Depesche

Uniforms and Armies of bygone days

Year 1 – No. 4

Contents

P.1	A Russian Corps at Borodino 1812	J. E. Koontz	
P.4	Magazine Roundup		
P.7	Small Ads		
P.8	Russian Guard Cossacks, 1812-1815	P. Courcelle	Colour Plate
P.13	Napoleon's Allies … The Royal Italian *Sapeur* Battalion, 1806-1807	J.-P. Perconte	Plates 1-3
P. 25	Events		
P.26	From the archive … *Sapeur* of the 1st French Light Infantry Regiment 1812	M Stein E. Wagner	Plate 4
P.29	Questions and Answers		
P.31	Table of Contents for the 1st Year		

Unless otherwise noted, the drawings which are distributed among the text are by L. Sergent, G. Bauer and J. Fey.

Editor

M. Stein

2011 translation: Justin Howard

Introduction

This issue concludes the first year of *Depesche* – a short, busy year; however a brief summary is worthwhile.
Prior to the first issue of *Depesche*, doubts were expressed from many sides, whether enough demand for a magazine with a limited subject area even existed – according to several older collectors, the Napoleonic era had already been "milked for all it's worth", i.e. expounded upon at sufficient length, that they instead prefer to concentrate on the "sparsely" documented era of Frederick the Great. That this ignorance and arrogance mostly leads to (voluntary?) isolation and thus blunts the eagerness of bright-eyed younger collectors, as a long term consequence even endangering the future of our hobby – or rather: passion? – seems to have escaped the notice of these gentlemen. A collection only "lives" when it is exposed to the outside world and the exchange of information and documentary material which is thereby permitted.
However, back to the original question – the large quantity of demand as well as the consistently positive feedback from home and abroad shows me that very many collectors are interested in the Napoleonic era after all. In the future, *Depesche* will therefore continue to focus exclusively on this period (1789-1815) and act as a meeting point for "open-minded" collectors.
Now to the question of quality. It is precisely the older collectors, with many years' experience of various publications, that take a very critical view. Many an ambitious project has begun with high qualitative aspirations and then fizzled out when these could not be maintained. This fate might also befall *Depesche*, however I hope to be able to sustain the high quality of the articles provided so far.
The way illustrations are presented is also a decisive factor, and one which *Depesche* more than satisfactorily achieves. The crowning glory in the current issue is the colour plate by Patrice Courcelle, who together with Michel Pétard belongs to the best uniform illustrators and painters of the younger generation.
I would like to conclude by mentioning two new sections, and in so doing request your assistance. The first of these is the "Magazine Roundup", in which readers can review other magazines in a comparable manner. The Magazine Roundup should appear consecutively in each issue of *Depesche* and provide the reader with an overview of current publications (and any "Napoleonic" articles they contain). In the second new section, "Events", readers can inform about exhibitions, events, etc. which may be of interest.
Here's to a second successful year of *Depesche*.

Markus Stein

A Russian Corps at Borodino 1812

Regular Infantry

The regular Russian infantry consisted of three types of regiments: the Grenadier regiments (gr'enad'ersk'ije polk'i), the actual Infantry regiments (p'exotnije polk'i) and the Jäger regiments (jeg'ersk'ije polk'i). Until 1810, the Infantry regiments were also designated as Musketeer regiments (mušk'et'orsk'ije polk'i).
Each one of these three types of regiment consisted of three battalions, with the 1st and 3rd battalions – the so-called field battalions – further divided into 4 companies each. The troops stationed in the regimental depot were grouped together into the 2nd battalion.
In common with all other armies of the time, the Russian companies also had distinct designations.
The four companies of a battalion were thus made up of one elite and three line companies. The line companies of the Grenadier, Infantry and Jäger regiments were designated as Fusilier company (fuz'il'ornije roti), Musketeer company (mušk'et'orsk'ije roti) and Jäger company (jeg'ersk'ije roti) respectively. The respective battalions (batal'oni) were also designated accordingly. Elite companies were always designated as Grenadier companies (gr'enad'ersk'ije roti). Each Grenadier company was divided into two platoons (vzvodi), the Grenadier platoon (gr'enad'ersk'ij vzvod) on the right of the battalion line and the sharpshooter platoon (str'elkovij vzvod) on the left.
In the "Leib" Guard Grenadier Regiment (L'ejb-gr'enad'ersk'ij Polk), all companies and battalions were designated "Grenadier".

The Infantry regiments and the Grenadier regiments had a very similar history and purpose. The Grenadier regiments were often senior units with impressive battle honours, though the Infantry regiments were only slightly inferior, so the uniformly new units of the 27th Division were atypical for the Russian army.
The Infantry regiments, which were named after cities or provinces, served various purposes.
The Grenadier regiments, which bore the names of cities and provinces or of princes (e.g. *Pavlov*) and idols (e.g. *Arakčejev*), usually formed the tactical reserve together with the Guard. There is also various pieces of evidence that they had their own recruiting system, because – similar to the Jägers – no militia units were incorporated into these regiments. Thus in 1812 a number of battalions of recruits were raised to supply the Grenadiers, so that the army rolls of 1812 include three Grenadier training battalions.
The purpose of the Jäger regiments was different from that of the two other types of regiments. In 1812 they were attached to the regular infantry divisions (3rd – 27th) and employed on campaign as an advance guard and for reconnaissance.
The Jäger were mostly newer units and in addition very short-lived. Often two weak Jäger regiments were amalgamated into one and the cadre of one regiment was sent back to the depot.
Due to the small number of battalions and the strong company strength of the Russian regiments, it was necessary to subdivide each company into two platoons. The Russian battalions thus operated in the field with eight platoons – similar to the Prussian army or the French battalions before their reorganisation of 1807. As in the

French and British armies, the platoons of the elite company were positioned at either end of the battalion line.

Provisional Infantry

As already stated, the troops of the second battalion of each infantry regiment formed the depot of their respective regiment. During mobilisation, the strength of this battalion often increased, though not to the point where a completely independent march battalion could be formed. Thus, similar to the French army, troops from several depots were assembled to form a single provisional or march battalion. These were then designated as “Converged – or rather combined – Grenadier battalion” (svodnije gr’enad’ersk’ije battal’oni), because the contribution from each depot was considered to be the Grenadier company of the respective 2nd (Depot) battalion. It is impossible to overlook the similarity to Oudinot’s Grenadier battalions in the French Army of 1806 to 1809.

Since each normal Russian Division consisted of six regiments, two Converged Grenadier battalions (the 1st and 2nd), each of three companies, were to be formed from their six depots. This was generally possible, even though B’eskrovnij, e.g. the merging of two battalions – presumably due to heavy losses – sometimes resulted in only one provisional unit.

The Converged Grenadier battalions of the 27th Division never appeared however, because the 27th Division itself was only in the process of forming and so there were most likely no surplus men available.

Infantry Divisions

In 1812, each complete regular Russian infantry division consisted of three brigades with two regiments each. Generally two of these brigades were made up from actual Infantry regiments while the third comprised two Jäger regiments. The Grenadier

Divisions consisted exclusively of Grenadier regiments. However, there were exceptions to this rule, because it is also known that provisional divisions were raised from sections of remote divisions, to serve in the main theatre of operations. In addition to these provisional divisions made of regular units, some also existed which were made up of provisional units, for instance Voroncov's converged Grenadier Division. At any rate, units from the depots, the various reinforcement and recruit battalions, were combined into provisional divisions for the march to the front. Several of these divisions saw service in the 3rd (Reserve) Army of the West. The various local militias were also combined into units of divisional scale.
The regular Russian infantry divisions are particularly interesting for military historians, because they mark a specific stage on the road to today's divisional concept. They were developed between 1806 and 1812 and represent the first standing divisions, existing in times of peace as well as war.

(To be continued)

John E. Koontz, USA

Magazine Roundup

Uniformes

Issue 91

G. Englebert, RIGO: Albrecht Adam and the *grognards*, pp. 11-16.
Excellent b/w drawings and sketches by the contemporary artist Albrecht Adam, a valuable complement to the recently published work *Die Französische Revolutionsarmee Moreaus*.

L. Rousselot: 1st *Eclaireur* Regiment of the French Guard, pp. 45-46 and the back cover.
2 A4 colour plates with very informative explanatory notes.

Issue 92

Does not include any articles on Napoleonic subjects.

Issue 93

M. Pétard: 7th French Hussars, 1807, pp. 20-25.
2 A4 colour plates and several detailed b/w drawings. Of the usual high quality, the notes about the dimensions of the cartridge box are especially interesting.

F. Robichon: Horace Vernet, pp. 26-34 and cover picture.
Article on the famous artist, with colour illustrations of the Battle of Friedland, the Battle of Valmy, the Gate at Clichy 1814 and Bonaparte leading his troops over the bridge of Arcole (two-page spread!).

RIGO: Marshal Davout as *Colonel-général* of the Foot Grenadiers of the Guard, p. 46 and back cover.
2 A4 colour plates with informative explanatory notes.

HWB

Le Briquet

Issue 1/1986

Cap. Jourdain, R. Thomas: 6th French Cuirassiers, 1635-1985.
General historical overview with b/w plate, which shows a cuirassier of 1810-1812.

C. Perrot: General Santerre.
Biography of the Revolutionary-era general that played a significant role in the insurrection of 10 August 1792.

J. Brouillet: The volunteers of Santerre, 1792.
Colour photo with short explanatory note about this relatively unknown volunteer unit.

M. Galban: The Polish Chevauléger *Escadron Napoléon* on Elba
Informative text about the history, organisation and uniforms.

M. Gärtner, A. Umhey: The Grand Duchy of Hessen Infantry Regiment *Groß- und Erbprinz* in Spain, 1808-1812.
In depth, exhaustive report on the history (detailed calendar of engagements) and uniforms, with two b/w plates.

MSM

Military Modelling

Issue 1/1986

Ch. Davis: Siborne's second Waterloo diorama
Short report about the restoration of this diorama, including one b/w photo.

R. Simkin: British Rifles in Spain.
Colour plate of no great value for uniform studies.

Issue 2/1986

D. Featherstone: With Wellington and the "Black Prince" in the Pyrenees
Travelogue, with three b/w photos, of the present-day site of the Battle of the Nive, December 1813. Very interesting.

Issue 3/1986

Does not include any articles on Napoleonic themes

MSM

Le Moniteur

Magazine of the British "Napoleonic Association".

Issue 3

Ch. Jones: Waterloo 1985.
Photo report about last year's grand re-enactment.

J. Henderson: Troops of the City of Augsburg, 1792-1806.
Very good article with comprehensive description of the various municipal units. 10 b/w drawings. 1 map.

K. Redfern: The siege of Bergen-op-Zoom, 1814.
Short, introductory article with a nice colour map of the fortress; this excerpt is meant to advertise a booklet on the same subject.

S. Petty: The British Light Division at Sabugal, 1811.
Very good, exhaustive account of the battle; the weaving of memoirs into the text is excellent.

J. L. Dominguez: What was Cambronne's actual quote?
Superfluous discourse on part of the Napoleonic legend.

MSM

Zeitschrift für Heereskunde

Issue 323

Does not include any articles on Napoleonic themes

No. 324

F. Herrmann, P-E. Jansson: The *Elberfelder Bilderhandschrift* (Elberfeld Picture Manuscript) (VII).

Mr. Herrmann presents 7 different figures from this manuscript in a b/w plate of the usual high quality; very good explanatory notes by Mr. Herrmann as well as by Mr. Jansson (for the four Swedish figures).

MSM

Translator's Note: The rest of this page was taken up by an advert for *Derdinger Zinnfiguren*.

Small Ads

Translator’s Note: The information on this page has been omitted as it is no longer relevant.

Russian Guard Cossacks, 1812-1815

As a result of an initiative of Hans-Karl Weiß from Bamberg, Patrice Courcelle, the renowned artist and illustrator from Brussels, has provided this fascinating plate as a colour supplement to *Depesche* Issue 4, and in addition permitted a translation of the interesting accompanying text. A whole-hearted thanks to both of them.

Introduction

In the Tatar language, the word *Kosak* means free man … since the beginning of the 16th Century, rebels who were weary of service and slavery to the Tsars emigrated in order to lead a free, independent life in the Steppes. The tough life there as well as the ever-present danger from the merciless Tatars transformed these emigrants into excellent warriors and riders. The horse, the only possible means of transport in the Steppes, thus came to be seen as a brother to, or even an integral part of, the Cossack. At the age of three, a young Cossack sat on horseback for the first time, at five he rode behind his father – in his scabbard the sabre his father had placed in the cradle at his christening.

Several centuries later, the first Cossack villages were founded and the inhabitants re-entered the Tsar's service, but only under condition of Cossack sovereignty over the Steppes. Daily life had only slightly changed however – horse, sabre, lance and warfare still shaped events. Cossack regiments – both regular and irregular – were raised in the Russian army and the elite of these soldiers were the three squadrons of Guard Cossacks.

The Lifeguard-Cossacks, to use their proper name, participated with the Russian Imperial Guard in all of their battles during the Napoleonic Wars and, together with the rest of the Guard cavalry, were under the command of the Grand Duke Constantine, the Tsar's brother. At Borodino, the regiment threw itself upon the 84th French Line Regiment and D'Ornano's cavalry brigade and in the campaign of 1813, it fought at Lützen, Bautzen and Leipzig. In the 1814 campaign in France, the Cossacks, together with two squadrons of the Chevalier-Garde and the Lifeguard-Uhlans, broke the squares of Pacthod's division at La Fère-Champenoise, taking ten thousand prisoners and also capturing the artillery park of Macdonald's army corps, with about 80 guns. After the surrender of Paris, the Guard Cossacks marched ahead of Tsar Alexander I and the King of Prussia into the French capital.

Uniforms of the Other Ranks

FUR CAP

This, the most common headgear, consists of a leather frame covered with black sheepskin. On the top, there is a scarlet cloth bag with rounded end. Yellow cord with low-hanging flounders and tassels – though the Russian army yellow is closer to a bright orange. The slender "plume" of white horsehair (about 40 cm in length) fixes into a pocket on the left side.

FORAGE CAP

Towards the end of 1811, Russian soldiers were issued with a forage cap as part of the smaller items of service uniform. Having a height of about 10 cm, the characteristic shape of this cap is still retained today. For the Guard Cossacks, the uniform colours

were re-used – red top with dark blue piping and dark blue headband with yellow squadron number sewn on.

SEMI-KAFTAN
With the summer uniform, Cossacks wore this short scarlet-coloured cloth waistcoat, which had sleeves, was very tight-fitting and reached to the waist. The high collar and rounded cuffs were in the same basic colour. As a new distinguishing feature for the Old Guard, yellow woollen strips with red central stripes were attached in pairs on either side of the collar and on the cuffs. As the semi-kaftan was fastened at the front by means of hooks and loops, there were only two red copper buttons – on the shoulders - for attaching the epaulettes. Yellow woollen epaulettes.

KAFTAN
Part of the winter uniform. It could be fastened down as far as the waist by means of hooks and loops. The tails were very wide at the back, reaching down to the knee. Collar and cuffs as for the semi-kaftan. The complete item of clothing is made from dark-blue cloth. Depending on orders or circumstances, the tails could be worn tucked into the trousers.

TROUSERS
The oriental influence on the Cossacks' clothing is recognisable here. These wide trousers were pleated at the waist, thus creating large folds. According to the regulations and all pictorial evidence, the trousers were dark blue. However, we will nevertheless quote Captain Mercer, who in his report speaks of greenish-blue trousers with wide red stripes. The authenticity of Mercer's statements has been proven in so many other respects, that this report should also be taken seriously. However, another section of his description (see "1" below) is more evocative of younger recruits than of experienced soldiers returning from three years of conflict on the battlefields of Europe. Disregarding the characteristic woollen strips of the Old Guard, one suspects, due to the old, turquoise coloured trousers of the regiment described, that it may have been a *vélite* regiment or similar unit, which has long since been forgotten.

SASH
This covered the waist belt. Even though Viskovatoff and Sweguitzow give the colour as white, its exact appearance in the period from 1812-15 is a mystery. We suspect supple leather, covered with cloth and which could be fastened at the side by means of a hook.

GREATCOAT
This is in the typical Russian style, i.e. very wide and reaching almost to the ground. It overlaps at the breast and is closed there by means of a row of six red copper buttons. The stitching at the back, which creates large pleats at the waist and allows for the wide cut of the coat tails, should be noted in the plate. The complete item of clothing is made from earth-brown cloth, although shades ranging from dark grey-beige to dark grey-brown are recorded. Scarlet collar and scarlet shoulder straps.

GLOVES
Although he doesn't specifically mention them in the text, Viskovatoff shows white leather gauntlets with white cuffs in his plates.

BOOTS
Made from black leather with rounded shaft ends and polished steel spurs. Sweguitzow shows shoes.

EQUIPMENT

CARTRIDGE-BOX
This model is peculiar to the Cossacks, because even though it is identical in shape to the normal light cavalry model, its dimensions are smaller. The plate makes clear that the wooden box as well as the cover flap were covered with Russian leather (red-brown colour). The rings are made from red copper, the typical metal of the Guard. The steel pistol-ramrod is fixed in place by two loops, which are sewn to the cartridge-box above the fastening straps for the rings.

CARTRIDGE-BOX BELT
A fairly straightforward style, made from Russian leather. Red-copper buckle.

WAIST BELT
This is not shown in any illustration, because it was covered by the white sash. As even the regulation doesn't mention it, Viskovatoff was wary of drawing it. What is certain is that it was made from Russian leather and that the pistols were often tucked underneath it, because their fixing hooks were very fragile. These facts, together with the assumption that the waist belt is fairly wide and is fastened by means of a buckle with prong, have been used for the reconstruction shown in the plate.

WEAPONS

The Guard Cossacks retained the traditional weapons of their homeland, namely lance and sabre, but also pistols (usually two), which on campaign were transported in the holsters.

LANCE

The lance could be up to 3 metres in length. Wooden shaft painted red, with an iron point. Note on the plate the two leather loops, one the grip, one the end of the shaft, which guaranteed a secure grip whether dismounted or mounted.

LIGHT CAVALRY SABRE, 1809 MODEL

Iron basket-guard with three branches. The hilt was covered with black sheep leather. The curved blade measured 78 cm. Note the details. Steel sabre scabbard.

SWORD KNOT

This could only be detached from the sabre with difficulty. Made from Russian leather, with the tassel in the squadron colour, i.e. white for the 1st, sky-blue for the 2nd and yellow for the 3rd squadron.

PISTOLS, 1809 MODEL

These have already been depicted and described in our Plate 5[1].

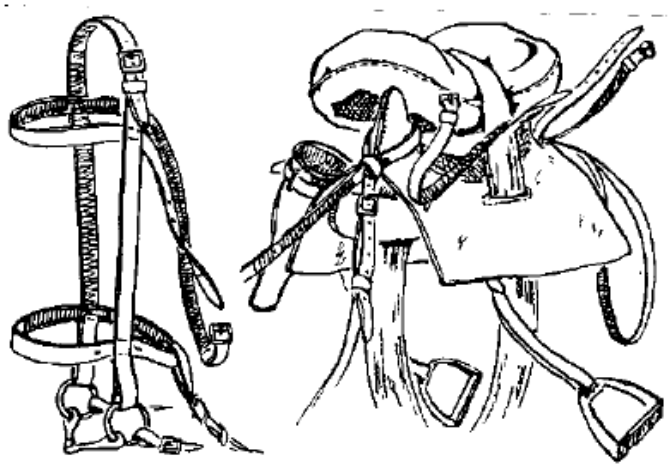
HORSE FURNITURE

BRIDLE

The Cossack used only the curb rein, fixing only a simple bridle over the head of the horse.

SADDLE

Either a Tatar or Mongolian saddle, both of which were very practical and comfortable to ride. This simple saddle was made from two pieces of wood connected by two saddle curves and then covered with leather. A thick cushion, also covered with leather, made up the seat. The saddle was strapped to the horse over a grey blanket. Scarlet cloth shabraque with white lace.



[1] Translator's Note: This refers to another plate by Courcelle from the same series as the one published here.

To conclude, some general comments.
Most Guard Cossacks had quite long hair – a very popular style in Russia at the time – and a moustache. The other ranks' horses were usually of small, simple stature, though robust and well groomed. All shades of colour were to be found – even within a single squadron. Neither manes nor tails were cropped.

Description of the Colour Plate

1. Kaftan 1812, Front and Rear views.
2. Light Cavalry sabre, 1809 Model.
3. Semi-kaftan 1812, Front and Rear views.
4. Waist belt, reconstruction.
5. Imperial Guard lace.
6. Cartridge-box with pistol ramrod fastened above.
7. Cossack in barracks uniform 1812-15.
8. Cossack in greatcoat.
9. Cossack in summer uniform. On the breast, he wears the St. George Cross 4th Class for conspicuous bravery.
10. Cossack in winter uniform.
11. Cossack in greatcoat. Note the seams on the back and the folds of the skirts.

(1) The following description of the Guard Cossacks was recorded by Mercer in Paris in 1815:
"The Guard Cossacks have the appearance of elegant lancers. They are tall, have a pleasant and striking demeanour and, with their white and pink coloured faces, without any trace of a beard or moustache, seem to be very young. The scarlet waistcoat, bereft of any lace, fits tightly on the torso while the wide, blue-green trousers with wide red stripes are tight at the waist. They are armed with a sabre, a brace of pistols, which are tucked into the sash and a long red lance without pennon. They also did not spare any money on their pleasant appearance to invest in their coarse little horses."

Patrice Courcelle, Belgium

Napoleon's Allies …
The Royal Italian *Sapeur* Battalion 1806-1807

The years 1806/07 were an important milestone in the evolution of the organisation and uniform of the *Sapeur* Battalion, which belonged to the *Corpo Reale del Genio* (Royal Engineer Corps) in the Kingdom of Italy.
In 1806, the miner company was integrated into the battalion as an elite company, while the *artisti* company was disbanded. Miners and *sapeurs* also wore the same uniform from then on – in contrast to the differences during the Cisalpine and the Italian Republics.
However, to completely understand the situation of the *Sapeur* Battalion in 1806/07, we must first of all look in more detail at the organisation and uniform of the battalion as well as the miner and *artisti* companies during the years 1801 (the date of the reorganisation of the Cisalpine Army) to 1805.

A) 1801-1805
Organisation

The law of 4 *complémentaire* in Year X of the French Republic specified the organisation of the Engineer Corps as follows:
Article 12 – one miner company with:

1 *Capitaine en premier* (Captain)
1 *Capitaine en second* (Captain)
1 *Lieutenant en premier* (First Lieutenant)
1 *Lieutenant en second* (Second Lieutenant)
1 *Sergent major* (Sergeant-major)
4 *Sergents* (Sergeants)
1 *Caporal fourrier* (Quartermaster Corporal)
8 *Caporaux* (Corporals)
40 Miners 1st Class
40 Miners 2nd Class
2 Drummers
This gives a total strength of 96 men.

Article 13 – one artisan company (*artisti*) with the same organisation as the miner company.

Article 14 – two *sapeur* battalions, each with a battalion staff and 6 companies of 100 men.
A battalion staff consists of
1 *Chef de bataillon*
1 *Quartier-Maître* (Quartermaster)
1 Medical Officer
1 *Adjudant sous-officier* (Sergeant-major)
1 *Caporal tambour* (Drummer Corporal)
2 *Maître-ouvriers* (Artisans)
A company consisted of
1 *Capitaine*
1 *Lieutenant en premier*
1 *Lieutenant en second*
1 *Sergent-major*

4 *Sergents*
1 *Caporal fourrier*
8 *Caporaux*
1 Blacksmith
1 Carpenter
80 *Sapeurs*
1 Drummer

This gave a total battalion strength of 607 men.

A report from 11 May 1801 gave the following information for the *sapeur* battalions:
1st *Sapeur* Battalion under *Chef de batallion* David with three companies and the depot in Milan.
2nd *Sapeur* Battalion under *Chef de batallion* Ordioni with two companies and the depot in Bologna.

On 2 May 1802, the two *Sapeur* battalions were combined into one battalion.
Before being combined, they had the following strength:

1st Battalion	–	1st Company with 68 men
		2nd Company with 40 men
		3rd Company with 60 men
		Depot with 101 men
2nd Battalion	–	1st Company with 63 men
		2nd Company with 57 men
		Depot with 119 men

which gave a total strength of 510 men, counting both battalions.

The new single-battalion organisation was as follows:

1. Battalion staff, with	1 *Chef de batallion*
	1 *Capitaine en second* (on semi-active duty)
	1 *Quartier-maître lieutenant*
	2 Medical officers 2nd Class

2. The three companies of the former 1st Battalion formed the
1st Company with 86 men
2nd Company with 86 men
3rd Company with 84 men
3. The two companies of the former 2nd Battalion formed the
4th Company with 84 men
5th Company with 81 men
4. The depot of the former 1st Battalion formed the
6th Company with 82 men
5. The depot of the former 2nd Battalion was distributed among the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th companies.
The new battalion therefore consisted of six companies and counted 508 men.

In 1803, the *Sapeur* battalion consisted of the staff as well as 9 companies, namely
the battalion staff with
1 *Chef de batallion*
1 *Quartier-maître Capitaine*
1 Medical officer 1st Class
1 *Adjudant sous-officier*
1 *Caporal tambour*
3 *Maîtres ouvriers*
as well as the nine companies, each with
1 *Capitaine*
1 *Lieutenant de1ère classe*
1 *Lieutenant de2ème classe*
1 *Sergent-major*
4 *Sergents*
1 *Caporal fourrier*
8 *Caporaux*
1 Carpenter
1 Blacksmith
80 *Sapeurs*
1 Drummer
This gave a total battalion strength of 908 men.

In a report from 26 February 1804 from Milan, the strength is confirmed as 9 companies.

The decree of 27 August 1805 specified a further reorganisation of the *Sapeur* battalion.
Up to this point, it counted a total of 695 men in the staff and the nine companies. Thereafter the battalion was reduced to six companies - of which one was an *artisti* company -, i.e.

Battalion staff with	1 *Chef de batallion* 1 *Quartier-maître lieutenant* 1 Surgeon 2nd Class 1 Chaplain 1 *Adjudant sous-officier* 1 *Caporal tambour* 3 *Maîtres ouvriers*
1st Company (a*rtisti)* with	1 *Capitaine en second* 1 *Lieutenant en premier* 1 *Lieutenant en second* 1 *Sergent major* 4 *Sergents* 1 *Caporal fourrier* 8 *Caporaux* 1 Carpenter 1 Drummer 40 *Artisti* 1st Class 40 *Artisti* 2nd Class
2nd to 6th Companies with	1 *Capitaine en second* 1 *Lieutenant en premier* 1 *Lieutenant en secomd* 1 *Sergent-major* 4 *Sergents* 1 *Caporal fourrier* 8 *Caporaux* 1 Drummer *72 Sapeurs* 2 Blacksmiths 2 Carpenters

Uniforms

The uniform of the Engineer Corps was first laid down by Order of the Day Number 54 of 3 *Thermidor* in Year 9 of the French Republic.

1. Other Ranks (see Plate 1)
For *sapeurs*, miners and *artisti*:
Coat made from green cloth with red lining, horizontal pockets and black cloth grenades on the skirt turnbacks.
11 large and 22 small tin buttons, embossed with a cuirass and helmet.
Green waistcoat with 11 small buttons.
Green culottes.
Shoes and long black gaiters.
Bicorn with black goat leather trimming, white woollen loop, cockade and small red pompom.
Black cravat.

The various troop types were distinguished as follows:

	Miners	*Sapeurs*	*Artisti*
Collar	Black, with red p.	Green, with red p.	Red, with black p.
Lapels	Green, with red p.	Red, with black p.	Red, with black p.
Cuffs	Red, with black p.	Black, with red p.	Black, with red p.
Cuff slashes	Red, with black p.	Black, with red p.	Black, with red p.

p. = piping

In addition, red epaulettes with fringes for the miners, yellow epaulettes with fringes for the *sapeurs* and green shoulder straps with red piping for the *artisti*.

2. NCOs and Officers (see Plate 1)

Sergeants – silver diagonal tresses on a background of red cloth, silver loop, ankle-length boots, infantry sabre.

Corporals – diagonal stripes made from white wool on a background of red cloth.

Officers – Full dress uniform: as the uniform of the other ranks, with silver-coloured epaulettes and *contre-epaulettes*, with red lining; silver buttons and white waistcoat. Silver loop, silver hat tassels and high red plume. Green trousers with ankle-length boots. Dagger on a waist belt made from green morocco leather with silver trimming and rectangular silver clasp.

Undress uniform: For all types a green tail coat with green lining, a single row of 8 buttons, black collar and black cuffs with red piping. Waistcoat and trousers as for the full dress uniform.

On 20 April 1802, the uniform of the *sapeur* companies was modified as follows (see Plate 2):

The uniform buttons were inscribed with the words REPUBLICA ITALIANA along the upper edge of the face, with the battalion number (1 or 2) in the centre and with the words ZAPPATORI along the lower edge of the face.

The cuffs of the coat were thereafter green with red piping.

The tail coat of the *sapeur* officers' undress uniform was completely green and distinguished by the buttons.

This uniform was then worn during the complete existence of the Italian Republic (1802-1805) and moreover was confirmed by several documents on creation of the Kingdom:

- Lists from the War Ministry archive

  On 18 January 1805, green, scarlet and black cloth as well as red lining material was required for an *artisti*-coat.

  On 31 July 1805, green and scarlet cloth as well as red lining material was required for a *sapeur's* coat.

  On 6 May 1806, green and black cloth as well as red lining material was required for a miner's coat; for the waistcoat and trousers green cloth.

  On 6 June 1806, scarlet and green dragoon-cloth as well as red lining material was required for a *sapeur's* coat.

- The town chronicle of Pegau notes Italian *sapeurs* in green coats with red lapels on 30 June 1807 (!).

- A drawing by Otto von Baden shows a *sapeur* seen in Germany in 1807 (see Plate 2):

Bicorn with tricolour cockade, yellow-orange coloured loop and pompom, yellow-orange coloured tassels.
Green coat with green collar, red lapels, red turnbacks, red cuffs (!) and red collar-piping.
Green waistcoat and green trousers.
Yellow-orange coloured epaulettes.
Long black gaiters.
Knapsack with rolled-up beige coloured greatcoat strapped on top.
Musket; *sabre-briquet* with yellow-orange coloured sword knot.

This underlines the gradual change in the uniform according to the decree of 1806, which was probably initially restricted to reinforcements as well as to companies stationed in Italy.

B) 1806 – 1807
Organisation

The Milan Decree of 25 October 1806 laid down the following:
The miner company abandoned its independent existence and was incorporated into the *Sapeur* Battalion as an elite company.
The battalion consisted of a total of six companies, each of 100 men and officers.
The officers of the miner company as well as the *Capitaine* of each *sapeur* company were recruited from within the Engineer Corps.
The battalion was led by a *Chef de battalion*, who likewise came from within the ranks of the Engineer Corps.
The battalion staff then consisted of

1 *Chef de battalion*
1 *Quartier-maître lieutenant*
1 *Adjudant-major capitaine* or *lieutenant* (*Adjudant*)
1 Medical Officer
1 *Adjudant sous-officier*
1 *Caporal tambour*
1 Tailor
1 Shoemaker
1 Armourer

The 1st (Elite, i.e. Miner) Company consisted of

1 *Capitaine commandant*
1 *Capitaine 2ème classe*
1 *Lieutenant en premier*
1 *Lieutenant en second*
1 *Sergent major*
4 *Sergents*
1 *Caporal fourrier*
8 *Caporaux*
40 Miners 1st Class
40 Miners 2nd Class
2 Drummers

Each *Sapeur* Company included

1 *Capitaine commandant*
1 *Capitaine en second*

1 *Lieutenant en premier*
1 *Lieutenant en secomd*
1 *Sergent-major*
4 *Sergents*
1 *Caporal fourrier*
8 *Caporaux*
4 Blacksmiths
4 Carpenters
20 *Sapeurs* 1st Class
52 *Sapeurs* 2nd Class
2 Blacksmiths
2 Drummers

This gives a total battalion strength of 609 men.

Uniform

This is known to us from three documents, namely
- The Milan Decree of 25 October 1806
- The Regulation of 1 July 1807
- The breakdown of fabric dimensions in paragraph 5, Article 15 of the Regulation of 1 July 1807

1. Other Ranks (see Plate 3)

For miners and *sapeurs*:
Coat made from dragoon-green cloth; collar, cuffs, cuff slashes and lapels made from black cloth; scarlet piping on collar, cuffs, cuff slashes, lapels and horizontal pockets; red lining.
11 large and 22 small tin buttons with the inscription ZAPPATORI ITALIANI.
Black cravat.
Waistcoat made from dragoon-green cloth with collar and cuffs made from black cloth as well as 14 small uniform-buttons.
Trousers made from dragoon-green cloth.
Long black gaiters with 15 black bone buttons.
Long linen gaiters with 15 white bone buttons.
Felt hat with black wool trimming, tricolour cockade, white loop and uniform-button.
Forage cap made from dragoon-green cloth.
Greatcoat made from blue (!) cloth with collar strips made from black cloth.

Sheep-leather apron for some particular work.
The miners were distinguished by red epaulettes with fringes, a red sword knot and a red pine cone shaped pompom.
Sapeurs could be recognised from the yellow epaulettes with fringes, a yellow sword knot and a yellow disc-shaped pompom.
There is no document describing the exact drummer's uniform. The breakdown of fabric mentioned above only states "… wooden drum hoops painted in the shades of the tricolour". However, I assume that the drummers wore the uniform of their company and were distinguished by the traditional livery, made from white and red wool.
In addition, the 1807 regulation mentions 12 *enfants de troupe* (children of the regiment), who were presumably shared out in pairs among the companies. They wore the other ranks' uniform, though without epaulettes or gaiters – instead they wore stockings and shoes – and were unarmed.

2. NCOs and Officers (see Plate 3)

Adjudant sous-officier – yellow pompom and sword knot, silver epaulettes.

Caporal tambour – yellow pompom and sword knot, yellow epaulettes, white woollen braiding, drum, drum strap and drum major's mace.

Sergeants – Silver tresses on coat and greatcoat.

Caporaux fourrier – Silver tresses and white woollen braiding on the coat and greatcoat.

Corporals – White woollen braiding.

Officers – The only source for the uniform is the decree of 25 October 1806: "For all officers the same uniform, i.e. that of the officer of engineers. Officers not recruited from the engineer corps wear buttons with the inscription *Zappatori Italiani*".
The uniform of the officer of engineers was laid down in Order of the Day Number 54, which was still valid:
Green coat and green trousers.
Collar, lapels, cuffs and cuff slashes made from black velvet with scarlet piping.
Red lining and silver grenades on the skirt turnbacks.
Silver buttons and epaulettes.
White waistcoat.
Bicorn with silver loop and silver tassels.
Ankle-length boots.
For the undress uniform:
Green tail-coat with black collar and cuffs, both with red piping.
According to the documents in the archive in Milan, the officers of the battalion must have worn a frock coat, namely in 1806 a blue frock coat with black collar patch, and according to an account from 17 November 1807 an iron-grey frock coat with black collar. Might these perhaps simply be prototypes?

Equipment and Weapons

	Infantry sabres	Infantry muskets
Adjudant sous-officier	1	
Caporal tambour	1	

Maîtres ouvriers	3	
Sergents-major	6	6
Sergents	24	24
Caporaux fourriers	6	6
Caporaux	48	48
Miners, Sappers, *Artisti*	480	480
Drummers	12	
Total	581	564

In addition 564 cartridge boxes, 564 cartridge-box belts, 564 musket slings and 581 sabre belts.
Officers were armed with an epée with silver sword knot on a waist belt.

According to the regulation of 1807, the battalion possessed a flag and two pennants, but did not have an eagle.

Description of Plates 1 – 3:

Plate 1:
A – Miner, 1801-1806
B – *Sapeur* battalion, 1801-1802
Button as worn by the entire Engineer Corps
C – *Artisti* company, 1801-1806
D – Miner officer, 1801-1806
E – Tail-coat of an officer of engineers
F – Rank distinctions, clockwise from upper left: *Sergent-major* of a*rtisti*, *Sergent* of a*rtisti*, *Caporal* of miners and *Caporal fourrier* of *sapeurs*.

Plate 2 *Sapeur* Battalions, 1802-1806
A – *Sapeur*
Button of the 1st Battalion
B – Officer in tail-coat
C – *Sapeur* of the 4th or 6th Company in Germany 1806-1807
(after OTTO von Baden)

Plate 3 *Sapeur* Battalion, 1806-1807
A – Miner
Uniform button
B – *Sapeur*
C – Forage cap and waistcoat
D – Other ranks' greatcoat
E – *Sapeur* officer
F – Miner officer in frock coat from 1806
G – Frock coat from 1807
H – Rank distinctions
Upper row: *Adjudant sous-officier*
Lower row, from left to right: *Sergent-major, Sergent, Caporal fourrier, Caporal*
I – Drummer of miners

Sources

- Law of 4 *complémentaire* in Year X (National Archive in Milan, War Ministry, Dossier Number 7)
- Report from 11 May 1801 (idem, Dossier Number 441)
- Reorganisation of 12 May 1802 (idem, Dossier Number 441)
- Report from 1803 (idem, Dossier Number 443)
- Decree of 27 August 1805 (idem, Dossier Number 443)
- Order of the Day Number 54 from 3 *Thermidor* of Year IX (*Braidense* Library in Milan, *Raccolta degli ordini del giorno del dipartimento della Guerra ZOO VI 73*, Volume 3)
- Change to the uniform from 20 April 1802 (*Museo del Risorgimento* in Milan, *Foglio officiale della R. Italiana*)
- Manuscript by OTTO von Baden (HGM Rastatt, Knötel-Estate)
- Decree of 23 October 1806 (National Archive in Milan, War Ministry, Dossier Number 129)
- Regulation of 1 July 1807 (*Braidense* Library in Milan, *Raccolta degli leggi, decreti, circolari ... riguardandi lo stato militare*, Volume 1)
- Description of the items of uniform and equipment (Collection of P. Crociani, Rome)
- Report from 15 July 1807 (National Archive, Paris)
- List of the cadre officers of the battalion from 15 July 1807 (National Archive, Paris).

J.-P. Perconte, France

Addendum

List of the cadre officers of the *Sapeur* Battalion, from 15 July 1807

Battalion staff:

Chef de bataillon BERNARDI	Mantua
Lieutenant Adjudant major BIANCHI D'ADDA	Mantua
Quartier-maître BIZZOZERO	Mantua
Surgeon 2nd Class TOSI	Mantua

1st Company:

Capitaine commandant DEGIANB	Osopo
Capitaine en second FERREGIO	Osopo
Lieutenant en premier TIRRELI	Osopo
Lieutenant en second CARANDINI	Osopo

As all four officers were on secondment, the company was led by Tognoli (3rd Company) and Ferrari (5th Company).

2nd Company:

Capitaine commandant ROLANDO	Naples (on secondment to Anfo)
Capitaine en second LAMPANI	Naples
Lieutenant en premier BAGLIONI	Naples (on secondment to Mantua)
Lieutenant en second BIZZOZERO	Naples

3rd Company:

Capitaine commandant TOGNOLI	Venice
Capitaine en second BELLANI	Venice (on secondment to Mantua)
Lieutenant en premier GASSON	Venice
Lieutenant en second ALBERTINI	Venice

4th Company:

Capitaine commandant BELTRANI	Kolberg (on secondment to Ancona)
Capitaine en second SOLARI	Kolberg
Lieutenant en premier RANZELLI	Kolberg
Lieutenant en second ALIETTO	Kolberg

5th Company:

Capitaine commandant BIANCHI D'ADDA	Dalmatia, in Turkey
Capitaine en second FERRARI	Dalmatia
Lieutenant en premier VILLANI	Dalmatia
Lieutenant en second LIBERATI	Dalmatia

6th Company:

Capitaine commandant FE	Grande Armée (seconded to Milan)
Capitaine en second SARTI	Grande Armée
Lieutenant en premier SCHEPELLI	Grande Armée
Lieutenant en second NEGRI	Grande Armée

Events

Translator’s Note: This section has not been translated because it is no longer relevant.

From the archive …

Sapeur of the 1st French Light Infantry Regiment 1812

This issue's instalment of the series "From the Archive", discusses the "*Depesch*e-*Sapeur"* (i.e. the figure on the envelope[1]). His uniform is striking, though by no means unusual by the standards of the day. Due to the steadily increasing emergence of specific *sapeur* units, the regimental *sapeurs* progressively lost their relevance, almost exclusively becoming status symbols. Each colonel adorned his regiment with a so-called *Tête de colonne* consisting of the regiment's *sapeurs* and band dressed in particularly flamboyant and pompous uniforms which very often contradicted the general regulations.

Organisation

In 1812, a French infantry regiment consisted of a regimental staff and four field battalions, each of 6 companies (1 carabinier company, 4 chasseur companies and 1 voltigeur company) as well as a depot battalion with 4 chasseur companies. These, of course, are only the company designations used for light infantry.

The staff included 1 *Colonel*, 1 *Major*, 4 *Chefs de battalion*, 1 *Quartier-maître trésorier* (Quartermaster treasurer), 5 *Adjudants major* (Adjutants), 1 *Officier payeur* (paymaster), 1 Eagle-bearer, 1 Surgeon 1st Class, 4 Surgeons 2nd Class, 5 Surgeons 3rd Class, 10 *Adjudants sous-officiers* (approximates to staff sergeant majors), 1 second and 1 third Eagle-bearer, 1 *Tambour-major*, 1 *Caporal tambour*, 8 musicians (including the band leader) and 4 craftsmen (tailor, gaiter maker, armourer and shoemaker).

Each company included 1 *Capitaine* (Captain), 1 *Lieutenant* (First Lieutenant), 1 *Sous-Lieutenant* (Second Lieutenant), 1 *Sergent-major* (Company sergeant major), 4 *Sergents* (Sergeants), 1 *Caporal-fourrier* (Quartemaster corporals), 8 *Caporaux* (Corporals), 2 drummers or cornet players and 121 privates.

This gave a theoretical regimental strength of 3970 men – including 108 officers.

Description of Plate 4

Black bearskin cap, scarlet pompom and plume, scarlet bag with white piping and white tassel.
Dark blue coat with scarlet insignia on the upper sleeves.
Dark blue trousers.
Black gaiters, scarlet braid and tassel.
Black shoes.
Ochre-coloured leather gauntlets with white braid on the cuffs.

[1] Translator's Note: *Depesche* was a subscription magazine; its logo was the *sapeur* described here

Scarlet epaulettes.
Dark grey, rolled-up greatcoat on top of the knapsack.
White knapsack straps.
Ochre-coloured leather cross-belts.
Ochre-coloured waist belt, black bag with brass grenades.
Sabre with brass hilt.
White leather apron with ochre-coloured leather grenade.
Musket with iron fittings; white sling with iron buckle.

Sources

For the plate:
Unsigned watercolour from the Knötel-Estate, WGM Rastatt.
For the text:
H. Malibran *Guide à l'usage des artistes et des costumiers contenant la déscription des uniformes de l'armée française de 1780 à 1846*
Paris 1983

Markus Stein, Mannheim
Edmund Wagner, Karlsruhe

Questions and Answers

French Telegraphs

The following information is complementary to the article in issue 3 of *Depesche*.

Optical telegraphs were also successfully developed in other countries around this time. However, only the French constructed a complete network of stations, implementing Claude Chappe's system, which at the time was ideal and unequalled.

In the aftermath of the campaign in Russia, there was an imminent danger of popular uprising against the French. Not just in Germany, but also in France it became increasingly difficult for Napoleon to maintain an overview of both the military and political situation. Swift communication was thus more important than ever to him. In May 1813, he therefore ordered construction of a 225 km long telegraph route between Mainz and Metz, following the plans already prepared in 1799. That the complete route was constructed in only 3 weeks underlines its importance. The expense came to 105 000 francs. Operations on the Mainz - Metz route started on 29 May 1813, but were already interrupted soon afterwards and after 7 months were completely abandoned. On 1 January 1814, an advance party of Blücher's army reached the line of the route at Kreuznach and thus partly interrupted telegraph traffic – in mid January it was finally discontinued. The station houses were all destroyed and in the course of time completely demolished. All that remains today of this Napoleonic telegraph line is some vestiges of ruins - the quarry stone-built plinth of a telegraph station on the Schaumberg near Tholey in the district of St. Wendel in Saarland.

Herbert Brandhoff, Pulheim

Translator’s Note: The rest of this section has not been translated as the content is no longer relevant.

List of Contents

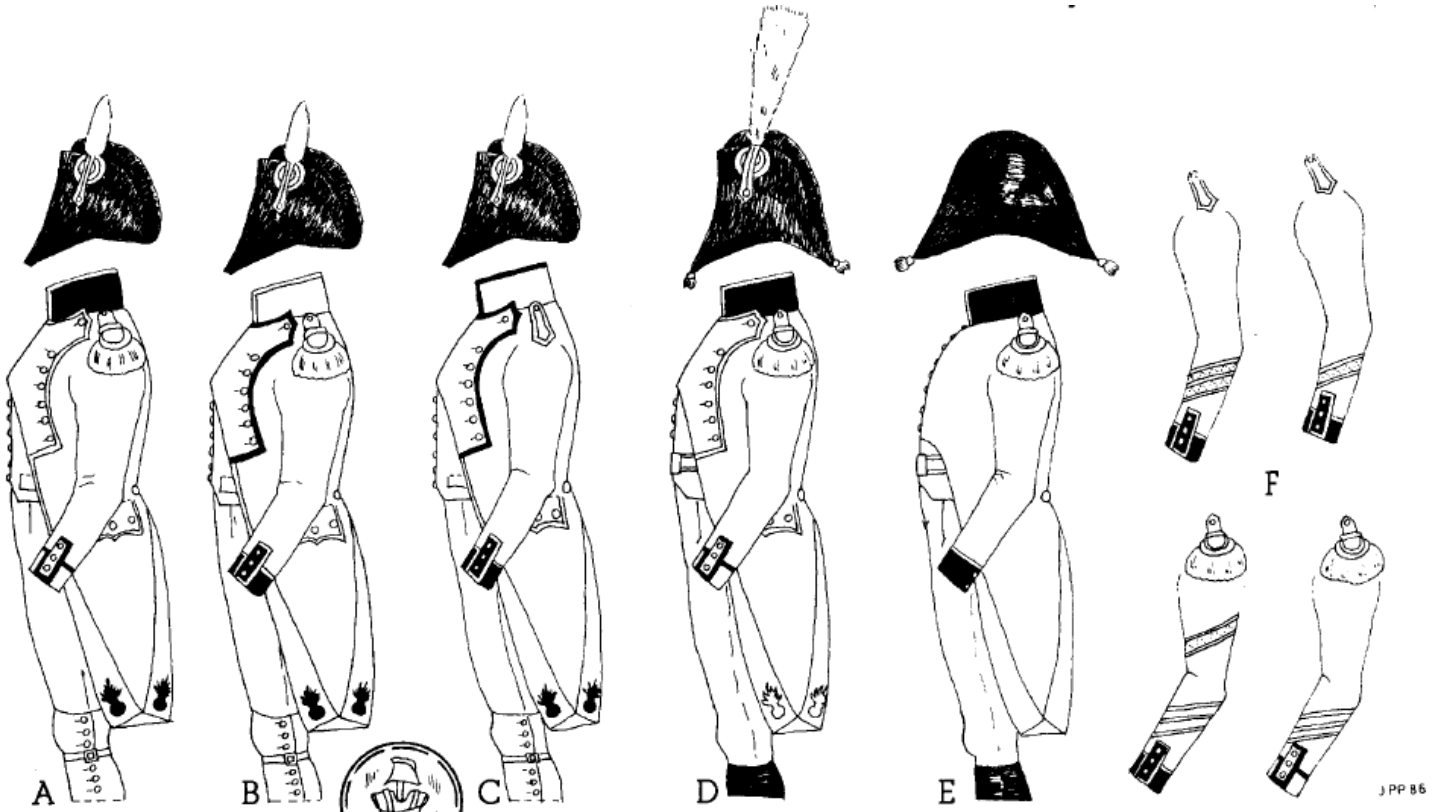
1st Year

To provide a better overview, all articles and readers' letters are sorted systematically by relevant country and troop type or by period. The numbers next to each article give indicate the issue number/page number, e.g. 1/1-4 stands for pages 1-4 in Issue 1[1]. "P" stands for Plate.

History				
1805	The Trophies of Austerlitz	J. Leparquois	1/17-19	
1814	Bavarians at Arcis-sur-Aube	P. Wacker	2/5	
France				
1795	Telegraphs	E. Wagner	3/3-6	
1813-1814	ditto	H. Brandhoff	4/---	
1806-1808	The 3rd Line Regiment and its white uniform	H.-K. Weiß/ G. Bauer	1/11-16	P 3
1806-1808	ditto		2/31-32	P 4-5
1812	*Sapeur* of the 1st Light Infantry Regiment	M. Stein/ E. Wagner	4/---	P 4
1812	Musicians of the 2nd Guard Chevauléger Regiment[2]	M. Baptiste	1/6	P 2
1813	14th Hussar Regiment	M. Stein/ E. Wagner	2/17-22	P 2
1814	13th Hussar Regiment[3]	M. Stein/ E. Wagner	1/1-5	P 1
1814	14th Hussar Regiment[4]	E. Wagner	3/12-13	P 2
1805-1816	The Reserve Companies of the Départements	C. Achard	3/19-28	P 4-8
1806-1815	The Czapka	J.-C. Colrat	2/6-10	P 1
Italy				
1806-1807	The Sapper Battalion	J.-P. Perconte	4/---	P 1-3
Nassau				
1814	The Service Life of Clothing and Equipment	P. Wacker	2/1-4	
Naples				
1811-1814	7th Infantry Regiment	M. Gärtner	1/21-31	P 4-8
Austro-Hungary				
1806	Funeral Regulations		2/12-16	

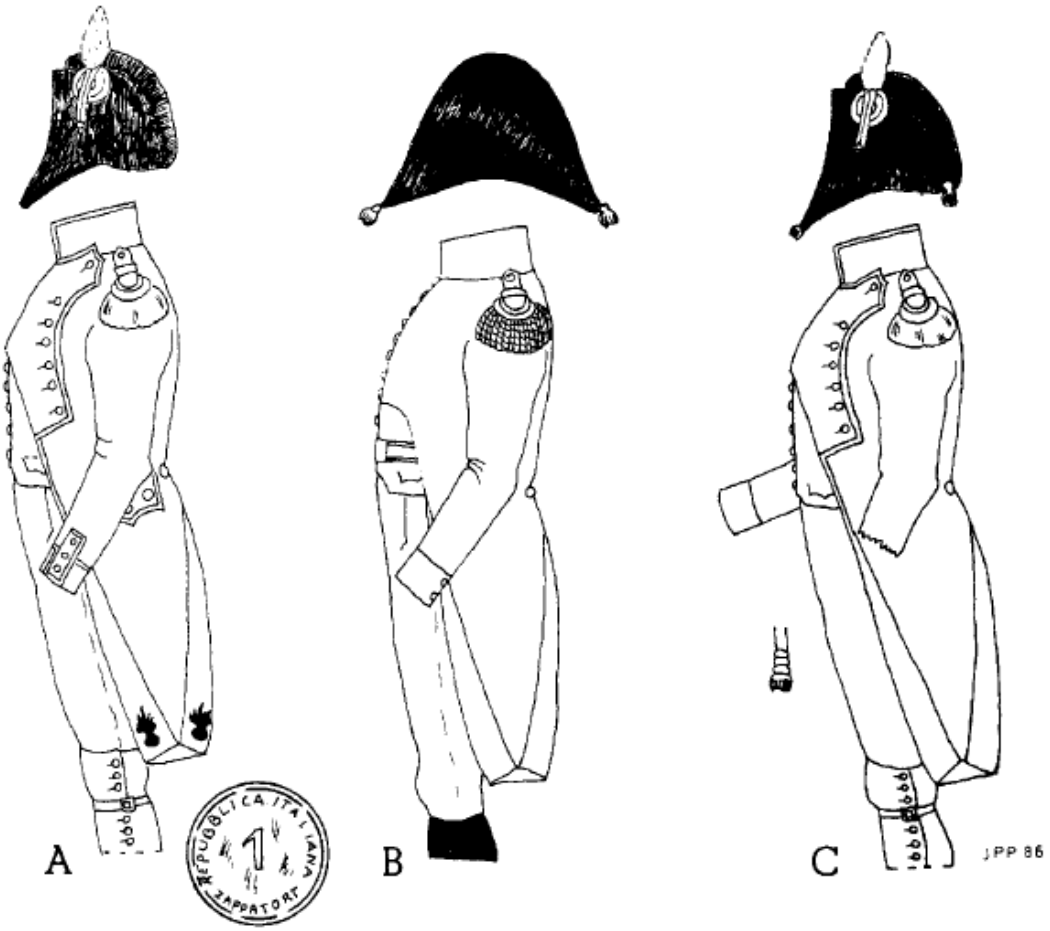
[1] Translator's Note: The page numbers given here refer to the translated version, not the original
[2] Translator's Note: i.e. the "Red Lancers"
[3] Translator's Note: i.e. "Jérôme Napoléon"
[4] Translator's Note: after the Alsatian Picture Manuscript

Prussia				
1815	Horse Artillery	U. Ehmke/ E. Wagner	1/8-10	
1815	ditto		3/14-18	P 3
Russia				
1812	8th Corps at Borodino	J. E. Koontz	3/8-11	
1812	ditto		4/---	
1812-1815	Guard Cossacks	P. Courcelle	4/---	Colour-P
Saxony				
1806	Kettledrummer of the *Kochtitzki* Cuirassier Regiment	M. Gärtner/ P. Courcelle	3/1-2	P 1
Spain				
1808-1814	King Joseph Bonaparte's Infantry	J. Brouillet	2/23-25	P 3
Publications				
A. Martinien *Tableaux par corps et par batailles des officiers tués et blessés pendant les guerres de l'Empire (1805-1815)*		M. Stein	2/27	
P. Crusius *Die französische Revolutionsarmee Moreaus, gezeichnet von dem vierzehnjährigen Albrecht Adam*		M. Stein	2/27-29	
P. Wacker *Das herzoglich Nassauische Militär 1806-1866, in Uniformtafeln von Carl Jakob Frankenbach*		M. Stein	3/29	



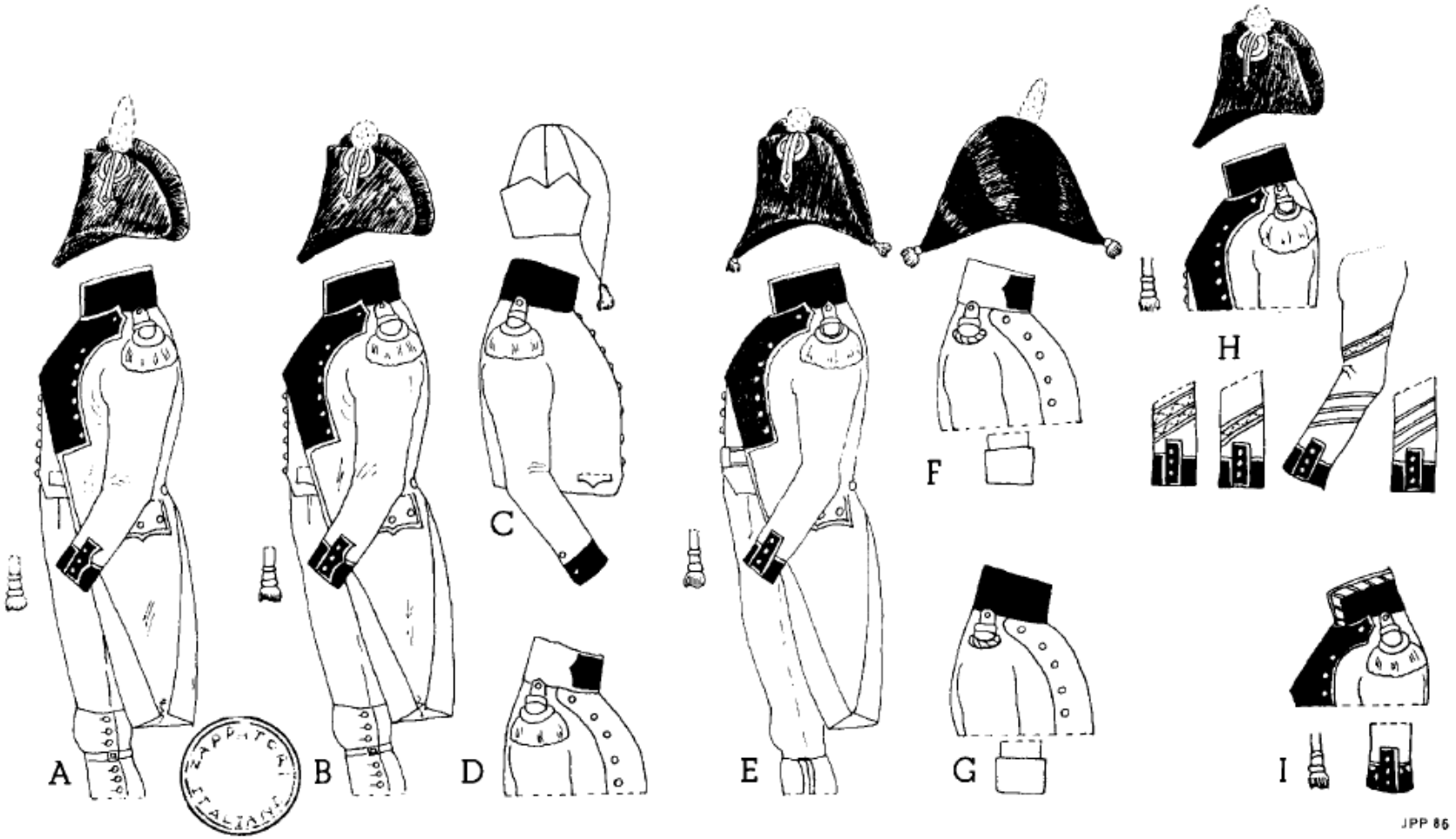
The Royal Italian Sapper Battalion 1806-1807

Depesche Issue 4, Plate 2



The Royal Italian Sapper Battalion 1806-1807

Depesche Issue 4, Plate 3



The Royal Italian Sapper Battalion 1806-1807

Depesche Issue 4, Plate 4

***Sapeur* of the 1st French Light Infantry Regiment 1812**

Depesche Issue 4, Colour Plate