

# Nº5 First Empire Nº5



*König. Schwedisch Grenadier Regimente.*

Nº5

£1.50



# The Swedish Life Grenadier Regiment

by Keith Barker



When I received issue three of my subscription to *First Empire*, I was delighted to find it contained an advertisement for 15mm Swedish Napoleonic troops by MINIFIGS. I have wanted to add such an army to my collection, but had been hampered by the poor availability of figures.

I decided to start with the Life Grenadier Regiment as it took part in all three major campaigns, and because it was one of the few regiments whose 1807 uniform remained unchanged throughout the period. It could thus be used on the wargames table against the Russians, the Danes, the Norwegians or the French, nor would it be stretching history too far to use them against the Spanish.

The Swedish Army of the Napoleonic wars is a subject not very well covered by any book in the English language. I hope this article will help to provide wargamers interested in the Swedish army and the new Minifigs figures with information previously only available in Swedish.

I have based this article on two uniform prints from 1808 and a number of Swedish works. These Swedish authors have used the original archives and diaries as their sources, something which time does not permit me to do.

One of the prints used as a source was from "Uniformen der ganzen königl. Schwedischen Armée" published in Berlin in 1808 by J.B.Schiavonetti. Contained six engravings of which number 4, covering the grenadier regiments, is on the front cover of this issue.

## THE REGIMENT'S NAME

Upon formation the regiment was known as 'Lifgrenadjärregementet' although this would nowadays be spelt 'Livgrenadjärregementet' - the Life Grenadier Regiment.

After 1802 the regiment was sometimes referred to as the Life Grenadier Brigade (Lifgrenadjärbrigaden) although this does not seem to be official. The royal decree which split up the regiment still referred to it as the Life Grenadier Regiment and not Brigade.

Because the regiments recruiting area was in Östgötaland, the regiment was unofficially known as the Östgöta Grenadiers.

Sweden's only other grenadier regiment was the Life Regiment's Grenadier Corps (Lifregementets grenadjärkår). A name easily confused with the Life Grenadier Regiment.

## ORGANISATION

By royal decree of March 24th, 1791 the Östgöta Provincial (Indelta) Cavalry regiment was converted to infantry and combined with the Östgöta Provincial (Indelta) Infantry regiment to become the Life Grenadier Regiment.

It was originally decided that the 8 infantry companies would be combined with the 8 cavalry squadrons to give 8 companies, each of 275 grenadiers. The regiment was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Nils Fredrik Jernfeltz, previously of the Östgöta Infantry.

It very soon became obvious that the merger was carried out without due consideration for unit, officers, men or traditions and the new regiment was not functioning well. Furthermore companies of 275 men were considered too large.

By April 18th, 1792 it was decided to split the regiment into two divisions. The 'rotehålls' division was formed from the ex-Östgöta Infantry regiment, while the 'rusthålls' division was formed from the ex-Östgöta Cavalry regiment. Each division consisted of two battalions of four companies each. The 'rotehålls' division had an establishment of 1200 officers and men and the 'rusthålls' division an establishment of 1000.

The regiment was commanded by a Colonel. Each division was commanded by a Lieutenant-Colonel and had a staff of 2 majors (commanding



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the battalions), 2 adjutants, a surgeon, and an armourer. Each company was commanded by a captain, with a lieutenant, a second-lieutenant, a sergeant-major, a sergeant, a corporal and five lance-corporals as well as two drummers and one pioneer.

As from May 3rd, 1802 the Life Grenadier Regiment was considered to be a brigade and the divisions as individual regiments. The was now commanded by a Major-General. Each division was commanded by a Lieutenant-Colonel with a slightly increased staff. The organisation of the companies remained unchanged.

During the campaigns of 1808-09 and 1813-14 the regiment was increased in strength to about 3,000 men. By royal decree of 24th July 1816, the Life Grenadier Regiment was again split into two regiments. The 'rotehålls' division became the First Life Grenadier Regiment (Första Lifgrenadjärregementet) and the 'rusthålls' division became the Second Life Grenadier Regiment (Andra Lifgrenadjärregementet). The regiment was part of the King's household troops (Konungens Lif-och Hus-trupper).

## CAMPAIGNS

### THE CAMPAIGN IN GERMANY 1805-06

For this campaign the regiment mobilized a 1000 men strong field regiment. It consisted of two field battalions, one from each division. It was later reinforced by an additional 200 men.

The regiment arrived in Germany on September 3rd, 1805 and marched to Stralsund. Here the Swedish army remained throughout October while the French were defeating their Austrian allies at Ulm.

In November the Swedes advanced to Luneberg, where the whole army was gathered by the beginning of December. After the battle of Austerlitz the coalition split up and the Russian and English troops in Northern Germany were recalled leaving the Swedes in splendid isolation.

Gustav Adolf realized he was in a sticky situation and recalled his army first across the Elbe and then towards Pomerania. A small detachment of 1800 men including the Life Grenadier Regiment was left in Hanover with the task of defending Lauenburg for the English. Unfortunately this caused problems with the Prussian court, which had just been given Hanover by Napoleon.

By August the main Swedish army had withdrawn to Stralsund leaving the Life Grenadiers in Hanover, supported only by a few squadrons of light cavalry.

After the twin battles of Jena and Auerstädt, the French overran Germany and the position of the Life Grenadier Regiment was precarious. Cut off from the main army, and pursued by a corps of 18,000 Frenchmen, they retreated to the port of Lubeck where their communications with Sweden could be re-opened.

On the November 3rd 1806, they arrived at Lubeck, whose citizens would not permit the Swedes to enter. The gates were stormed by a platoon of Life Grenadiers supported by their pioneers and two cannons. The good citizens of Lubeck then changed their minds, and "allowed" the Swedes to enter with flags flying and band playing.

The Swedes embarked on nine transport ships in the hope of reaching Stralsund. The ships were first detained by adverse weather conditions, then by the Prussians under Blucher and finally by the French under Marshal Bernadotte. The French turned field artillery on the transports and caused the Swedes to raise the white flag and surrender on November 7th. In a fine gesture, later to be remembered by the Swedes, Bernadotte ordered the prisoners to be well treated. The remainder of the army returned safely to Sweden.

### THE CAMPAIGNS OF 1808-09

In March of 1808, Sweden found herself at war with both Russia and Denmark. The Swedish regular army consisted of 47,886 men of which 14,778 were Finnish. The Swedish possession of Finland was left to her own defense while the 33,108 Swedish troops at home were formed into three armies facing north, south and west. The southern army faced Denmark from which Napoleon planned to attack Skåne with a 'French' army of 22,000 French, Spanish and Dutch troops and a 14,000 strong Danish army. The western faced a combined Danish-Norwegian army in Norway, while the northern army faced the might of Russia.

A reserve was formed in the centre of Sweden containing the Life Grenadier Regiment, the Västgöta Dragoon Regiment and a 6 pounder artillery battery.

Because a considerable amount of the regiments men were still in French prisons, it was only possible for the divisions to muster one battalion each. The total regimental strength was only 27 officers, 41 NCOs, 33 musicians and 1340 grenadiers divided into two battalions each of four companies.

On March 29th 1808 the regiment was ordered to join the western army ready for the invasion of Norway. The Swedish army now totaled 13,406 men against an enemy of 23,000 line and 9,300 militia troops.

Gustaf Adolf hesitated about attacking and on June 10th the Norwegians advanced over the Swedish border, and attacked the outnumbered Swedes. The Life Grenadier Regiment was involved in a skirmish at Prestbakke where they lost 76 casualties.

It was not however in the west where the main threat lay. The regiment was quickly increased in strength, the new recruits were used to bring the four regular battalions up to strength and formed a third battalion in each division.

On 18th June all six battalions were ordered to join the southern army for an attack on Denmark. They formed a Grenadier Brigade together with the Skånska and Mörner hussar regiments together with a battery of horse artillery.

On 17th August 1808 the regiment was ordered to concentrate at Karlskrona for shipment to Finland. This was followed by a steady stream of counter-orders, while the King constantly changed his mind. The regiment spend the next 25 days marching up and down Sweden without coming anywhere in the vicinity of the front line.

By September the fate of Finland had been decided, lost to the Russians. Russia had an army in Finland of 50,000 troops. These faced a Swedish-Finnish army with 12,000 men in Finland and 9,000 in Åland. The 30,000 Swedes defending their homeland could not come to the aid of the Finns.

However, it was decided to send small force of 1,000 Life Grenadiers to aid the Finns, in what was a classic example of too little too late. The Life Grenadiers fought their way through autumn storms and shipwreck and on November 2nd, 700 grenadiers were in action at Wirta along side the Savolax Jägers.

The regiment spent the winter in their home quarters in Östgötaland

Each division was now organized into two battalions, each of four companies. The recruit battalion being distributed among the regulars.

At the end of May 1809 the regiment arrived at the port of Karlskrona, and on 1st June it embarked bound for Stockholm. The 2nd rusthålls battalion was further moved to Jämtland, as part of the defense against Norway under the command of General Dobeln.

On 1st July 1809 the military situation was as follows. Russia had taken all of Finland and Åland. A Russian army 13,000 men strong (4,000 of which were guarding the lines of communications) under the command of Lieutenant-General Count Kamenskij had marched south from the Swedish-Finnish border and reached Umeå with an advance guard on the Öre river.

The Swedes split there forces into two armies, the Coastal army and the northern army. The three remaining battalions of the Life Grenadier Regiment (1248 men) together with the Uplands Provincial (Indelta) Infantry Regiment formed the third brigade of the Coastal Army. The army had a total strength of less than 8,000 men. While the northern army marched to meet the Russians, the Coastal army was shipped up the coast. On 17th August the Coastal army landed at Ratan, behind the Russian front line.

The three battalions of the Life Grenadier Regiment that were present were reorganized into four. Until peace was declared the 'rusthålls' division was to have two second battalions ! Fifty dismounted light cavalry were attached to the regiment and together with 100 grenadiers formed a light company.

The Coastal army marched inland to Sävar, where the Russians turned to



meet them. On the 18th August battle was joined between 5,000 Swedes and 6,000 Russians; both sides fighting bravely. The combat was fierce, the Life Grenadiers had fired 90 shots per man. While the battle was still undecided, the Swedish General ordered his army to retreat on Ratan. Here a small skirmish was fought to cover the embarkation. Artillery fire from the fleet contributed greatly to the safe embarkation of the Swedish army.

The Swedes lost a total of 1,000 men while the Russians lost double that including three generals. The Life Grenadier's casualties were 6 officers and 92 men killed or wounded.

The Coastal army joined up with the northern army at Umea and pursued the Russians who, fearing for their communications, retreated northwards. Peace was declared in September 1809.

## CAMPAIGN IN GERMANY 1813-14

Napoleon's army had been beaten by the Russian winter and the Emperor's power shaken. With Russia (summer 1812) and England (March 1813) Sweden agreed to provide 30,000 men to the coalition, and on 24th April 1813 an alliance was signed with Prussia. These countries guaranteed Sweden the right to conquer Norway, after Napoleon was defeated.

Jean Baptiste Bernadotte, one time Marshal of France, Prince of Ponte Corvo and now Karl Johan Prince Royal of Sweden was in command, and the Swedish Army had the competent leadership that it had so far lacked in these wars.

The regiment contributed two battalions of four companies each to the 1813 campaign. These battalions were based upon the 2nd battalions of each division, but were brought up to a strength of 600 grenadiers by taking men from the 1st battalions. Additionally 200 recruits were added to each battalion, giving the regiment a field strength of 1600 men.

They were commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Clairfelts.

The regiment arrived in Germany on May 11th, 1813 and formed part of the 1st Brigade (Maj-Gen Schultzenheim) of the 1st Division (Lt-Gen Sandels).

The 1st Brigade consisted of:

- 1st (Svea) Life Guard 1 btn
- 2nd (Göta) Life Guard 1 btn
- Life Regiment's Grenadier Corps 1 btn
- Life Grenadier Regiment 2 btns
- The Queens Life Regiment 2 btns
- Mounted Life Guard
- Smalands Dragoon Regiment
- Artillery from Svea Artillery Regiment
- Horse Artillery from Wendes Artillery Regiment

A light infantry company (Jägaredivision) was organized from each of the Life Grenadier Regiment's battalions with a staff of 6 and 13 men from each company; totaling 110 officers and men. All the light infantry companies in the brigade were formed into a light infantry battalion.

Throughout this campaign, Bernadotte was forced to conserve his army; Sweden had neither the money nor the manpower to replace the 30,000 men. Bernadotte knew that without this army he would never be able to take Norway, and was worried what his subjects would say if their future King killed-off Sweden's only army. This was a campaign in which the Swedish army was present, but usually arrived a little too late to take part in the fighting.

On 23rd August 1813 the regiment was present at the battle of Ruhlsdorff along with Prussian and Russian troops. The only Swedish troops engaged were the Horse Artillery.

On the 7th of September the Life Grenadier Regiment marched to Dennewitz in support of Bulow's Prussians who were engaged against Ney, but they arrived too late in the day to see action having covered the fifteen miles in six and a half hours. Next morning Bernadotte's order of the day emphasized how his own arrival with 40 battalions had made victory certain, this was not appreciated by the Prussian army, who had lost 7000 men in hard fighting. In Stockholm, Dennewitz was celebrated as a victory, but it was never followed up and the fresh Swedish army didn't pursue the beaten French who had lost 10,000 casualties that day.

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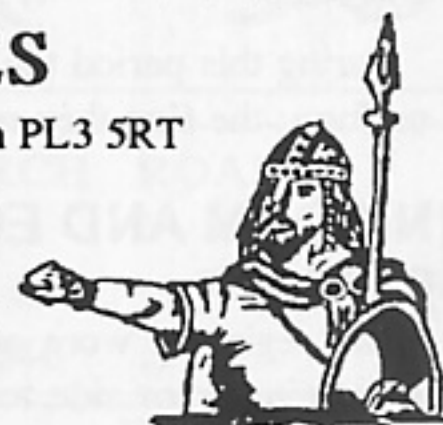
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On September 26th, the Life Grenadier Regiment engaged the French for the first time when they beat off a French attack at Mulda.

The whole Swedish army advanced on Leipzig on the 18th October, and camped around Breitenfeld, where the Swedish army had been twice victorious in the Thirty Years War. Only the horse artillery was to be engaged that night.

The following morning at 9 am the first brigade's combined light infantry battalion along with the Värmlands Jägare regiment stormed the strongly held Grimma Gate (Grimmisches Thor) supported by Swedish artillery.

The light infantry company was the only part of the Life Grenadier Regiment to be engaged at 'The Battle of the Nations'. In the evening the Regiment was reviewed by the Emperors of Russia and Austria and the King of Prussia.

After Leipzig the Swedish marched north, helping the English to recapture Hanover. They proceeded further north to Lubeck and Kiel threatening Denmark. By the treaty of Kiel, signed on January 14th, Denmark ceded Norway to Sweden.

## UNIFORM AND EQUIPMENT

One of the greatest pleasures of King Gustaf IV Adolf was to occupy himself with uniform regulations. This passion was shared by the Life Grenadier Regiment's first commanding officer.

Things were complicated for the regimental commander by the fact that the 'rotehålls' division's uniforms were owned by the crown while the 'rusthålls' division's were not. It was thus not until five years after being converted to infantry that the 'rusthålls' division had their cavalry boots replaced by shoes and gaiters.

During the summer maneuvers of 1805 the regiment was ordered to cease the practice of powdering the hair and to cut off the queues. This was just in time for the departure to the continent for the 1805-06 campaign against Napoleon.

A regimental order dated February 5th, 1793 stated that "No soldier may be without a moustache. Those without must use paint or a false moustache." This applied throughout the Napoleonic wars.

During this period the Life Grenadier Regiment wore two different models of uniform; the first they received in 1802 and the other in 1806.

## UNIFORM AND EQUIPMENT 1802 - 1806

### Headgear:

The regiment wore a high felt hat with peak and an imitation bearskin crest running from side to side. It had a white plume, a red bag with a white tassel hanging down over the right shoulder and a brass hat band.

### Clothing:

The grenadiers wore a dark blue double breasted coat with red facings piped in white on lapels, and cuffs. The collar and turnbacks were both white, the collar being piped in red. They wore white breeches with long black gaiters coming up over the knees. They were issued a dark blue cape without sleeves.

### Equipment:

A three inch wide shoulder belt of whitened leather was worn over the left shoulder to carry the plain black leather cartridge pouch. A narrower belt, also of whitened leather, with a rectangular brass buckle was worn around the waist and carried a short sword on the left hip. Attached to the rear of the pouch was a bayonet scabbard, although bayonets were traditionally carried fixed in the Swedish army.

The grenadiers were originally armed with muskets of mostly of models 1762, 1775 and 1799 although some model 1725 were still in use. The muskets were bound in brass and had red leather slings.

## UNIFORM AND EQUIPMENT 1806 - 1814

In October 1806 the King was ready with a new uniform model for his Life Grenadiers, which was issued both to the troops on service in Swedish Pomerania and those at home. It was hoped that these would be fully issued by the end of the year. The Swedish army could not work that fast, although they were mostly ready in time for the outbreak of war in 1808.

### Headgear:

According to the uniform regulations the regiment was to wear a hat which shall be 9" high with brass hat band with the Östgöta coat of arms, and a grenade badge of brass with a crest of horsehair and a higher plume.

The Östgöta coat of arms was coloured red. The crest was first placed at an oblique angle across the top of the hat, but was later altered to run from side to side. The plume was 15 inches high, of white goose-feathers, and worn on the left side with yellow bow and cords. The crest is sometimes referred to as a chenille.

This type of headdress was also worn by the Life Guard (Lifgardet) and the Life Regiments Grenadier Corps (Lifregementets grenadjärkår). Research is somewhat confused in that the Life Regiment's Grenadier Corps changed to wearing the crest fore and aft while the Life Guard never changed, always wearing the crest at an oblique angle.

### Clothing:

The grenadiers wore a single breasted blue coat with 10 white metal buttons (silver for officers). The collar, cuffs and shoulder straps were scarlet with white piping. The turnbacks were white. The collar and cuffs had white lace (silver for officers) in the form of two button holes. These button holes were horizontal, even on the cuffs which was unusual.

It is unlikely that epaulets were worn prior to the model 1814 uniform, issued after the war, when the epaulets were red. All the available evidence, with the exception of one print, point to the use of scarlet shoulder straps. Shown standing in the background of this print is a grenadier with red collar and white epaulets. He stands beside a correctly uniformed grenadier from the Life Regiment's Grenadier Corps with white collar and white epaulets. As no other work corroborates this, it is probable that the artist confused the two grenadier units.

The white breeches were replaced by dark blue long trousers. With these were worn short black gaiters which reached half way up the calf. On the front of the breeches were two Hungarian knots which reached half way down the thigh. These were 3 cm wide, of red lace with a white stripe running down the middle. The same lace ran all the way down the outside edges of the trousers. The trousers may originally have been worn inside the gaiters, but this was soon changed to outside.

A new greatcoat was issued replacing the previous cape. It was knee length and wide, and had sleeves, an elbow length cape and a scarlet standing collar. It was initially made of dark grey cloth, but from 1810 onwards blue cloth was used.

### Equipment:

The grenadiers now wore two shoulder belt of whitened leather; these were 3 inches wide. That over the left shoulder still carried the plain black leather cartridge belt, while that over the right shoulder now carried the short sabre. After 1806 this short sabre was no longer worn by the line troops, but was retained by the household troops, of which the Life Grenadier Regiment was a part. It was not probably taken on campaign, but only worn at home in peacetime. The waist belt had been replaced by a yellow cummerbund sash with two horizontal blue stripes.

The grenadiers carried a calfskin backpack with white straps. When going into battle, these were traditionally left with the regimental baggage, but towards the end of the Napoleonic wars these were usually carried even on the battlefield.

In 1807 the regiment ordered the new 1807 model rifle. Due to a misunderstanding these were not ready when they left for war in 1808, but were issued when the regiment was on the march. Unfortunately only half were the model 1807 rifle as ordered, the remainder being model 1799 muskets.

### Officers:

The officers uniform was similar to the mens, and is shown in the print. Officers still wore the white waist belt, the with a silver buckle which bore the Swedish royal coat-of-arms in gilt. Since the 1772 palace revolution, Swedish army officers had worn a white silk brassard tied around their upper left arm. A general order discontinuing the wearing of the brassard was issued after the campaign of 1809.



## Drummers:

Drummers wore the same basic uniform as the rank-and-file, but had scarlet swallows nest epaulets trimmed with white lace and four white lace chevrons on each arm - the top two facing up and the bottom two facing down. Drum aprons were of whitened leather. The drum was made of brass with the rims probably painted in alternating diagonal blue and yellow stripes although may have been plain blue.

## Pioneers:

The pioneers (timmermän) wore the same basic uniform as the rank-and-file with a two-crossed-axes badge on their right sleeve. Their headdress was a tall bearskin cap with a brass plate. They wore an apron of white seal-skin. Pioneers were required to have full beards. They were additionally armed with an axe.

## STANDARDS

The normal Swedish infantry regiment carried four colours (fanor), two per battalion. The King's colour (Lifkompanifana or Liffana) was carried by the King's company (Lifkompani), this being the first company of the first battalion. The other three colours were known as company colours (Kompanifana), an outdated name from when they were issued one per company.

The Life Grenadier regiment, which was in effect a double regiment, carried 8 colours (four per division, two per battalion), and was the only Swedish regiment to do so. Only one King's colour was carried; by the King's company of the 'rotehålls' division.

Special regulations existed for the colours of the Household troops of which the regiment was part. The King's colour was white and bore the Royal Swedish coat-of-arms in the centre. The company colours were also white and bore the King's monogram. During the 1805-06 and 1808-09 campaigns these should have carried the monogram of Gustaf IV Adolf and during the 1813-14 campaign that of Carl XIII. Both types were carried on a white staff. In all probability they were 1.8 m high and 2.2 m wide up to 1812, and 1.48 x 1.78 afterwards.

## FURTHER READING

**There are not many easily available works in the English language covering the Swedish Army during the Napoleonic wars.**

### Magazines:

By far the best English work is a pair of articles published in Tradition magazine (numbers 59 and 60) by W. B. Young.

An article published in the March 1988 issue of Military Modelling covered the Swedish Indelta Infantry. Although the Life Grenadiers were Indelta Infantry they were not mentioned!

The Elberfeld Manuscript contains examples of a Swedish Pioneer and a Mounted Life Guard (Lifgardet till Hast) which were included in an article in the May 1989 issue of Military Modelling. Back issues of these magazines are still quite easily available.

### Books:

Osprey published a Men-at-Arms book covering the Scandinavian Armies of the Napoleonic wars. Osprey succeeded in confusing the Life Grenadier Regiment with the Life Regiment's Grenadier Corps. This is not up to the excellent standards of the current series and is now out-of-print.

The Army of Sweden 1802-1814 by W. J. Rawkins is the only work still in print. The origins and organisation of the Life Grenadier Regiment are totally wrong!

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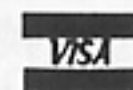
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