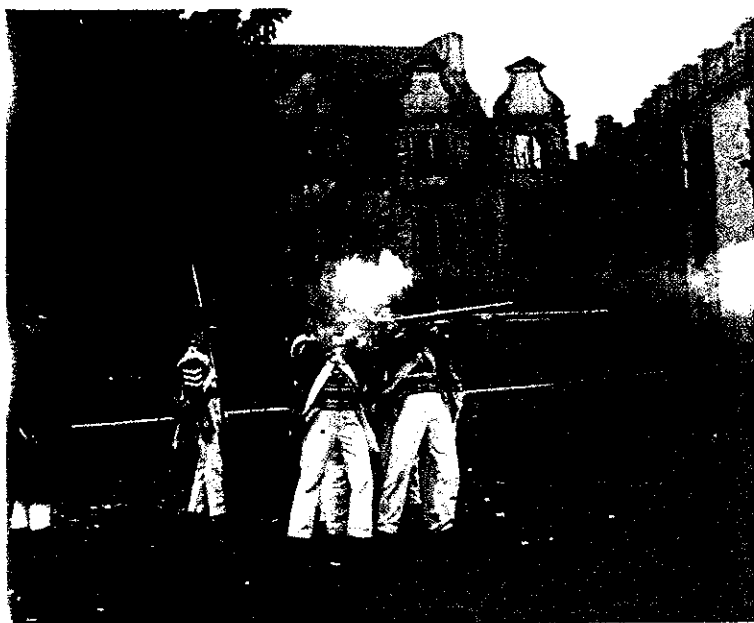
I.R. 17th May 1812: Fifty eight recruits have joined since the last confidential report was made at Castillo Branco, and are doing their duty in the ranks.

I.R. 21st Oct. 1812: The best of their drilled men have lately proceeded to join the Battn (from Depot Company). Those remaining are tollerably good - they are not particularly clean - but tollerably healthy. They are not well drilled but are improving & are sober & well behaved. Recruits - They have had ninety three joined since last Inspection. They are an acquisition to the Battalion.

I.R. 9th Feb, 1813: Ninety one recruits or volunteers have joined at St. Martinha since the last Inspection. They appear to be well drilled, and an acquisition to the corps.

It would appear from the returns that the term, Volunteer, was used mainly to denote volunteers from the Militia; whereas the term recruit was mainly used to denote any civilians joining the regiment. Also, once the Regiment was overseas, a Depot company was established which was used to train volunteers or recruits up to the standards required. Once a proficiency in drill had been achieved these men would be transferred to the main battalion as reinforcements - or more likely, replacements.

By mid 1811, the 68th had been transformed from the one which had returned from the West Indies in 1806. It had been trained and converted into a Light Infantry Regiment, one of the British Army's "elite" formations. It was also an experienced body of men, having undertaken at least one major campaign, this being Walcheren in 1809¹⁷. Indeed, on embarkation to Lisbon there were still 89 men serving who had joined the Regiment in 1800, and all but 250 men had served in Walcheren. Thus about two-thirds of



those men who sailed for the Peninsula were mature soldiers (Ward).

These soldiers consisted mainly of young men, the main proportion (36%) being between 20 & 25 of age (O.R.'s). 27.5% were between 25 & 30 years of age (O.R.'s). 42% of these men (O.R.'s) were of "unlimited Service " which gave the Regiment long term stability and experience. The 68th also represented the ethnic mix of the British Isles. The last Inspection Return prior to departure for Portugal, shows that for O.R.'s the Regiment consisted of 47% English, 42% Irish and 11% Scots. There was besides a mixture from the different English Shires. Finally, the Regiment took an allowance of married women with them. No figures are available from the return of 31st May 1811 made just before embarkation for the number of married women with the regiment. The return for the 17th May 1812 at Castillo Branco however shows that 73 women were legally married out of 527 men (O.R.'s), or one woman for about 7 men¹⁸.

On the 7th June 1811, the 68th embarked for Lisbon, Portugal. Three years of arduous campaigning lay ahead of them which would earn the regiment five battle honours, Salamanca, Vitoria, Pyrennes, Nivelles and Orthez¹⁹, a future probably few of the 68th's survivors could have envisaged when they landed at Portsmouth five years before. The 68th had been rebuilt.

Footnotes

9. Recruiting Department, Horse Guards 20th April 1811.

(Extracts From) Special Instructions for the guidance of General Officers and Others, employed in carrying into effect the Volunteering from the Militia to the Line.

3rd. The Men will be permitted to volunteer for any Regt. of the Line, with the exception of the 60th, 98th, 99th, 100th and 101st Regts, and must be attested accordingly, and not for any particular Battalion.

4th. As the services for which the Light Infantry Regiments and Rifle Corps are intended, are of a peculiar nature, and to perform them to advantage require men who combine in their persons bodily strength and activity with intelligence of mind; It has been determined that the 43rd, 51st, 52nd, 68th, 71st and 85th Light Infantry Regiments, and 95th Rifle Corps, shall receive volunteers only from the Light Infantry Companies of the Regiments of Militia.

8th. The Volunteers will be permitted to extend their services to the Line, without limitation of time, or for a period of seven years. The former will be allowed a Bounty of Fourteen guineas, and the latter a Bounty of Ten guineas; One half of which is to be paid to the Volunteer on attesting, and the remainder (after completing his Regimental Necessaries) on joining the Recruiting Depot or Headquarters of the Regiment.

9th. The Volunteers are to take with them to the Line the clothing of the present year, and are to leave with

the Militia their Greatcoats and other Regimental Appointments. Those who make choice of the 95th or Rifle corps provided they have other clothing in their possession in which they can proceed to their Regiment, are to leave the clothing of the present year with the Regt. of Militia from which they Volunteer.

12th. Men not above thirty-five years of age, or under five feet four inches, to be taken.

23rd. Officers from the Militia, in the proportion of one for every fifty men furnished by the Regiment, will be appointed to Ensigncies in the Line on the recommendation of the Colonels of Militia, and as far as circumstances will permit, they will be appointed to the Regiments into which the volunteers from their respective corps have generally entered.

24th. Serjeants and Corporals in the proportion of one of each rank for every Twenty men volunteering, will be received in the Line according to their Rank, but these Serjeants and Corporals must necessarily be attested as private Soldiers.

The above instructions were soon ammended as follows :

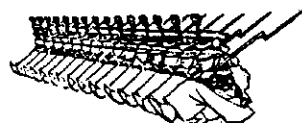
General Orders, Horse Guards, 26th April 1811.

It having been represented to the C-in-C. that by restricting the Light Infantry Regts of the line, and the 95th, or Rifle Regiment to receiving Volunteers from the Light Infantry Companies of the Militia only, as directed by the Instruction dated 20th Instant, many Militia Soldiers competent to that service, though not actually in the Light Companies, may be prevented availing themselves of this opportunity of engaging in it.

His Excellency approves of Volunteers from the Militia being received generally into the Regiments named in the Margin (43rd, 51st, 52nd, 68th, 71st, 85th and 95th), provided they are in point of strength and activity fitted for Light Infantry Service, and are of Stature from five feet seven to five feet ten inches.

10. The 68th were not the only unit recruiting from the Militia. Harris of the 95th remembered trying to coax a few men of the East Kent Militia into the Rifles; and in the case of the Leicester Militia, many of whom had already volunteered for the 7th Royal Fusileers, Harris recalled, "The appearance of our Rifle uniform, and a little of serjeant Adams blarney, so took the fancies of the volunteers that we got everyone of them for the Rifle Corps, and both Officers into the bargain". However, recruiting from the Militia for the Regular Army was not popular among Militia Officers, some of whom looked on themselves as mere recruiting Officers. Many though came to regard the continual drain on their Regiments as an inevitable evil. Henry Dundas did warn Castlereagh about the situation in 1807, " Depend upon it (this kind of recruiting) will disgust your most respectable Militia Officers and many of them will leave it (Glover).

11. Between 1807 & 1809, 168 men volunteered from the Durham Militia with a further 9 brought in by the Durham recruiting party. In May 1811, a further 15 men volunteered from the Durham Militia bringing the total Durham connection to 192 in four years. But by December 1814 only 58 of these remained on the



books. The rest had died, been discharged, transferred or deserted (Ward).

12. To give some idea of the composition of the 68th the following information concerning the Numbers of each Country has been extracted from the Returns for the period 1809 to 1813. As can be seen, while to begin with the majority of men were of English origin, a substantial proportion were Irish, particularly the N.C.O.'s. The Irish element was to grow as the Peninsula Campaign continued. This might be explained by the fact that the number of recruiting parties diminished (see note one) after the unit had reached combat strength and been sent abroad. Only 3 parties remained, 2 in Ireland and one in England. it is more likely than than any replacements for casualties would proportionally come more from Ireland than England.

Inspection Return 3rd May 1809. Bradbourne Lees.

	Serjeants	Corporals	Drummers	Privates
English	10	15	13	328
Scottish	2	6	0	78
Irish	34	24	5	249
Foreigners	0	0	0	1
Total	46	45	18	656

Inspection Return 16th May 1810. Hythe Barracks.

	Serjeants	Corporals	Drummers	Privates
English	11	12	16	258
Scottish	4	10	0	78
Irish	32	26	5	251
Foreigners	1	0	0	0
Total	48	48	21	578

Inspection Return 16th October 1810. Hythe Barracks.

	Serjeants	Corporals	Drummers	Privates
English	8	10	17	262
Scottish	7	10	1	68
Irish	35	28	4	276
Foreigners	0	0	0	0
Total	50	48	22	606

Inspection Return 31st May 1811. Lewis.

	Serjeants	Corporals	Drummers	Privates
English	10	18	18	348
Scottish	7	8	1	76
Irish	32	28	4	291
Foreigners	0	0	0	0
Total	49	54	23	715

Inspection Return 17th May 1812. Castillo Branco.

	Serjeants	Corporals	Drummers	Privates
English	10	10	13	219
Scottish	9	9	0	91
Irish	15	10	5	217
Foreigners	0	0	0	0
Total	34	29	18	527

Inspection Return 9th February 1813. St. Martinha.

	Serjeants	Corporals	Drummers	Privates
English	6	14	14	225
Scottish	5	7	1	55
Irish	20	11	4	245
Foreigners	0	0	0	0
Total	31	32	19	525

13. James Anton of the 42nd Royal Highlanders (Black Watch) would recall that he and a friend enlisted from the Militia for a pension, " My friend Huntly had been promoted some time previously to be a corporal...and as little prospect of further advancement appeared to gratify his views, he determined to volunteer his service to the line. His remark was, " I serve at present secure of life and limb, but with no prospect of future benefit in old age, which I may attain; it is better to hazard both abroad in the regular service, than have poverty and hard labour accompanying me to a peaceful grave at home". I concurred in his opinion..."

14. The Army did provide for minor criminals to exchange their sentences for service in Regiments particular those overseas and in such "popular" places as the West Indies :

Horse Guards 2nd May 1800. WO 3/22 Page 172

Sir, In answer to your letter relative to Wm. Hyde now a prisoner in Worcester Goal for a Burglary. I am directed to inform you, that if the man signs a certificate of his being willing to serve as a soldier in the West Indies, and thereby escape the trial by the Civil Law, H.R. Highness will consent to his being sent to Chatham Bks. for General Service.

Horse Guards 5th May 1801. WO 3/33 Pages 633,634
Sir, ...I take this opportunity of informing you that a man named Robert Brown, who was convicted of theft at the last Nottingham Assizes has been pardoned upon condition of his enlisting for General Service, and Orders have in consequence been given for his removal to Chatham.

15. A recent survey of No.6 (Grenadier) company 2nd/73rd at Waterloo 1815, shows that out of 56 men (excluding those on staff), 31 or 55% had volunteered at one time or another from the militia. The spread of militia volunteers was again wide, men coming from all over Britain and Ireland.

Military Illustrated No.25 June 1990.

16. General Orders. Horse Guards 14th December 1808.

Articles of clothing for a recruit

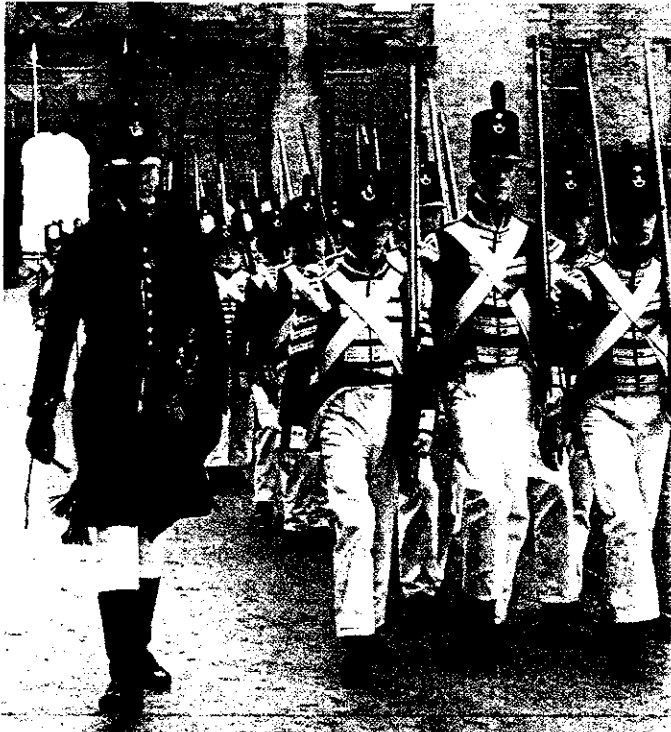
White Kersey Jacket.....	£0 6s 4d
White cloth breeches.....	£0 6s 2d
Pair gaiters.....	£0 3s 8d
stock and clasp.....	£0 0s 9d
cap and plume.....	£0 3s 1d
Total.....	£1 0s 0d

Necessaries allowed on intermediate approval

White Kersey Jacket.....	£0 6s 4d
White Cloth breeches.....	£0 6s 2d
Pair gaiters.....	£0 3s 8d
stock and clasp.....	£0 0s 9d
cap and plume.....	£0 3s 1d
1 shirt.....	£0 6s 0d
1 pair shoes.....	£0 6s 0d
Total.....	£1 12s 0d

If the recruit has of his own any articles fit to be included among his Regimental Necessaries, the surplus of the portion of Bounty allotted for the purchase of necessaries is to be paid to him in money.





17. The 68th appears to have recovered quickly from the Walcheren experience in regard to numbers and efficiency. The 68th had totalled eighty nine men when brought home in December 1809. The Regimental records give a total figure of deaths due to Walcheren fever as 384, while the monthly returns show a total of 218 over the period 25th Aug. to 25th Oct. 1810 (Ward).

The Inspection return of 16th May 1810 lists 578 N.C.O.'s and O.R.'s with 225 died between 1st Sept 1809 and 1st March 1810. The return also has this telling remark, " 245 suits of... clothing only...have been fitted in consequence of the bad state of health of the Taylors ".

The Inspection return of 16th October 1810 lists 606 N.C.O.'s and O.R.'s with 14 dead between 25 March to 25th Sept. The return also states, " I do not know in what state it (68th) was previous to the Walcheren expedition, but certainly some months ago it appeared to have been much neglected in its field movements. As a reason for this seeming neglect Lt.Col. Johnstone informed me that for many months the state of the Regiment had been such as to preclude the possibility almost of parade. But since the Regiment has become healthy the parades & drill have become regular & the improvements great...the regiment appears to have recovered the effects of the climate of Walcheren ". It was still to experience at least one recurring bout of fever in the Peninsula though.

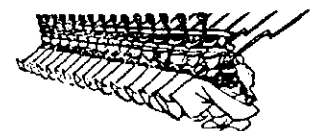
18. The Official Orders allowed for only six married women for every hundred men, (or one to every 16 or 17 men) to follow their husbands abroad. These figures are at variance with the orders. Either the 68th took more women abroad than they should which is unlikely. Or, some married men having died their wives remarried within the regiment while replacements had arrived with their wives, thus bolstering numbers. Either way, the situation appears to have been rectified by the return of 9th Feb.1813 at St. Martinha. The return shows a drop in the number of married women to 23 out of 525 (O.R.'s) men, Or one women for 23 men.

Which is more like the officially condoned figure.

19. The 68th also provided volunteers to assist at the siege of San Sebastian. Whilst the Regiment never received a battle honour for that particular unpleasantness, those volunteers from the 68th who did participate and lived long enough afterwards, received a San Sebastian clasp with their General Service Medal.

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 - 8th May 1812 WO 27/107
 - 17th May 1812 WO 27/107
 - 21st Oct.1812 WO 27/112
 - 9th Feb. 1813 WO 27/112



Recruiting Sergeant, 68th (Durham) Light Infantry, 1809

The Sergeant wore the second pattern stovepipe shako introduced in 1806, made of blocked felt with a leather cockade, regimental button, green tuft or plume, brass bugle horn badge and leather peak. Around his throat the Sergeant wore a leather stock, below which was a "frill" or "breast" worn with the jacket's top buttons undone. The flowery showing this effect produced was fashionable in the age of Beau Brummel. In fact, sergeants in the 7th Royal Fusiliers were ordered to have six white shirts with double frills, whilst soldiers in the 85th Light Infantry were ordered to have three white shirts and two false frills.

The Sergeant's jacket was made of scarlet cloth superior in quality to the privates, the privates jacket in 1802 being ordered, "...to be of red cloth instead of scarlet, and of inferior quality to the sergeants...". The Sergeant's buttons too, were to be of superior quality. The lace of his jacket was of white worsted braid as per regulations and did not have the coloured "worms" or "stripes" found worked in the privates lace. It was also not unknown for some Sergeants in line regiments to have silk lace, though special dispensation had to be granted for this.

The Sergeant wore the N.C.O.'s chevrons introduced in December 1802, ¹. The nature of light infantry work called for N.C.O.'s to be "visable" from all angles, particularly in open or skirmishing order: chevrons worn on both arms would have facilitated this requirement better. However, there is little evidence that this was the case, the orders stating only that chevrons were to be only worn on the right arm.

Around his waist the Sergeant wore a sash. These sashes were made by a technique called "sprang" and were to be of, "Crimson worsted (wool), with a stripe of the colour of the facing of the Regiment...". The sash for those regiments that had facings of red or purple was to have a stripe of white in the middle. For the 68th, the middle stripe was of dark or bottle green. The sash was, "...to be worn over the coat round the waist, and outside of the shoulder belt, with the tie and ends hanging on the left side (except Highland corps - worn over left shoulder with tie and ends hanging on the right side)".

On actual service, Light Infantry Sergeants did not carry spontoons or swords, but instead carried the India pattern sergeants carbine of 1797. They would have thus worn an ammunition pouch, pouch belt, bayonet and bayonet belt. The sergeants sash would have gone over both of these cross-belts ².

Canes had long been established in the army: it was noted as early as 1768 that the sergeants of the 25th Foot carried them. Orders for the 85th Light Infantry 1813 noted, "When the Regiment parades without arms, all serjeants will wear Regimental canes and gloves, and serjeants on Orderly duty will also observe the same". The gloves were most probably made of Buck or Doe skin.

The breeches were to be made of a cloth similar to the coat, which again for sergeants was to be superior to privates. They were, "...to be made to come well up on the hips and below the knees as far as the calf

of the leg..." with "...one small regimental button behind ³, set on above the knee band, to keep up the garters".

Regulations in 1802 stated that the long black woolen cloth gaiters were, "...to come up over the breeches to the edge of the cap of the knee and to be rounded off so as to cover the knee band of the breeches behind, without appearing to have a crease or wrinkle, and be fastened behind to a regt. button set on sufficiently high above the knee band to prevent any opening from appearing between the gaiters and breeches". Regulations also stated that the gaiter buttons were to be, "...small of white metal and set on at equal distances". No number is specified though the 1st Royal Scots ordered that 15 buttons were to be used.

Despite the official uniform regulations however, when on the recruiting service uniforms could be enhanced to attract the would be recruit or volunteer. The 68th were probably no exception to this ploy. Harris of the 95th recorded that, "When on recruiting service in those days, men were accustomed to make as gallant a show as they could and accordingly we had both smartened ourselves up a trifle. The Sergeant-Major was quite a beau in his way, he had a sling belt to his sword like a field-officer, a tremendous green feather in his cap, a flaring sash, his whistle and powder flask displayed, an officers pelisse over one shoulder, and a double allowance of ribbons in his cap...".

These ribbons or favours seem to have been a common ornament worn by the men on recruiting service. A possible survival of a "favour" from this period can be found in the John Biddle collection. Biddle was a colour sergeant in the 2nd/2nd Foot Guards, and this surviving favour consists of a large six-armed star made of yellow, scarlet and dark blue ribbons attached to a blue pasteboard backing ⁴.

Notes:

1. General Orders 30th Dec. 1802 and 24th May 1803.

In the Heavy Cavalry and Infantry the chevrons are to be formed of a double row of the lace of the regiment. In the Light Cavalry, the chevrons are to be formed of a double row of vellum lace corresponding in colour with the furniture of the Regiment.

The bars of the chevrons are to be edged with a very narrow edging of cloth of the colour of the facing of the regiment, and are to be affixed on a piece of cloth the colour of the coat, and worn on the right arm, at an equal distance from the elbow and the shoulder. The number of bars of the chevrons as denoting the Rank of the wearer, are as follows, viz :

Serjeant Major & Qr. Master Serjeant... 4 Bars
All Other Serjeants..... 3 Bars
Corporals..... 2 Bars

The bars are to be placed at right angles with the points downwards, the distances between the bars is to be half an inch, and their extremities are to extend on each side to within half an inch of the seams of the sleeve.

2. These cross-belts would have been pipe-clayed, which itself could be detrimental to recruiting as the 95th were to exploit. An original 95th recruiting poster in the Royal GreenJackets Museum, dated Hull 1808 emphasised, "NO WHITE BELTS ! NO PIPE CLAY !". The 95th's belts being black leather.

3. This button appears to have been discontinued shortly after 1808, if not for the infantry than certainly for the Artillery. General Orders 24th January 1810. "Care is to be taken that the gaiters are of sufficient length to reach the Knee-pan, the tops to be cut perfectly straight, and no button to be put behind".

4. Article on the Biddle Collection, Military Illustrated No.14

5. Sources are the same as for the article,
"Recruiting the 68th".

