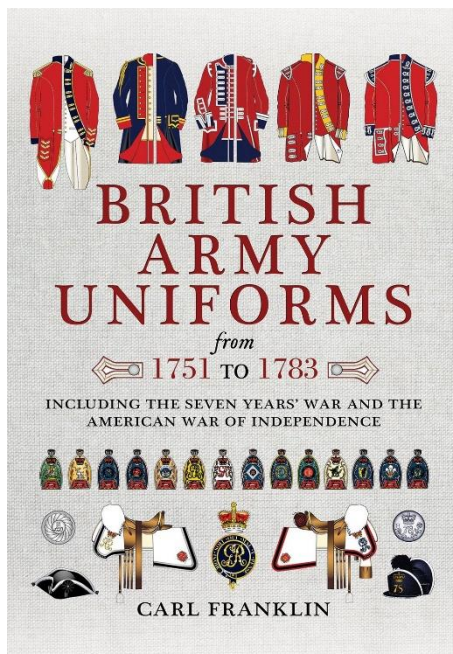


British Army Uniforms from 1751 to 1783

By Carl Franklin

Review by Rob Morgan

Focused on one of the more interesting periods in British colonial warfare, this lavish paperback by Carl Franklin (Pen & Sword £19.99) is at first sight a gold mine of information. This is the book to own if you are researching the uniforms of British infantry regiments and cavalry in the Seven Years War and the American Revolution. It is sumptuous, and probably the best illustrated and best art work I've seen on any relatively short period of British military history.



Given the modern interest in wargaming with larger figures, 28mm, and even 54mm, and the often observed return to the kind of wargaming which used to be called 'toy soldier' (heresy!) this book can be invaluable. Less so, regrettably for the 15mm gamer, who can't achieve that level of painting detail.

The uniforms changed in detail over that short time, and the book is a truly competent display and examination of what must have been an expensive and unnecessary set of changes in 1768. While the range of headgear alone from mitre caps, fusilier and grenadier fur caps, to several very different versions of Light

Company caps to the attractive Tarletons worn by both sides in the American wars is astonishing. There is little uniform detail and embellishment that can't be found in these pages. I doubt if many skilled regimental historians would be able to find fault with Franklin's work. There are accounts of the variations in tartan, rather few at that time, though the Highland regiments are given much space; and the, no fewer than 33 facing colours used by the army, including some 11 variations of green.

Yet, the lack of variation in the cavalry units depicted, Household, Light and Heavy, seems remarkable. It's my own fault for thinking that the mid-1700s might have spawned regimental details on a par with General Bonaparte's pretty boys. These British horsemen clearly retained much of the sturdy and efficient look of Marlborough's time, which is refreshing to someone not well versed in the world of the cavalryman -- and makes them easier to paint of course. On the

whole, the army was a professionally outfitted force, in terms of Franklin's account. By the way, one single page in the volume, page 353, deals with a different, and vital regiment within the army, the Royal Artillery.

Some regiments of horse barely existed for any time at all, serving for only a few years. The 22nd and 23rd Light Dragoons were established in 1779, clad in deep green, a rare colour indeed for King George's men. They were disbanded by 1783. The 102nd Foot lasted only two years, being lost with its colours in battle at Bednore in India, and never reformed.

Despite the magnificence of uniforms covered, there are good and readable sections on weapons for both services, muskets, carbines, pistols, the array of swords carried, halberds and spontoons too. The book includes a 300-word glossary of terms which may not be familiar to the modern, or the former colony-situated reader. The references are thorough, including a favourite of mine, Lawson's 1941 account of uniforms of the British Army, as decent a book as this one, but sadly without any serious colour content. If this is your period this is your book.