

## Three Scottish Soldiers

On 1 June 1987 two new permanent galleries were opened as part of an expansion of the Scottish United Services Museum, Scotland's National Museum of the Armed Services in Edinburgh Castle. Situated in a prominent 19th-century building overlooking Princes Street, originally built as the garrison hospital in the 1890s, the galleries are the first addition to the SUSM since the 1950s.

**The Story of the Scottish Soldier 1600-1914** is the title of the exhibition which occupies the two main galleries. Smaller areas are to be used for specialist displays; and an exhibition dealing with the history of military music is planned for this year.

In the past the military history of Scotland has been told mostly through the various regiments which have become household names not only in Scotland but throughout the world; this was certainly the case in the existing galleries in the SUSM. It was felt that the time had come for a broad-ranging history of the Scottish soldier. The SUSM, with its unique collection combined with an incomparable site — the Castle is the most visited Ancient Monument in Scotland — was ideal for this purpose. The exhibition which has resulted looks at most aspects of the Scottish soldier from 17th-century mercenaries to 19th-century Rifle Volunteers, and ends with the outbreak of the Great War. It is planned to continue the story in a further exhibition in the near future.

To act as a focal point, the exhibition includes 21 full-length figures each dressed in a complete uniform from the museum's large collection. The lifelike figures have wax hands, and heads with glass eyes and even human hair. Each has a distinctive face, based where possible on an actual likeness of the original wearer of the uniform.

Because many of the

uniforms belonged to one individual, and have survived almost complete, it has been possible to give an identity to many of the figures and to

present information on their lives and careers.

One drawback inseparable from this approach is that 19 of the 21 figures are dressed in officers' uniforms. Because an officer had to buy his uniforms they remained his property after retirement or death; and, being of little practical use to a civilian, they were sometimes packed away in a trunk, often with a healthy amount of camphor, and stored in an attic, to be discovered intact by future genera-

tions. Any deficiencies in the surviving costumes used in the Edinburgh exhibition have been made up either with originals of the correct pattern or with specially-made and exact reproductions.

Other Ranks' uniforms, on the other hand, were either handed in upon discharge, or worn until they fell apart; the discharged soldier was often compelled by circumstances to wear whatever he could. Out-of-date or worn-out OR's uniform items were sometimes cut up to make fatigue clothing, and eventually, cleaning rags. Little now survives from any period; it is, for instance, a scandalous thought that to the best of our knowledge no single example of the uniform coat of an Other Rank of a British Guards or Line Infantry regiment of the Napoleonic period now survives in any published collection in the United Kingdom.

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Starting in the next issue of *MP*, **Allan L. Carswell**, a Museum Assistant at the SUSM, will contribute an occasional series of three articles which examine in detail three of the figures in the exhibition. These will be Lt. Col. John Dalgleish of the 21st Regiment of Foot (Royal North British Fusiliers), 1797, two of whose uniforms survive, spanning the 1780s and 1790s; a private of the 93rd (Highland) Regiment of about 1854; and Capt. Frederick Phillips of the 2nd (Royal North British) Dragoons, also c.1854. The accompanying colour photograph, showing in detail the collar, lapel and epaulette of Lt. Col. Dalgleish's uniform of the 1790s, gives some idea of the superb quality of the surviving uniforms which we shall be illustrating, wherever possible in colour.

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# Lt. Col. John Dalgleish, 21st Regiment of Foot, 1797

ALLAN CARSWELL

The uniforms of Lt. Col. Dalgleish now form part of the collections of the Scottish United Services Museum, Edinburgh Castle; and a tableau depicting him as he may have appeared while on recruiting duty in 1797 is included in the SUSM's major exhibition 'The Story of the Scottish Soldier 1600-1914', mentioned in 'MP' No. 15.

As John Dalgleish sat in his Spartan inn lodgings in the small town of Paisley, south of Glasgow, on a cold

The figure representing John Dalgleish in the SUSM exhibition, showing him as he might have appeared in his quarters at Paisley's Abertorn Inn in January 1797. He wears smallclothes: shirt, breeches and waistcoat. The waistcoat and regimental coat showed a frill of the shirt at the neck; new officers were recommended to buy 24 shirts. Dalgleish's waistcoat is made of white cassimere, a twilled woollen cloth; it is single-breasted, with small, gilt, cast regimental buttons bearing '21', a thistle and a crown within a foliate border — see colour photographs. The skirts are cut square at the front, and do not taper away as one might expect.

The breeches are of the same material; the trap fly is secured by two large gilt buttons, and the vent at the bottom of each leg, outside the knee, is closed by five small gilt regimental buttons, with a buckle below the knee. White leather breeches would also have been worn on some occasions. Black cloth gaiters and half-boots, or top-boots, would normally have been worn, though stockings and shoes would not be unusual when parading with troops. A black silk stock or black cravat was worn at the neck over the shirt; and a crimson silk net sash over the waistcoat, knotted at the left waist.

Officers' hair dressing depended on the headdress being worn. With the dress fur cap the long back hair was plaited and tied with a ribbon, then fixed up the back of the head with a comb. For everyday wear the hair was either clubbed (the long hair gathered round a pad in the back of the neck, and tied with a ribbon with a black leather rosette attached); or worn in a queue — as here — like a pigtail wrapped round with a black ribbon decorated with the leather rosette. The hair was cut every month by the regimental barber, and was to be well filled with powder and pomatum — hair ointment originally made from apple juice.

<sup>10</sup> Superior numbers refer to the notes at the end of this article.

January evening in 1797, he may well have reflected upon his life and career as an officer in the King's army. He was 42 years of age: a man — by all accounts — of frugal tastes, through necessity if not through inclination, after serving for 20 years in the same regiment.

At this moment in his life he was in command, albeit temporarily, with the rank of lieutenant-colonel of his regiment; and was busily recruiting men to take the places of the hundreds who had died during the 21st's most recent campaign in the West Indies. The deaths of many officers senior to Dalgleish had contributed in large part to his present position. Dalgleish was one of hundreds of Army officers whose lack of wealth or influence doomed them to responsibility for the mundane day-to-day running of their regiments; frequently passed over, they had little hope of promotion or recognition except by the death of comrades.

## DUTCH SERVICE

John was born in 1755, the third son of a minor landed family, the Dalgleishes of Westgrange in the county of Fife. As the third of five children he would have to make his own way in the world; and like many of his class and county (including his younger brother), it was decided that he would become a soldier. Having neither the money nor the influence to acquire an ensign's commission in the British Army of the day, John Dalgleish was commissioned at the age of 19 as *Vaandrig*

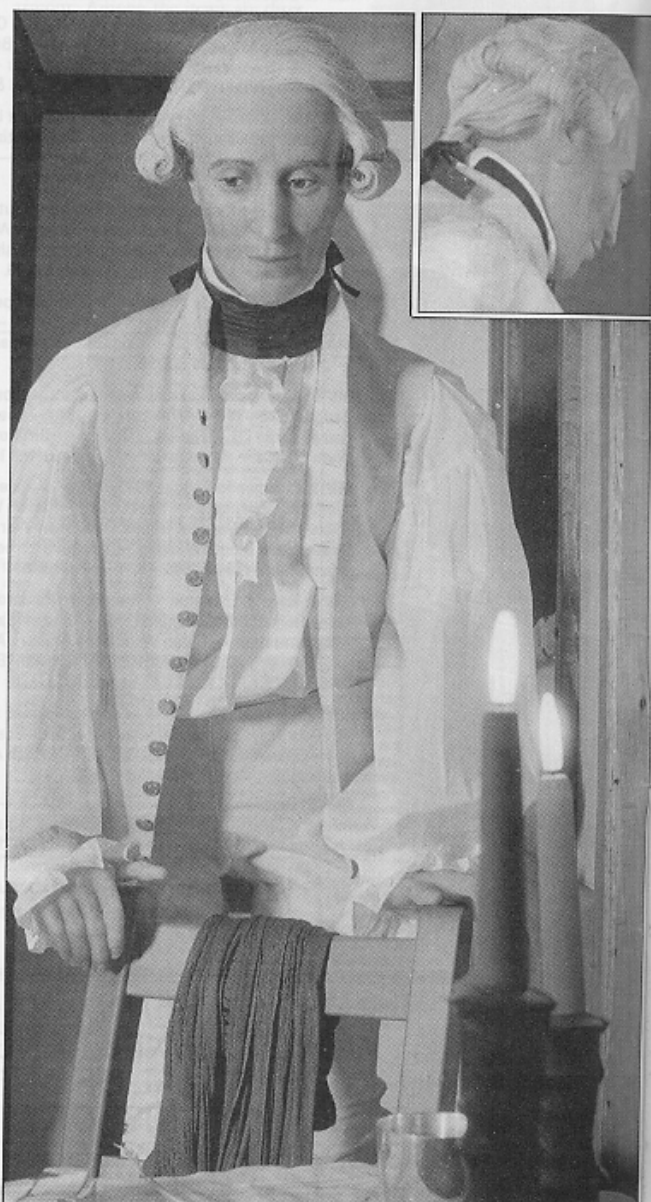
(ensign) in the 2nd Battalion of McKay's Regiment, part of the Scots Brigade in the service of the Dutch — a force of three two-battalion regiments originally recruited and officered entirely from Scotland. By 1774, however, the heavy recruitment of Scots for British regiments during the Seven Years War had much diluted the Brigade's national character, though the officers continued to be Scottish.

served for two years in the Brigade, whose main function was to garrison a series of fortified towns known as the 'Barrier of the Dutch'<sup>11</sup>. This duty cannot have been either particularly exciting or — since Dutch sympathies lay firmly with the Americans in the forthcoming conflict — particularly congenial.

## THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

The young Dalgleish

In spring 1776 Dalgleish had a



stroke of good fortune, and managed to obtain an ensign's commission in the 21st Regiment of Foot, The Royal North British Fusiliers, then under orders to sail for North America to help put down the rebellious colonists. The following year saw the 21st taking part in Burgoyne's expedition down the Hudson, ending with defeat at Saratoga at the hands of Maj. Gens. Horatio Gates and Benedict Arnold. The 21st suffered heavily during the long march and in the final confrontation. Cut off and outnumbered, Burgoyne was forced to surrender.

The offered terms were honourable, the British troops being granted repatriation on condition they never returned to America. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Congress failed to ratify these terms: the captured officers were to be exchanged for Americans of equal rank, while the rank and file were to be kept as prisoners of war. John Dalgleish remained a prisoner at Charlottesville, Virginia until 1780; of the 200-odd men of his regiment who surrendered at Saratoga, nothing more was ever heard. Back in Scotland Dalgleish and his brother officers began to rebuild their destroyed regiment.

### IRELAND, CANADA, & THE WEST INDIES

Back to strength in 1782 after recruiting around Dalgleish's home county of Fife, the 21st was sent to Ireland, where it remained for six quiet years — although Dalgleish complains in his diary of the expense of living in Dublin<sup>(2)</sup>. A sharp contrast to this fashionable society was provided by the next posting, to Nova Scotia. The prospect of the fogs and chills of the Canadian Maritimes persuaded several officers to sell their commissions and purchase others in regiments based in more comfortable surroundings. This expensive option was, of course, not open to John Dalgleish, who remained with the 21st, and was promoted captain in August 1789.



*Caricature of a recruiting party of the 1790s, showing a grenadier or Fusilier officer with the usual accompanying drummer and fife. The contemporary popular image of typical Army recruits is vividly conveyed.*

After four inactive years in Canada the regiment embarked, on the outbreak of war with France in April 1793, for Barbados. During the disastrous campaign against the French-held islands of the West Indies the 21st took part in the unsuccessful attempt on Martinique; then landed on Antigua, where they fell prey to the yellow fever which at that time made the West Indies one huge graveyard for British soldiers. By the end of 1793 the regiment had lost nine officers and 94 rank and file to the disease; Dalgleish contracted it, but survived, to find himself the senior surviving captain in the regiment.

In 1794, reinforced by drafts from other units, the 21st once again formed part of a force flung against Martinique; this time the attack succeeded, and the expedition went on to capture St. Lucia and Guadeloupe. Trying to hold the islands in the face of disease, native revolts and French counter-invasions was a different and costly matter. By 1796 the 21st was again in a low state, split up between various islands and worn down by sickness. For most of this period Dalgleish

acted as commanding officer, yet still only with the rank of captain. Eventually many of the able-bodied men were transferred to other units and the remnant of the regiment was sent home, after three years of appalling hardship suffered in a campaign since judged an expensive and unnecessary disaster.

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And so we return to John Dalgleish in his chilly room in the Abercorn Inn in Paisley in January 1797, rebuilding a shattered regiment for the second time in his career. Of the 31 officers who had sailed for Canada eight years before, only he and six others remained with the 21st. Dalgleish had finally been promoted major in September 1795, and to lieutenant-colonel the following year. Now he was acting commanding officer as the 21st recruited in Scotland; the senior lieutenant-colonel was arranging for new uniforms and equipment to be sent north from London.

### PROMOTION AND RECRUITING

It had taken Dalgleish 20 years to reach this position, and many men of his means would have regarded him as

fortunate. Unable to buy himself up the ladder of promotion, he had had the luck to survive a terribly costly campaign, advancing without purchase and purely by seniority. The subalterns' toast to 'a bloody war and a sickly season' was all too understandable.

For those with wealth and connections the story could be very different. In the 1780s it was feasible for a wealthy man to advance from ensign to lieutenant-colonel in the space of three weeks, without serving a single day with any regiment<sup>(3)</sup>. Although attempts were made to regulate the prices of commissions, they were nearly always sold through special brokers for the highest price available. The system was open to the most flagrant abuses, and schoolboys could be bought commissions over the heads of experienced junior officers.

Another means of achieving promotion was the system of 'raising for rank'. Whenever the army needed building up quickly the government would offer commissions to anyone who would undertake to recruit an independent company, which would then be drafted into an existing battalion — thereby putting a totally inexperienced captain above the battalion's serving ensigns and lieutenants. The shortcomings of this method were displayed during the Duke of York's disastrous Flanders campaign of 1793, when many of these companies were found to contain nothing but untrained boys and old men enlisted by unscrupulous and self-seeking officers. The inadequacy of most of the senior regimental officers who had purchased their commissions was also starkly revealed during this campaign. A letter from the Duke's Adjutant General described the pitiful



condition of the officer corps:

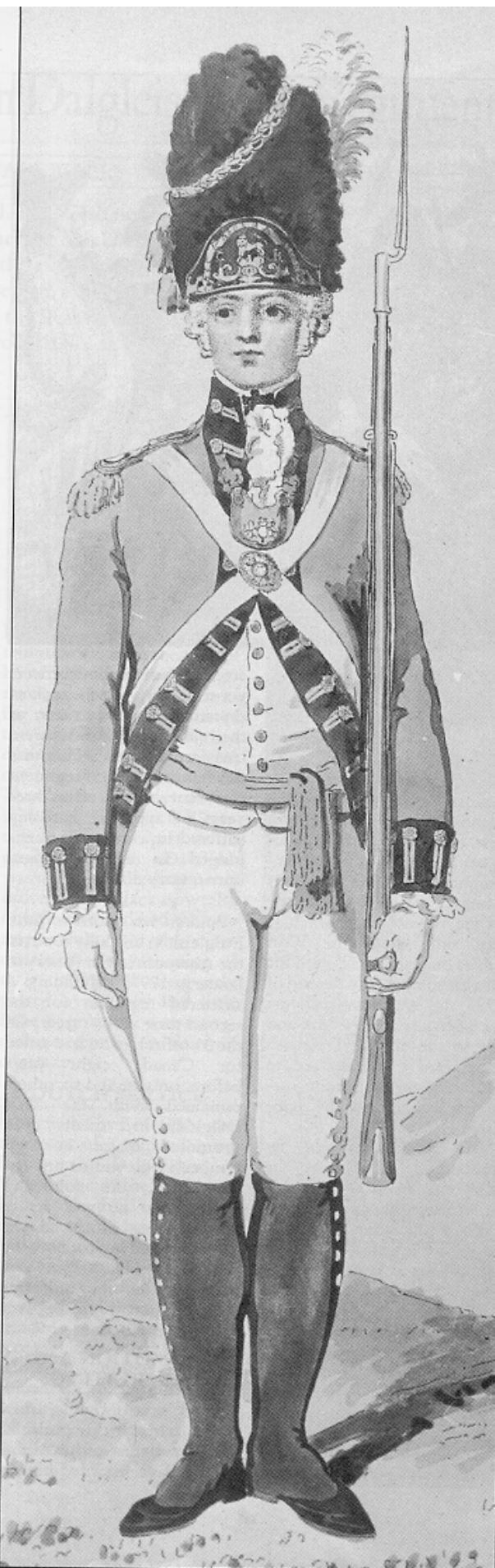
'There is not a young man in the Army that cares one farthing whether his commanding officer, the brigadier or the commander-in-chief approves his conduct or not. His promotion depends not on their smiles or frowns. His friends can give

*Officer of the 7th Regiment of Foot (Royal Fusiliers), 1792: engraving after a watercolour by Edward Dayes. The 21st would have worn very similar uniform.*

Until 1792 officers of Fusilier regiments still carried the fusil, a light musket favoured in the 1770s by infantry officers in place of the unwieldy spontoon or half-pike. This latter was abolished in 1786 and the first official instruction was issued for officers to carry swords alone; as stated, Fusilier officers only complied in 1792. The sword, with a straight 32in. blade, was to have a hilt of unspecified design in either gilt or silver, according to the regiment's button colour. Officers' swords within one regiment were to be uniform; and in practice many units adopted the 'five ball' hilt, a plain design identified by five joined balls incorporated into the knucklebow and side ring. It is not known exactly what hilt was favoured in the 21st. A crimson and gold sword knot would be worn.

The sword was carried in a scabbard through a frog in the whitened buff-leather sword belt worn over the right shoulder and fastened with an oval copper-gilt plate engraved with a crowned thistle device surrounded by the motto *Nemo Me Impune Lacessit* and the number 'XXI'. When on duty an officer would wear the belt over the coat, when off duty, under the coat.

The other mark of an officer on duty was the gorget, suspended on ribbons with rosettes, usually in regimental facing colour, either from the collar buttons or the top lapel buttons<sup>20</sup>. Between 1768 and 1796 the gorget bore the Royal Arms and regimental number, plus any other devices the regiment were entitled to wear but, as in all such questions, individual regiments and colonels indulged themselves in unauthorised embellishments. During this period, too, the gorget metal matched the regiment's buttons and lace. In 1796 a new universal pattern was introduced in copper-gilt, bearing the Royal Cypher and crown. The only 21st Regiment gorget in the SUSM bears the Royal Arms and regimental title and number — but it is made in silver, not used by the 21st for their lace since much earlier in the century, when gorgets were of a different design. Whether this particular example had been gilded at one time, or whether the 21st wore silver gorgets as some unauthorised regimental idiosyncrasy, is not known (National Army Museum, London)



him a thousand pounds with which to go to the auction rooms in Charles Street, and in a fortnight he becomes a captain. Out of fifteen regiments of cavalry and twenty-six of infantry which we have here, twenty-one are commanded literally by boys or idiots'<sup>4</sup>.

By the late 1790s the position had improved following a series of reforms instituted by the Duke of York as Commander-in-Chief. A mandatory period of service was required in each rank prior to promotion; a minimum age of 16 was set for officers; and a Royal Military College was founded. Despite these improvements the officer corps was still dominated by privilege and wealth. For men like John Dalgleish the system offered a hard, monotonous life spent often in unpleasant and unhealthy postings, for little reward or recognition.

#### Filling the ranks

When the 21st returned from the West Indies in 1796 it was a regiment in name only; Dalgleish and his officers faced the daunting task of recruiting and training a whole new unit, the establishment of which had just been raised to 1,000 men. It took over four years to fill the ranks, and this was only achieved by taking volunteers from the various Fencible units, and by recruiting while stationed in Ireland<sup>5</sup>. The Fencibles were at least partially trained; and Ireland had become a vast pool of potential recruits since the easing of restrictions on Roman Catholics serving in the ranks of the Army in the early 1780s.

While Dalgleish was at Paisley in winter 1796/97 recruiting parties were despatched throughout central Scotland, each consisting of an officer, several sergeants, and usually a drummer. They enlisted from the social groups who had always filled the army: farm labourers unemployed following the harvest, unskilled workers, petty criminals, and the occasional adven-

turer. At this time the only qualifications required of a recruit were a minimum height of 5ft 6in; that he 'have no rupture' nor 'be troubled with fits' or any other lameness; that he not be an apprentice, or serving with the Militia. In peacetime the army would gladly take anyone outside these categories; in wartime, even these restrictions could be waived.

Enlistment was generally for life, but in wartime a limited period of service was introduced, along with a more attractive bounty. Conditions and pay were poor; the daily wage of a soldier was increased from 8d to a shilling in the 1790s, but various deductions for food and 'necessaries' were made from this. While rations were basic in the extreme, and irregular when on campaign, at least enlistment normally guaranteed a full belly, and this alone would have been a sufficient inducement for many. Brutal discipline, inadequate medical services, scant attention to hygiene, a monotonous daily round in peacetime and the very real risk of death or mutilation on active service, without even the assurance of a pension for the turned-off wounded — these factors add up to an existence harsh enough in 20th-century eyes to justify the soldier's almost universal recourse to the bottle. The fact remains, however, that given the social backgrounds of many of the men who volunteered to serve in the late 18th century, army life must have had its comparative attractions.

### THE UNIFORMS

The figure in the SUSM exhibition which represents John Dalgleish in his inn room is dressed in surviving clothing presented to the Museum in 1949 by his descendants; the gift consisted of two regimental coats, a pair of breeches, and a waistcoat, all in excellent condition.

As a senior officer in a Fuzileer regiment in the 1790s, Dalgleish would wear a uniform based on that prescribed in the 1768 Clothing

Warrant and its subsequent amendments<sup>(6)</sup>. It would, of course, have been personally ordered and paid for. There are no known surviving illustrations of the 21st Fuzileers from this period; but one of a superb series of engravings after the watercolours of Edward Dayes, draughtsman to the Duke of York, shows an officer of the 7th Foot (Royal Fuzileers) in 1792. Although a little earlier than the Dalgleish figure, its main difference lies in the fact that the Dayes figure is still carrying the fuzil, bayonet and cartridge pouch then the personal armament of all Fuzileer officers; they were replaced in that year by the sword for all occasions.



#### Above:

Rear of the coat worn by John Dalgleish, c.1790.



#### Left:

Rear of the coat worn by John Dalgleish, c.1780.

### Headgear

Fuzileer officers wore three different forms of headdress. For full parades the Fuzileer cap was worn: a black bearskin cap with a blackened metal front plate bearing the King's crest and the motto *Nec Aspera Terrent* picked out in gilt, with gold cords and tassels, and a white feather plume on the left side. This cap was very similar to that then worn by grenadiers except in lacking the small rear grenade badge, and in being slightly shorter than the





*Front view, and detail of epaulette, cuff, and turnback ornament, of the coat worn by John Dalgleish, c.1780.*

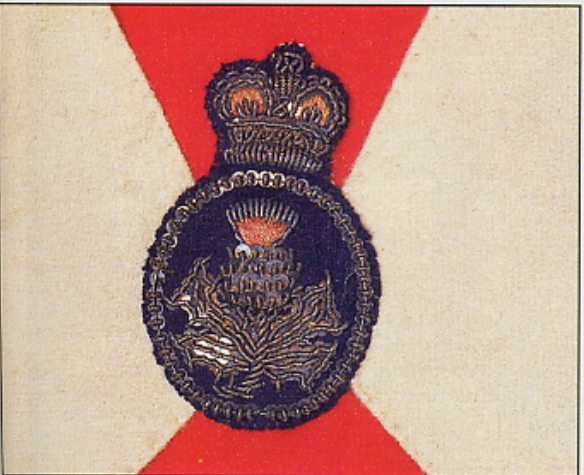
12in. height of the grenadier type. It would appear that this fur cap was kept very much as a full dress item (probably due to the expense of replacing it).

For everyday wear the 'cocked' felt bicorne was worn. This had a gold lace loop, regimental button, and a black cockade, with the distinctive white hackle of the Fuzileers and grenadiers.

There is also evidence that

Fuzileer regiments wore what is referred to as a 'helmet' with a white feather hackle. This would seem to have been of similar appearance to the 'Tarleton' helmet worn by light dragoons, horse artillery, and some light infantry regiments. The 7th Foot (Royal Fuzileers) were certainly wearing such a helmet in about 1788, and mention is made of an officer requiring a helmet in the regimental





*Front view, and detail of epaulette, cuff, and turnback ornament, of the coat worn by John Dalgleish, c.1790.*

standing orders of 1798<sup>70</sup>. Whether the 21st wore such helmets is not known.

#### **Regimental coat**

This was the most expensive part of the uniform, and an officer would be expected to own two. Dalgleish certainly had two: both have survived, though they were obviously made at different dates. Both follow the 1768 Warrant except in having upright col-

lars rather than the buttoned-down type stipulated in those regulations. They are made from scarlet superfine woolen cloth, with cuffs, collars, and waist-length lapels in the regimental facing colour of dark blue. The body lining is of white shalloon, a lightweight worsted fabric; the sleeves are lined with a linen flax, and the coat-tail turnbacks with white cassimere.



Quartermaster Taylor of the 7th Foot (Royal Fusiliers), 1788: note the headgear. (From John Kays, *A Series of Original Portraits*)

The main datable differences between the two coats lie in the epaulettes, and the button loop decorations. The earlier coat has the usual two epaulettes worn by Fusileer officers of all ranks<sup>(8)</sup>, but of the design without the crescent above the fringe, and with the strap of facing colour embroidered with gold thread — a typical design of the 1780s. The button loops (ten in pairs on each lapel; one on each collar; and four in pairs on each cuff) are of gold thread embroidery, square-ended, 2½in. long on the lapels. On the rear of the coat are two tail pockets with three-pointed flaps each decorated with four false button loops of the same gold wire embroidery, corresponding to four gilt-covered bone buttons of the same design as those on the lapels, collar and cuffs. Between the pocket flaps are two buttons and four more embroidered loops; and two embroidered thistle devices decorate the points where the tail turnbacks meet.

The second coat follows much the same pattern, except that the button loops have now changed to applied gold lace rather than embroidery<sup>(9)</sup>. The lapels are a little fuller. The design of the epaulettes is now that of the 1790s: a solid strap of gold lace with a crescent of gold embroidery and spangles, and an applied crowned thistle badge at the end of the strap, above a gold bullion and thread fringe. The same badge is also used on the tail turnbacks.

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John Dalgleish was not an exceptional soldier, neither was his career particularly remarkable — which is what makes him important as an exemplar. For every famous personality of the period there were hundreds like Dalgleish: ordinary men who looked on the Army as their

career, and had long experience of its stupidities, inadequacies and injustices. Left to try to run their regiments as best they could, they saw themselves trampled by privileged youths and wealthy fools, but lacked the independent means — and perhaps the radical temper — to challenge the system. Most were, after all, the deeply conservative products of a social background which regarded the challenging of traditional authority with distrust, if not horror.

It is well-documented that Scotland produced hundreds of such younger sons of the gentry, to whom the Army

offered the only secure future, albeit, in terms of rank and fortune, a distinctly modest one. Scotland's relative lack of wealth, relative isolation from the prosperous centre of the state, and long tradition of service in other peoples' armies reinforced this tendency.

In October 1797 John Dalgleish sold his commission and left the regiment he had served so long and faithfully — and the Army. It is pleasant to record that with the money he received for his hard-earned rank he married the daughter of a local Fife family in 1798, and settled down to father eight children.

On the deaths of his two elder brothers in 1811 he succeeded to the family estate; and died in 1829 at the respectable age of 74.

In late 1797 Dalgleish's successor as lieutenant-colonel of the 21st Foot (Royal North British Fusiliers) arrived in Scotland to join the regiment. Lord Evelyn Stuart, formerly of the 1st Regiment of Foot Guards, was then 24 years old. M

#### Notes

(1) This chain of fortified towns garrisoned by the Dutch beyond their own southern frontier in the then Austrian Netherlands, to act as a defence against French invasion, was fixed by treaty in 1715 as including Namur, Tournai, Menin, Fumes, Warneton, Ypres, Knocke and Dendermonde (a shared garrison). The Scots were thought better suited than Dutch troops for the sensitive duty of garrisoning towns well within a foreign, and Catholic, state. (*Papers Illustrating the History of the Scots Brigade in the Service of the United Netherlands 1572-1782, Vol. II*, ed. James Ferguson (Edinburgh, 1899) pp.109-111.

(2) An Inspection Return dated 24 July 1787 at Dublin describes the 21st as a 'Very showy, good regiment'. *British Military Uniforms 1768-96*, Hew Strachan (London 1975), p.215.

(3) *The Purchase System in the British Army 1660-1871*, Anthony Bruce (London 1980), p.38.

(4) Quoted in *The Story of Sandhurst*, Hugh Thomas (London 1961), p.20.

(5) Fencible regiments were units of infantry and cavalry raised at various times of national emergency during the second half of the 18th century, mainly in Scotland. Full-time home defence troops, they enlisted for a limited period for service restricted to within the British Isles. All were disbanded after the Peace of Amiens, 1802.

(6) As Dalgleish left the Army in 1797 his uniform was unaffected by the new regulations issued in 1796-97, which made major changes to the infantry officer's clothing and equipment.

(7) *Standing Orders of the Royal Fusiliers, 1798* ed. Percy Sumner, *JSAHR*, Vol.27, p.120.

(8) The practice of Fusileer officers wearing two epaulettes arose from their requiring two crossbelts, since they alone carried the cartridge box and bayonet.

(9) The change from embroidered loops to applied lace would usually have been made at the behest of the Regimental Colonel. Gen. James Inglis Hamilton, colonel of the 21st from 1794, may have been responsible.

(10) Mounted officers within a regiment, e.g. the adjutant and the field officers (such as Dalgleish) would not wear a gorget. *Infantry Clothing Regulations, 1802*, W.Y. Carman, *JSAHR*, Vol.19, p.211.