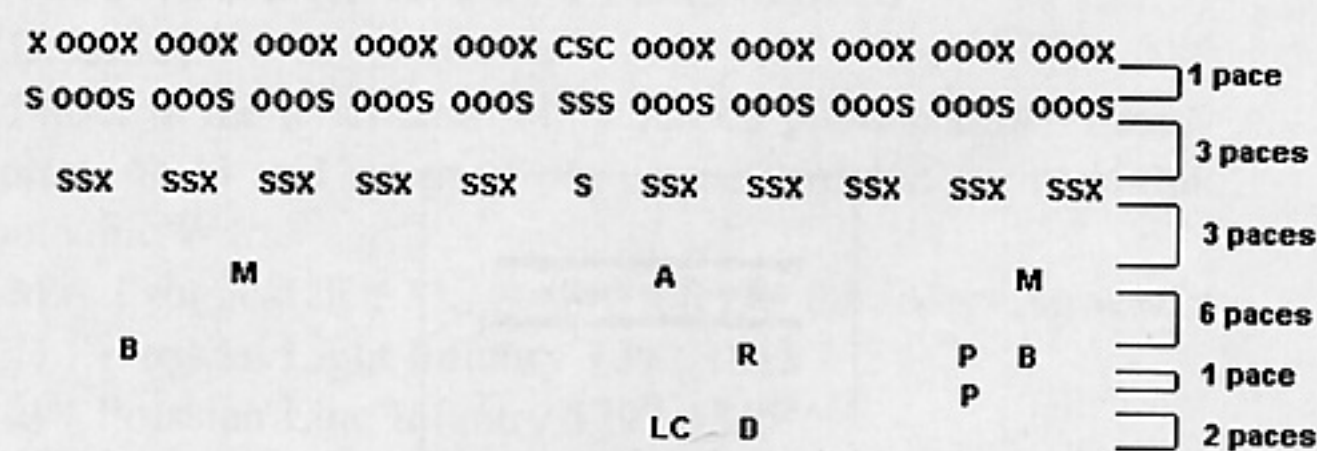


Whilst on this tack, and because I want to use the facts later in this article I would mention the depth of a line formation.

“Field Exercise” page 126 gives the following depths in line:-



R = 10? Regimental Musicians. C = Colour Ensigns

3. B. Fosten shows the front rank as number 1 platoon and the second as number 2 platoon in each company.

The proportion of the depth to the frontage of a company is thus 2.4:1 at full strength. This is an important ratio when trying to portray columns using figures on a war game table. All too often the size of the figure base means that the depth of a company is too deep in true scale. This means that one seldom is able to arrange figures to differentiate between quite important tactical formations such as Column of March, Open Column of Companies, Close Column of Companies, and Quarter Column. What you see is not what you get! All Columns look as if they are in Close Order, yet take up the space on the table of an Open column.

For the uninitiated I should explain that in Close Column the intervals between each company and the one behind are 3 paces. In Open column the intervals between companies are the same as a company frontage i.e 32.4 yards. In Quarter Column the intervals are a quarter of a company frontage - say 8 yards. This last formation is the one from which it is quickest to form square as the table below taken from Tactics

and Grand Tactics of the Napoleonic Wars by George Jeffrey shows:-

FORMATION		Time to Nearest Minute			
		Drill System			
		French		Prussian	
		No. of Companies			
		4	6	4	6
Open Column of Companies	Line facing Left	6	8	8	11
Open Column of Companies	Line facing Right	11	17	14	21
Open Column of Companies	Line facing Front	2	2	9	12
Open Column of Divisions	Line facing Front	3	5	-	-
Open Column of Divisions	Hollow Square	4	6	4	6
Close Order Line	Hollow Square	3	4	4	5
Quarter Column	Hollow Square	1	2	1	2
AVERAGE		4	6	6	8

The British had ten companies per line battalion throughout the period, but almost always used Dundas' variant of the Prussian Drill system. Later in the Peninsular War they formed Line Facing Right in the same manner as Facing Left thus saving time. They had ceased to worry about always having the Grenadier Company on the right. Because of the high standard of drill they used Half Column and Quarter Column more often than other armies.

The Russians had four companies per battalion throughout the period. The establishment of their companies appears to be stronger than the French. They stayed with Prussian drill.

It is interesting to note the usage of the same word - division - to describe different formations. It's grand tactical

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IN-FORMATION

Charles Reavley, U.K.

I have long contended that most sets of wargame rules overstate the frontage that a unit occupies relative to its strength. This occurs for two reasons - first because too much space is allowed per individual - and secondly because the supernumeraries are not deducted from the unit strength to arrive at the number left in the two or three remaining ranks.

The point is important tactically because when simulating what actually happened in a historical battle too often troops take up more scale space on the wargame table than they really occupied in the engagement being simulated. The result is that flanks are not open in the way they should be and were. In addition if one accepts the shorter frontages postulated below then changing formation would take less time.

Commencing with the British Army. Dundas 2nd Edition 1792 gives a frontage per man of 22 inches. The possibility of infantry being able to move and fire in this limited space has often been disputed in my presence. However, even today, I, reasonably broad across the shoulders and just under six feet tall, can fit into this space I see no reason why people dispute this measurement. Bear in mind too that in the Napoleonic period the average height of a ranker was 5 feet 6 inches. As the poor and undernourished made up the bulk of private soldiers one assumes they were also proportionately less broad than us. Placing one foot and one's shoulder forward it is relatively easy to load and fire in the space of 22 inches. RSM Nesbitt now at Sandhurst only allows 24 inches per cadet in a drill style that permits swinging of the arms and much more freedom in movement than was the case in the period under review.

As an example, a British Guards Company in the early 1800's had 111 all ranks on establishment, with 7 supernumeraries, giving a frontage of 32.4 yards.

The French 1791 Regulation on page 46 has the instructor place the troops elbow to elbow, although page 11 talks of two paces from man to man.

A French infantry company, post 18 Feb 1808, had an establishment of 140 all ranks. Deducting 10 supernumeraries this would give a front rank of 44 plus the company commander who stood on the right. 45 x 25 1/2 inches (two French paces according to George Jeffrey in "Tactics and Grand Tactics of the Napoleonic Wars") gives a maximum frontage of 31.87 yards - say 32.

A French "division" of two companies would therefore occupy a frontage of 64 yards. This is only 85% of the 75 yards given by Chandler and Haythornthwaite, and obviously makes a deal of difference to the layout of one's troops on the war game table.

I am not clear as to the allowance made by the Prussian 1812 Regulation but would imagine this would be similar to the French on which it was apparently based. This poses a problem as to why von Reisswitz' rules use 2 1/2 feet (30 inches) per man. Possibly because the writer was an artilleryman, and writing well after 1815?

I do appreciate that troops seldom, if ever, fought at establishment strengths, but the points made above are still

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pertinent for formed infantry. If they are weaker in strength their frontage will be proportionately smaller. Close Order drill was important, not only in instilling discipline and the rapid reaction of a soldier to his officers command, but because a shoulder to shoulder formation, preferably in square, was the foot soldiers only real defence against cavalry. A loose order would have been fatal in the days when the musket's range and rate of fire was insufficient to repel cavalry.

Even the Guards skirmishers at Quatre Bras suffered grievous casualties when caught in loose order and flanked by French cavalry.

I started by quoting from Dundas. His drill book was still based on a three rank line, but by the time of the Peninsular War, which is where most British troops will appear in simulations on a war game table, fighting formations were based on two ranks.

This was not formally acknowledged by the War Office until they produced "Field Exercise and Evolutions of the Army" in 1833. The French were similarly lax, not producing a new drill book until 1831 which even then stuck to three ranks as a standard line infantry formation.

"Field Exercise" on the subject of the Formation of a Battalion (p125) states "When companies join and the battalion is formed, there is to be no interval between any of them, grenadier, light company, or other; but every part of the front of the battalion should be equally strong. Each company which makes part of the same line, and is to act in it, must be formed and arranged in the same manner." I quote this because it has been argued that the intervals between platoons and companies account for the 15% discrepancy I mentioned

usage is of a formation containing two or more brigades. But it's tactical usage differs. In Britain the word division and company were used to describe the same sub unit. Thus a column of divisions was a column of companies, whilst a column of Grand divisions was used to describe a two company frontage. In France a Column of Divisions was a battalion on a two company frontage.

Now having laid out the facts on which I base my thesis let us have a look at some commercial war game rule frontages:-

A Comparison of Battalion frontages in yards.

	British	% too large	French	% too large.
In thesis	326	-	193	-
Chandler	343	5.2	225	16.6
Newbury 1981	358	9.8	263	36.3
Sound of the				
Guns II	358	9.8	263	36.3
Empire III	370	13.5	210	8.8
WRG 1685 -				
1845. (1979)	333	2.1	200	3.6

I have always been interested in minor tactics and in the appearance and ready recognition of troops on the table. Even in 15mm the depth of the figure is too great. I therefore followed on logically from the above data and moved down in scale to 6mm.

I even tried 2mm but they do not meet my criteria for the spectacle of a Napoleonic war game. With a little practice one can get a considerable amount of detail on these small figures.

What is more one can even use blocks (Such as Eagle Six sold by First Empire) that portray, within the scale depths I have quoted, sub units in two or three ranks. Units on the same side can be differentiated by the use of Standards and different shades of green and earth for bases, as well as different coloured shako covers and trousers. This looks very "Korrekt" on one's realistically modelled terrain and helps the "Suspension of Disbelief". What you see is certainly what you get.

So my recommendation is that you move down to the SIXMIL scale. Stay with a 1 inch equals 25 yards (1:900) ground scale and learn to handle troops in real tactical formations.

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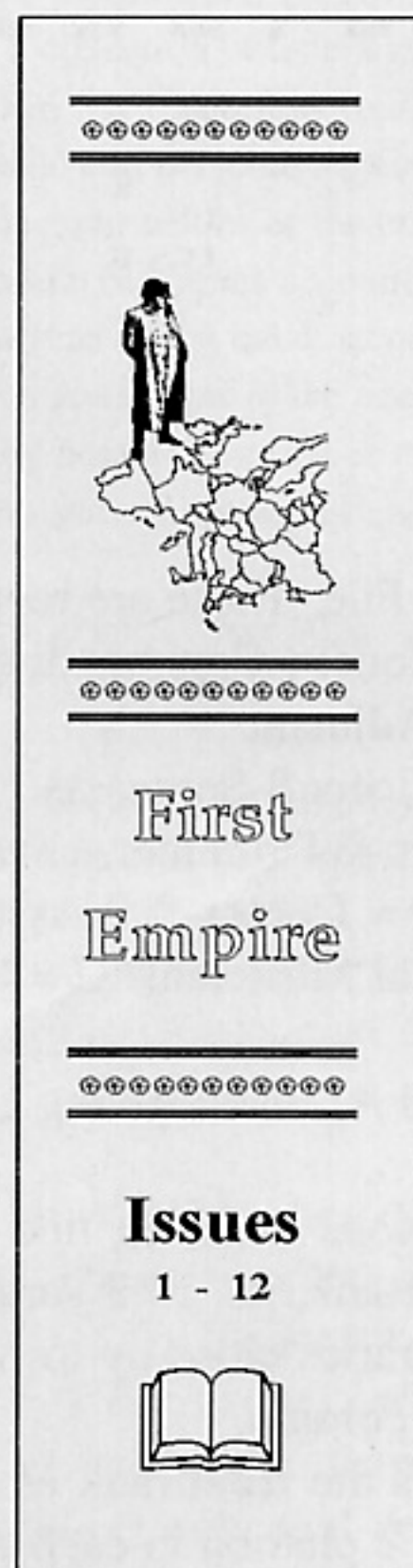
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