

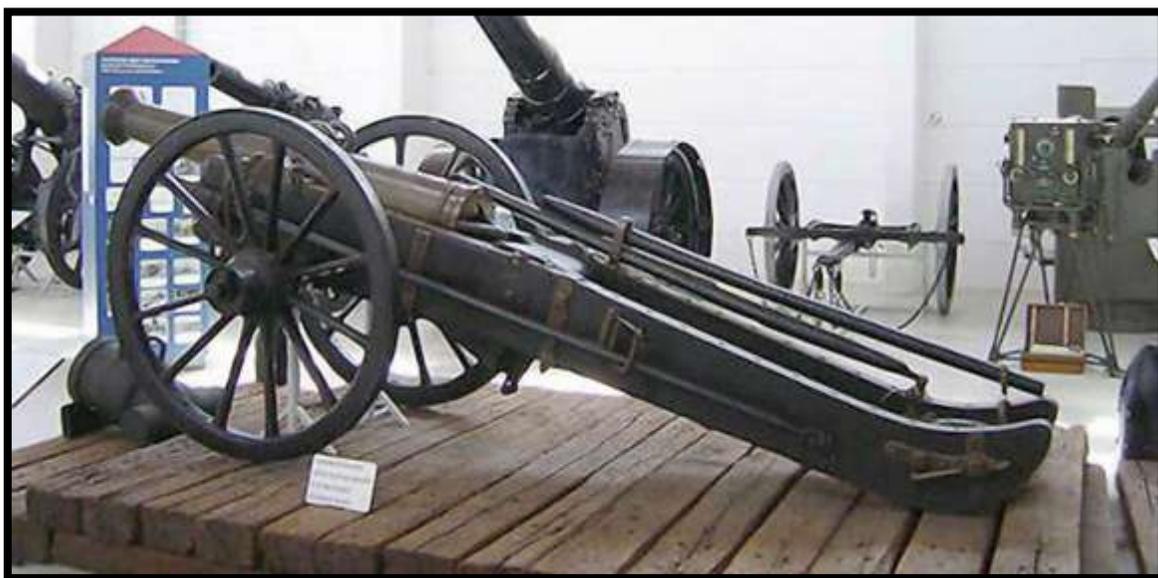
## Issue 2(09) Saxon Horse Artillery 1810-15

By Gerard Cronin and Stephen Summerfield

The Saxon Army of 1809 was still using the tactics, the M1766 equipment and uniforms of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1810, the Saxon Artillery Commission concluded that a simplification in the Saxon Ordnance was required. The number of different pieces was reduced from eight to three field pieces. The new 18 calibre M1810 6-pdr, 12-pdr and M1810 8-pdr howitzer of 7-calibres bore a striking similarity to the French AnXI gun tubes.

The M1810 ordnance and rolling stock was only complete on the eve of the 1812 campaign. In 1812, the Saxons 7e Corps consisted of 24e and 25e Division.

- 1.-4. Foot Coys [4x 6-pdr & 2x8-pdr how]
- 1.-2. Horse Coys [4x6-pdr & 2x8-pdr how]
- Each of the 5 infantry regiments had 4x M1766 4-pdr *Schnellfeuergeschütze*.



Saxon M1810 12-pdr in Copenhagen

In 1813, the regimental guns lost in Russia were not replaced. The 7e Corps in February 1813 had

- Two Foot Coys [6x 6-pdrs & 2x 8-pdr how] attached to each Division.
- Two Foot Coys [6x 6-pdrs & 2x 8-pdr how] in the Corps reserve.
- One Horse Coy [4x6-pdr & 2x8-pdr how]

By 15 August 1813, the Saxon Artillery had grown to 52 pieces. [Summerfield (2010)]

- Four Foot Coys [6x 6-pdrs & 2x 8-pdr how] attached to 24e and 25e Division
- Two Horse Coys [4x6-pdrs & 2x8-pdr how] attached to the 26e Cavalry Brigade.
- Reserve Coy [6x12-pdrs & 2x8-pdr how]

Saxony joined the Allies at Leipzig (18 Oct 1813). In December 1813, for the *III German Armeekorps*, the Saxons provided a 6-pdr battery (8 pieces), 12-pdr battery (8 pieces) and two horse artillery batteries (6-pieces each).

At the Congress of Vienna in 1815, half of Saxony was given to Prussia and the Royal Saxon army was not fully re-organised to join Wellington in the Netherlands but later accompanied the Austrian Army in the invasion of France.

### **M1810 Guns**

The new **M1810 carriages** were lighter than previous designs. The initial order was for 15x 12-pdr, 45 6-pdr and 30x 8-pdr howitzer carriages for the foot artillery with a further 15x 6-pdr and 5x 8-pdr howitzer carriages for the horse artillery. The M1810 6-pdr was first issued to the horse artillery and operated with the M1766 *Granadstück* until they were replaced by the M1810 8-pdr Howitzer in early 1812.

Wheel sizes were restricted to only two instead of the previous eight wheels so reduced the logistic problems of other armies.

- Large 137cm wheel with 12 spokes for the 6-, 12-pdr, 8-pdr Howitzer and the rear wheels of vehicles.
- Small 113cm wheels for the M1810 limber and the front wheel of vehicles weighing.

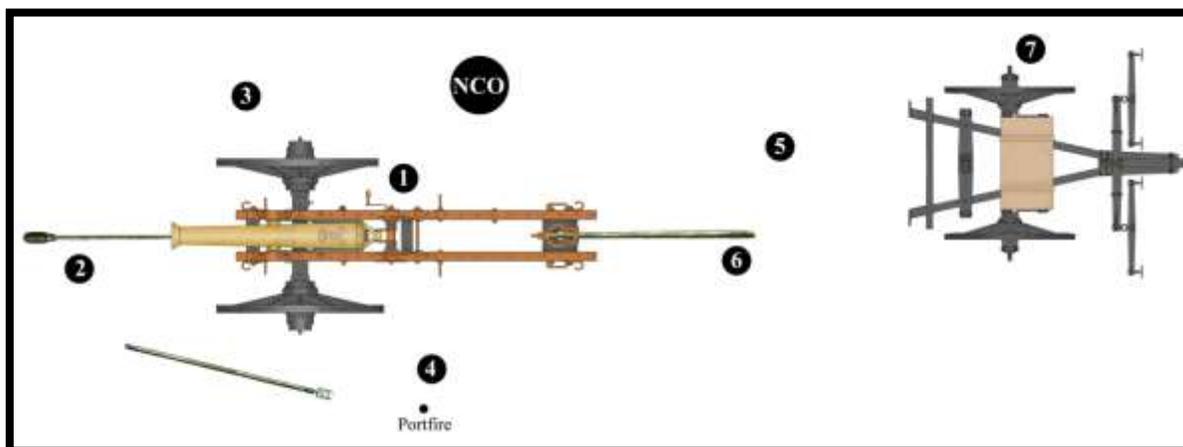
The **M1810 Ammunition Wagon** was heavily influenced by the French AnXI system. It had 113cm front and 137cm wheels rear wheels. The latter were the same as the field guns. The **M1813 Caisson** had the same chassis as the M1810 but instead of a seat, there was an ammunition box.

### **Manning the M1810 6-pdr**

A 6-pdr would have one corporal, two senior gunners and eight gunners. It is interesting to note for Saxon guns that the ammunition was run up the right hand side and was fired from the right hand side. This was the opposite for French guns. [See the plate for French gun crew positions in DDS (2007) 27].

Upon clearing the gun for action, the Loader [No. 3] would remove the **tompion** [a wooden stopper fitted to the muzzle to protect the bore from the weather] and the Ventsman [No. 1] would remove the **apron** [a piece of leather used to cover the vent of a cannon]. These were suspended from the carriage when in action or moved over short distances.

The RAMMER [No. 2] would take the **ramrod-sponge** and the separate **worm** from the rack on the left hand side of the gun. The worm was used to check the tube was empty. The FIRER [No. 4] would unhook the sponge bucket and place it by the axle of the left wheel allowing the Rammer [No. 2] to wet the sponge. The Firer [No. 4] would then check his own equipment and about face to plant **linstock** into the ground.



Crew positions for ramming home the charge for a Saxon M1810 6-pdr.  
[© Norman Swales (2010)]

Once the tube had been declared empty by the Rammer, the Corporal [NCO] would select the type of ammunition to be loaded. The VENTS MAN [No. 1] would stop the vent with the **thumb stall** [buckskin pad stuffed with horsehair] worn on the third or fourth finger of the left hand during the ramming procedure to stop any sparks igniting and firing the powder charge. It should be noted that losing the thumb or forefinger would be far more serious than the third or fourth finger.

The ammunition would be ferried from the ammunition limber by the AMMUNITION NUMBER [No. 5] and presented to the LOADER [No. 3] who stood to the left of the muzzle. The ammunition could be inserted separately [cartridge then shot attached to a sabot] or as **fixed ammunition** [the shot attached to the powder charge] into the muzzle by the Loader [No. 3] which was immediately rammed down the bore by the Rammer [No. 2] until seated at end of the breech with three firm thrusts. The shaft was cupped with the palms facing upwards so that, should the piece discharge prematurely, he was unlikely to lose a hand. In larger pieces, he would be assisted by the loader.

The Rammer [No. 2] and Loader [No. 3] would retire to their positions next to the axle. The Gun Captain [NCO] assisted by the gunner [No. 6] with the handspike at the trail and the Ventsman [No. 1] at the elevating handle would **point** the piece and to bring the gun to bear. Once on target, the VENTS MAN [No. 1] would pierce the cartridge with a bronze spike [or priming wire]. The fuse was placed in the vent and into the cartridge.

Once the gun was armed, the Gun Captain [NCO] reported to the Lieutenant that the piece was ready to fire. Upon his command, the Firer [No. 4] would ignite the fuse either by a slow match attached to a **linstock** or a **portfire**. After each discharge the portfire were cut with **portfire cutters**.

Upon discharge, the gun **recoiled** and was then sponged out with the hog bristle sponge dipped in water from the **sponge bucket**. This scoured out any remaining parts of the charge and extinguished any burning embers. A **worm** was used to pull any misfires or parts of charge bags that failed to be discharged from the tube. The gun was run-up after each discharge and re-laid by the gun captain before another round was fired.

### **Colour of Ordnance**

Saxon ordnance was stained with a mixture of asphalt [by-product from burning mineral oils], litharge [lead (II) oxide], boiled linseed oil and turpentine. This gave a creosote (virtually black) appearance to the woodwork. The metal fittings were bronze or yellow ochre. The wagons had a light blue body [lead (II) oxide with a small amount of Prussian blue], light brown roof [red ochre, yellow ochre, lead oxide and lampblack] and black wheels.

### **Saxon Horse Artillery in Action**

On 6 September, *Marshal Ney* who now commanded the army marched into an allied ambush at Dennewitz and was badly outnumbered. *Reynier's 7ème Corps* fought skilfully but the poor coordination by Ney threw away the chance of a decisive victory. The Saxons lost 3,000 men including 158 artillerymen and 214 artillery horses, 12 pieces, and 40 wagons.

On 8 September 1813, due to attrition, the *24ème* and *25ème (Saxon) Divisions* were reduced to 22 officers, 826 men, 607 horses and 33 pieces with 3 pieces sent to the fortress Torgau. The 12-pdr battery was reduced to 4x 12-pdrs and 2x 8-pdr howitzers. The 2nd Horse Battery was reformed with 4 pieces and the remaining gunners of 3rd 6-pdr Battery was transferred to the other batteries. The 1<sup>st</sup> Horse Battery was reduced to 4 pieces with 1x 6-pdr and 1x 8-pdr howitzer battery transferred to the park. The artillery had been reduced to 22 officers, 826 men, 607 horses and 33 pieces. [Titze (2006) II: 12] *Reynier's 7ème Corps* now comprised of *24ème (Saxon) Division* with *Durutte (French) Division* and *Giolleminot (French) Division* formed from the disbanded *12ème Corps*.

### **Horse Artillery Uniform (1810-15)**

A more practical uniform based upon the French pattern was adopted in 1810 and the hair was now cut short for all ranks. The Horse Artillery had a uniform based upon the *Chevanleger*.



Saxon Horse Artillery Gunner  
c1813

**HEADWEAR:** Plain M1810 French style felt shako with leather trim, brass rhombic plate with madder red cords, flounders, raquettes, pom-pom and upright plume over a national cockade of white with a gold bar. NCOs had a Brass band around the top of the shako.

**TUNIC:** Mid-green Habit Vest with poppy red lapels, turnbacks and cuffs; brass shoulder scales and a double row of buttons. Poppy red piping on shoulder straps, poppy red turnbacks and pointed cuffs.

**TROUSERS:** White trouser in summer and on parade. Grey trousers on campaign with a poppy red trouser stripe and arrow shaped lace on front of trousers.

**FOOTWEAR:** Black knee boots.

**EQUIPMENT:** Buff leather belt over left shoulder supporting a black leather cartridge box. A buff leather waist belt with a buckle supported the steel sabre.

**SIDE-ARMS:** Steel sabre with white sword knot.

**HORSE FURNITURE:** Green shabraque with

poppy red border in 'wolf-tooth' style and edged yellow. Chevauxleger horse furniture. Green round portmanteau edged with yellow lace.

### ***Horse Artillery Trumpeter***

TUNIC: Reversed colour poppy red Habit Veste with mid-green collar and cuffs. The cuffs and collar were piped in gold

EQUIPMENT: Brass trumpet with red-gold-black variegated cord

TROUSERS: Mid-grey trousers with a double poppy stripe and brass studs down the centre. Overalls were also worn.

### ***Horse Artillery Officer***

HEADWEAR: Officer's M1810 French style shake with gilded brass appointments including some intricate heavy gilding on the outer edge

TUNIC: Medium green Habit-Veste with poppy red lapels and poppy red piping on the tails. Gold grenades on turnbacks.



#### **DISTINCTIONS:**

<i>Oberst</i>	Two fringed epaulettes with gold crescents,
<i>Oberst-Lt</i>	Two Gold buttons with silver crescents.
<i>Major/Captain</i>	Plain fringed and contra epaulette
<i>1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant</i>	Plain fringed and contra epaulette with straight carmine lace.
<i>2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant</i>	Plain fringed and contra epaulette with zigzag lace

TROUSERS: White nankeen trousers were tucked into calfskin black leather boots trimmed with gold lace and tassels.

EQUIPMENT: White sword knot. Gilt sword with black scabbard with gilt fittings. Green shabraque edged poppy red with yellow lace.

HORSE FURNITURE: Medium Green shabraque with gold edging in an intricate pattern set on a poppy red stripe.

### **Acknowledgements**

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