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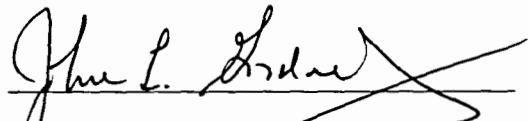
**“OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY . . .” A STUDY OF THE 95TH RIFLES:
THEIR BACKGROUND, DISCIPLINE, DOCTRINE AND COMBAT
EMPLOYMENT DURING THE DEFENSE OF PORTUGAL, 1810-1811.**

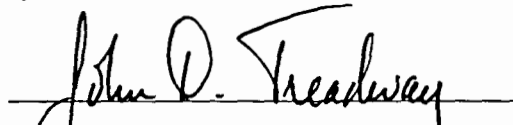
By
Ryan Talley, Master of Arts in History
University of Richmond
August, 1998
Dr. John L. Gordon Jr., Thesis Advisor


The 95th Rifles were part of the British Army’s answer to tactical problems posed by the Napoleonic Wars, in particular how to deal effectively with the massed skirmishers employed by the French. The bulk of this work examines the process by which the 95th was established: its background, formation, organization, discipline and doctrine. The final chapter documents how the 95th was used on the battlefield during the Peninsular War, focusing on the campaign to defend Portugal in 1810-1811. The study is based upon both primary and secondary sources relating to napoleonic warfare and the British Army. This includes manuals, diaries, memoirs, dispatches and original clothing and equipment.

This research demonstrates that the 95th greatly increased the British Army’s ability to face the French Army on equitable footing. The regiment proved a model of reform for the rest of the army, pioneering disciplinary and tactical changes throughout the nineteenth century.

I certify that I have read this thesis and find that, in scope and quality, it satisfies the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.


Dr. John L. Gordon Jr., Thesis Advisor


Dr. John D. Treadway


Dr. Emory C. Bogle

**“OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY . . .” A STUDY OF THE 95TH RIFLES:
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EMPLOYMENT DURING THE DEFENSE OF PORTUGAL, 1810-1811**

By

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B. A., Adams State College, 1995

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the University of Richmond

in Candidacy

for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

In

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This thesis has been over six years in the making, the seed for its topic planted while I was in undergraduate school at Adams State College in Colorado reading my first *Sharpe*'s novel. In that time a number of people and organizations have helped me, both in writing the thesis itself, and in keeping up my morale and motivation.

First I would like to thank the most recent contributors, the Graduate School at the University of Richmond for providing research funds allowing me to obtain primary sources at the British Library and the National Army Museum in London and to visit the Royal Green Jackets Museum in Winchester. I would also like to extend thanks to the faculty of the History department of the university for their guidance, input, and acceptance of my often narrow-minded aims in military history, especially to Dr. John L. Gordon, Jr., my thesis advisor, and Dr. John D. Treadway, the Graduate Coordinator.

In more general terms I would like to express gratitude to the staff of Midas Battlefield Tours, in particular Mr. Ian Fletcher, for providing some useful tips on where to find information on the 95th Rifles and the Light Division. I must also offer many thanks to Mr. Bernard Cornwell, author of the *Sharpe*'s books. We have never met and probably never will, but his series of historical fiction sparked my interest in the 95th.

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“Hurrah for the first in the field and the last out of it,
the bloody fighting ninety-fifth.”

Peninsular toast quoted by
Captain John Kincaid

Introduction

A great deal of scholarly work has been produced on the Napoleonic Wars, ranging from studies of the economics and societies of participating nations to the far more common works on diplomatic and military topics. For the student of military history there is still much to be learned about the Napoleonic era, which saw the birth of what has become known as modern warfare. Napoleon's campaigns changed the face of war as it was recognized in the eighteenth century, returning to the style of warfare waged by the Romans at the height of their strength by seeking the decisive battle. Warfare in the eighteenth century had been characterized by its limited nature, small armies of professional soldiers that were expensive to maintain and took years of intensive training, fighting campaigns with narrowly defined goals. Campaigns were little more than long marches and sieges of key fortified positions, attempting to preserve the armies involved and force a negotiated settlement after exhausting the enemy. Avoiding defeat and the loss of the army was seen as more of a virtue than winning decisive victories at the expense of heavy casualties. By harnessing the material and ideological energies released by the French Revolution, and a seemingly endless supply of conscripts produced by the *levee en masse*, Napoleon could seek decisive battle by maneuvering his enemy into a position that forced him to stand and fight. His goal then was not to force the enemy to negotiate, but to destroy completely his ability and will to fight. Those nations that survived the Napoleonic Wars did so by adapting to Napoleon's style of warfare or, as the British did, by choosing to fight only on their own terms.¹

¹David G. Chandler, ed., and Ian Beckett, assoc. ed., *The Oxford History of the British Army* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 139-140.

What all but a few of these studies have lacked is an acknowledgment of the vital importance of small unit tactics in the winning of battles, and therefore of campaigns. Most have emphasized Grand Tactics, the art of maneuvering divisions and corps, ignoring the fact that at the point of decision it is the actions of battalions and sometimes even of companies that decide the day. It is the training and courage of individual officers and men that determine if a line breaks or holds under fire or in the face of charging cavalry. Every army during the Wars of the French Revolution and of Napoleon had its share of units that influenced the course of the campaigns in which they fought: Kellerman's Dragoons at Marango, the Russian Cossacks in the winter campaign of 1812-1813, Maitland's Guards Brigade at Waterloo. The British Army produced one such unit that was to stand out, a regiment whose employment at the tactical level would substantially alter the course of Britain's war with France. This regiment, the 95th, was the inheritor of a trust passed down from the middle of the eighteenth century by a few visionaries within the conservative British Army.

The 95th was a breed apart from the rest of the British Army at the time. Rather than wearing the scarlet coat of the line infantryman and fighting with the smoothbore musket, the soldiers of the 95th wore bottle green coats and carried rifles. These riflemen were not trained to fight shoulder to shoulder in the two deep line, but to fight in pairs in the loose skirmish chain. They were the product of a new discipline and of the re-learning of the tactics of the light infantryman in an army that had long neglected that style of warfare. The 95th was over fifty years in the making, the result of much hard learned experience in both peace and war. The new discipline and tactics were perfected by Colonel Coote Manningham and Lieutenant Colonel the Honorable William Stewart

with the creation of the Experimental Rifle Corps in 1800 and by Major General Sir John Moore at the Shorncliffe training camp from 1803 to 1805. They would prove that properly applied tactics could and did win campaigns. They got their chance in the Peninsular campaigns of Sir Arthur Wellesley and Sir John Moore, 1808-1814, where Britain chose to fight on the periphery of Europe on her own terms with a small professional army.

The first chapter of this study of the 95th examines the long struggle through the eighteenth century to create an adequately trained and equipped corps of riflemen in the British Army, culminating in the creation of the Experimental Rifle Corps in 1800. Experiences in North America, the West Indies and Europe that bear relevance will be examined along with those individuals whose experience or works influenced the creation of the 95th. The second chapter investigates the organization and new discipline of the Experimental Rifle Corps, its drafting into the line as the 95th, Sir John Moore's camp at Shorncliffe and his system of training. Chapter three examines the doctrine of the riflemen, how they were to be employed as protection for the army on the move, while in camp and in battle. The final chapter covers the actual experience of the 95th in the Peninsular, examining the defense of Portugal from the close of the Talavera campaign of 1809 to the opening of the Fuentes de Onoro campaign of 1811. Close attention is paid to operations along the Coa in the spring and summer of 1810. Here the 95th operated along with the rest of the Light Division as outposts for the entire British Army, never once allowing the French to break through their line, or passing on inaccurate information to Sir Arthur Wellesley. It is therefore a study of the tactics of a single regiment and its influence on the course of a series of campaigns.

Chapter 1

Creating a Corps of Riflemen: The Long Struggle of the Eighteenth Century

The need for a corps of riflemen in the British Army, indeed of any kind of professional light infantry, did not become apparent until the American Wars of 1748-1763. Prior to the experience of warfare in the wilds of North America the linear tactics employed by European armies in the Wars of Spanish and Austrian Succession had indicated there was little need for light infantry. What little use they could serve was best filled by detachments of irregulars hired for the duration of the conflict and disbanded following peace. It was expensive enough fielding and maintaining even the smallest army of regular heavy infantry let alone including the added expense of light infantry.¹

The rigid linear tactics practiced at the time had developed from the growing reliance on massed and rapid volleys of musketry from densely packed infantry and on the sheer shock and weight of the fire impacting upon the opposing line to disorder and demoralize the enemy. The ultimate expression of this was in the army of Frederick the Great of Prussia. His army consisted of soldiers drilled and flogged until they could load and fire like automatons. An increasing number of cannons added their weight to the firefight and cavalry was employed to finish off the broken and demoralized enemy.

A new type of light cavalry, the Hussar, descendant of the Huns of old, was employed by the Prussian and Austrian armies, first as irregulars and later as regular units, to perform the old light infantry duties of scouting. The ponderous lines and march

¹J. F. C. Fuller, *British Light Infantry in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1925), 76. Irregular troops, from the fringe of Europe, were commonly more trouble than they were worth. Their practice of rape and pillage offended Enlightenment sensibilities of humane and scientific warfare.

columns of the opposing armies of the day were so unwieldy to form up for battle that it took all of the talent of commanders simply to get their heavy infantry into position to fight. There was no place it seemed for larking about with skirmishing. The army that could march and deploy the fastest determined the site of battle. The formations employed could only hope to maneuver on the most open of terrain anyway and the carefully drilled automaton-like soldiers would be put through their paces until the best drilled and least individualistic side triumphed.²

The nature of warfare in the Americas, away from the rolling, open fields of northern Europe, caused a few perceptive officers within the British Army to realize that reform was necessary. Unfortunately they were few in number and it took time and several disasters for their warnings to be heeded. Colonial America was the perfect environment for the light infantryman; in fact the rigid, heavy formations used in Europe were hopelessly inadequate for employment in the rugged, heavily wooded terrain of North America. The dense lines of infantry and cavalry could hardly form up, let alone advance or charge. The colonists, both British and French, who had settled the land, understood how to use the terrain to their advantage as did their native allies and enemies whom they emulated. The regular military commander who understood how to make use of the terrain and the skills of the locals would achieve victory in any war in North America. Unfortunately for the British regulars, their commanders did not understand quickly enough.

These skills to modern eyes seem simple to grasp. The use of cover and concealment, aimed fire, demoralization of the enemy by killing his leadership, and

²Ibid., Chapters III and IV, 41-75.

breaking up his formations before fading away, are the tactics of the dozens of bush wars around the world seen nightly on the news. They are tactics taught to and practiced by soldiers in places like Vietnam and Beirut. To the officer of the mid-eighteenth century who was not accustomed to this style of warfare, this was madness, the tactics of savages and cowards. To the conservative mind, battles were fought between disciplined professionals and won by the correct application of shock, either massed volleys of musketry or the cold steel of the bayonet charge. What the French had succeeded in accomplishing, and what the British would seek to emulate, was a blend of irregular, backwoods tactics with the discipline of the trained regular. The first British lesson would be learned in 1755 at the Battle of Monongahela. In this engagement in the woods of western Pennsylvania, a French and Indian army numbering 901 officers and men, mostly Canadian colonists and Indians, overcame a force of 1495 British regulars and American provincials under General Edward Braddock. The British, adhering to the rules of war as dictated by Frederick the Great, and fighting in an exposed line, were massacred by French and Indian sharpshooters firing from cover. Only the American provincials, dispersing into the woods, fought the French and Indians on equal terms. The result was telling, as the British lost 977 officers and other ranks, the French and Indians only 39. Braddock was not a bad officer. By the standards of Europe he had a great deal of experience and was actually a very good commander. He was simply applying inappropriate tactics.³ The British not only had to study and understand their enemy's tactics; they had to devise a way to overcome them.

³J. W. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1910. Reprint, New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1976), 285-286.

The first professional corps of British light infantry was established on Christmas Day, 1755, in the form of the 60th Regiment of Foot, the Royal Americans.⁴ The Colonel commanding the regiment was British, Lord William Howe, who became famous during the French and Indian War as a leader of British light infantry in the Americas, but many of the other officers were German or Swiss, as were most of the enlisted men. While a number of American irregular formations were raised, it was the 60th that was the most important as it was a regular army formation. The 60th was formed with the intention of creating a body of soldiers with the ability of “combining the qualities of the scout with the discipline of the trained soldier.”⁵ The regiment consisted of four battalions, each of ten companies⁶ commanded by German officers and recruited primarily in Pennsylvania amidst the English, Swiss, German and Austrian colonists.⁷

A Swiss officer, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Bouquet, commander of the 60th's first battalion, had the most influence on the development of the regiment's light infantry doctrine. He had seen service in Europe with and against armies trained in the system of Frederick the Great and understood its inherent weakness of relying on brutality to discipline the soldiers. He realized that intelligence and self motivating discipline must replace mindless drill and flogging and that a breed of soldier capable of beating untrained irregulars or professional soldiers in any style of warfare was necessary.

Bouquet studied Indian warfare “not to copy it – this would have indeed shown his incapacity to overcome it – but to discover its nature so that he might devise a system

⁴Fuller, *British Light Infantry*, 87.

⁵*Ibid.*, 98.

⁶This is a huge regiment for the time. Most regiments in the British Army had a single battalion, a small number had two.

⁷Fuller, *British Light Infantry*, 98.

of tactics whereby he could destroy it.”⁸ Bouquet then instituted a new method of training his soldiers, doing away with the pipeclay and ridiculous accoutrements so popular with the system of Frederick. His soldiers dressed as the colonists did in practical lightweight clothing and trained to fight in the wilderness in small, loose formations as the Indians did. They were also taught valuable skills to look after themselves and each other: carpentry, shoe making and repair, farming and masonry, among others.⁹

Bouquet recorded many of his experiences and theories in *An Historical Account of the Expedition against the Ohio Indians, in the Year MDCCLXIV., under the Command of Henry Bouquet, Esqre* in which he stated quite clearly the importance of light infantry as part of the regular army:

. . . if they were beat two or three times, (meaning the Indians) they would lose that confidence inspired by success But this cannot reasonably be expected till we have troops trained to fight them in their own way, with the additional advantage of European courage and discipline.

Any deviation from our established military system would be needless, if valour, zeal, order and good conduct were sufficient to subdue this lightfooted enemy. These qualities are conspicuous in our troops; but they are too heavy, and indeed too valuable, to be employed alone in a destructive service for which they were never intended. They require the assistance of lighter corps, whose dress, arms and exercises, should be adapted to this new kind of war.¹⁰

With the 60th and the various irregular units recruited in the colonies the British were able to defeat French expansion in North America and with the Peace of Paris in

⁸Ibid., 102.

⁹Sir Arthur Bryant, *Jackets of Green: A Study of the History, Philosophy and Character of the Rifle Brigade* (London: Collins, 1973), 21-40. Throughout the first chapter of his work Bryant mentions a number of times the importance of the riflemen being self reliant and able to perform any number of skills that soldiers in regular line regiments, away from the commissariat, were unable to do.

¹⁰Quoted in Fuller, *British Light Infantry*, 106-107.

1763 to end French involvement in North America. The tactics of Frederick, however, had won the war in Europe. Thousands of soldiers, drilled endlessly and flogged into obedience, had marched in long lines across rolling plains as heavy infantry had for ages, battering each other to pieces under the shock of rapid yet unaimed musketry and bayonet charges. The leadership of the British Army at Horse Guards, the administrative heart of the army in London, viewed that as the only way civilized nations could wage war; events in the colonies had been an aberration and best forgotten. The lessons learned by the 60th in America and by Austrian and French light infantry commanders in Europe, especially by Marshal de Saxe, that the accurate fire of light infantry could destroy any line or column and remain relatively unscathed, were swept out of sight and the irregular formations were disbanded. In the cutbacks that followed the war even the light companies of the line regiments that had been created to provide skirmishers for the heavy infantry, and had been successfully brigaded together as Light Battalions during the war, were disbanded.¹¹ Still, the spark of the new discipline and doctrine was kept alive in the British Army by the likes of Howe and others.

The French were greatly influenced by Frederick's tactics, for it was they, with their Austrian and Russian allies who had received the worst end of them. Unlike the British Army they also remembered the lessons learned in America. A French officer, M. le Comte Turpin, a student of light infantry tactics, produced a work in 1754 which was studied by Bouquet and others and influenced those in the British Army who saw the need for light infantry. His work, entitled *Essai sur l'Art de la Guerre*, advocated a system of discipline based more on common sense than the whip and called for a greater

¹¹Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*, vol. 2., 598-599.

closeness between light infantry officers and their men. Turpin believed, “It is very requisite for an officer of light troops to obtain a thorough individual knowledge of the men under his command, that he may employ them according to their intelligence and courage.”¹² Another Frenchman, M. Guibert, also noted the importance of regular as opposed to irregular light infantry and argued they should be trained to fight as infantry of the line, that is as heavy infantry, as well as in extended order. The ranks of light infantry formations should be filled with “chosen veterans.”¹³ He also proposed the implementation of realistic training in peacetime, an uncommon practice in European armies at the time. “In peace,” Guibert noted, their officers “should teach them those exercises which are found serviceable in war.”¹⁴

The war for independence that erupted in America caught the British Army once again ill-prepared for war in the colonies. The light companies of the line regiments had been re-established in 1770 but amounted to little more than a place to dump soldiers that did not fit the image of pipeclay and hairpowder established by the Prussian system. Finally, in 1774, as conditions in America worsened, General Howe received orders from Horse Guards, possibly at the direction of George III,¹⁵ to recreate Britain’s light infantry. He was given only seven companies with which to work.¹⁶ This proved timely as Britain slipped into war with the American Colonies the following year.

¹²Quoted in Fuller, *British Light Infantry*, 116. A similar view came to be held by Col. Coote Manningham and Lt. Col. William Stewart when they formed the Experimental Rifle Corps, as will be seen with their Company System of organization.

¹³ Ibid., 122. France at this time was busy raising a number of light corps known as the *Chasseurs a pied*.

¹⁴Ibid. This is a novel concept in the eighteenth century as most officers had little or no professional interest in their army careers beyond social events and advancement.

¹⁵No source indicates precisely where the order originated.

¹⁶Fuller, *British Light Infantry*, 125.

The low to which British light infantry had sunk in the interwar years was immediately evident at Concord and the retreat through Lexington to Boston. The forces that took part in that battle were all flank companies, the light and grenadier companies of several regiments, supposedly the elite of the regiment. Yet, when faced with militia employing light infantry tactics, the British officers and men failed to respond as they lacked adequate training. Had proper light tactics been employed by the British at Lexington the Americans likely would have been quickly swept aside as they lacked the discipline to hold together as a cohesive unit in the face of an adversary employing similar tactics against them.¹⁷

Over the course of the war the British had once again to learn the lessons of good light infantry work. Again they employed irregular forces raised from amongst the loyalists to face the American backwoodsmen in the vicious fighting along the frontier and in the south, John Simcoe's "Queen's Rangers" and Banastre Tarleton's Legion being the most famous. A Major Patrick Ferguson raised a corps of British sharpshooters armed with a breech-loading rifle of his own invention. They fought one engagement with the weapon, killing seventeen Americans as compared with the loss of only two British riflemen who could load and fire while in a prone position.¹⁸ Despite this achievement, Sir William Howe ordered Ferguson, to discontinue the use of his rifle which was withdrawn from service. British tactics employed by regular officers continued to prove unable to cope with situations encountered in America. The massive

¹⁷Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*. vol. 3, 152-154. Experience in the French and Indian War had shown that irregular troops usually refused to stand in the face of a determined rush with bayonets.

¹⁸Fuller, *British Light Infantry*, 129-131. This is the first recorded use of rifles by British troops. It is hard to understand why they were withdrawn from service as they obviously out classed the American and Hessian Jaeger rifles then in service which were long and clumsy to load, impossible to load while prone.

loss of British soldiers at Bunker Hill, especially officers, was a direct result of flawed tactics. While the British line advanced to carry the position it was not screened by light infantry in skirmish order¹⁹ and suffered several bloody repulses as the American line had not been disrupted or demoralized by British skirmishers.

The British did make one critical advance in their doctrine during the American War of Independence, although it was not made official until Wellington's Peninsular Campaign: namely, the adoption of the two-rank line. This formation, a departure from the Prussian three-rank line, allowed an increase in firepower by a third as every musket could be brought to bear, and as it was looser and more flexible, it allowed faster deployment and movement. Still, throughout the war the British were unable to keep pace with the number of light infantry the Americans could deploy against them, and in the long run this was a contributing factor in their defeat as they could not effectively carry the war to the Americans. Even so, the British light infantry that did exist was equal to the Americans. Indeed at Guildford Courthouse in 1781 the British light infantry and Hessian Jaegers proved superior to the American irregulars in the skirmishing that took place.²⁰

Other than the acceptance of looser, two deep lines that increased firepower and mobility while decreasing casualties, British officers who served in America were beginning to understand that accurate firepower – not the unaimed broadsides of Frederick – was the best replacement for the shock of the bayonet charge. The old school

¹⁹Ibid., 126-127. Fuller does note that the Light Infantry under Howe at Bunker Hill were so unprepared for proper light infantry work that they could not have been deployed properly as such anyway.

²⁰Ibid., 129.

traditionalists who had not served in America believed this tantamount to heresy.²¹

Those officers who understood the evolving battlefield instructed their men to properly level their muskets rather than simply to load and fire as quickly as possible without aiming, as was the practice in other European armies.

The Hessian Jaeger officer Captain Johann Ewald discussed the most valuable lessons of the war for the developing light infantry doctrine in the British Army. The Jaegers, or “hunters,” he commanded were among the best light infantry the British had in their service and Ewald’s *A Treatise Upon The Duties Of Light Troops* was influential in solidifying a new light infantry doctrine. While Ewald was well aware of the defensive capabilities of light infantry, as piquets and outposts, it was on their role in the offense that his work displays the most interest. He was able to show that light infantry properly employed could prove a devastating weapon for the able commander. By making use of cover and concealment and mutually supporting fire, parties of riflemen or light infantrymen advancing in rushes could move quickly to seize key terrain features and disable enemy forces by killing officers and NCOs and other key personnel like artillery crews. The offensive nature of his theory is clearly displayed in the following: “For it is a general rule in war that he who begins the attack has already half the victory, and fortune generally favours the resolute and brave, and very often, indeed, the rash.”²²

The British were to find that the tactics they had learned in the war against the Americans worked with deadly precision against other armies clinging to the Prussian

²¹The bayonet remained something of a British quirk into the twentieth century. Accounts of a “British” cheer followed by a short rush with the bayonet come up again and again. These were not charges over a long distance but short controlled rushes to push the enemy back supported by the second line holding in place and alternated with controlled volleys of musketry.

²²Quoted in Fuller, 147.

system. In 1778 when British troops fought French army at St. Lucia in the West Indies, British light infantry under General Medows engaged a French column while deployed in skirmish order. They drove off the French, inflicting 400 deaths and wounding an additional 1200 men, versus only 13 killed and 158 wounded, including General Medows.²³ The postwar cutbacks that followed the peace of 1783 were even deeper than those following the French and Indian War. For the next ten years the British Army declined precipitously. Again the lessons paid for in blood during the war were discarded in peace. The French, as before, remembered the lessons and would put them to use during the wars of the French Revolution. The Experimental Rifle Corps and ultimately the 95th Rifles would be created out of this period of confusion and decline by the actions and work of six individuals who paid heed to the lessons of the past and suffered in the new classroom of battle against revolutionary France.

The first of these men was General Sir David Dundas. Dundas, who was in no way a proponent of light infantry, realized that the British Army was in sorry shape and in serious need of some kind of reform and reorganization. Reorganization, at least, was accomplished under Dundas's auspices with the publication of his *The Principles of Military Movements* in 1788 and *Rules and Regulations* in 1792. These two works gave the British Army a new standardized drill book for the first time since 1758. While his drills were essentially only simplified, faster, looser variations on the Prussian system and did not yet officially recognize the two deep line, they ensured the whole army was unified in a system of drill. In Part III of his *Rules and Regulations* there were brief

²³Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*, vol. 3, 268-271.

comments on the role of light infantry. Although scant, they were of great importance to the advocates of a corps of regular light infantry in that for the first time light infantry was dealt with in the Army's official drill manual.²⁴

The second of these figures was Major General John Money. In the late 1790s he proposed a series of reforms based on his experiences in the American War of Independence and observations of the early battles of the French Revolutionary Wars. Money was greatly impressed by the organization and skills of the French *tirailleurs*, raised from the mass of conscripts and volunteers following the outbreak of war between France and Austria. He felt that if the British Army were ever to face the French it would be in serious trouble without the establishment of a corps of light infantrymen equal if not better in skill than the French. He believed that the British light infantry should be modeled on the Native Americans and the American irregulars he had observed in action. Money argued, "I have seen Indians fire and am persuaded that fifty of them could kill or take two hundred men of any high-dressed regiment in Europe who had fifty miles to march in a woody or extremely inclosed country. . . ."²⁵ He also noted that these new light infantrymen should not be clothed in the traditional scarlet of the British Army as "a sentry becomes, in a scarlet coat, a complete target to riflemen. . .if they are clothed in green, or dark brown, they are not discernable, but at a very short distance."²⁶ Other reforms envisioned by Money involved creating balanced combined arms formations of

²⁴Fuller, *British Light Infantry*, 197.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 209. Also Chandler and Beckett, *Oxford History of the British Army*, 149-150. The enclosure and urbanization of northern Europe in the last decades of the eighteenth century had done much to alter the face of the countryside making the Prussian style of warfare based on long lines impractical. Europe was now much more suited to the columns and swarms of *voltigeurs* and *tirailleurs* employed by the French Revolutionary and later Imperial Armies.

²⁶Fuller, *British Light Infantry*, 210.

light infantry, light cavalry, and horse artillery with several officers trained in combat engineering.

The Duke of York, Frederick Augustus, second son of George III, also played an important role in Army reform. Having served against the French in Flanders in 1793 and the Helder campaign of 1799, he was aware of the need to counter the French light infantry. His backing and interest allowed the creation of the Experimental Rifle Corps in 1800, its drafting into the line in 1803 as the 95th and the conversion of the 52nd Regiment of Foot to light infantry in 1803 at the Shorncliffe camp under Sir John Moore.

The fourth important figure came from among the officers of the 60th Royal Americans, when in 1798 the 5th Battalion of the 60th was raised to fight exclusively as light infantry and were armed with rifles. The commander of this Battalion of mostly Germans was Colonel Francis de Rottenburg, an experienced Austrian leader of light infantry. His *Regulations for the Exercise of Riflemen in the Field*, published in 1798, became one of the standard texts of the British light infantry and in particular of the Experimental Rifle Corps and the 95th. He served with Sir John Moore in Ireland in 1798 and his battalion served with distinction in the Peninsular War as individual companies attached to other Brigades. The 5th Battalion, 60th Royal Americans was the first corps of true light infantrymen to serve in the British Army, trained and equipped from the moment of formation as skirmishers and to carry out all the tasks associated with light infantrymen.²⁷

The final two figures of note are Colonel Coote Manningham and Lieutenant Colonel the Honorable William Stewart. In the spring of 1800, following the disastrous

²⁷Ibid., 215-221.

Helder campaign of the previous year, they were selected to assemble and command an experimental corps of riflemen. This new corps was to receive training as sharpshooters and light infantrymen to counter the French *tirailleurs* and to cover the movements of the British Army in the field.²⁸ The corps assembled at Horsham barracks, volunteers and drafts from fifteen regiments of the regular army. They were clothed in green jackets and pantaloons, black belts and equipment and armed with the Baker Rifle. They trained that summer in Windsor Forest and three companies covered the landing and withdrawal of a British Expeditionary Force at Ferrol on the northwest coast of Spain on 25 August, 1800. This date is regarded as the official birthdate of the 95th. While recovering from wounds received at Ferrol, Lieutenant Colonel Stewart prepared detailed Standing Orders for the new unit, which would become the guide for the 95th, *Regulations for the Rifle Corps formed at Blatchinton Barracks under the Command of Colonel Manningham*.²⁹ These two officers would lead the Experimental Rifle Corps through its early battles and would participate in the creation of the 95th and the development of a new model of discipline and training with Sir John Moore at the Shorncliffe Camp in 1803.

²⁸Bryant, *Jackets of Green*, 22.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 22-23.

Chapter 2

The Forging of a Sword: Recruiting, Organization, and a New Discipline

In January of 1800, the Duke of York as Commander in Chief of the Army ordered the creation of an Experimental Corps of Riflemen as part of a series of ongoing reforms following the rather poor showing of the British Army on the continent against the armies of Revolutionary France. A letter was circulated from Horse Guards, the administrative headquarters of the army, at the order of the Duke of York and signed by Harry Calvert, the Adjutant General, on 17 January 1800, to the Colonels of fourteen regiments then stationed in England and Ireland stating that,

. . . it is His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief's intention to form a corps of detachments from the different regiments of the line for the purpose of its being instructed in the use of the rifle and in the system of exercise adopted by soldiers so armed. It is His Royal Highness's pleasure that you shall select from the regiment under your command, 2 sergeants, 2 corporals and 30 private men for this duty, all of them being such men as appear most capable of receiving the above instructions, and the most competent to the performance of the duty of Riflemen.¹

In addition each regiment was to provide several officers and musicians for the Experimental Corps and it was noted that both officers and men were to be considered only on temporary detachment, not drafted out of their regiments. This indicates that initially at least the Experimental Rifle Corps was not intended to be a permanent organization but something similar to the eighteenth century practice of brigading Light and Grenadier companies of several regiments together to provide an elite formation for the duration of a campaign.

¹ Colonel Willoughby Verner, *History and Campaigns of the Rifle Brigade*, vol. 1 (London: J. Bale and Sons & Danielsson, 1912. Reprint, London: Buckland and Brown, 1995), 19.

The fourteen regiments of the line provided 443 officers and men for the Experimental Rifle Corps, which was intended to have a strength of 844. The remaining men were provided from drafts recruited from the Irish Fencibles, a militia organization, each man receiving a bounty of ten guineas.² Many of the Colonels of these line regiments took the creation of the Rifle Corps as an opportunity to get rid of men they considered unfit for duty and sent their worst privates, NCOs and officers.³ Other regiments such as the 92nd Highlanders (later the famous Gordon Highlanders) ordered that:

The detachment of riflemen will march tomorrow under the command of Ensign Cameron. The Major expects that the detachment will conduct itself in such a manner as to do credit to the Regiment they belong to and Ensign Cameron will so exert himself on the march, and after he has arrived at Horsham, that his detachment will appear as respectable in the corps they are to join, as the regiment has always done among other Regiments.⁴

Throughout the spring and summer of 1800 these recruits trained in the duties of riflemen and three companies participated in the abortive raid on Ferrol in Spain. During August, however, it was ordered that the drafts of men from the line regiments be returned to their respective corps, leaving only the recruits from the Irish Fencibles. In most cases all but a handful of these men returned to their regiments, but a few were shown on the returns from their regiments as being discharged and transferred to the Rifle Corps. At this point the Rifle Corps numbered 435 NCOs and other ranks and underwent

² Ibid., 23-25.

³ Ibid., 21. On the 22nd of March 1800 there was an order to the regiments that had provided recruits to replace fifty-two men who were unfit for duty. One of these regiments had provided twenty-two of these poor examples alone.

⁴ Quoted in Verner, 21. From *History of the Gordon Highlanders* by Lt.-Col. Greenhill Gardyne.

a transformation from a temporary corps of detachments to a regular corps gazetted in the line, so ordered by the Duke of York on 21 October 1800.⁵

The Rifle Corps now stood as a permanent organization within the British Army establishment. It only remained to fill out its ranks by recruiting and complete its discipline and training to create a combat ready formation. Recruits provide the raw material of any military formation and their background, character and selection determine the quality and capabilities of the corps of which they are a part. These recruits, however, cannot simply be brought together, handed weapons and equipment and be expected to make good soldiers. They must first be organized and disciplined in such a way as to make them capable of following orders and acting and looking like soldiers in whatever style of warfare trained for. Both the standards for recruiting and the style and method of discipline brought to the Rifle Corps and later the 95th would largely be the work of two men, Lieutenant Colonel William Stewart and Major General Sir John Moore. Their influence would create a model for the British Army to follow into the nineteenth century, a model well ahead of its time.

Of all the countries of Europe involved in the war against France, England was the only one without a system of conscription. Indeed the British Army did not institute conscription until World War I. The system of recruitment employed by the British Army from 1800 through the end of the Napoleonic Wars made it extremely difficult for the regular army, the regiments that bore the brunt of the fighting and therefore the casualties, to obtain recruits. England essentially had three armies, the regular army, the militia, and the Fencibles and Volunteers. The militia, Fencibles (in the process of being

⁵ Ibid., 28-29.

phased out), and Volunteers were for home defense only and could not be ordered to serve overseas. They received good pay, high bounties for enlistment, a bounty being a cash inducement paid up front, with other benefits being paid to the family of a militiaman when he was serving in another part of the country. In 1802 the Fencibles were eliminated and by 1808 the Volunteers had been absorbed into the militia. The regular army was handicapped by its low pay and, prior to 1809, by a lifetime commitment of service. In 1809 the new option of seven years of service in the regular greatly increased the prospects of finding recruits.⁶

The process of recruiting was relatively simple. A party of sergeants and corporals, perhaps accompanied by an officer and several drummers, would travel around the country recruiting for their regiment. There were no central recruiting offices and for the most part no community or county affiliations for the regiments. That would be a part of army reform in the 1870s. These recruiting parties would concentrate on militia meetings and country markets and fairs where there would be a large number of laborers and farm workers seeking employment. A majority of recruits were obtained from the militia because there were benefits for both parties. The recruiting parties offered large bounties to militiamen, sometimes up to forty-two pounds, or almost two years wages for a laborer, and the army got a partially trained recruit.⁷ When times were tight and recruits scarce the recruiting parties were authorized to go to local magistrates and offer service in the army as an alternate to jail sentences or hanging. As urbanization increased a growing number of recruits came from the slums and rookeries of the great cities. It is

⁶ S.J. Park and G.F. Nafziger, *The British Military. Its System and Organization, 1803-1815* (Cambridge, Canada: Rafm Co. Inc., 1983), 14.

⁷ Ibid.

perhaps from these recruits, enlisting to escape grinding poverty or to gain the promised daily ration of alcohol, that the myth developed that British soldiers were “the scum of the earth” and enlisted for drink as Wellington is often quoted as having believed. It was not uncommon for recruiting parties to spend a great deal of money getting potential recruits drunk to induce them to take the bounty and enlist. Once the bounty was paid, a shilling up front with more promised, a local doctor would make sure that the recruit was fit for service and the local magistrate would swear him in. The recruits would then be sent to the regimental barracks for training. Once at the barracks the new recruits lost a great deal of their bounty to “Stoppages.” Necessary items such as clothing and accoutrements were paid for out of the bounty. These stoppages continued throughout a soldier’s career as replacements for worn out items of clothing and food were paid for by deductions from a soldier’s pay.

The individual status, reputation, and posting of a regiment did a great deal to determine the success of its recruiting parties. The cavalry and Household regiments with their good reputation and flashy uniforms had a much easier time getting recruits and could be far more selective. The Highland regiments also found it easy to find recruits. Most were clan structures with many of its rank and file from the same clan. At the other end of the scale were regiments posted in the West Indies and India where disease was rampant and it was likely a replacement sent out would never return. Although on paper a British regiment numbered one thousand officers and men, most regiments ranged between four and eight hundred based on their posting, duty, and recruiting fortunes.

Officers received their commission by purchase from the government and gained promotion in a similar manner. Promotion from the ranks was rare and promotion through seniority and experience occurred only in regiments that had lost officers through disease or combat. Only the rank of general officer could not be purchased and it would not be until the army reforms of the Victorian era that minimum time in service and time in grade requirements along with professional skills requirements would be necessary to advance in rank. The purchase system was not abolished until 1881.⁸

The Rifle Corps had two distinct advantages during its initial recruiting period and would add another over the years. The first was that it was formed as the Fencibles were being disbanded. As stated above large drafts of men came from the Irish Fencible establishment, these men were already trained in the basics of military discipline and other skills and many volunteered for service in the Rifle Corps to continue their military service. The second advantage held by the Rifle Corps was its stature. It was an elite unit with a flashy uniform and an already growing reputation for derring do and an esprit de corps lacking in many line regiments. Recruiting posters for the Rifle Corps and later the 95th played up the distinctive green uniform and lack of pipe-clayed white belts⁹, the uniqueness of the weapons and tactics, and the respect and comradeship of being in an elite unit.¹⁰ The third advantage would develop through combat experience and a growing list of laurels and battle honors.

Private Benjamin Harris, one of the 95th's many published writers of memoirs,

⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁹ For a discussion of the distinctive Rifle uniform see Appendix I.

¹⁰ Eileen Hathaway, *A Dorset Rifleman. The Recollections of Benjamin Harris*. With a Foreword by Bernard Cornwell (Swanage, Dorset: Shinglepicker Publications, 1995), 24. From a recruiting poster for the 95th in the Royal Green Jackets Museum, Peninsular Barracks, Winchester.

commented, “Whilst I Dublin, I saw a corps of the 95th Rifles, and fell so in love with their smart, dashing appearance, that nothing would serve me till I was a Rifleman myself.”¹¹ Captain John Kincaid, an ensign in the North York Militia had similar reasons for transferring his commission to the 95th in 1809, recalling in his *Random Shots From a Rifleman*,

On those occasions any subaltern who could persuade a given number of men to follow him, received a commission in whatever regiment of the line he wished, provided there was a vacancy for himself and followers. I therefore chose that which had long been the object of my secret adoration, as well for its dress as the nature of its services and achievements, the old ninety-fifth, now the Rifle Brigade. --“Hurrah for the first in the field and the last out of it, the bloody fighting ninety-fifth,” was the cry of my followers while beating up for more recruits -- and as glory was their object, a fighting and a bloody corps the gallant fellows found it. . . .”¹²

Recruiting for the Rifle Corps and later the 95th was so good that on 6 May 1805 a second battalion was raised. A core of trained men, NCOs and officers from the existing formation were transferred and the new unit filled out with drafts of recruits, mostly volunteers from the militia. In 1809 a third battalion was raised after a call for 338 volunteers from the militia resulted in no less than 1,282 recruits stepping forward, such had the fame of the 95th become.¹³

With the Rifle Corps officially established and filled out with drafts from the Fencibles and new recruits it became necessary to begin turning civilians into soldiers. Before a new recruit can be instructed in the use of the weapons that are the tools of his trade and the tactics through which the capabilities of those weapons will be employed on

¹¹ Ibid., 19. At the time Harris was serving with the 66th Militia. He joined the 2nd Battalion, 95th on 8 August, 1806.

¹² Captain John Kincaid, *Random Shots From a Rifleman*. With an introduction by Ian Fletcher (Kent: Spellmount Limited, 1998), 16.

¹³ Verner, *History and Campaigns of the Rifle Brigade*, vol. 2, 4.

the battlefield, it is necessary to instill the individual recruit with discipline. This is accompanied by a sense of team spirit, a mutual trust in the men with whom he serves and the NCOs and officers who lead him. The Rifle Corps, under the direction of one of its founders, Lieutenant Colonel William Stewart, and with further refinements from Sir John Moore, would pioneer a new style of discipline for the British Army. It would take time, but eventually the system established in the early years of the Rifle Corps, 1800-1804, would filter through the rest of the British Army and became the basic system for instruction in military discipline in the armies of Europe and the west.

Prior to the formation of the Rifle Corps the basic tactical unit for maneuver, combat, administration and discipline was the battalion. In the British Army of the period this consisted of ten companies commanded by a captain and several subalterns and numbering at full strength one hundred officers and other ranks. The company was not a true command in the modern sense of the word, an almost independent tactical formation capable of acting and fighting on its own, the captain in command simply had to ensure his movements and fire conformed to the orders of the battalion commander. Lieutenant Colonel Stewart, under the auspices of Colonel Coote Manningham made the company a real command, and a position of responsibility and importance within the battalion for the company commander. This, the Company System, as it would become known, was Stewart's primary contribution to the Rifle Corps and ultimately to the British Army.

The basis of the Company System was professionalism at all ranks, discipline based on respect, pride and trust between officers and other ranks, and the development

of a feeling of honor, community and family within each company. In his *Regulations for the Rifle Corps*, Stewart laid down the basis for this new system:

Every inferior, whether officer or soldier shall receive the lawful commands of his superior with deference and respect, and shall execute them to the best of his power. Every superior in his turn, whether he be an Officer or a Non-commissioned Officer, shall give his orders in the language of moderation and of regard to the feelings of the individual under his command; abuse, bad language or blows being positively forbid in the Regiment.¹⁴

He continued by setting forth a system of responsibility, initiative, and flexibility around each company and its cadre of officers and NCOs as well as the individual Riflemen,

Every Officer and Non-commissioned Officer will observe that it is an invariable rule and principle in discipline that, in the absence of a superior, the whole of the duty or charge which was entrusted to that superior devolves upon the next in rank, so that a blank or chasm is never to exist in the various responsible situations of the corps In a Regiment of Riflemen each Company must be formed upon the principle of being separate from and totally independent of another. All the lieutenants are therefore equally divided and are never to be exchanged from Company to Company; and, if the necessity of the service may occasionally require a subaltern officer doing duty with another, he is always to return to his original company on the earliest opportunity

This attention to retaining the same men and officers together is on account of Riflemen being liable to act very independently of each other and in numerous small detachments in the field when they will feel the comfort and utility of having their own Officer, Non-commissioned Officer and comrades with them. The service will be benefitted by the tie of friendship, which will more naturally subsist between them.

In every half-platoon one soldier of merit will be selected, and upon him the charge of the squad devolves in the absence of both the Non-commissioned Officers of it. As from among these four *Chosen Men* (as they are to be called) all Corporals are to be appointed; the best men alone are to be selected for this distinction.

The gradation of rank and responsibility from the Colonel of the Regiment to the *Chosen Men* of a squad . . . is in no instance to be varied by whatever Officer may command the corps. It is the groundwork of all other regulations of either discipline or interior economy, and the *principle* of it need on no occasion be necessarily lost sight of, however various the situations in which the Regiment may hereafter find itself and however

¹⁴ Quoted Bryant, *Jackets of Green*, 23.

inadequate the means at Headquarters of fully carrying into execution every minute part of it¹⁵

This was a wide divergence from the practices found in line infantry battalions where officers transferred between companies and indeed battalions on a regular basis and individual companies seldom, if ever, operated independently of the parent battalion.

Respect for senior Non-commissioned Officers and Officers was not to be neglected amidst this system of familiarity and mutual trust. “It is therefore an order from the Colonel that not only all Inferiors shall show . . . respect to their Superiors in their several ranks, but that all Superiors, whether they be Commissioned or Non-commissioned Officers, shall insist upon the same, never permitting without reprimand the smallest *marked* inattention or want of respect from those who are subordinates.”¹⁶

Respect and honor, however, swung both ways and officers were expected to lead by example in all manner of things and must, “remember that example is the most powerful of all preceptors, and he will find that what he does not himself observe with regard to conduct will not be attended to From the Officers of the Regiment the Colonel expects every example of what is good and great in a Soldier’s and Gentleman’s character.”¹⁷ John Kincaid, who served with the 95th in the Peninsula, stated the utility and uniqueness of the Company System and the Rifle’s style of discipline in his own clear and eloquent words, “. . . for the beauty of their system of discipline consisted in their doing everything that was necessary, and nothing that was not, so that every man’s duty was a pleasure to him, and the *esprit de corps* was unrivalled.”¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid., 23-24.

¹⁶ Ibid., 25.

¹⁷ Ibid., 26.

¹⁸ Kincaid, *Random Shots from a Rifleman*, 17.

Lieutenant Colonel Stewart, with the full backing and support of Colonel Manningham, went even further than reforming the system of discipline in their new corps. Unlike most officers of the era, they took an active interest in the well being and education of the men under their command. In an age when education was restricted to the relatively well off who could afford it, the Rifle Corps provided a regimental library and school of reading, writing, arithmetic, and geometry for the men, aiming in particular to foster the education of those who sought to become NCOs. Another first for the British Army, they created a system of medals and awards for Good Conduct, Long Service, and Special Merit. The Special Conduct medal, made of silver, was to be awarded to Riflemen not only for acts of courage but for “voluntary acts of generosity towards either an enemy or those in an enemy’s country.”¹⁹

As a new recruit Edward Costello, one of the 95th’s most famous rankers and memoirists, left an account of the impact that rewarding the men for good service made on the enlisted men,

The first parade we had after our men had received their new equipment’s [sic], was imprinted upon my memory from a circumstance attending it, that was well calculated to make an impression upon the mind of a youthful soldier, such as I then was; and to inspire that *esprit de corps* in a regiment, which is absolutely essential to even disciplined valour. I had previously, more than once, heard a man of the name of Tom Plunket eulogized by the men for his courage. He was a smart, well-made fellow, about middle height, in the prime of manhood; with a clear gray eye, and handsome countenance; and was a general favourite with both officers and men, besides being the best shot in the regiment.

On the occasion I have alluded to, we were formed into hollow square, and ordered to face inwards; as we knew it was not a punishment parade, we naturally expected some address from the commanding officer, and wondering in our own minds what was coming, when Colonel Beckwith broke the silence by calling out: ‘Private Thomas Plunket, step into the square.’

¹⁹ Bryant, *Jackets of Green*, 27-28.

All eyes, it is needless to say, were fixed upon Plunket, as he halted with his rifle shouldered, in the finest position of military attention, within a few paces of his officer.

‘Here, men,’ exclaimed the commanding officer, pointing to Plunket, ‘here stands a pattern for the battalion!’ Then addressing Tom he added, ‘I have ordered a medal for you, in approval of your late gallant conduct at Corunna. Present yourself, Sir, to the master tailor and get on a corporal’s stripes, and I will see you do not want higher promotion, as you continue to deserve it. I love to reward conduct such as yours has hitherto been!’

Making a salute, Tom retired, when we formed into column and marched back to our barracks, duly fired with a love of emulation to deserve the praise that had been bestowed on the fortunate Plunket. I have since often thought of the judicious conduct pursued by our Colonel in the foregoing instance, as I am convinced that it was attended with the happiest effects among many of the men, and, perhaps, indeed, induced much of that spirit of personal gallantry and daring for which our corps afterwards became celebrated.²⁰

Finally, Lieutenant Colonel Stewart encouraged the men under his command to take part in organized or individual sports which would be, “particularly characteristic of a light corps,” and, “both of use in the field and tending to the health of Officers and Soldiers in quarters and in camp.”²¹ Areas of the Rifle Corps’ camps were set aside for football and cricket fields and dances held, open to the soldiers and local ladies. Swimming was strongly encouraged as, “the passage of rivers, and with British troops the frequent embarkation’s and landings which they are liable to, call for this exercise.”²²

Lieutenant Colonel Stewart remained with the Rifle Corps until 1804, rising to become Colonel of the regiment and was then promoted to Brigadier-General, receiving command of a Militia District and transferred out of the Rifles. Direct command of the regiment passed to Lieutenant Colonel Sidney Beckwith, an officer who had been with

²⁰ Anthony Brett-James, ed., *Edward Costello: The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns* (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1967.), 7-8

²¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

²² *Ibid.*

the Rifles since its days as the Experimental Rifle Corps and who was to achieve fame and high command with the Rifles in the Peninsula. In January of 1803 the Rifle Corps was placed among the numbered Regiments of the Line, ninety-four of which existed at the time, becoming the “95th or Rifle Regiment.”²³ The period 1803-1805 marked the final completion of the genesis of a new breed of soldier in the British Army at Shorncliffe, a small camp on the south coast of England.

The camp was formed in June 1803 with the purpose of defending the southern coastline of England from a feared invasion by Napoleon. Several regiments of militia and three regiments of the line were placed under the command of Sir John Moore, a remarkable officer with radical new views on discipline and light infantry duties. The 95th joined the 52nd and 43rd Regiments, both newly restyled as Light Infantry Regiments. These three regiments formed the core of one of the finest fighting organizations the British Army ever fielded.

Moore was a rarity among senior British Army officers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in that he was a true career military man interested more in his duties and responsibilities as a soldier than in political or economic advancement. The British Army had not seen his likes since Wolfe during the French and Indian War. Born in 1761 to a respectable upper middle class family, his father was a doctor and tutor to the young Duke of Hamilton, whom the Moore's accompanied on many tours through Europe. By age thirteen Moore was determined to make a career in the military and set to learning all he could of his chosen profession. In 1775, while in Prussia, he met Field Marshal Sporken, who, taking an interest in Moore's passion, had a sergeant teach Moore

²³ Verner, *History and Campaigns of the Rifle Brigade*, vol. 1, 72.

and the young Duke the Prussian drill and how to load and fire a musket.²⁴ Letters from Moore's father, written during these excursions to Europe, show much of John Moore's character that was to play an important part in the nature of the system he was to eventually develop. The senior Moore observed that "his mind begins to expand, and he shows a great deal of vivacity tempered with good sense and benevolence; he is of a daring and intrepid temper, and of an obliging disposition."²⁵ While not a member of the aristocracy he was accepted by it and yet he did not allow any snobbishness to invade his personality. Again his father noted in his letters:

Jack . . . is always invited with the Duke (of Hamilton) and me, yet if, at the same time, he has an invitation from any of his old acquaintances, of a much humbler class, he always prefers the latter. I pressed him one day to go with us, because the people had insisted particularly on his coming; it was to a fine villa, and a most brilliant party. I could not prevail; he silenced me with this sentence: 'They who have invited me are poor, they were kind to me when the others did not think me worth their notice.'²⁶

In 1776 he entered the Army with a commission in the 51st Regiment of Foot purchased for him by the Duke of Argyll. He served in the last campaigns of the American War of Independence and returned to England as a Captain. In 1787 he was made a Major in the 60th Royal Americans and his special abilities to discipline men without resorting to punishment was noted by an early biographer who wrote of the "complete command he possessed over his own temper qualified him peculiarly for disciplining troops." To the officers under him he was, "friendly yet firm," to the other ranks, "kind, but strict – and to both impartially just."²⁷ In all matters pertaining to

²⁴ J.F.C. Fuller, *Sir John Moore's System of Training* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1924), 17-18.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 19. These extracts are taken from *The Life of Lieutenant-General Sir John Moore, K. B.*, by James Carrick Moore, vol. 2, 37.

military skills his discipline was strict, but in those relating to the comfort and well being of the men under his command he was indulgent and somewhat relaxed.

By the age of twenty-nine, Moore was a Lieutenant Colonel and back with the 51st which he set about reforming in his own image. From 1794 to 1802 Moore was involved in a number of foreign expeditions in Corsica, the West Indies, Ireland, Holland, and Egypt in which he gained valuable experience in commanding troops, in particular light infantry, and an understanding of the manner of reforms needed to improve the army in general. In 1796, while Governor of St. Lucia in the West Indies, he wrote a letter to General Sir Ralph Abercromby explaining what he believed to be a serious flaw in the discipline and doctrine of the British Army relating to troops posted in the West Indies and other foreign stations. Moore also outlined a solution to the problem, a reform in the selection and training of Young Officers:

. . . with a Roman, instead of a modern exercise and discipline, the troops in the West Indies might, I am convinced, be kept healthy. A parade twice a day . . . is easy for officers; it leaves them what they call more time; but it leaves the soldier also to lounge the whole day in a barrack where the air cannot be good, and where, from indolence, his body becomes enervated and liable to disorder . . . I fear the same fate (should the war continue) will attend whatever troops are sent out, unless serious attention is paid to get proper officers to put at the head of regiments, who will re-establish discipline, and inspire those under them with some of that zeal and ardour, which I am not too young to have seen, but which you must recollect so much better to have existed, in the Service. Such officers, I am sure, still exist in the British Army, though they are not to be found exclusively amongst those who have most money or most political interest.²⁸

In 1799 he was appointed Colonel of the 52nd by the King for his services in Holland. In 1802 he returned to England to a series of postings in which he was responsible for administration of the cut backs in the British Army following the

²⁸ Ibid., 23-24.

campaign in Egypt. On 2 October 1802, Moore sent orders to Lieutenant Colonel Stewart, then at Chatham Barracks, to march the Rifles to Shorncliffe. In the orders he wrote, "I hope you will find the station at Shorncliffe adapted both to your target practice and field movements."²⁹ On 10 January 1803, while himself at Chatham, Moore dispatched an order to Horse Guards declaring that the 2nd Battalion of the 52nd Regiment of Foot was to become the 96th Regiment. Transfers between the two corps were to be made on certain conditions assigned at a later date. On 18 January the 52nd was reorganized and refitted as a light infantry formation, officers and men were reassigned between the two units so that the 52nd should be, "supplied with men suitable for light infantry work."³⁰ The 52nd joined the 95th at Shorncliffe and they were soon reinforced by the arrival of the 43rd, also converted to light infantry. Sir John Moore was then stationed at Shorncliffe himself on the orders of the Duke of York, tasked with the defense of the south of England. Moore now began his work of reform.

At the heart of Moore's system was Stewart's Company System, reinforced by a concentration on the relationship to be developed between officers and other ranks and the professional education of both junior and senior officers. Prior to the formation of the Shorncliffe training system, sixty-five out of one hundred new officers upon joining their companies had received no formal military instruction of any kind,³¹ the others had served in the militia or received commissions from the ranks.

To Moore the officers were to be the driving force behind his new light infantry, especially in the Rifles since the individual company commander was expected to act

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

³⁰ Sir J. F. Maurice, ed., *The Diary of Sir John Moore*, vol. 2 (London: Edward Arnold, 1904), 67.

³¹ Michael Glover, *Wellington's Army. In the Peninsula 1808-1814* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1977), 40-41.

independently on most occasions. They were created from the bottom up as soldiers and instilled with a responsibility to and an understanding of the enlisted soldiers under their command. To accomplish this when a new Young Officer, or Officer Candidate, arrived at Shorncliffe he initially drilled as a private among the men he was to command. He had to learn how to march and shoot as, “. . . an officer who has no knowledge of the theory and practice of war, no experience in the handling and commanding of men, will not, because he cannot, educate and train a crowd of men into a company or regiment of soldiers.”³² The officer was a teacher as well as a leader. The Lieutenant Colonel in command of a battalion must be able to instruct his company commanders in their duties, they in turn should be able to instruct the lieutenants and subalterns in their companies who would then teach the other ranks.

To attain this respect and affection, high standards were required and maintained by the system of discipline in use at Shorncliffe. The soldiers, and they were considered soldiers before all else, whether officer or enlisted, were expected to refrain from drunkenness and to dress and act like soldiers at all times. To Moore this did not mean a return to the foppish dress favored by many other officers and the obsession with pipeclay and hair powder. It meant simple pride, uniformity and neatness in one's appearance. The *Rules and Regulations of the Rifle Corps*, set down by Stewart and adopted by Moore, clearly defined the goals and manner of discipline maintained by the new Light Brigade, “real discipline implies obedience and respect wherever it is due on the one hand, and on the other a just but energetic use of command and responsibility.”³³

³² Fuller, *Sir John Moore's System of Training*, 105.

³³ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 123.

While studying Sir John Moore's system of discipline it is of importance to examine the study of military discipline published by Robert Jackson while Moore was carrying out his training at Shorncliffe. This work, *A Systematic View of the Formation, Discipline, and Economy of Armies*, was available to Moore and a comparison of his views with Jackson's indicates that Moore was greatly influenced by Jackson's study. Jackson was a strong proponent of individual training similar to the Company System adopted by Stewart and Moore and believed company officers should possess individual knowledge of their men so the most could be made from the strengths and weaknesses of each soldier. Jackson, like Moore, also believed that leadership by example, experience and study were the keys to military prowess and ability.

The last resort of discipline is the infliction of punishment. In the British Army, based on the system of Frederick the Great, flogging was the method of punishment prescribed for almost any crime or failure of duty. Two hundred and fifty to five hundred lashes were not uncommon for even minor offenses, with examples of up to one thousand lashes being administered. Desertion to the enemy in battle and extreme cases of rape and pillage were punishable by death, either by firing squad or hanging.

Moore believed the use of the lash to be criminal in all but the most serious of offenses and took great pains to ensure that flogging was seldom employed within his command. Despite his efforts flogging continued in the British Army until near the end of the nineteenth century. Under Moore's system, punishment at Shorncliffe fell into two general categories depending on the crime and the rank of the perpetrator. Private punishment was given for the most minor crimes and could be inflicted on all those of the

rank Corporal or below. Its use was encouraged as it spared the “public shame of the Soldier, and the public disgrace of the corps. . . .”³⁴

The punishment was inflicted only after the perpetrator was judged guilty by a Company Courts Martial. He was tried by a court composed of a Corporal as president, a Chosen Man and three Privates for cases involving Privates and Buglers, or three Sergeants and two Corporals if the defendant was a Corporal. The Company Sergeant Major kept a log of the trial and punishment, if any, and no punishment was carried out without the approval of the Company’s Duty Officer of the Day. Punishments could range from extra duty, confinement to barracks, turned coats (a real dishonor when a military coat, its color, facings, lace and buttons, signified a place among equal peers and a home), fines (money to be used in the company mess), and cobbing (caning on the buttocks).³⁵ Sergeants could be confined to quarters, or reprimanded privately or publicly for minor infractions, depending on the wishes of their commanding officer.

Public punishments were for more serious crimes and they were classified under four headings: confinement, confinement with a turned coat or disgrace, prison, or flogging for the most serious offenses such as theft. As with private punishments a trial was held with the entire regiment present, the crime and punishment being recorded in the Regiment’s “black book.”³⁶

Officers were expected to prevent crime through leadership by example and instilling a sense of pride and honor in their men, not to simply punish crime after the fact. With the reforms instituted at Shorncliffe the regiments of the Light Division

³⁴ Ibid., 128. From *Rules and Regulations of the Rifle Corps*.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 129-130.

achieved an unparalleled rise in discipline and morale, “. . . for whether units joined him [Moore] good, indifferent, or bad, they all left him as near perfect as it was possible for them to be.”³⁷ Throughout the Peninsular Campaign there were fewer cases of disorderly conduct or crime in the Light Division than in any other formation in the army. With the Rifle Corps organized and disciplined Sir John Moore next commenced instructing them in the duties of Riflemen, a new doctrine contrary to traditional practice.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 45.

Chapter 3

Sharpening the Sword: Rifle Doctrine, the Tactical Duties of the Rifleman in Battle.

The domain of strategy is beyond the scope of this work, but the tactical problems faced by the British Army, Napoleon's most consistent if not largest opponent, demonstrate a remarkable ability, at the regimental level at least, to meet and overcome a powerful foe. Doctrine is the application of a system of drill and training on the battlefield in order to achieve certain goals, such as the capture of a key terrain feature, the turning of an enemy's flank, or holding a key village or road. The wars of the late eighteenth century and of the French Revolution increased in savagery and scope over the limited wars of previous decades. A new dimension in the manner in which wars were fought was developing at both the strategic and tactical level; a fundamental shift in the doctrine of the warring nations was under way.

The newly raised Rifle Corps in particular faced a difficult situation, being forced to adopt and implement a tactical doctrine in time of war with little or no professional experience. As seen in the previous chapters the long struggle to create a professional corps of riflemen in the British Army was paid for in blood. It now fell to the officers who had raised and disciplined this new corps of riflemen to give it a doctrine that would enable it to act as an effective fighting force on the battlefield.

It is of some considerable importance to note that the rifleman, like artillery and cavalry, was a supporting arm of the British Army, the regular line infantryman with his smoothbore musket, the massed volley and charge with cold steel was the decisive force on the battlefield. Until the advent of the breech loading and ultimately the magazine

loading rifle, the firepower of the infantry was limited to such a degree that truly “modern” tactics, those of the green jacketed rifleman were limited in scope. The importance and utility of this support provided by rifleman must not be overlooked. While the proper employment of the regular infantry proved the decisive factor on the outcome of a battle, the actions of the rifleman before, during and very often after a battle, could tip the balance in favor of the British Army.

The Company System was the cornerstone of the system of discipline created for the Rifle Corps by Lieutenant Colonel Stewart and reinforced by Sir John Moore at Shorncliffe. This was also the basis of the new doctrine created for the riflemen. Unlike Regiments of the Line which rarely fought in formations smaller than a battalion and usually in brigades of two or more battalions, the Rifle Corps was expected often, if not always, to fight as single companies. Off of the battlefield, as patrols, piquets and outposts, riflemen operated in even smaller detachments of squads and platoons. A captain in command of a company of riflemen truly held a position of command, rather like the captain of a naval vessel, he received orders of intent from his battalion commander but the details of how those orders were to be carried out was largely left up to him.

In support of the army on campaign the Rifle Corps was to be employed in a wide number of tasks, both on the offense and defense. In 1803, Colonel Coote Manningham, one of the founding officers, delivered a series of lectures to the officers of the 95th at Shorncliffe outlining their duties. The opening paragraph plainly laid out the role the 95th would play for the army on campaign:

Light troops are, as it were, a light or beacon for the General, which should constantly inform him of the situation, the movements and nature

of the enemy's designs. It is upon the exactness and intelligence of what they report that he is enabled to regulate the time and manner of executing his own enterprises. The Officer who is deprived of this support, being ignorant of what his enemy is preparing to execute, his views on every occasion anticipated, and arriving constantly too late to prevent some mischief, will experience daily losses, checks without end and such disheartening circumstances as may lead eventually to a general defeat. The safety of an army, the justness of those measures which have so direct an influence upon success, depend frequently on the vigilance, the expertness and the superiority of the light troops compared with those of the enemy.¹

The next paragraph laid out the duties of the rifle officers,

Every officer of light troops should know how to occupy a post, how to keep it, how to support it, or to retire from it when requisite. He should be well acquainted with the means and precautions necessary to secure himself upon all marches, how to penetrate the enemy's chain of sentries, to reconnoitre his position, his force and his movements, the circumstances which favour an attack upon those places he may occupy, as well as such as are unfavourable to himself when attacking.²

The Rifle Corps performed the duties for the commanding general of an army that Special Forces units, Military Intelligence, photo and signal intelligence organizations and even satellite imagery carry out today. In the era of horse and musket it was a large and difficult responsibility. Training began with the basics, drill, rifle handling and marksmanship, and progressed through the tactics to be employed on campaign. The bulk of rifle doctrine adopted by Stewart and Moore was based on Rottenburg's *Regulations for the Exercise of Riflemen and Light Infantry*, Mannigham's *Lectures* and Captain Neil Campbell's *Instructions for Light Infantry and Riflemen*.

Training was intensive and lengthy, with individual drill and movements taught first with larger and larger numbers of recruits being brought together until a whole

¹ Colonel Coote Manningham, *Military Lectures delivered to the Officers of the 95th (Rifle) Regiment at Shorncliffe Barracks, Kent, during the Spring of 1803* (London: T. Egerton, 1803), 1.

² *Ibid.*, 2.

battalion would be trained to act together. One Rifle officer, Captain John Cross, who later wrote a simplified version of standard drill for light infantry based on Sir David Dundas's system, entitled *A System of Drill and Maneuvers*, stated in his introduction that "instructors will be appointed to the classes in progressive order, according to their qualifications; and they are not, on any account, to proceed from one lesson to another... until they are expressly ordered to do so..."³ Before moving on to the unique drill and formations employed by riflemen the recruits were instructed in a simplified version of regular infantry drill so that they could operate in concert with regular infantry if necessary. While many regular battalions still trained with the three deep line, the Rifle Corps employed the loose two, deep line adopted in the Americas.

Musketry, the proper employment of the rifle, followed instruction in drill. The Baker Rifle, adopted by the Rifle Corps, provided a number of advantages over the smooth bore musket employed by the line and light infantry. Proper instruction in its use was vital.⁴ Rottenburg's system was simple and methodical, based on three groups of three lessons, each of which utilized the inherent accuracy of the rifle to its full effect, proceeding in the following manner:

First, the recruit was taught the manual exercise in order to accustom him to handle his arms smartly; secondly, how to shoot; and, thirdly, how to extend, that is place himself in a position to use his rifle or musket. These three lessons mastered, the next three were begun. These were: firing in extended order, firing advancing, and firing retiring. The last three were the tactical application of the former six: Skirmishing, the Formation of the Chain, and the Formation of the Advanced Guard. The whole system, being based on musketry, had, as its object, the protection in movement or at rest of the heavy infantry of the line.⁵

³ Fuller, *Sir John Moore's System*, 166.

⁴ For a discussion of the development and characteristics of the Baker Rifle see Appendix II.

⁵ Fuller, *Sir John Moore's System*, 167-168.

The use of extended order to fire allowed individual and therefore aimed fire, greatly increasing the possibility of scoring hits against the enemy, this being the true goal of the rifleman, accurate fire with the intent of causing casualties among the enemy. These training methods remain constant today, recruits in Basic Training first learning the manual of arms followed by intensive training on a rifle range to teach marksmanship in controlled situations and completed by firing under simulated combat situations. The company commanders maintained records of shooting skills and to encourage practice and skill a system of distinctions was created similar to the good conduct medals, with three classes of marksmanship. The best, or marksmen, wore a green cockade on their shakos, above the universal black national cockade. Second class shots wore a white cockade.⁶ The extent of true marksmanship taught in the regular infantry of the day was the leveling of muskets, ensuring all of the musket barrels pointed in the same general direction and at the correct trajectory based on the estimated range to the enemy. The close formations, confusion, smoke and noise of volley fire prevented accurate fire.

Once trained to handle his weapon, the rifleman learned the rest of his trade, the officer the necessary commands and applications, the soldier how, when and where to move. As previously noted, tactics fall basically into two different categories, offensive and defensive. There are, of course, always exceptions to any general rule and some tactics based on application and circumstance fall into both. The skirmish line was the most commonly used formation of the Rifle Corps on the battlefield and served both offensive and defensive purposes. With time and the advent of modern weapons, the breech-loading, magazine fed rifle firing smokeless powder and the machine-gun, the

⁶ Ibid., 183-184.

skirmish chain became the dominant tactical formation of the infantry. For this reason the skirmish line or extended order is discussed first. All movements and formations discussed below are based on a battalion of riflemen operating by companies and in two ranks.

A rifle company consisted of two platoons, further broken down into four sections or squads, two per platoon. A captain commanded the company with a subaltern officer, a lieutenant or second lieutenant commanded each platoon, and sergeants commanded sections. Each company also included a bugler posted with the captain to pass orders to the men beyond the range of spoken or shouted commands. The officers and sergeants also carried whistles on their cross belts for similar purposes. At full strength a company numbered one hundred officers and men but on campaign this figure obviously varied based on casualties and sickness.

The skirmish line in reality was formed of three distinct parts, the firing line, the supports and the reserve. Upon receiving the order to form a skirmish line, one platoon from each company trailed arms and advanced forward, accompanied by the captain, bugler and platoon commander. The remaining second platoons stayed in the rear with the battalion commander. This formation, half of the battalion, was the reserve. It provided reinforcements for the firing line, a formed counter-attack force, a position to fall back upon, or a formed body to cover a retreat if necessary. The advancing platoons, commanded by the senior of the battalions two majors again split itself some distance in front of the reserve based on the distance to the enemy and terrain. One section of each platoon halted and formed up with the others in close order. Here remained the company commanders and the buglers. Known as the support, this formation provided close aid to

the firing line, replaced casualties and watched the flanks to prevent envelopment by the enemy's own skirmishers. The last sections, a quarter of the battalion again advanced and extended, up to six paces between men according to Rottenburg, based on advantageous cover and concealment. This was the firing line. The men operated in pairs or "files," a front rank and rear rank man. The Company System ensured that these two men had undergone all of their training together and were well acquainted.

With the skirmish line in place fire and movement commenced. Firing was carried out in such a manner that at least one man in each rank was loaded at all times, ensuring the skirmish line was always ready to fire. When not moving fire was to be given as follows:

"At the signal to commence fire the front rank makes ready, presents (each man selecting his particular object) and fires; as soon as the rear rank man sees his file leader put the ball in his piece, he makes ready, and fires through the intervals of the front rank; and when the rear rank men have got their balls into their pieces, each man gives notice to his file leader to fire. In this manner the fire is continued *on the spot* till the signal is given to cease firing."⁷

Fire was also issued on the move, advancing and retiring. Upon the order to advance:

... the rear rank moves briskly six paces before the front rank, each man having passed to the right of the file leader, makes ready, takes his aim, and fires; and as soon as he has loaded again, trails his rifle. When the sergeant of the front rank sees the rear rank has fired, he steps in front, gives a signal with his whistle, upon which the front rank moves briskly six paces before the rear rank, each man then presents, takes aim, and fires; following the directions that have been given to the rear rank. Thus each rank continues advancing and firing alternately.⁸

Campbell's instructions provide a little more realism, taking advantage of cover and

⁷ Baron Francis de Rottenburg. *Regulations for the Exercise of Riflemen and Light Infantry and Instructions for their conduct in the Field*. (London: T. Egerton, 1803.) 18.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

where necessary firing from the kneeling, sitting, and prone positions. Fire was also conducted while retiring, in exactly the reverse of advancing except that loading was performed while on the move.

All movement conformed to the body to the rear, the firing line conformed to the movements of the supports, the supports to the reserve and the reserve to the main body of the army. If forced to retire by an overwhelming enemy advance, the firing line first fell back upon the supports and if necessary continued to the reserve. This movement was made to the flanks in order to leave a clear line of sight and thus fire between the friendly formation and the enemy.

The primary purpose of the skirmish line was to screen the main body of the army. On the defense the skirmishers bloodied the nose of the advancing enemy. The highly accurate rifles allowed them to single out the enemy's officers and NCOs, as well as the gunners of accompanying artillery. This galling fire lowered the enemy's morale and, if very successful, forced the enemy to halt and open fire or deploy and attack to sweep the skirmishers out of the way. All infantry attacks were based on maintaining the morale of the attacking force and on sheer impetus, the first volley, with all muskets loaded being the most effective. By forcing the enemy to halt and fire the will to attack was drained from the enemy. Soldiers were much more comfortable in an extended firefight at long distances than in close melee with the bayonet, the riflemen then killed off the motivated officers and NCOs as they urged their men on to attack. If the enemy charged the skirmishing rifles they retired to the flanks to return when the enemy fell back. If the enemy assault came within musket range of the main line of heavy infantry the rifles would also retire to the flanks to continue harassing the enemy while the massed

muskets and bayonets of the intact main line crushed the attack. On the attack the riflemen carried out much the same role, screening the movements of their army so that the enemy were never sure where the weight of the attack would fall, forcing the enemy to waste their first and most destructive volley on the dispersed and elusive skirmishers.

Riflemen found employment on the battlefield beyond their role as skirmishers in the main line of battle. One task, for which the long-range accuracy of the Baker Rifle was especially suited, was the suppression of enemy artillery. Although opposing batteries of artillery did occasionally engage in long-range duels with one another, counter battery fire would not truly come into its own until the First World War. The role of artillery on the Napoleonic battlefield was to support the infantry and cavalry with direct fire and to shatter the enemy's morale through infliction of casualties. The fact that most pieces of field artillery employed in this era were capable only of direct fire placed them among the infantry or cavalry they were intended to support. While the closely massed ranks of line infantry presented perfect targets for the gunners, especially if they were forced into squares by the presence of cavalry, riflemen, dispersed in pairs and taking advantage of cover and concealment, made poor targets indeed. By utilizing the capabilities of their weapons, accuracy out to a range of up to three hundred yards, groups of riflemen could effectively suppress enemy artillery with little fear of retribution. Suppression was achieved by maintaining a steady fire upon the gunners and, perhaps more importantly, upon their horses. A battery of artillery without horses was as useless as one without ammunition or gunners. The guns, each weighing several tons, instantly would be immobilized, unable to move forward in support of advancing infantry

or cavalry and in the event of defeat, unable to move from the field of battle, they became prizes for the enemy.

The other vital task carried out by the rifleman, with the support of musket armed light infantrymen, cast one eye back to the initial crisis that led to the creation of the Rifles in the British Army, and one forward to a problem that military theorists seek an adequate answer to in the present, the occupation and defense of broken, irregular or urban terrain. Contrary to much popular myth the battlefields of the Napoleonic Wars were not tournaments fought on pool table-like terrain of gently rolling hills and fields. As stated earlier the urbanization of the population and enclosure of fields in northern Europe made for very close terrain with a landscape filled with small walled farms and villages, hedged fields, sunken roads, irrigation ditches and isolated copses and woods of small tangled trees and thick undergrowth. Portugal and Spain, the main arenas of combat for the 19th, while less developed than northern Europe presented its own tactical problems through its sheer remoteness and rugged terrain. The Portuguese/Spanish and Spanish/French frontiers, dominated by mountains and the associated deep, fast, water courses, were terrain nightmares for an army on campaign. Most battlefields also featured man-made structures of one type or another and these tended to become pivotal points on the battlefield, ready made fortifications for whichever side occupied them that could dominate fields of fire and avenues of approach. Parties of riflemen often found themselves, usually mixed with regular light infantry whose faster loading muskets provided a greater volume of fire at closer ranges, occupying broken terrain, woods, farmhouses, and villages on the flanks or in front of the main line of battle. This was acting upon the basic military tenant that an obstacle to the enemy not covered by fire is

useless in preventing his advance. More often than not they were successfully held. The rocky slopes of the battlefield at Bussaco in 1810, the woods and rocks on the flank of the British Army at Fuentes de Onoro in 1811, the hedgerows on the Ligny road at Quatre Bras on 16 June 1815 and the Sand Pit and Hedgerows at Waterloo on 18 June provide important examples.

In his experiences in the Peninsula, Kincaid found himself fighting through trees with his men. He explained the dangers of fighting in close terrain and the advantages of rifle discipline and doctrine when faced with this situation:

Be it known then, that I was one of a crowd of skirmishers who were enabling the French ones to carry the news of their own defeat through a thick wood, at an infantry canter, when I found myself all at once within a few yards of one of their regiments in line, which opened such a fire, that had I not, rifleman like, taken instant advantage of the cover of a good fir tree, my name would have unquestionably been transmitted to posterity by that night's gazette. And, however opposed it may be to the usual system of drill, I will maintain, from that day's experience, that the cleverest method of teaching a recruit to stand to attention, is to place him behind a tree and fire balls at him; as, had our late worthy disciplinarian, Sir David Dundas, himself been looking on. I think that even he must have admitted that he never saw anyone stand so fiercely upright as I did behind mine.⁹

The duties of the rifleman did not start or end on the battlefield. It is no wonder that "Hurrah for the first in the field and the last out of it, the bloody fighting Ninety-fifth!" became the recognized toast for the Rifles. Like the motto of the modern United States Marine Corps, "First to Fight," it symbolized the many and varied roles of the riflemen. An army on the move in the Napoleonic era was a cumbersome, vulnerable thing, weighted down by the long tail of camp followers and supply trains attached to it. The generals commanding the brigades and divisions were blinded by the sheer size of

⁹ Captain John Kincaid, *Adventures in the Rifle Brigade*. With an introduction by Ian Fletcher (Kent: Spellmount Limited, 1998), 49-50.

the thing, unable to see the forest for the trees as it were. Any information on the nature of the surrounding terrain and movements and intentions of the enemy was of vital importance. Much of the work of screening the movements of the army, and of gathering intelligence on the enemy was accomplished by the Light Cavalry, Hussars and Dragoons. Cavalry, however, could not operate in a vacuum and it usually fell to the riflemen to provide advanced and rear guards for the army on the move and patrols on its flanks and ahead to determine the lay of the land, to be Manningham's "Beacon for the General."

Both Rottenburg and Captain Cross dealt extensively with the duties of advanced and rear guards. Cross laid out the basic tenants of the advanced guard in such a way as to encourage initiative and basic common sense in the Rifle officer or NCO:

The distance at which an advance guard and flank patrol should keep from a column must be determined by local circumstances and the strength of the column; they should, however, be always at such a distance that, if they should be attacked, the column may have time to put itself in a posture of defense. . . detached files must examine carefully all houses and enclosures within their reach. . . . On coming to a house, an enclosure, or a hill, a single file of those detached parties will advance and examine it, the other remaining behind watching its motions, and ready to give assistance when required.¹⁰

In *Rules and Regulations* Rottenburg made equally clear and useful recommendations while not limiting the riflemen to textbook solutions to real world problems and it is worth quoting at length in order to demonstrate the nature of doctrine developed for the 95th:

Skirmishers, whether from the flank patrols or advanced guard, are to stop every person they meet, to question them respecting the enemy. . . . The commander of an advanced guard or flank patrol will at all times make an exact report to the Commanding Officer of the column of anything

¹⁰ Quoted in Fuller, *Sir John Moore's System of Training*, 196-197. From Cross's, *A System of Drill and Maneuvers*.

extraordinary that may occur during the march, or of any remarkable feature of the country. . . .¹¹

Upon contact with the enemy the leader of the advanced guard or flank patrol was to take immediate action, halting and determining the strength and nature of the enemy,

. . . and then fall back on the main body; the commanding officer of which, if the enemy is not in too great force, should try to conceal his men, suffer the enemy to approach, and endeavour to entangle him between his parties and the head of the column.¹²

At all costs the advanced guard was not to fall back directly upon the main column. If forced to retire by weight of numbers it was to fire and retire as slowly as possible, attempting to force the enemy to deploy and thus buy time for the main column to react. While retiring, the riflemen of the advanced guard were to make use of all available cover and concealment and take as circuitous a route back to the main force as possible. Thus the enemy could not simply follow them back into the midst of re-deploying force, catching them unprepared.

As the officers of the 95th gained experience in battle they developed their own theories on the tactics they employed. Captain John Kincaid being among their number and possessed of a sharp wit as well as a keen eye for tactical development laid down his own thoughts on the composition and duties of an advanced guard in *Random Shots From a Rifleman*:

In an open country a few squadrons of dragoons shoved well to the front will procure every necessary information; but in a close country, I hold the following to be the best advanced guard.

1st. A subaltern with twelve hussars, throwing two of them a hundred yards in front, and four at fifty.

2nd. A section of riflemen or light infantry at fifty yards.

3rd. The other three sections of the company at fifty yards.

¹¹ Rottenburg, *Rules and Regulations*, 42-43.

¹² *Ibid.*, 43.

4th. Four companies of light infantry at a hundred yards, with communicating files, and followed closely by two pieces of horse artillery, and a squadron of dragoons.

On falling in with the enemy, the advanced videttes will fire off their carabines to announce it, and if their opponents fall back they will continue their onward movement. If they do not, the intermediate four will join them, and try the result of a shot each; when, if the enemy still remain, it shews that they decline taking a civil hint, which, if they are infantry, they assuredly will; and the dispositions must be made accordingly. While the remaining hussars are therefore dispatched to watch the flanks, the leading section of infantry will advance in skirmishing order, and take possession of the most favourable ground near the advanced videttes. The other three sections will close up to within fifty yards, one of them, if necessary, to join the advanced one, but a subdivision must remain in reserve. The guns will remain on the road, and the dragoons and infantry composing the main body of the advanced guard will be formed on the flanks, in such a manner as the ground will admit, so as to be best ready for either attack or defense; and in that disposition they will wait further orders, presuming that the officer commanding the division will not be a hundred miles off.

The foregoing applies more particularly to the following of an enemy whom you have not lately thrashed, whereas, if following a beaten one, he ought never to be allowed a moment's respite so long as you have force enough of any kind up to shove him along. He ought to be bullied every inch of the way with dragoons and horse artillery, and the infantry brought to bear as often as possible.¹³

While advancing through hostile territory or if the enemy is pursuing the column, the formation of a rearguard was of vital importance: "No column is ever to march without a rear-guard. . . . When an army retires before an enemy in several columns, each having his own rear-guard, they will preserve a communication with one another, and in common cover the retreat of the army."¹⁴ The purpose of the rearguard was not to get tied down in a fight with the enemy but rather to delay him, it being "a fixed principle that the rear-guard should dispute every *defile* as long as possible, in order to enable the

¹³ Kincaid, *Random Shots From a Rifleman*, 316-318.

¹⁴ Rottenburg, *Rules and Regulations*, 48.

column to gain ground. . . .”¹⁵ Rottenburg stressed cooperation at all times in his work as one of the key principles of rifle doctrine, thus reinforcing the Company System, demonstrating this in the manner in which he described how a rearguard should retire in the face of the enemy:

If a rear-guard should be pursued by the enemy, it will divide itself into two bodies, which will continue to retreat in communication with one another, sending out several skirmishers, who will extend themselves by two's, and fire in retiring. The skirmishers must preserve as good a line as possible; the two bodies will retire alternately, the one covering the retreat of the other.¹⁶

Even while the army was at rest, bivouacking over night, or in cantonments for extended periods of time between campaigns, the riflemen expected no respite from their duties. The perimeter of the army was protected by outposts and patrols, composed like the advanced and rearguards, of light cavalry and riflemen or light infantry. Of all of the duties carried out by riflemen, the establishment of outposts, or piquets, was probably the most difficult to effectively master. This was because it involved the deployment of small numbers of riflemen often at extensive distances from the main body of the army, usually in unfamiliar terrain and in close proximity to the enemy.

Like the formation of the skirmish line, the picquets were composed of three distinct divisions. Individual companies of riflemen were usually tasked with providing piquets for a given sector of the perimeter. Of this company half of it, one platoon, was held back as a reserve to support the advanced positions in event of crisis. The platoons and companies were rotated if the post was held over an extended period of time in order to provide relief to those on the piquets and give everyone a fair share of the duty. The

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 50.

second platoon of the company was again split, one section positioning itself about midway between the reserve and the advanced posts to act as a line of communication and support the piquets closely in a similar manner to the supports of the skirmish line. The remaining section broke down into groups of two to four men, again based on local terrain and weather conditions, observing enemy movement. At night the outlying sentries fell back upon the support but half of the present men remained under arms at all times. The piquet occupied different ground at night than it had during the day to prevent the enemy making use of any observations they had been able to make. The ground before the line of sentries was patrolled so as to ensure all avenues of approach were well known. The officer commanding the piquet studied the lay of the land and judged the capacity of local roads, bridges and fords for handling infantry, cavalry and artillery. It was then his duty to pass this information on to the officers relieving him. He was also expected to question anyone attempting to cross his piquet line to determine what information they may hold about the enemy or the local area, and what their business in his camp was. In the event of the piquet being attacked the officer commanding ensured that the enemy be delayed as long as possible in order to allow the army to prepare itself. If forced to retreat he was to give ground slowly, harassing the enemy's flanks with rifle fire and falling back by a route that would not lead the enemy right into his own lines. The commander of the reserve would bring up his men to strengthen the piquet if possible; if not they would attempt to get on the enemy's flanks and slow down their advance.

Rottenburg believed that the efficiency of the officer defined how effective the piquet line would be and stated:

On picket and other duties, where the service is inseparable from the greatest hardships, it is the duty of every officer to set his men a good example, not to be laying down and resting himself when the men are under arms, nor to go under cover while they are without shelter, but share, in common with them, every danger and fatigue: by his example, soldiers will submit cheerfully, and without murmuring, to any inconvenience: it is also the best means of securing their attention and confidence.¹⁷

The officers and men of the Experimental Rifle Corps and its successor, the 95th, from 1800 to the summer of 1808, were put through their paces in constant training in the south of England. They also participated in several of the amphibious operations that characterized the British war effort against France, her allies and her client states prior to the beginning of the Peninsular War. Parties of riflemen served aboard Royal Navy vessels as marines in Nelson's spectacular raid on the Danish navy in 1801, they fought in Germany in 1805-1806 with the expeditionary force that evacuated the remains of the army of Hanover, and in South America against France's Spanish allies in the ill-fated Monte Video and Buenos Aires campaigns in 1806-1807. In this last campaign they served under the command of Brigadier Robert Craufurd, future commander of the Light Division. Finally, they served at Copenhagen in 1808, with Sir Arthur Wellesley, as yet a relatively unknown "Indian" general. During these campaigns and expeditions the 95th set about making a name for itself. It had slipped onto the British Army's strength largely through the patronage of the Duke of York and Sir John Moore, both influential figures in army reform, but was considered somewhat unconventional in a highly conservative society, little more than a curious plaything never more than temporary and experimental. The publicity and support that gave the Rifles the legitimacy and

¹⁷ Ibid., 65.

recognition it so badly needed and much deserved came not from the Royal Army, but from the Royal Navy. Colonel Stewart and a detachment of riflemen served aboard Nelson's ships at the battle of Copenhagen and made quite an impression upon the Admiral who was fast becoming one of England's greatest heroes. They made such a mark that one-eighth of the prize money seized from the Danes was passed on to the Rifle Corps and Nelson and Stewart carried on a correspondence until Nelson's death at Trafalgar in 1805. In a letter written shortly after the engagement at Copenhagen Nelson made a statement that did much to ensure the continuation of the Rifles, "I hope the Government will increase your Rifle Corps."¹⁸

The summer of 1808 found four companies of the 2nd Battalion, 95th Rifles, preparing to embark for Portugal as part of an expeditionary force once again commanded by Sir Arthur Wellesley.

¹⁸ Bryant, *Jackets of Green*, 30

Chapter 4

Combat Operations of the Light Division during the defense of Portugal, 1810-1811.

Before examining the role of the 95th Rifles in the campaign of 1810-1811, fought to secure once and for all a British foothold in the Peninsula at Lisbon and to complete the restructuring and training of the Portuguese Army along British lines, it is necessary to set down a brief history of their actions in the two years leading to this point. The 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 95th came to the Iberian Peninsula as part of a British Expeditionary Force in 1808 with the goal of disrupting Napoleon's Continental System and in answer to a plea for help from the Portuguese Royal family. This was Britain's largest overseas expedition since the American War of Independence and opened what Napoleon would come to call his "Spanish Ulcer."

Four companies of the 2nd Battalion landed with Sir Arthur Wellesley's army at Mondego Bay on 1 August 1808. The riflemen of the 95th, along with detachments of the 60th, formed the advanced guard as the British moved towards Lisbon and were closely engaged in the skirmishing at Obidos, Rolica and Vimiero. Following the Convention of Cintra¹ the 2nd Battalion was joined by the 1st and followed Sir John Moore, the army's new commander on his campaign into Spain. The purpose of this campaign was to support the Spanish Army and population, which was engaged in a popular uprising against the French. By the time Moore's army reached Salamanca Napoleon had arrived in Spain and crushed the bulk of the Spanish forces, placing his brother Joseph on the

¹ This treaty, created by Wellesley's superiors, allowed the entire French army in Portugal, a defeated army, to leave in British ships with its arms. Wellesley, Sir Hew Dalrymple and Sir Harry Burrard were recalled to England to face a Parliamentary investigation in which Wellesley was cleared.

throne. Moore turned north towards Burgos in an attempt to cut Napoleon's lines of communication but soon found his own line of retreat threatened by other French armies under Marshal's Soult and Ney. On Christmas Eve 1808, Sir John Moore turned his army back towards the west coast of Spain and the port of Corunna, to evacuate before he was completely cut off.

The rear guard of the army was composed of four brigades under the command of Major General Edward Paget. One of these brigades, the 1st Flank Brigade, under the command of Brigadier General Robert Craufurd, included battalions from the three regiments that later comprised the Light Brigade and Light Division: 1st Battalion 43rd Foot, 2nd Battalion 52nd Foot and 2nd Battalion 95th Rifles. This Brigade, along with other elements of the army, was dispatched to Vigo, further south along the coast relieving the over-burdened commissariat services of Moore's army. While the rest of the army came close to falling apart due to the hardships of the winter retreat, the three regiments trained at Shorncliffe held together and maintained their moral and discipline. While much of this was indeed due to the fine training enforced by Manningham, Stewart and Moore, a new element was added to the character of the Rifles, an element that made them, along with the 43rd and 52nd, the finest infantry in Europe. This new force was the character of their commanding officer, Robert Craufurd.

Craufurd first served with the 95th during the expedition to Buenos Aires and developed a rather close attachment to the green jackets. From that ill-fated expedition² until his death in 1812 at the storming of Cuidad Rodrigo, he was never

² The poorly managed expedition to seize one of Spain's largest and most wealthy colonies ended in the British expeditionary force being forced to surrender following a nationalistic rising by the population. See Verner's *History and Campaigns of the Rifle Brigade*, vol. 1, chapter 9.

without at least a small detachment of rifles. Rifleman Benjamin Harris, who served with Craufurd in the 2nd Battalion during the Corunna campaign observed:

It sometimes amused me to see him with the Rifles always at his heels, like they were his familiars. When he stopped his horse and halted to deliver one of his stern reprimands, you would see half a dozen lean, unshaven, shoeless, and savage Riflemen leaning on their weapons, scowling up in his face as he scolded them. And then, when he dashed his spurs into his reeking horse, they would throw their rifles upon their shoulders and hobble after him again.³

Craufurd was well educated and a professional military man in the modern sense. He took a keen interest in his military education, unlike most officers of the day. He had served in Parliament for several years while on leave from the army on half pay but returned to active service for the South American expedition. It seemed that Craufurd had an instinctive knack for commanding light troops and for this reason was given command of one of Sir John Moore's Flank Brigades during the Corunna campaign. His style of command, however, was very different from that adopted by Stewart and Moore. The system of discipline he employed still included the use of flogging for even the most minor of violations. This was tempered by an innate common sense in his command structure and in the Standing Orders he developed for the regiments under his command during the Peninsula War. Any light infantryman or rifleman who found himself lashed to the tripod being flogged had every reason to be there based on the value system of the era. His Standing Orders ensured that every officer and NCO in his command knew every duty and how to perform it with the utmost speed and accuracy, from filling out the mountains of paperwork the army required, to packing the baggage, posting sentries and how to march. This last may seem trivial, but Craufurd realized absolute discipline must

³ Eileen Hathaway, *A Dorset Rifleman*, 110.

be maintained upon the march, especially when crossing obstacles such as streams and rivers. He insisted that his men march straight through, without breaking ranks to find their own way. While this proved uncomfortable for the men who had to march in wet trousers, it saved a great deal of time and spared much confusion. The whole column would not get bottled up at the river's edge, seeking a convenient crossing point and then having to be reorganized on the far bank. In the same light Craufurd insisted his officers share the hardships of their men. Rifleman Harris observed a humorous event on the retreat to Vigo involving a stream crossing and an officer attempting to spare himself wet clothing:

We came to a river which was tolerably wide, but not very deep. This was just as well for had it been deep as the dark regions, we would have had to go through somehow or other, for what with the avenger behind, and Craufurd along with us, we were kept moving along whatever the obstacle. So into the stream went the light brigade, and Craufurd, busy as a shepherd with his flock, rode in and out of the water to keep his wearied band from being drowned as they crossed over. One officer, probably to save himself from being wet through, and having to wear damp breeches for the remainder of the day, had mounted the back of one of his men. Craufurd spied him. The sight of such effeminacy was enough to raise the choler of the general and he was soon plunging and splashing through the water after them.

"Put him down, sir! Put him down! I desire you to put that officer down instantly!" Whereupon the soldier dropped his burden into the stream like a hot potato and went on through.

"Return sir," said Craufurd to the officer, "and go through the water like the others. I will not allow my officers to ride upon the men's backs through the rivers. All must take their share alike here."

Wearied as we were, this affair caused all who saw it to almost shout with laughter. It was never forgotten by those who survived the retreat.⁴

Craufurd's command arrived in Vigo on 13 January 13 1809 and after several

⁴ Ibid., 111-112.

days wait in order to gather up stragglers, embarked for England, arriving in Portsmouth on 1 February.⁵

After rest and refitting, the 2nd Battalion was sent to the Netherlands in the spring of 1809 as part of the Walcheren expedition where little was achieved, excepting the deaths and crippling of hundreds due to malarial fevers. The 1st Battalion, along with the 1st Battalions of the 43rd and 52nd Light Infantry and “A” Battery of the Royal Horse Artillery, were ordered back to the Peninsula under Craufurd to join the army again under the command of Sir Arthur Wellesley. Built around the garrison left at Lisbon by Sir John Moore, this army was intended to liberate Portugal and aid the Spanish Juntas. Initially a part of the 3rd Division, Craufurd’s brigade was detached during the winter of 1809-1810 and reconstituted as the Light Division in the spring of 1810 by the addition of two battalions of Portuguese *cacadores* (light infantry), and the 1st King’s German Legion Hussars.

The three British regiments remained the heart of the division, a “band of brothers.” Indeed three very famous brothers, Charles, William and George Napier, served with the Light Division during the Peninsular War, each in one of the British regiments. Captain J.H. Cooke of the 43rd described the relationship among the three regiments:

Though amongst the regiments which composed it there existed an unanimity which was almost without parallel in war, yet there was a shade of difference between them – a something peculiar to each corps distinguishing it from the others – which was the more remarkable as amongst them there was a sort of fraternal compact, and it has occurred that three brothers held commissions at the same time in the 43rd, 52nd and Rifle Corps.

⁵ Ian Fletcher, *Craufurd's Light Division. The Life of Robert Craufurd and His Command of the Light Division* (Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Spellmount Ltd., 1991), 70.

The 43rd were a gay set – the dandies of the Army; the great encouragers of dramatic performances, dinner parties and balls of which their headquarters was the pivot.

The 52nd were highly gentlemanly men of a steady aspect; they mixed little with other corps, but attended the theatricals of the 43rd with circumspect good humour, and now and then relaxed, but were soon again the 52nd.

The Rifle Corps were skirmishers in every sense of the word; a sort of wild sportsmen, and up to every description of fun and good humour. Nothing came amiss: the very trees responded to their merriment, and scraps of their sarcastic rhymes passed current through all camps and bivouacs.⁶

Of course Captain John Kincaid had much to say about his own regiment and those with whom he fought. About the 95th, “for there is none other that I like so much . . . for we were the light regiment of the Light Division, and fired the first and last shot in almost every battle, siege, and skirmish, in which the army was engaged during the war.”⁷ About his fellow light infantry regiments he wrote:

. . . with regard to regiments, I beg to be understood as identifying our old and gallant associates, the forty-third and fifty-second, as a part of ourselves, for they bore their share in everything, and I love them as I hope to do my better half, (when I come to be divided,) wherever *we* were, *they* were; and although the nature of our arm generally gave us more employment in the way of skirmishing, yet, whenever it came to a pinch, independent of a suitable mixture of them among us, we had only to look behind to see a line, in which we might place a degree of confidence, almost equal to our hopes in heaven; nor were we ever disappointed. There never was a corps of riflemen in the hands of such supporters!⁸

This spirit of brotherhood continued, even after the many reorganizations and amalgamations that have occurred in the British Army. Officers from all three regiments

⁶ Quoted in Verner, *History and Campaigns of the Rifle Brigade*, vol. 2, 103. From *A Narrative of the Events in the South of France*, by Captain J.H. Cooke, 1835.

⁷ Kincaid, *Adventures in the Rifle Brigade*, 16.

⁸ *Ibid.*

and from “A” Battery, Royal Horse Artillery, remain members of the others regimental messes.

Craufurd’s brigade missed the battle of Talavera, the first major battle of Wellesley’s new campaign by only a few hours, having just completed a forced march of nearly fifty miles in only twenty-six hours, quite an achievement in itself. The Light Brigade immediately took up the outposts for the army and following the failure of Wellesley’s Spanish allies to provide adequate food and transportation, they formed the rear guard of the army as it withdrew into Portugal. As both the British and French armies moved into winter quarters Wellesley, made Viscount Wellington on 10 January 1810 in honor of his victory at Talavera, began to lay plans for making Portugal a fortress in order to guarantee Britain a stronghold on the continent. While his chief engineer, Colonel Fletcher, began construction of a massive series of defensive works at Torres Vedras, the Light Division, now detached from the 3rd Division, was positioned on the Portuguese/Spanish frontier. Their mission was to guard a one-hundred-mile-long expanse of rugged terrain between the Douro and Tagus rivers, the only acceptable route for a French advance. From February 1810 until March 1811, excepting a short period in the fall and early winter of 1810-1811, when the British Army retired within the lines at Torres Vedras, the Light Division provided the outposts for the whole army and was in almost constant contact with the enemy.

By the middle of the winter of 1810-1811, Napoleon had upwards of 325,000 men in the Iberian Peninsula. Of these Wellington faced some 83,000, Marshal Andre Massena’s “Army of Portugal,” consisting of Marshal Michel Ney’s VI Corps and Marshal Junot’s VIII Corps, with Marshal Reynier’s II Corps in support south of the

Tagus. To oppose this force Wellington placed some 25,000 men well forward on the frontier between the Douro and the Tagus with the Light Division straddling the frontier itself between the Spanish garrisoned fortress of Ciudad Rodrigo and the Portuguese held Almeida, along the line of the Agueda river and with their backs to the deep ravine cut by the fast running Coa river.⁹ In a dispatch from Wellington dated 4 February 1810, Craufurd received orders concerning his position in advance of the army:

As my views, in the position which the army now occupy, are to take the offensive in case of the occurrence of certain events, I wish not to lose the possession of the Coa; and I am anxious therefore that you and Gen. Cole should maintain your position upon the river, unless you should find that the enemy collect a force in Castille which is so formidable as to manifest a serious intention of invading Portugal; in which case it is not my intention to maintain the line of the Coa. In this case I wish that, if you find it necessary, you should retire gradually to Celorico. . . .¹⁰

On the 6 January, with word that the French piquets were on the Agueda north of Ciudad Rodrigo, the Light Division crossed the Coa and occupied several villages between the two rivers. On the 17 January the Rifles moved north to the rugged land close to the Douro and remained there unmolested by French for three weeks. Several more weeks were spent in moving from village to village between the two rivers until 27 February when opposing patrols, British Rifles and French cavalry, probably dragoons, collided at Barba del Puerco, on the Agueda. From this point friction between the outposts of the two armies increased as each side sought to penetrate the other's screen of piquets.¹¹

⁹ Verner, *History and Campaigns of the Rifle Brigade*, vol. 2, 86.

¹⁰ Colonel C.B. Gurwood, K.C.T.S., ed, *The Dispatches of Field Marshal The Duke of Wellington during His Various Campaigns in India, Denmark, Portugal, Spain, The Low Countries, and France*, vol. 3, (London: Parker, Furvinall and Parker, 1844), 725.

¹¹ Verner, *History and Campaigns of the Rifle Brigade*, vol. 2, 89-90.

On 28 February a second patrol of Rifles entered Barba del Puerco and sent a small detachment across the Agueda, determining that an all arms force of some 3,000 Frenchmen was in the nearby village of San Felices under General Ferey. Between 28 February and 11 March, patrols of Rifles occupied and abandoned Barba del Puerco several times as changes in the weather altered the level of the rivers and streams between the Agueda and the main body of the Light Division on the Coa. This threatened to cut these patrols off and affect their ability to receive reinforcement. On 11 March Craufurd decided to push the entire strength of the 95th forward onto the line of the Agueda with elements of the 43rd just to the rear to provide support. Lieutenant Colonel Sidney Beckwith, commander of the 1st Battalion, occupied the village with four companies. One of these, Captain Peter O'Hare's, was posted as a piquet above the ravine through which the river flowed, observing the narrow Roman bridge some eight hundred yards from the village. Four more companies were posted in Villar de Ciervos, six miles south of Barba del Puerco, watching several ford's across the Agueda, with one company in Escalhao twelve miles to the north and one in Almofalla six miles to the north.¹² With the exception of small patrols from the 1st King's German Legion Hussars, these ten companies of riflemen were the only obstacle between the French army and the bulk of the Light Division. Deserters from among the French troops, mostly Italians and Germans in the various foreign corps, provided a great deal of information on enemy movements and dispositions, building up what Wellington referred to as his "intelligence." While the other ranks had a rather dull time of it, marching from outpost to outpost, the officers were busy gathering information and adjusting their positions in

¹² *Ibid.*, 90.

order to maintain the integrity of the picquet line. Still, the officers maintained good humor as illustrated in an anecdote related by Kincaid in *Random Shots*:

The chief of the 1st German hussars meeting our commandant one morning, "Well, Colonel," says the gallant German in broken English, "how do you do?" "O, tolerably well, thank you, considering that I am obliged to sleep with one eye open." "By Gott," says the other, "I never sleeps at all."¹³

Having left the British to undisturbed at Barba del Puerco for eight days, General Ferey decided to make an attempt to capture the bridge on the night of the nineteenth, and thus penetrate the British picquet line. The weather that night was overcast with occasional heavy storms of rain, the river swollen and splashing noisily over its rocky bed. Ferey selected six companies of *voltiguers* from his brigade to spearhead his assault, with another 1,500 men in close reserve. Taking advantage of the stormy weather, the French light troops closed upon the bridge.

The picquet on the bridge consisted of Captain O'Hare's company. Two men were placed almost on the bridge itself with orders to give the alarm if attacked and fall back to the sergeant's party posted some fifty yards above the bridge. This group consisted of a sergeant and twelve men. Their orders were to delay any enemy advance at all cost until assistance arrived. The remainder of the company was quartered in a small church at the edge of the village. At about 9:00 p.m. Captain O'Hare took ill and retired to bed, leaving the picquet in the hands of his Subalterns, Lieutenants Mercer and Cowan and 2nd Lieutenant George Simmons.¹⁴

It is especially fortunate that so many of the Rifles diarists seemed to be in this

¹³ Kincaid, *Random Shots from a Rifleman*, 51.

¹⁴ Verner, *History and Campaigns of the Rifle Brigade*, vol. 2, 93.

company. Second Lieutenant Simmons, Sergeant Edward Costello, and Bugler William Green were all present during this action. The warning was given as the French crossed the bridge and overwhelmed the two man piquet, one of whom managed to fire a shot before being captured. The sergeant's party immediately grabbed their weapons and opened fire on the advancing *voltiguers*. Sergeant Betts in command of the outpost was shot through the mouth and killed, his small detachment quickly forced to withdraw. Their volley, however, had bought enough time for the rest of O'Hare's company to scramble out of their quarters and into the rocks above the ravine:

My surprise soon, however, gave place to perfect recollection, and in less than a minute we were all under arms, the balls of the French whistling about us as a column came rushing over the bridge to force our position. Captain O'Hare, with his characteristic coolness, immediately gave us the word to 'seek cover', and we threw ourselves forward among the rocky and broken ground, from whence we kept up a galling fire upon those who had commenced storming our heights.¹⁵

Second Lieutenant Simmons quickly found himself in command of the forward elements of the piquet when Lieutenant Mercer who was with him was shot through the head while putting on his spectacles and fell dead at his feet. O'Hare had not yet arrived, Lieutenant Cowan having been sent to fetch him, and for some fifteen minutes the struggle was in the hands of a young Second Lieutenant. To his credit Simmons immediately took charge of the situation:

In a moment, after the arrival of the main body of the piquet, the French were literally scrambling up the rocky ground within ten yards of us. We commenced firing at each other very spiritedly. Their drums beat a charge, and the French attempted to dislodge us without effect. My friend, Lieutenant Mercer, who was putting on his spectacles, received a musket ball through his head, and fell dead close by my feet. Several were now falling, and the moon for a few minutes shone brightly, then disappeared, and again at intervals let us see each other. We profited by

¹⁵ Anthony Brett-James, ed., *Edward Costello: The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns*, 26.

this circumstance, as their belts were white and over their greatcoats, so that where they crossed upon the breast, combined with the glare of the breast-plate, gave a grand mark for our rifles. Our men being in dark dresses, and, from their small number, obliged to keep close together, the ground also being exceedingly rugged, were all favourable circumstances. We fought in this way for at least half an hour against fearful odds, when Lieutenant-Colonel Beckwith brought up the three reserve companies from the village, who soon decided the affair.¹⁶

Bugler Green also remembered the closeness and ferocity of the fight before Beckwith arrived with the reinforcements, as he was attacked:

Three of these big ugly fellows came within me and my front rank man. I had got my ball in my rifle, but had not time to return my ramrod, so both ball and ramrod went through one of them. My comrade fired, and the ball struck another in the breast. I threw my rifle down, as it was no use to me without a ramrod, and retired about 20 yards.¹⁷

Green found another weapon and continued the fight.

As stated by Simmons, the arrival of Beckwith and the remaining three companies from Barba del Puerco decided the fight. Many of these riflemen, hastily pulled from bed, were dressed only in their trousers and shirts. Beckwith personally led the counter-attack in a nightgown, slippers and red nightcap.¹⁸ While his riflemen fired a devastating volley, Beckwith observed a French soldier taking aim at him within a couple of yards:

Stooping suddenly down and picking up a stone, he immediately shyed it at him, calling him at the same time a "scoundrel, to get out at that." It so far distracted the fellow's attention that while the gallant Beckwith's cap was blown to atoms, the head remained untouched.¹⁹

¹⁶ Willoughby Verner, Lieutenant-Colonel, ed., *Major George Simmons: A British Rifleman. Journals and Correspondance during the Peninsular War and the Campaigns of Wellington*. With and introduction by Lieutenant-Colonel Willoughby Verner (London: A&C Black, 1899. Reprint, London: Greenhill Books, 1986), 53-54.

¹⁷ Quoted in Fletcher, *Craufurd's Light Division*, 98. From *Travels and Adventures* by Bugler William Green, 1857.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹⁹ Kincaid, *Random Shots from a Rifleman*, 55.

This was not Beckwith's only close call in the closing minutes of the struggle. Moments later a *voltigeur*, a mere boy, fired his musket into Beckwith's face. Fortunately the weapon misfired. A rifleman was about to kill the boy when the Lieutenant-Colonel stopped him saying, "Let him alone; I daresay the boy has a mother. Knock the thing out of his hand, that he may do no more mischief with it, and give him a kick on the bottom and send him to the rear."²⁰

The French, repulsed by the accurate fire of the riflemen retired back across the bridge. They left two officers and twelve other ranks dead, five mortally wounded and upwards of thirty more wounded carried back with their comrades. O'Hare's under strength company, which numbered only fifty-three men before the fight, lost one officer and five men killed, with seven seriously wounded. The reserve companies had two men killed and eight wounded. Just under four hundred men, less than two hundred actually engaged, repulsed an attack by six hundred of the enemy's finest. Craufurd was rightly pleased and issued the following General Order to his Division:

Brigadier-General Craufurd has it in command from the Commander-in-Chief to assure Lieutenant-Colonel Beckwith and the officers of the 95th Regiment who were engaged at Barba del Puerco that their conduct in this affair has augmented the confidence he has in the troops when opposed to the enemy in any situation.

Brigadier-General Craufurd feels peculiar satisfaction in noticing the first affair in which any part of the Light Brigade were engaged during the present campaign.

That British troops should defeat a superior number of the enemy is nothing new; but the action reflects honour on Lieutenant-Colonel Beckwith and the Regiment inasmuch as it was of a sort which the riflemen of other armies would shun. In other armies the rifle is considered ill-calculated for close action with an enemy armed with a musket and bayonet; but the 95th Regiment has proved that the rifle in the hands of a British soldier is a fully sufficient weapon to enable him to

²⁰ Verner, ed., *A British Rifleman*, 54.

defeat the French in the closest fight in whatever manner they may be armed.²¹

The outpost at Barba del Puerco was soon augmented by a company of the 43rd and two from the 52nd and the whole was withdrawn to Villar de Ciervos. The attack on Barba del Puerco was the first and last time the French ever attempted to surprise a British outpost during the Peninsular War.²²

Following the withdrawal from Barba del Puerco, things once again settled down along the line of the Agueda and the Coa. The 1st King's German Legion Hussars were joined by squadrons of the 14th and 16th Light Dragoons, while two companies of the 1st Battalion, 95th were effectively disbanded, the men being dispersed among the remaining eight companies, the officers and NCOs returning to England to recruit. The Light Division was kept busy patrolling and garrisoning the scattered villages between the fortresses of Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida, observing the movements of the growing French "Army of Portugal" under Massena as they prepared to lay siege to Ciudad Rodrigo. Costello noted the routine of outposts and observation:

A section of our rifles usually mounted piquet with a troop of dragoons, and occupied, accordingly, three different points – Carpio, Molina dos Flores and Marialva; all all about two miles nearer to Rodrigo. Bull's troop of artillery [actually Ross's] remained always near a church, in the center of the village of Gallegos, and at all times kept a gun ready loaded with blank cartridge, and a sentry near it, watching a beacon erected on a hill, about a mile from the village. A vidette and one of our riflemen were placed near the beacon in case of the piquets being attacked, to give alarm by discharging his piece into the combustibles, and so setting it on fire; or, in the case of its not igniting, to ride round it three times, with his cap mounted on his sword, at which signal the gun was instantly fired, and the whole division were immediately under arms.²³

²¹ Quoted in Verner, *History and Campaigns of the Rifle Brigade*, vol. 2, 97.

²² This fact is mentioned by both Kincaid and Costello in their memoirs.

²³ Brett-James, *Edward Costello: The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns*, 28.

On 26 April the French invested the Fortress of Cuidad Rodrigo, but communication was kept open with the Light Division until 5 June when Ney crossed the Agueda and pushed back the advanced videttes of the 1st Hussars. French siege guns began bombarding the fortress on 25 June. On 4 July Massena sent 15,000 men to force Craufurd back from his position at Gallegos, approximately half way between Cuidad Rodrigo and Almeida. The French force, infantry and dragoons under Junot, induced Craufurd to withdraw simply through weight of numbers, pushing him back across the Dos Casas river. The 1st Hussars covered the withdrawal in good order, fighting for every inch yielded. The 95th, along with some of the Hussars, shielded the river crossing with a steady fire, using the advantage of their weapons' range to keep the French back until all of the division was over the river. The fire was so effective that Junot refused to maintain pressure on the retiring Light Division, believing it had much greater numbers than it actually did.

Craufurd re-established his outposts around the village of Val de la Mula with two hundred riflemen and some cavalry positioned on the heights near the abandoned Fort Conception. On 10 July, Cuidad Rodrigo fell to the French whose entire army crossed the Agueda. Pressure was growing on Craufurd. On 11 July he launched a badly managed cavalry attack against a strong French patrol in which the commander of the 14th Light Dragoons, Colonel Talbot, was killed. Wellington began to urge Craufurd not to risk his force, on the thirteenth he sent a dispatch instructing Craufurd to fall back on General Picton's 3rd Division if pushed by an overwhelming French force. Wellington again stressed on the sixteenth that Craufurd should not risk his force beyond the Coa:

It is desirable that we should hold the other side of the Coa a little longer; and I don't think that our doing so is facilitated by our keeping La

Conception. At the same time I don't want you to risk anything to remain at the other side of the river, or to retain the fort; and I am anxious that, when you leave it, it should be destroyed.²⁴

Immediately upon receiving this order Craufurd withdrew his command to the banks of the Coa, excepting the Cavalry which remained around Fort Conception to cover a party of engineers preparing to demolish the works. This was accomplished on the morning of the twenty-first, the fort's walls being breached from within in the face of advancing French dragoons and hussars.

Craufurd was now left to determine if the French advance was simply a reconnaissance in force or an actual move to invest the fortress of Almeida. Pressure from the French and from Wellington continued to mount. On the twenty-second Craufurd received another dispatch from Wellington:

I have ordered 2 battalions to support your flanks (from the 3rd Division); but I am not desirous of engaging in an affair beyond the Coa. Under these circumstances, if you are not covered from the sun where you are, would it not be better that you should come to this side with your infantry at least?²⁵

How was Craufurd to take this, as a direct order or as a suggestion? Through the remainder of the twenty-second and the twenty-third he stayed in place as patrols brought word of the approach of increasing numbers of French troops of all arms.

Sergeant Costello recalled the ever-increasing pressure of the French advance and the preparations made by the Rifles:

We now daily held ourselves in expectation of an attack, and were under arms every morning at one o'clock, five minutes only being allowed for the whole division to fall in. But we seldom took our accoutrements

²⁴ Colonel C.B. Gurwood, K.C.T.S., ed., *The Dispatches of Field Marshal The Duke of Wellington*, vol. 4, 172.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 179.

off, and used to sleep and cook with them on. The baggage was paraded every morning half a mile to the rear, and every other precaution taken by the Brigadier for an orderly retreat, as the French were in our front and in overwhelming force, while our division was scarcely more than four thousand strong.²⁶

Craufurd seemed unwilling to abandon his post in the face of the enemy. Even his cavalry, which was far too few in number to prove of any real use against their French opponents was maintained on the east bank of the Coa.

The night of 23 July brought a violent storm which soaked the troops of both sides, exposed as they were in the fields around Almeida. Simmons spent a very uncomfortable night, “upon a stone like a drowned rat, looking at the heavens and amusing myself with their brilliancy. . . .”²⁷ The rain blew out by dawn, leaving the riflemen to dry both their clothing and ammunition. The French wasted no time in beginning their advance:

At break of day, the music that we were now getting quite accustomed to – ie, the cracking of the rifles of our outline picquet, gave intelligence of the enemy’s advance. Our company was immediately ordered to support them. Captain O’Hare accordingly placed us behind some dilapidated walls; we waited the approach of the picquet then under the Hon. Captain Stewart engaged about half a mile in our front, and slowly retreating upon us. They had already, as it afterwards appeared, several men killed, while Lieutenant M’Culloch had been wounded and taken prisoner with a number of others. We could distinctly see the enemy’s columns in great force, but had little time for observations, as our advance ran in upon us followed by the French *tirailleurs*, with whom we were speedily and hotly engaged. . . .²⁸

²⁶ Brett-James, *Edward Costello: The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns*, 29-30.

²⁷ Verner, ed, *A British Rifleman*, 76.

²⁸ Brett-James, *Edward Costello: The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaign*. 32.

The position Craufurd's command occupied before Almeida was precarious indeed. In his *History of the British Army*, Fortescue with an eye for terrain gave a splendid description of the field of battle:

The ridge upon which Almeida stands forms the western boundary of the great upraised plain of Leon, the altitude of the town above the sea exceeding two thousand feet. The summit is broad, flat, and sound, an ideal country for cavalry, and to the eastward the upland rolls away in broad billows which are furrowed by little rapid streams. But on the westward side of the fortress the ground plunges down rapidly to the gorge of the Coa; the distance from the walls to the river in a direct line being almost three thousand yards, and the difference in height over three hundred feet. The whole of this hillside is seamed by hollows, about three in every mile of ground, each carrying its trickle of water to the sea. From the southern face of the fortification there descends to the Coa a road, narrow and fairly steep indeed, but by no means bad, being for the most part paved and enclosed between fairly high stone walls. It would, however, be too slippery for horses to descend it safely at high speed, particularly after rain. This road follows a leading spur very nearly to its foot; and the final descent to the bridge, upon which Craufurd's salvation depended, is a comparatively easy slope. The ridges immediately to right and left of the leading spur both tend to converge upon the bridge. The ground along the upper part of the declivity is broken by countless vineyards, high walls, and little enclosures, but the soil steadily becomes poorer as the water is approached. The rock crops up more and more thickly through the heather and broom, the enclosures become less frequent, and for the last few hundred yards the ground is open and the rock is everywhere. At a short distance from the water the road for wheeled traffic is forced aside by many obstacles, and after turning for a little way upstream, doubles back to its final access to the bridge. But for men and pack animals the track leads perfectly straight down, and upon each flank of this final descent to the bridge rise two rocky knolls, covered with heather and broom. The Coa itself is a boiling torrent which, at the point where the road touched it, has cleft its way through the rock and turned the valley into a chasm. The bridge consists of two lofty arches, and the roadway runs nearly forty feet above the highest flood mark. The left or western bank offers above the bridge a fairly easy slope, which becomes far steeper below; immediately opposite the bridge itself it presents a sheer cliff over one hundred feet high.²⁹

²⁹ Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*, vol. 7, 476-477.

This terrain offered little advantage to the guns and cavalry on either side. The developing battle was to be an affair for light infantry with little exception. On the extreme left of Craufurd's line was an old stone windmill garrisoned by a half company of the 52nd. To the right of this was the 43rd, the 1st and 3rd Cacadores in the center and the remainder of the 52nd on the right. The riflemen were distributed along the line and up to several hundred yards in advance. His guns and cavalry, along with the baggage, more of a burden than help in the close, broken terrain was formed up on the road to cross the bridge. After pushing in Captain Stewart's piquet company on the Val de la Mula road, the French paused for over two hours, apparently in order to form up for battle and bring up their entire force. Still, in the face of overwhelming odds, Craufurd refused to withdraw.

With preparations complete the French again advanced, Loison's division in front, Mermet's in support, both of Marshal Ney's 6th Corps. They approached rapidly and with much spirit, the massed drummers beating the *pas de charge* from the head of the dense columns, "in front of the line French officers, like mountebanks running forward and placing their hats on their swords and capering about like madmen, saying as they turned to their men 'Come on children of our Country. The first that advances, Napoleon will recompense him.'"³⁰ At this point disaster almost overtook O'Hare's Company on the extreme left of the British line some one hundred yards in advance of the 43rd. Portuguese gunners on the walls of the fortress, mistaking the darkly clothed riflemen as French advancing on the scarlet-coated 43rd, fired several shots which fell among them, killing and wounding several. O'Hare gave the order to retire by half-companies; one

³⁰ Verner, ed, *A British Rifleman*, 77.

platoon falling back while the other covered. At this moment a squadron of the elite French 3rd Hussars swept along the flank of the British line and into the riflemen.

Simmons was among this group of rifles:

. . . a body of Hussars in bearskin caps and light-coloured pelisses got amongst the few remaining Rifle Men and began to sabre them. Several attempted to cut me down, but I avoided their kind intentions by stepping to one side. . . . A volley was now fired by a party of the 43rd under Captain Wells, which brought several of the Hussars to the ground. In the scuffle I took to my heels and ran to the 43rd, Wells calling out, "Mind the Rifle Man! Do not hit him, for heaven's sake." As I was compelled to run into their fire to escape, he seized me by the hand and was delighted beyond measure at my escape³¹

With his left flank effectively turned by the French hussars and heavy columns of infantry advancing from the front, Craufurd's already precarious position was growing more and more tenuous. He ordered the cavalry and guns down the road to cross the bridge, with the *cacadores* following down the rocky slope while the British regiments made a rear-guard fight. The Portuguese infantry, moving faster down the slope than the horses and vehicles of the cavalry and artillery, swept onto the narrow road and became completely intermingled with them. As if this were not enough, a wagon overturned in the road, blocking it entirely for quite some time until it was righted. At this point Craufurd seems to have lost all control over the battle. Rather than a coordinated withdrawal of a division in the face of the enemy, the battle fell into the hands of individual regimental and company officers. The Company System devised by Stewart and implemented by Moore was now about to be tested in the heat of battle.³²

The riflemen, fighting in small parties of sections and platoons fought their way

³¹ *Ibid.*, 77-78.

³² For a general description of the action see Verner's, *History and Campaigns of the Rifle Brigade*, vol. 2, chapter 7 and Fletcher's, *Craufurd's Light Division*, chapter 3, "The Darkest Day."

slowly back down the hill towards the bridge over the Coa, defending each and every wall and enclosure. Behind them stood the 43rd and 52nd, their closed ranks and rapid volleys of musketry holding the advancing French at bay if they got too close, buying the riflemen time to fall back upon another strong position. Four or five companies of the 43rd found themselves trapped in a stone walled enclosure at one point. The officers and men, working in a concerted effort, succeeded in literally pushing the wall over and rejoined the action.

Being members of O'Hare's company, on the most exposed flank of the British line, Sergeant Costello and Lieutenant Simmons experienced some of the heaviest fighting of the day, both were wounded severely. As the company retired it was ridden over several times by French dragoons and hussars, Costello's received his wound while falling back upon the 52nd:

I rushed up to the wall of our 52nd, which I was in the act of clearing at a jump, when I received a shot under the cap of my right knee and instantly fell. In this emergency, there seemed a speedy prospect of my again falling into the hands of the French, as the division was in rapid retreat, but a comrade of the name of Little instantly dragged me over the wall, and was proceeding as quick as possible with me, on his back, towards the bridge of the Coa, over which our men were fast pouring, when he, poor fellow! also received a shot, which passing through his arm smashed the bone, and finally lodged itself in my thigh, where it has ever since remained. In this extremity, Little was obliged to abandon me, but urged by a strong desire to escape imprisonment, I made another desperate effort, and managed to get over the bridge. . . .³³

Simmons was wounded in the final struggle to hold the bridge as the last of the rearguard crossed:

. . . I was shot through the thigh close to the wall, which caused me to fall with great force. Being wounded in this way was quite a new thing to me. For a few moments I could not collect my ideas, and was feeling

³³ Brett-James, *Edward Costello: The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns*, 33-34.

about my arms and body for a wound, until my eye caught the stream of blood rushing through the hole in my trousers, and my leg and thigh appeared so heavy that I could not move it. Captain Napier took off his neckerchief and gave it to a sergeant, who put it round my thigh and twisted it tight with a ramrod, to stop the bleeding. The firing was so severe that the sergeant, on finishing the job for me, fell with a shot through the head. Captain Napier was also about the same time wounded in the side.³⁴

Several company's of the 43rd and 95th held the sandy and rocky knolls that flanked the road just above where it crossed the bridge until the road was cleared and the division had retired across it. Ross's troop of Horse Artillery was established on the far shore and had begun to fire across into the advancing French, who by this time had several of their own cannon in action. The *cacadores* were also in position on the west bank, scattered among the rocks. Here Craufurd inexplicably made another error, ordering the 43rd and 95th to withdraw across the bridge before a wing of the 52nd, fighting along the chasm edge, had crossed. Following Craufurd's orders the company's withdrew from the knolls and walls they had been holding and began to dash across the bridge, threatening to leave about half of the 52nd trapped on the east bank of the Coa. Lieutenant Colonel Beckwith, on his own initiative, ordered the men around him, a mixture of riflemen and scarlet coated light infantrymen, to retake the hill. A Major M'Leod of the 43rd joined him. Putting themselves at the fore of some two hundred rifles and light infantrymen, they stormed back up over the rocks and walls, checking the French advance and allowing the 52nd to cross to safety behind them. A last artillery vehicle, an ammunition caisson was still caught on the bridge and more riflemen lined the parapets, holding off the French until it was free. All of the Light Division was now on

³⁴ Verner, ed, *A British Rifleman*, 78-79.

the west bank of the Coa except the half company of the 52nd which had been posted in the windmill. Surrounded by French dragoons and hussars this small force remained silent, managing to slip away under cover of darkness.

The tide of battle now turned in favor of the British as Ney, not content to have simply given the Light Division a firm thrashing, decided to attempt to force the bridge. The Rifles and *cacadores* were well sited among the rocks and walls of the far bank, one company of Rifles holding an abandoned house, while the cavalry was sent to observe the fords six miles to the south.

Ney ordered the 66th Regiment de Ligne, the lead regiment of Loison's division to storm the bridge, led by its Grenadiers. They made it across the bridge but were cut down on the British side. Next an elite storming party of *chasseurs* attempted to force the bridge. In less than ten minutes this assault attempt suffered four officers and eighty-six men killed, and three officers and one hundred-forty-four men wounded, with bodies stacked as high as the parapets. The 66th again attacked losing its colonel and fifteen of its other officers.³⁵ The fight continued sporadically throughout the day, a slow rain causing many of the flintlock weapons to misfire as it turned the powder in the priming pans into a gray sludge. At sunset a French medical officer advanced waving a white handkerchief and asked for a cease-fire to gather up the wounded. This was granted. French losses for the Combat of the Coa were seven officers and one hundred and ten men killed, seventeen officers and three hundred and ninety-three men wounded. Four fifths of their casualties were incurred at the bridge. The Light Division lost four officers

³⁵ Verner, *History and Campaigns of the Rifle Brigade*, vol. 2, 126

and thirty-two men killed, twenty-three officers and one hundred and ninety-one men wounded with one officer and eighty-two men missing, in fact captured by the French.³⁶

While the officers and men of the Light Division were highly praised by Wellington, their commander, Craufurd was open to a great deal of rebuke. Still, Wellington never openly blamed him for the rather dismal outcome of an unnecessary fight, stating in his dispatches on 31 July:

Although I shall be hanged for them, you may be very certain that not only I have had nothing to do with, but have positively forbidden, the foolish affairs in which Craufurd involved his outposts. Of the first, indeed, in which Talbot was killed, I knew nothing before it happened. In respect to the last, that of the 24th, I had positively desired him not to engage in any affair on the other side of the Coa; . . . You may say, if this be the case, why not accuse Craufurd? I answer, because, if I am t be hanged for it, I cannot accuse a man I think has meant well, and whose error is one of judgement, and not of intention.³⁷

The Light Division held its position on the Coa until midnight on 25 July before retiring in a heavy rainstorm to Freixada. They rested here until the twenty-eighth when they moved back to Celorico. Here, on 4 August the Division was broken into two brigades, the first under Sidney Beckwith comprising the 43rd, four company's of the 1st Battalion 95th and the 3rd Cacadores. The second brigade consisted of the 52nd, the remaining four companies of the 1st Battalion 95th and the 1st Cacadores, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Barclay of the 52nd. Following a week's rest, the division advanced to support the cavalry observing the line of the Coa and attempting to maintain communication with the Portuguese garrison of Almeida. At the end of the first day of bombardment of the fortress, 26 August, a lucky shell ignited the magazine, destroying

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 126-127.

³⁷ Quoted in Verner, *History and Campaigns of the Rifle Brigade*, vol. 2, 132. From *Wellington's Supplemental Dispatches*, edited by Gurwood, 1844.

all of the defender's powder and dismounting many of their guns. The fortress, now untenable, surrendered on the following day. Wellington, who had been counting on the siege to give him at least a month to complete his preparations for the defense of Portugal, now expected Massena to advance rapidly on Lisbon.

Wellington slowly withdrew his small army south and west, away from the line of the Coa, with the Light Division and cavalry disputing every water course and pass in a brilliant series of rear-guard fights. Craufurd seemed to have recovered completely from his uncertainty of 24 July. The morning of 22 September found Wellington preparing to defend the steep, long ridge of the Bussaco massif, hoping to bloody Massena's nose in a sharp defensive engagement and buy time to complete his withdrawal into the lines of Torres Vedras. As the bulk of the British Army moved into position along the ridge the Light Division maintained a line of outposts and skirmishers in advance of the position, Craufurd displaying once again his almost complete unwillingness to withdraw in the face of the enemy. This time Lord Wellington intervened directly, ordering Craufurd to retire to the villages of Sula and Moura at the foot of the ridge before the division became decisively engaged and unable to withdraw.³⁸

By the afternoon of the twenty-fifth the bulk of the Light Division was atop the ridge, only the eight companies of the 95th and some *cacadores* remained in the villages and on the forward slope of the ridge. Wellington was utilizing what was to become his classic deployment on a defensive position. The bulk of his force was drawn up on the reverse slope of the ridge, out of sight of the enemy. Here they would be protected from cannon fire and the enemy could only guess at where the strong and weak points of the

³⁸ Ibid., 138-139.

line were. Wellington also took advantage of a track running parallel with the crest line to speedily move about reinforcements. The French bivouacked that night on several smaller spurs and ridges in front of Bussaco, their line of piquets deployed almost at the foot of the British position. This time it was Reynier's Corps that would lead the attack. Junot's and Ney's Corps moved up on the twenty-sixth while Massena made a reconnaissance of the ridge, determining to attack on the following day. A French force of 53,000 now faced 40,000 British and Portuguese troops.³⁹ Throughout the twenty-sixth the riflemen holding the village of Sula underwent a heavy cannonade and several attacks by skirmishers as the French attempted to gain possession of the village that occupied a dangerous position on their right flank. The riflemen held out throughout the day with little loss but retired during the night as it appeared the main effort of the French advance would come closer to the center of the British line.

The 95th played their usual role in a fixed defensive battle, forming a loose skirmish chain before the main line of the British Army concealed among the rocks of the steep slope. As the French columns advanced the rifles became involved in a running fight with their *voltigeurs* who greatly outnumbered them. As the French advanced within range of the British muskets, the riflemen fell back behind the line infantry which sent the French reeling back down the ridge with their controlled volleys of musketry and short rushes with the bayonet. Other groups of riflemen and *cacadores* wrapped around the flanks of the advancing columns and poured in a destructive fire. In lulls between the French advances the riflemen were busy suppressing the fire of the enemy skirmishers that still swarmed in the valley between the opposing camps. The day ended with the

³⁹ Ibid., 141.

French withdrawing and making a wide flank march around the British the following morning. Wellington for his part withdrew directly back towards Lisbon having sufficiently delayed the French. The Light Division suffered few casualties during the battle, most of which were incurred before it had properly commenced, in the fighting around the villages. Twenty-four men were killed and six officers and one hundred forty-six men wounded. The 95th had only nine men killed and thirty-two wounded.⁴⁰

The pursuit continued until 11 October when advanced French cavalry patrols found themselves faced with a strong line of field works and redoubts stretching across the peninsula upon which Lisbon is located, from the Atlantic to the Tagus. Within these fortifications, completed in secret by Wellington's engineers and Portuguese levee's, the British Army waited out the last of fall and the early winter of 1810, wondering if Massena's "Army of Portugal" would attack or withdraw. In order to make life more difficult for the French Army, accustomed to living off of the land and with limited supply services, Wellington adopted a scorched earth policy, bringing all civilians within the fortifications from miles around, along with whatever portable supplies and livestock they owned. All stores of food and other necessities not brought within the lines were hidden or destroyed.

The Light Division never entered the Lines of Torres Vedras, they occupied instead a series of outposts just outside the fortifications. The riflemen of the 95th immediately made themselves comfortable in their new surroundings, a series of heights above the deserted village of Arruda. John Kincaid, recently arrived from England and a member of O'Hare's company made several observations of the manner in which his

⁴⁰ For a detailed account of the battle see Verner, *History and Campaigns of the Rifle Brigade*, vol 2, chapter 8 and Fletcher, *Craufurd's Light Division*, chapter 4, "Moore's Avengers."

company lived while covering the lines. In warm or rainy weather the men were moved into the village itself during the day to keep out of the elements, at night they occupied outposts along the heights. He recorded the items the officers removed from the village to the bivouac site in order to make life more comfortable:

. . . it was rather amusing to observe the different notions of individual comfort, in the selection of furniture, which officers transferred from their *town house* to their *no house* on the heights. A sofa, or a mattress, one would have thought most likely to be put in requisition; but it was not unusual to see a full-length looking-glass preferred to either.⁴¹

Kincaid also found it somewhat astonishing that Massena, with his vast army, never made a serious effort to assault the lines at any point, stating:

. . . I do know, that we have since kicked the French out of more formidable looking and stronger places; and, with all due deference be it spoken, I think that the Prince of Essling ought to have tried his luck against them, as he could only have been beaten by fighting, as he afterwards was without it! And if he thinks that he would have lost as many men by trying, as he did by not trying, he must allow me to differ in opinion with him.⁴²

Finally, on 10 November, with his army literally starving around him, Massena ordered a retreat to Santarem. This brought him closer to the lines of communication with France, allowing him to re-supply and recover. The army's tail, the small transport columns and the sick and wounded marched on the thirteenth, the combat arms slipping away under cover of darkness on the fourteenth, leaving straw dummies in the place of their sentries and their camp fires burning to fool the British piquets. This they managed to do until the middle of the fifteenth, Kincaid noting that, "they seemed such respectable representatives of their spectral predecessors, that, in the haze of the following morning,

⁴¹ Kincaid, *Adventure in the Rifle Brigade*, 27.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 26-27.

we thought that they had been joined by some well-fed ones from the rear. . . .”⁴³ Late in the day three divisions of Wellington’s army, including the Light Division, were in pursuit. On the sixteenth the Light Division caught up with the French army at Cartaxo and Craufurd came close to launching his solitary command against the entirety of Junot’s Corps with only a single troop of Horse Artillery and one squadron of cavalry in support. Wellington was able to intervene again and halt the attack. The division remained in the village overnight. It seemed that Craufurd was displaying his inability to command a division sized force in a general engagement once again. This by no means lessened his credibility and talent as a commander of light troops in outpost duties and the skirmish line, his talents simply did not include the ability to command in large scale actions. Fortunately, Wellington recognized the direction in which Craufurd’s ability lay and was able to utilize his talent while curbing his tendency to get himself into trouble.

Through the end of November and into December, Massena’s Army of Portugal gradually retired towards Spain once again nearing the line of the Coa in its steep chasm. The Rifles had their hands full throughout this period with skirmishing and piquet duties as the British Army advanced. On 30 December the Light Division entered cantonments on the Rio Mayor to sit out the worst of the winter before pushing on to complete the expulsion of the French from Portugal.

On 6 March, 1811, a Portuguese peasant entered the camp of the Light Division with news that the French Army was in full retreat. Within an hour the whole force was on the move, with O’Hare’s company in the lead. For three days Craufurd led his division in close pursuit of the enemy, the riflemen sometimes riding on the back of

⁴³ Ibid., 29.

dragoon horses to increase their speed and mobility while hanging on to the enemy's rear guard. On 9 March command of the Light Division temporarily fell to Sir William Erskine, as Craufurd went home on a leave of absence. His reasons seem to be an effort to escape the ongoing war of words against him within the Army and simply because of his own egoism and obstinacy which placed his personal wishes above all other concerns. It would be under Erskine's command that the Light Division would return to its old stomping grounds between the Coa and the Aguada and complete their role in the defense of Portugal.

The advance continued with sharp rearguard actions fought by the French at Pombal, Redinha, Condeixa, Casal Novo and Foz D'Arouce from the tenth through the fifteenth. A General Army Order signed on the sixteenth of March praised the Light Division for their bravery in the difficult conditions of constant movement and fighting:

No. I. The Commander of the Forces returns his thanks to the General and Staff Officers and Troops for their excellent conduct in the operations in the last ten days against the enemy. He requests the Commanding officers of the 43rd, 52nd and 95th Regiments to name a Sergeant in each Regiment to be recommended for a promotion to an Ensigncy, as a testimony of the particular approbation of the Commander of the Forces of these three Regiments.⁴⁴

The proof that the brunt of the fighting in this period was borne by the Light Division, is found in the casualty returns for the period. Of the twenty-eight British and Portuguese officers killed or wounded during the pursuit, nineteen belonged to the Light Division.⁴⁵

The pursuit brought the Light Division back to the Coa on 1 April, this time at Quintas de San Bartolemeo opposite Sabugal, south of Almeida. Here Wellington

⁴⁴ Quoted in Verner, *History and Campaigns of the Rifle Brigade*, vol. 2, 242. From Wellington's *Supplemental Dispatches*, edited by Gurwood, 1844, vol. 7, 82.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 247.

planned to smash Reynier's Corps, which occupied Sabugal, using the 3rd and 5th Divisions to attack him frontally, the Light Division turning his left flank and cutting off the French retreat.

The attack commenced on the morning of the third, covered by a heavy fog. From the beginning things fell apart and only the swift and courageous action of Colonel Beckwith and the company commanders of his brigade prevented a disaster. The fog was so heavy that the commanders of the 3rd and 5th Divisions decided to await further orders before advancing. Erskine, in command of the Light Division, had no doubts and sent his force forward. In the fog and rain both of the Brigades and the supporting cavalry with which Erskine was posted, lost their way and began crossing the Coa.

Beckwith's 1st Brigade led the advance with skirmishing riflemen thrown well forward of the 43rd. They waded across the Coa, up to their armpits in icy water, receiving several shots from the French piquets before they retired. The riflemen inclined to their left to follow the French and stumbled directly into an entire regiment. Beckwith quickly realized he had marched directly into the front of Reynier's Corps rather than the flank. The rifles hastily withdrew, waiting until the 43rd came up in support before advancing again. Other French regiments were soon observed moving up through the mist. A Captain Hopkins of the 43rd, commanding one of the Flank Companies took the initiative to seize a key knoll in advance of the British position and held it against repeated French charges, buying time while Beckwith consolidated his position. A brief respite in the mist and drizzle revealed that Beckwith was almost in the midst of a French Brigade and heavily outnumbered. He withdrew slightly down the hill his force was upon and took up position amongst a tangle of low stone walls. The riflemen and light

infantry, dispersed behind cover were able to beat off several attacks supported by howitzers and two squadrons of dragoons, inflicting heavy losses on the French columns, especially their officers. Intermittent rain hampered both sides, soaking their paper cartridges. At this point the 2nd Brigade of the Light Division, under Drummond, guided by the sound of firing, appeared. Surprisingly, the 2nd Brigade had been ordered by Erskine not to engage, but Drummond ignored the order and advanced to Beckwith's aid. A see-saw fight, surging up and down the hill began and swept over the French howitzers several times until one of them was withdrawn and the other captured and recaptured several times, finally falling as a prize to the British. As the battle wore on the mist cleared and the 3rd Division finally entered the fight. With his flank heavily engaged by the Light Division and his front under attack by the 3rd, Reynier decided to withdraw and disengaged, leaving the field to the British. Erskine with the cavalry never arrived on the field, he went "Lord knows where, but certainly not into the fight. . . ."⁴⁶

Beckwith was without a doubt the hero of the day:

Beckwith himself was the life and soul of the fray; he had been the successful leader of those who were then around him in many a bloody field, and his calm, clear, commanding voice was distinctly heard amid the roar of battle, and cheerfully obeyed. He had but single companies to oppose to the enemy's battalions; but, strange as it may appear, I saw him twice lead successful charges with but two companies of the 43rd, against an advancing mass of the enemy. . . . Beckwith's manner of command on those occasions was nothing more than a familiar sort of conversation with the soldier. To give an idea of it I may as well mention that in the last charge I saw him make with two companies of the 43rd, he found himself at once opposed to a fresh column in front, and others advancing on both flanks, and, seeing the necessity for immediate retreat, he called out, "Now, my lads, we'll just go back a little if you please." On hearing which every man began to run, when he shouted again, "No, no, I don't mean that – we are in no hurry – we'll just walk quietly back, and you can give them a shot as you go along." This was quite enough, and was obeyed to the letter – the retiring force keeping up a destructive fire, and

⁴⁶ Kincaid, *Adventures in the Rifle Brigade*, 68.

regulating their movements by his, as he rode quietly back in the midst of them, conversing aloud in a cheerful encouraging manner – his eye all the while intently watching the enemy to take advantage of circumstances. A musket-ball had, in the meantime, shaved his forehead, and the blood was streaming down his countenance, which added not a little to the exciting interest of his appearance. As soon as we had got a little way up the face of our hill, he called out, “Now, my men, this will do – let us shew them our teeth again!” This was obeyed as steadily as if the words halt, front, had been given on parade, and our line was instantly in battle array, while Beckwith, shaking his fist in the faces of the advancing foe, called out to them, “Now, you rascals, come on here if you dare!”⁴⁷

To the end, however, Beckwith maintained that if one man ever decided an action through the command of a single company, it was Captain Hopkins of the 43rd. His defence of the knoll allowed Beckwith to organize sufficiently and repel the repeated French attacks.⁴⁸ Wellington also was quick to praise the Light Division and Colonel Beckwith in dispatches.

Massena again withdrew and, leaving a small garrison at Almeida, crossed the frontier into Spain. On 9 April 1811, the Light Division again took up the line of outposts on the line of the Agueda, south of Barba del Puerco, occupying Gallegos, Espeja and Fuentes de Onoro. For just over a year the Light Division had been in all but constant contact with the enemy, either as piquets, skirmishers, advanced or rear guards. They now continued on in Wellington’s second invasion of Spain, once again under the command of Robert Craufurd, recently returned from England.

⁴⁷ Kincaid, *Random Shots from a Rifleman*, 168-169.

⁴⁸ Verner, *History and Campaigns of the Rifle Brigade*, vol. 2, 258.

Conclusion

The Legacy of the 95th

The different battalions of the 95th served with Wellington's Army throughout the remainder of the Peninsular War, with elements of all three battalions having served in the Light Division by 1813. Following the peace of 1814 detachments of the regiment were sent to America to fight in the final stages of the War of 1812 and they also fought in the Waterloo Campaign of 1815. By 1815 almost all of the founders and builders of the 95th Rifles were dead, Moore died at Corunna, Manningham shortly after from exhaustion caused by the retreat, and Craufurd was killed in breach at Ciudad Rodrigo in 1812. Due to these innovators and leaders, and of course to the sheer bravery and skill of the regiment's junior officers and men, the 95th had firmly established itself within the ranks of the British Army.

Following the Waterloo Campaign the 95th received a very high honor from the Crown – it was removed from the numbered regiments of the line and re-designated the Rifle Brigade. In any formation in which the Rifles participated they stood at the far left of the formation, with no other unit beyond them, this being the second post of honor in any army, the premier position being the right of the line, held by the Brigade of Guards. Shortly afterward, the second rifle regiment, the 60th Royal Americans, received a similar honor, being re-designated the Kings Royal Rifle Corps. Both regiments continued to share a close affiliation, along with the 43rd and 52nd Light Infantry. These two regiments underwent a series of amalgamations and designation changes over the course of the nineteenth century, emerging as the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, the famous "Ox and Bucks." They joined the King Royal Rifle Corps and the Rifle Brigade

in the amalgamations of the sixties as the Royal Green Jackets, under which designation they serve to this day.

The 95th proved a number of things during its development and in the campaigns in which it served. First: a new style of discipline was necessary and appropriate for the British Army. Second: the British Army, without completely altering its structure and general purpose, the defense of the British Isles and the colony's, could adapt its doctrine at the tactical level to face and indeed, defeat, a major continental army. Third: these tactics, with the advance of technology, were enduring, they evolved with little modification rather than being replaced.

Technology is the catalyst of evolution in doctrine. The goals of warfare essentially have not changed since the first organized army was raised, but the manner in which it is waged, and the tactics employed have. As the capability of humans to construct ever more destructive and efficient weapons of war increases, battlefield tactics change with ever increasing frequency. The rifle increased the range at which soldiers could engage their targets. The development of the Minnie Ball allowed every soldier to be armed with a rifle that could be loaded as quickly as a musket, speed of loading being the main advantage the musket once held over the rifle. The percussion cap gave the rifle all weather capability. The breechloader with brass cartridges permitted even higher rates of fire, even from the kneeling or prone position. The bolt operated rifle, first manual and ultimately automatic, coupled with multiple round magazines gave the platoon and finally the squad, the firepower once possible only from an entire regiment. These developments in technology forced tactics to change in order to give the soldier the barest possible chance of survival. The 95th pioneered these tactics for the British Army.

The skirmish line; a reserve, supports, and firing line, became the standard battlefield formation in western armies as the century progressed. This was refined by further reduction in the size of tactical units and increased dispersion between units as battlefield lethality has increased. Squads and platoons are now employed for missions once given to battalions.

The modern battlefield, due to its lethality, has forced the individual rifleman further and further away from his comrades and junior officers. Here the discipline instituted by the 95th, initiative and self-reliance, have become paramount. Officers and soldiers, especially platoon and squad leaders, who understand every aspect of their role on the battlefield and have the capability to think and act for themselves, even under fire, not act like parade ground martinets, are vital. The advance of this type of discipline was tied hand in hand with the advance of rifle technology; regimental schools, the decline and ultimate abolishment of flogging and the rise of the junior officer and NCO as real military leaders developed with the dispersion of formations on the battlefield.

It would be foolish to claim that the 95th single handedly defeated the French in the Peninsular War or altered the British Army over night. Rather, they played an important role in shaping attitudes and perceptions of the officers who passed through their ranks. The importance of this investigation lies in making it clear that tactical developments are a piece of a greater puzzle that cannot be overlooked simply because they are not a piece of the big picture. Diplomacy plays its part in starting wars and determining the peace afterwards. Strategy charts the course of the war and places the opposing armies within striking distance of one another. It is tactics, the role and employment of small units on the battlefield, and very often the actions of perhaps one or

two individuals or squads, that wins battles. There may be fewer and fewer riflemen on the battlefields of the future, and they certainly are not as “sexy” as the big budget tanks and stealth fighters, but it is the rifleman with his personal weapon that still dominates the battlefield. The tank, for all of its sophistication, is still only there to support the infantry.

The acceptance of the rifleman as a key element on the battlefield has been acknowledged by the re-emphasis on small level tactics. The United States Marine Corps, a world leader in infantry training and employment has started to look once again at the importance of the individual rifleman. Even after nearly two hundred years the 95th still has lessons to teach. Recently the current Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Charles Krulak, assigned *Rifleman Dodd*, a novel by C. S. Forrester, about a rifleman of the 95th in the Peninsular War, to the Marine Corps Reading List for squad leaders. Dodd and his Rifle training and discipline are held up as examples for the modern infantry leader. The lessons of the past must not be forgotten by the warriors of today.

Appendix 1

The Rifle Uniform

If there was one thing which distinguished the rifleman from the remainder of the British Army until the advent of the khaki uniform at the end of the nineteenth century, it was the Rifle Green uniform and black accoutrements. The choice of a dark bottle green to clothe the Experimental Rifle Corps and its successors, along with the 60th, Royal Americans (later the King's Royal Rifle Corps), was not an arbitrary one or unique within the British Army for rifle armed troops. The armies of many continental nations, especially the Germans, had been clothing their rifle armed Jaegers in green for many years.

The clothing warrant for the Experimental Rifle Corps, like all warrants for uniforms of British regiments, originated with a Royal Commission from the Palace at St. James's, on 20 May 1801. This warrant laid down the style and color of the uniform, what accoutrements were authorized for use and how often worn out or damaged items of uniform were to be replaced, displaying the rather rigid control the Crown and Army administration placed on military uniforms, at least for enlisted personnel:

In a Corps of Riflemen serving in Europe, in America and at the Cape of Good Hope, each Sergeant, Corporal, Drummer, and Private Man shall have annually:-

For clothing

A Green coat without lace.

A Kersey waistcoat.

A Cap, Cockade and Tuft as above specified (viz, A Cap made of Felt and Leather with Brass plates, Cockade and Tuft conformable to a pattern approved by Us, the felt crown of the cap and Tuft to be supplied annually, the leather part and Brass plate and the Leather Cockade every two years.)

A Pair of Green Pantaloon.

Belts, pouches and knapsack were to be of black leather, as were shoes and gaiters. Officers and NCOs carried a whistle and chain attached to a silver lions head on one of the cross belts with the words "Rifle Corps" engraved about it. Officers and Sergeants were further distinguished by a scarlet sash, that worn by NCOs having a black stripe in the center of it. The facings of the uniform, the collar, cuffs, and turned back tails were black with white "lace" tape around the top of the collar and cuffs. Officers uniforms were of finer material, better tailored, and embellished with black lace loops on the breast and back with silver buttons. Initially officers wore a "Tarleton" helmet similar to that worn by Light Dragoons but this was discontinued in 1803 in favor of the Shako. Officers also wore a highly curved saber of light cavalry design, "better calculated to shave a lady's maid than a Frenchman's head. . . ,"¹ and Hussar style boots rather than shoes and gaiters.

Rank was indicated by lace stripes, epaulettes, and other devices specific to each rank as follows:

Chosen Men: A single stripe on the right sleeve.

Corporal: Two stripes on the right sleeve.

Sergeant: Three stripes on the right sleeve.

Color Sergeant: Single stripe with wreath, bugle horn, crossed swords and crown on the right sleeve.

Drum Major, Quartermaster, Sergeant Major and Regimental Sergeant Major: Four stripes on the right sleeve.

¹ Kincaid, *Random Shots from a Rifleman*, 207.

Ensign, Lieutenant, and Captain: Distinguished only by sash, sword, whistle, and silver chain epaulettes.

Major: Epaulettes with bugle horn and star.

Lieutenant Colonel: Epaulettes with bugle horn and crown.

Colonel: Epaulettes with bugle horn, star and crown.

Appendix 2

The Baker Rifle

The rifle, a firearm with spiraling grooves in the barrel to impart a spin to the projectile and therefore increase accuracy, has almost as long a history as other firearms but was slow to be employed in military service on a wide scale. The product of almost simultaneous invention in several countries across Europe and the Middle East between 1475 and 1525, rifles were first employed in small numbers by military forces during the Thirty Years War. The British Army first issued a small number of troops with rifled firearms in 1680 when eight rifled carbines were added to the armory of the Household Cavalry.¹ In 1742 Benjamin Robins in "*New Principles of Gunnery*" predicted the important role of the rifle on the battlefield,

. . . Whatever State shall thoroughly comprehend the nature and advantage of rifled barrel pieces, and having facilitated and completed their construction, shall introduce into their armies their general use, with a dexterity in the management of them, will by this means acquire a superiority which will almost equal anything that has been done at any time by the particular excellence of any one kind of arms, and will perhaps fall but little short of the wonderful effect which histories relate to have been formerly produced by the first inventors of firearms.²

Prior to the creation of the Experimental Rifle Corps in 1800 several rifled weapons had been employed by British infantry, primarily in the Americas. For one reason or another they were quickly withdrawn from service. The main reasoning behind the failure to adopt a rifled firearm by eighteenth century armies was that they did not fit the tactics of the era, there was no place for the slow loading rifle amongst the required rapid volleys of the smooth bore musket.

¹ Quoted in Fuller, *British Light Infantry*, 225-226.

² *Ibid.*, 227.

Demonstrations of the rifle's effectiveness as a skirmisher's weapon in the hands of skilled marksmen in the French and Indian War and the American Revolution failed to impress the conservative military leaders of the day. Even the invention of a breech-loading weapon by Major Patrick Ferguson that allowed rapid fire made no impression. Those who believed in the future of the rifle were outside the mainstream of military thought until the lessons of the French Revolution brought the need of rifle armed skirmishers to the full attention of the military establishment of Britain in the 1790s.

With the creation of the Experimental Rifle Corps a board was selected to test a number of weapons at the military proving grounds at Woolwich. The board selected for the new Corps a weapon produced by Ezekiel Baker of London, a weapon which would become famous in the hands of the progeny of the Experimental Rifle Corps, the 95th Rifles (later the Rifle Brigade) and which would remain in service into the 1830s.

The Baker Rifle as it would become universally known had the following dimensions;

Weight: 9 ½ Pounds.

Length: 3 ft

Barrel Length: 30 in.

Rifling: seven grooves with one quarter turn over the length of the barrel

Effective Range: 300 yards.

Sights: Fixed 100 yards. Folding Rear Sight 200 yards.

Rate of Fire: 1 round per minute.

Weight of Bullets: 20 rounds per pound of lead.

Each rifleman was provided initially with a seventeen-inch socket bayonet. This was soon replaced by a flat bladed "sword" which gave the weapon an overall length of 5 feet 10 inches and clipped to the side of the barrel rather than sliding over the muzzle. A horn was carried containing fine powder for loading and priming and balls were carried loose in a belt pouch. A brass box inlaid into the butt of the rifle held greased leather patches in which the balls were wrapped prior to loading in order to grip the rifling and impart a

spin. This made the Baker, like all rifles slow to load as there was little or no “windage” between the ball and the barrel, increasing effectiveness as all of the power imparted by the explosion of the powder in the barrel was imparted to the bullet rather than passing around it. Pre made cartridges wrapped in waxed paper were carried in a cartridge box if rapid fire was necessary but were seldom used as the coarser powder fouled the barrel and the unwrapped balls clogged the rifling with lead. A “picker” to clean the touch hole, spare flints, and brush to clean the lock were also carried.³

³Verner, *History and Campaigns of the Rifle Brigade*, 44-45.

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Ryan Talley was born in December of 1973 at R.A.F. Lakenheath, England. With the exception of two years, 1974 through 1975, he lived in England until 1988. His primary education was accomplished in the British school system, at St. Mary's and Etonbury, both in Bedfordshire. Two years prior to his family's reassignment to Fort Meade, Maryland, he was transferred into the American Department of Defense Dependents school system, completing middle school at R.A.F. Chicksands and Ninth Grade at R.A.F. Alconbury. His secondary education was completed at Severna Park High School in Anne Arundel County, Maryland in 1991.

Ryan completed his B.A. degree at Adams State College in Alamosa, Colorado, focusing on modern European history and graduating in 1995. Following a year of substitute teaching in the Anne Arundel County school system, he entered the University of Richmond to pursue a Masters degree in modern British history.

In addition to pursuing his higher education, Ryan entered the United States Marine Corps Reserve, completing Boot Camp at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego in the summer of 1994. He served with Marine Air Control Squadron 24 (Det Fwd) in Colorado until September of 1995, and currently is with Communications Platoon, Headquarters and Service Company, 4th Combat Engineer Battalion, Baltimore Maryland. He holds the rank of Corporal.

Ryan's parents now live in San Antonio, Texas. He has one older sister, a Marine officer, who is stationed with her husband at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, South Carolina.