

A Tale of Two Guardsmen

PHILIP J. HAYTHORNTHWAITE
Painting by BRYAN FOSTEN

Although the literature of the Napoleonic Wars is vast, the majority of the personal accounts concern commissioned officers. Memoirs of the rank-and-file do exist; but rarely is encountered a new relic or document which brings the anonymous ranker more sharply into focus. Two such collections are published here for the first time, both referring to members of the British Foot Guards in 1814-15, and linked by a remarkable coincidence. One provides significant new evidence regarding the uniform of the Guards at this period; the other relates to that most famous of Napoleonic battles, Waterloo. They are presented here in order of seniority of their regiments.

THE PAYNE SELF-PORTRAIT

It is to John Hall of the Dept. of History, Albion College, Michigan, that we are indebted for permission to reproduce a most significant uniform-portrait of the 1st Foot Guards; and to Capt. D.D. Horn, Curator of the Guards Museum, Wellington Barracks, to which museum the portrait is currently on loan, that we owe thanks for access.

On 29 March 1804 Thomas Carden, Justice of the Peace of the City of Worcester, attested a recruit to the 1st Regiment of Foot Guards. The recruit was William Payne, aged 18 years, born in the Parish of Stoke, Worcester, of fair complexion and dark brown hair, 5ft. 5½in. tall. In 1802

he had served as a volunteer (which had perhaps given him a taste for military service); and was enrolled by a recruiting party under Ensign Davenport, whose corporal, Thomas Birkitts, witnessed Payne's attestation.

Having been examined by the surgeon R. Hill, who pronounced him 'fit for his Majesty's service' ('no Rupture, nor was ever troubled with Fits, and am no Ways disabled by Lameness or otherwise, but have the perfect use of my Limbs'), and having received the ten guineas bounty, Payne signed with a cross the Articles of War: 'I, William Payne, do swear to be true to our Sovereign Lord King

George, and to serve him honestly and faithfully, in Defence of his Person, Crown and Dignity, against all his Enemies or Oppressors, whatsoever: And to observe and obey His Majesty's Orders, and the Orders of the Generals and Officers set over me by His Majesty'.

Payne was illiterate when he enlisted, but learned to write a passable hand — though he was unable to spell correctly his own name, as evident from a note affixed to the rear of his self-portrait.

'William Payne he Served as a volunteer in 1802 enlisted as a Soldier 1804 and in 1805 in Sicily he was in Spain with Sir John Moore at the retreat of Corunna then in Holland taking of Filushing afterward



This front flap of a 'Belgic' shako is preserved in Brussels, at one time on display in the Royal Army Museum. It was claimed to be a relic of the Waterloo campaign, and was displayed with a Coldstream shako plate and a separate bugle-horn badge. Since its provenance is anecdotal at best, we are unable to say how much weight may be placed upon this combination of items as genuinely contemporary evidence of a practice which seems to be contradicted by the William Payne self-portrait. (Courtesy John Mollo)

in Spain under the duke of Wellington. Returned to England and was ordered to Ireland. Served 21 years and some days in the Grenadier Guards 8 Comy. his own likeness drawn by himself.

That brief statement encapsulates a remarkable career in which Payne survived two of the most costly campaigns of the British army at the period: the horrors of the retreat to Corunna, and the disease-ridden expedition to Walcheren (the capture of Flushing). He survived to receive the Military General Service Medal with clasp for 'Corunna'.

Self-portraits by enlisted men are rare, but this one is especially significant due to the uniform depicted. Payne portrayed himself in 1815 wearing his best 'walking-out' uniform, and is obviously a member of the battalion light infantry company. The basic uniform is well known: a scarlet jacket with dark blue facings and white lace, the loops in the design known as 'bastion', the widening ends of which resulted in there being insufficient room on the breast for the normal ten loops, hence the number being reduced to eight. The shoulder-wings with white worsted edging were distinctions of the battalion flank companies (grenadiers and light infantry). With this uniform are worn the full-dress white breeches and black gaiters (white long gaiters were worn on dress parades, and grey overalls for ordinary service); and the single shoulder belt supporting the bayonet-scabbard, this belt being worn on its own for 'walking-out'. The rectangular brass belt-plate bore the design of a crowned Garter with 'GHIIR' in the centre. The fob at the right waist emphasizes the 'off-duty' aspect of Payne's uniform, such additions not being permitted on duty.

What makes the Payne portrait a most important document is the portrayal of the shako. Payne shows the false-fronted 1812-pattern 'Belgic' cap, with the green

bands and plume of the light company. The shako badges are most significant, as they would appear to be the only contemporary evidence of the insignia of the Guards light infantry, and suggest that previous reconstructions would appear to be incorrect.

The ordinary plate for the 1812 shako was a crowned 'rococo' shield bearing the royal cypher, but among many regimental patterns that of the 1st Guards bore an embossed star bearing the Garter encircling 'GR' in the centre. This plate was worn from the issue of the shako; but on 28 December 1814 it was ordered that light companies should adopt instead separate badges of a bugle-horn over the regimental number. As the number was not appropriate for Guards regiments, it has been presumed that they wore the bugle over the ordinary plate. Payne's portrait would appear to prove this erroneous, at least as far as the 1st Guards' light infantry was concerned; for Payne has the bugle over a 'cut-out' star, the whole design much superior in appearance to the rather clumsy arrangement of a bugle over the large plate.

The picture thus solves a minor mystery of military uniform; and allows a precise date to be ascribed to the picture, for the Belgic shako was replaced by the 'Regency' pattern from the end of December 1815.

THE BIDDLE COLLECTION

Although William Payne's portrait dates from the period of Waterloo, his battalion was not present at the great battle; but John Biddle's was — and he left a quite remarkable and unique collection of relics and documents which illustrate the career and duties of that most valuable member of a regiment, the company colour-sergeant. We are grateful to Alan Harrison for permission to illustrate and describe this collection of material.

By amazing coincidence, John Biddle was also attested

The reverse of John Biddle's colour-sergeant's sleeve badge, showing his hand-written name at the top.



at Worcester, also by Thomas Carden the magistrate, and also became a light company man. He enlisted in the 2nd (Coldstream) Guards on 25 June 1806, but was not attested until 12 August, probably having been with the recruiting party until that date. By trade a labourer, he was born at Little Shelsley (or Chelsley), Worcestershire, on 24 June 1788 and baptised on 30 June. He enlisted at the age of 18 for seven years' service, and was described as 5ft. 8in. tall (5ft. 8¾in. at his discharge!), of fair complexion, with grey eyes and light hair. Like Payne he was illiterate, his 'signature' being a cross witnessed by the recruiting-sergeant, Joseph Olive. He learned to write — remarkably well — in the army; and was promoted to corporal (9 June 1809) and then to sergeant in the 2nd Bn. (24 December 1811).

John Biddle was obviously a most capable and trusted NCO, for he was appointed colour-sergeant (apparently responsible for company accounts) in the battalion light company — a most

responsible post, given that the light infantry frequently operated in advance of the battalion in 'open order', when individual initiative played a greater rôle than usual at the period.

At Waterloo he served as second-in-command of the company's 1st Section (out of four), which was under personal command of Capt. the Hon. Robert Moore (second son of the Earl of Mountcashel, 1793-1856). The fact that Biddle's company commander was only 18 years of age, and that the light company had only one other officer (Ensign Henry Gooch; the senior captain, William Lovelace Walton, served at Waterloo as acting-adjutant) must have put even greater responsibility upon Biddle.

Many of John Biddle's papers have survived, both personal and those of his company. Among these are his own attestation form, and testimonials from his officers ('From his general conduct I can with confidence recommend him as an honest trustworthy person...'), and order-books concerning the

Left:

Tentative reconstruction of the Payne uniform. Note green shako plume and cord; and particularly the badges—a separate bugle-horn above a star, the latter presumably enclosing the 1st Guards' device of a Garter encircling the royal cypher. From the naïf self-portrait an oval rather than a circular Garter may tentatively be deduced. If the Biddle cut-out star badge illustrated elsewhere in this article is a light company shako badge, it would tend to confirm this, as well as the small size. The lace decoration on the fringed shoulder wing is puzzling: although Payne painted bastion loops on the cuffs and breast with some care, he shows a simple zig-zag shape on the wings. We have guessed at bastion loops here, following all other known sources, but without complete confidence. (Bryan Foster).

daily duties of a company sergeant and those under his command; but perhaps the most interesting are the documents which relate to Waterloo, which are probably unique survivals of their type.

The company roll (too extensive to be reproduced here) lists each member and the date of his promotion, the section in which he served, and the equipment with which he had been issued. For example, Biddle himself carried 'firelock' no. 42, no bayonet (presumably a sword instead?) and had greatcoat no. 67. Private George Wild (whose Waterloo Medal is still in existence) carried firelock no. 28, bayonet no. 28 and greatcoat no. 1296. Drummer George Hinckley carried 'horn' no. 1 ('drummers' carried bugles in light companies) and greatcoat no. 329. Against Hinckley's name is the note 'Prisoner — Returned'.

Most fascinatingly, it is the Waterloo papers which illuminate the actions of the company, which was engaged throughout the battle in the most bitter fighting around Hougomont, one of the great epics of the engagement. In this fighting Biddle himself was wounded, but not so severely as to disable him in the immediate aftermath of the battle; for he was apparently given the task of completing a roll of killed and wounded in the 2nd

Coldstream, doubtless compiled from the rolls of company-sergeants like himself.

The list, which still exists, was drafted onto a sheet of paper which bears the account for the washing of Sergt. Thomas Lloyd, Biddle's companion in the light company ('4 Shirts 10d, 2 Pairs of Stockings 3d...'). Biddle's own company ('Lt. Infantry') recorded three sergeants and 40 rank-and-file killed or wounded, and had nine men 'missing' (probably still in the Hougomont woods when the roll was called). Biddle's estimate of the battalion casualties is calculated as 13

sergeants and 263 other ranks (in addition, one officer was killed and eight wounded). Of the wounded, some are noted as 'since Ded'.

Biddle was temporarily evacuated from his battalion, spending the period from 18 to 24 July at Haslar Hospital. Waterloo was his last active service, though many of his papers relate to the post-Waterloo period when he joined the 1st Battalion, including service in Ireland. After 21 years and 3 months service (including the two years' notional service which presence at Waterloo bestowed) he was discharged in consequence of 'length of service' (presumably three

seven-year enlistments) on 15 September 1825. He returned to Worcester as an Out-Pensioner of Chelsea Hospital with a pension of 1/10d. per diem, paid in

Below:

The first page of Biddle's nominal roll of casualties in his battalion at Waterloo, apparently compiled on the evening of the 18th or on the following day.

Bottom:

Company roll, light company, 2nd Bn., 2nd Foot Guards, Waterloo, 18 June 1815. Sgt. Biddle's notebook shows the name of each man, with columns recording — left to right — his 'firelock' number, bayonet number, greatcoat number, and fate during the battle of that day, if wounded or 'Killed'.

Biddle					Company Roll				
1	Sgt. Thomas	42	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
2	Cor. Thomas	43	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
3	Cor. Thomas	44	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
4	Cor. Thomas	45	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
5	Cor. Thomas	46	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
6	Cor. Thomas	47	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
7	Cor. Thomas	48	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
8	Cor. Thomas	49	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
9	Cor. Thomas	50	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
10	Cor. Thomas	51	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
11	Cor. Thomas	52	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
12	Cor. Thomas	53	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
13	Cor. Thomas	54	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
14	Cor. Thomas	55	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
15	Cor. Thomas	56	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
16	Cor. Thomas	57	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
17	Cor. Thomas	58	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
18	Cor. Thomas	59	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
19	Cor. Thomas	60	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
20	Cor. Thomas	61	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
21	Cor. Thomas	62	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
22	Cor. Thomas	63	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
23	Cor. Thomas	64	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
24	Cor. Thomas	65	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
25	Cor. Thomas	66	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
26	Cor. Thomas	67	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
27	Cor. Thomas	68	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
28	Cor. Thomas	69	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
29	Cor. Thomas	70	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
30	Cor. Thomas	71	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
31	Cor. Thomas	72	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
32	Cor. Thomas	73	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
33	Cor. Thomas	74	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
34	Cor. Thomas	75	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
35	Cor. Thomas	76	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
36	Cor. Thomas	77	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
37	Cor. Thomas	78	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
38	Cor. Thomas	79	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
39	Cor. Thomas	80	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
40	Cor. Thomas	81	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
41	Cor. Thomas	82	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
42	Cor. Thomas	83	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
43	Cor. Thomas	84	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
44	Cor. Thomas	85	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
45	Cor. Thomas	86	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
46	Cor. Thomas	87	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
47	Cor. Thomas	88	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
48	Cor. Thomas	89	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
49	Cor. Thomas	90	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
50	Cor. Thomas	91	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
51	Cor. Thomas	92	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
52	Cor. Thomas	93	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
53	Cor. Thomas	94	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
54	Cor. Thomas	95	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
55	Cor. Thomas	96	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
56	Cor. Thomas	97	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
57	Cor. Thomas	98	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
58	Cor. Thomas	99	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
59	Cor. Thomas	100	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
60	Cor. Thomas	101	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
61	Cor. Thomas	102	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
62	Cor. Thomas	103	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
63	Cor. Thomas	104	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
64	Cor. Thomas	105	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
65	Cor. Thomas	106	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
66	Cor. Thomas	107	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
67	Cor. Thomas	108	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
68	Cor. Thomas	109	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
69	Cor. Thomas	110	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
70	Cor. Thomas	111	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
71	Cor. Thomas	112	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
72	Cor. Thomas	113	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
73	Cor. Thomas	114	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
74	Cor. Thomas	115	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
75	Cor. Thomas	116	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
76	Cor. Thomas	117	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
77	Cor. Thomas	118	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
78	Cor. Thomas	119	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
79	Cor. Thomas	120	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
80	Cor. Thomas	121	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
81	Cor. Thomas	122	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
82	Cor. Thomas	123	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
83	Cor. Thomas	124	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
84	Cor. Thomas	125	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
85	Cor. Thomas	126	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
86	Cor. Thomas	127	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
87	Cor. Thomas	128	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
88	Cor. Thomas	129	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
89	Cor. Thomas	130	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
90	Cor. Thomas	131	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
91	Cor. Thomas	132	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
92	Cor. Thomas	133	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
93	Cor. Thomas	134	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
94	Cor. Thomas	135	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
95	Cor. Thomas	136	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
96	Cor. Thomas	137	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
97	Cor. Thomas	138	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
98	Cor. Thomas	139	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
99	Cor. Thomas	140	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	
100	Cor. Thomas	141	Cor. Thomas	60	Firelock	Bayonet	Greatcoat	Fate	



The Coldstream Garter star badge, in brass, now on a cut-out scarlet cloth backing, measuring 47mm by 40mm; the sturdy rear attachment, and the Payne self-portrait, both suggest that it may be the lower of the light company shako badges, despite its small size.

quarterly instalments, a total annual payment of £31 15s. 8½d. (when deductions were reckoned).

Four other items are included in the Biddle collection: his Waterloo Medal, his colour-sergeant's badge, and two others. The sleeve badge of colour-sergeant was instituted in July 1813 as a reward of merit, worn on the right arm. It is conceivable that this is the only extant example of the unique design worn by the Coldstream: a representation of a crimson Colour bearing the regimental Garter star over a wreathed sphinx, with crown above and crossed swords below, in gold and silver embroidery. The badge was so highly regarded that it is mentioned on Biddle's regimental testimonial ('13 Years ... as a Serjeant in which Rank he obtained a Badge as a reward for his good conduct'), and it is even named on the reverse.

Another item is a brass Garter star badge with a scarlet cloth backing. Its use is uncertain, its large fitting on the reverse precluding its use on the uniform, but the badge being too small for use on the knapsack or cartridge-box. The rear fitting would be appropriate for a head-dress, but the badge would be too large to secure the cockade. Its possible use has been revealed by the Payne portrait: the badge below the bugle on the light company shako, perhaps?

The final item is more perplexing: a large six-armed star made of yellow, scarlet and dark blue ribbons attached to a blue pasteboard backing. It could well be that this is the only surviving example of the 'favours' worn by recruiting-parties, given to newly-enlisted men or worn to attract recruits. Could it be that Biddle preserved the 'favour' he was given when he enlisted, or one that he wore when he was himself on recruiting-duty? We shall never know; but taken together, the collection provides a possibly unique and historically most important insight into the life of one of Wellington's stalwarts.

REVIEWS

'British Commandos in Action' by Leroy Thompson, colour plates by Ken MacSwan, illustrated by Joe Sewell; Squadron Signal Publications, *Combat Troops in Action No.8*; 50pp, illus. throughout; 3pp col. illus.; £4.50

From the first glance it is clear to any reader with a reasonable knowledge of the subject that this work will not be breaking any new ground. This is a pity, because the wartime Commando Forces are one of the relatively few topics so far untouched in any detail by devotees of uniform and insignia (although recent articles by W.Y. Carman in *'MI'* have rectified this situation somewhat).

The text is a predictable, albeit reasonably accurate potted history of wartime units, and of training, weaponry, and the standards required. The first section of photos amply illustrate this phase (though a minor point emerges already — no man wearing a Commando flash can properly be described as a 'trainee').

The author then goes on to describe various Commando operations, listing 'orbats' for each campaign. Unfortunately, the second part of the photographic coverage is where the errors creep in. A clearly identifiable member of 2 Cdo. is described as 'thought to be a member of 30 Cdo.'; Army Commandos are identifiable as Royal Marines; two signallers captioned as 'members of 2 Cdo. Bde.' are clearly not Commandos at all; a member of 3 Cdo., clearly dated by his insignia as 1943/44, is captioned as c.1941... One could go on. The frequent use of weasel phrases such as 'thought to be' or 'believed to be' in captions betrays the author's basic unfamiliarity with the visual details of a subject on which he presumes to offer the public a book whose main appeal lies in photographs. This is all the more irritating, because the photos include some splendid illustrations of little-known and rarely-seen insignia — e.g. the swordfish flash of 101 Tp., 6 Cdo., and the insignia of the French element of 4 Cdo. at Dieppe, 1942 — of whose importance the author is clearly ignorant.

The choice of colour content is drab and uninspired, considering the great variety of clothing and equipment worn by these units in action; and the figures are not executed to a high standard of skill.

At £4.50, unless the prospective buyer simply has to have it for the sake of the photographs, this book is too expensive. It leaves the average military enthusiast little better enlightened on a fascinating subject which demands greater care. Sorry, Mr. Thompson; but you're out of your depth with this one.

BJH

'The Dragon's Teeth' by John Robert Young; Century Hutchinson; 224pp, 20 b/w ill., 111 col. ill., 6 maps, 7 charts, 37 line drawings; £16.95

John Robert Young is a skilled and imaginative photographer whose last book — on the French Foreign Legion — was widely praised. The present volume is his record, in words and pictures, of a journey 'Inside China's Armed Forces' in 1986 — a unique achievement for a Western photo-journalist, and a tribute to his persistence.

As China has become more open and the West has developed greater interest, 'The Dragon's Teeth' fits a unique slot; it is almost a military travel book. Though basic equipment diagrams and organisation charts are included at the back, the bulk of the book is John Robert Young's personal view. Visitors to China will recognise 'By now, I was becoming familiar with the arrival procedure at units I had been cleared to visit. Cold flannels, cold drinks — orange or beer — and consideration of my requirements.' The Chinese are hospitable and friendly, and keen to present a modern face to the world.

The book shows the efforts that the PLA are making to up-date their forces; and conversely, it may have been this desire to present a modern image which prevented the author from being given permission to cover a field training exercise, which might have presented an undesirable picture: there are fine photographs of men and vehicles in barracks, but none in the field. One senses, reading the book, that as the visit progressed the author experienced that growing frustration which gnaws at Westerners who see their plans frustrated by their hosts.

The reviewer is forced to add that, the spectacular cover apart, the author does not seem to have been particularly well-served by his publishers in the matter of design. The photographs are not used with the flair which made the Foreign Legion title so attractive. The text sits safely in a one-column layout with captions in the margin; there are only two double-page spreads in the book, and both of these are cluttered by text or inset pictures.

These reservations apart, the reviewer recommends 'The Dragon's Teeth' not only to the military enthusiast, but also to more generally Sinophile readers. The PLA has dominated Chinese life for over 40 years; and to fail to study it is to neglect a vital part of that nation's recent history. This book is a unique insight into a vast organisation, putting a human face on what history has always dismissed as a 'horde'.

EWFF



Above:
Self-portrait of William Payne, 1st
Foot Guards, 1814-15. (Courtesy
John Hall)

Left:
Possible recruiting favour pre-
served in the John Biddle
collection.

Right:
John Biddle's colour-sergeant's
sleeve badge — light company,
2nd Bn., 2nd Foot Guards.
140mm by 78mm.

