

# The Dutch Brigade

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## INTRODUCTION

In the first years of the revolutionary wars, various countries (e.g. Great Britain and the Dutch Republic) had mercenary troops or "Freikorps" in their pay which partly or totally consisted of troops which came from France; the so called *migrés*.

One of these troops in British pay consisted of Dutch *migrés*; became known as the "Dutch Brigade".

## A SHORT HISTORY

After the invasion of the French troops of the territory of the United Provinces and the declaration of the Batavian Republic in 1795, various units (and parts of them) of the old army went to Prussian territory, especially Osnabrück, to renew the war against the revolutionary French armies until the Prussian King forbid the gathering of troops, probably out of fear for the French and the troops spread through e.g. Hanover.

Some of the troops that came into Hanoverian pay, were transported to the West Indies and were later incorporated into the British 60th Regiment of Foot.

From 1798 onwards, the Prince of Orange knew, that an invasion by the British on the coast of the Netherlands was prepared and he tried to gather ex-Dutch troops to invade the Dutch territory from the east and to liberate the Netherlands.

When the invasion came, small detachments were sent into the Netherlands but they received no help from the Dutch people and as the invasion of the British/Russian army failed they withdrew into Germany together with some new "Orange-aligned" recruits and like minded prisoners of war. All these troops were shipped to the British isles.

## RAISING OF THE DUTCH BRIGADE

The troops, "loyaux Hollandais", were taken into service by King George II and were transported to the Isle of Wight where they assembled in October 1799.

Although the troops were known as Dutch troops they also included Nassau and other German soldiers and also probably Swiss and French (*émigré*) troops.

The "Dutch Brigade" was commanded by the Duke of York as commander in chief of the British army but were directly commanded by the Prince of Orange who took care of uniforms, equipment and assembling of the troops.

## ORGANISATION

The theoretical total strength of the "Dutch Brigade" was to be:

4 regiments of infantry each of two battalions. †

The battalion strength was 10 companies of 3 officers, 2 cadets and 100 rank and file.

The light companies (a total of 8) were in November 1800 organised in 2 light (flankeur) battalions of 4 coys each.

The theoretical strength of a regiment (excluding staff and flankers) would be 1,890 men; the strength for a flankeur battalion would be 420 men.

1 regiment of jagers †

This regiment had probably the same organisation as the infantry regiments and its strength would be 1,050 men per battalion.

† *There were other units of which the strength is not known but there were supposed to be a unit of artillery, some engineer officers, a company of workman and a company of veteran/invalids.*

The real total of troops is not known but probably was much lower than the theoretical one.

The following is known about the officers:-

The titular-commanding officers were the General Majors Stamford, K. Bentinck, de Constant Villars and W. van der Duyn, the Colonel B. Bentinck and the extra-ordinarius Colonel J. Bentinck. The first four probably commanded the line regiments, the last two the flankeur battalions.

The real commanding officers were the Lt. Colonels Von Dopff, Von Schwartz, MacLoad, Von Schinne, Morack and Sprecher von Bernegg (here also the first four probably commanded line units, the last two the flankeur battalions).

The jagers were commanded by the Lt. Colonel Von Heydt with the Majors Von Hessberg and Schaffner; the artillery was commanded by the Lt. Colonel W. du Pont.

The troops were encamped in barracks in East- and West Cowes, the north of the Isle of Wight and in Parkhurst near Newport. The jagers were encamped in Lymington.

On the 6th of august 1800 each regiment received during a parade 2 standards of which the first was the old "Prinsenvlag" (Orange) and the second the English standard which were donated by the King.

## BATTLE HISTORY

This is an easy one; there is none.

The unit never came into action although they exercised with the British troops and 2 regiments were shipped in for two weeks in Spithead to leave for Portugal which order never came.

After this, the brigade was destined for Ireland where the brigade arrived in December 1800 in Cork.

The two flankeur battalions stayed there, the other regiments marched to Wexford, Waterford, Kilkenny and the forts around the bay.

Later in that year the troops returned to Jersey, Guernsey and Wight to serve as garrison troops against a possible French invasion.

In 1802 (after the peace of Amiens) the Dutch brigade was disbanded; troops returned to the Batavian Republic, some went into the service of Fulda which was owned by the Prince of Orange or went into British service and served in other regiments e.g. in the West Indies.

## UNIFORMS

As the troops received new uniforms in 1800 in England, the uniforms were almost identical to the British uniforms of around this period.

For the other troops no plates are known but they had probably also blue.



### Line infantry (plate A)

The infantry had a blue coat (of which the cut was identical to the British uniform of 1800) with red cuffs, collar, shoulderstraps and turnbacks. There was white square-edged lace on the front of the coat and on the cuffs. On closer examination of plate A it seems, that the piping and the lace was white with orange interwoven. The shoulderstraps show no tufts as the British had but this could be a mistake.

The bandoleers were white, and had a oval copper(?) plate with the regimental number.

The shako is probably the British early stovepipe shako which seems very square on the plate, had a white over red plume, and a front plate of copper which of Ten Raa (1) had above a crown, in the middle the letters P.V.O. (Prins van Oranje) and a lion under. This plate Otto von Pivka (2) also shows. The plate A shows a more oval plate without crown or lion and the lettering is unreadable.

The trousers are grey with short grey/brown gaiters.

The flanker battalions/companies had probably the same uniform with the signs of light units namely a horn on the shako, blue wings on the shoulderstraps, the trousers with a black front figure and also white lace on the collar.

Plate B shows an officer in parade dress of an older (pre- 1800) style in dark blue, with red collar, cuffs, turnbacks and lapels. The cuffs, lapels and collar shows silver lace with orange interwoven. The epaulet is silver as is the plate on the cross-belt (with the letters PVO)

The bicorn is black with white over red plume and silver/orange troedels. The sash is crimson.

### Jagers

Plate C shows two officers of the jagers in parade (left) or field uniforms.

The coat of the parade uniform is green with black collar, lapels, turnbacks and cuffs. The collar has one, the lapels 9 and the cuffs 3 lace in gold as is the epaulet.

The sash is crimson.

The trousers are green with a gold stripe and gold figure; the boots are a la hussarde with gold piping and gold troedel.

The bicorn is black with green plume, black cockade with gold piping.

The field uniform is more plain and shows a black shako with green plume and golden horn.

The green coat has black collar, cuffs, turnbacks and lapels with green (or black) wings with gold piping. The sash is crimson. The trousers are green with black front figure and stripe, black boots.

Both the officers have curved, light infantry type swords.

The men had probably the same uniform, cf. Ten Raa they had a green over red plume and were equipped with rifles. The cross-belts were black.

An impression of the uniform which I think would have been worn by the jager unit is shown by the Funckens (4)

### CONCLUSION

I hope, that I have given some impression of a not so well known Dutch unit which saw no fighting at all but which could have been involved in e.g. a French invasion, an

expedition to Portugal etc.

### Sources

- 1) F.J.G. Ten Raa: De uniformen van de Nederlandsche Zee- en Landmacht
- 2) Otto von Pivka: Dutch Belgian Troops of the Napoleonic Wars
- 3) F. de Bas: Prins Frederik Hendrik en zijn tijd
- 4) L and F Funcken: L'uniform et les armes des soldats de la guerre en dentelle
- 5) plates :with permission of the Royal Netherlands Army and Arms Museum in Delft

