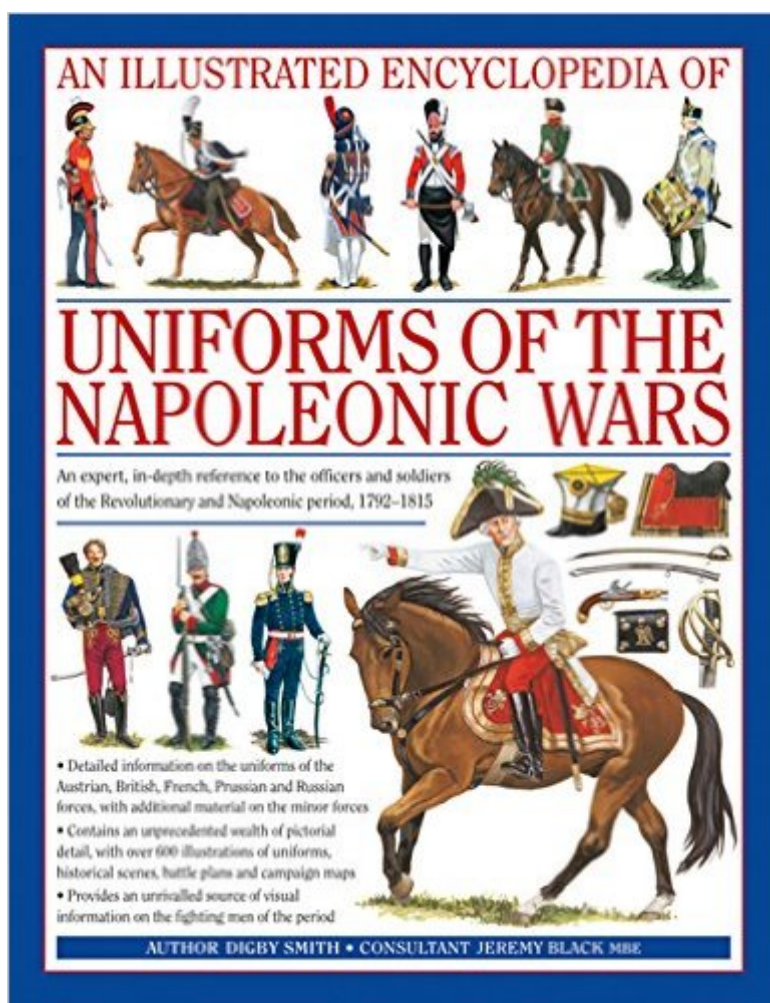


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An Illustrated Encyclopedia: Uniforms Of The Napoleonic Wars: Campaign Maps; Provides An Unrivalled Source Of Visual Information On The Fighting Men Of The Period





Synopsis

This book brings a highly eventful period of European history to life, chronicling the battles, campaigns and skirmishes of the conflict and the political triumphs and declines of the combatant forces.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

An Illustrated Encyclopedia: Uniforms of the Napoleonic Wars by Digby Smith is a very good introductory book on the uniforms and armies of the Napoleonic wars. Although this book is jam-packed with illustrations it tries to be all things to all people and ends up doing not much well, but those few things are very good. But still I came away wanting just that little bit more. A good example is the lack of unit size numbers for nearly all of the countries covered. Actually, I wish Digby had scrapped all the historical, tactical, technological sections and just stuck to uniforms. Although there are about 250 plates devoted to showing a uniform of an individual unit this actually just scratches the surface. Consider, there are about 30 plates of the units of Great Britain plus another four plates of Kings German Legion and Brunswickers combined, another four to the East and West India companies and seven of other foreign troops who fought under the British. 16 of those plates are used to show British line infantry. Considering the changes in uniform, Scots units, varying Rifle companies and battalions this gives you just enough information to paint most of the British units you might want. This pattern is repeated for all the major combatants. If you want a cheap introduction to the uniforms of the Napoleonic wars that is jam packed with illustrations then this is the book to get. Although, if you want to start modeling you would probably need

more. The Napoleon Source Book by Philip J. Haythornthwaite lacks the color plates but has a much better collection of information on uniforms and uniform changes. If you can get a copy, grab it. Plus, he also gives a good idea of the varying sizes of units throughout the era and a whole lot more. Napoleon's War in Spain: The French Peninsular Campaigns, 1807-1814 by Henry Lachouque et al and Military Dress of the Peninsular War, 1808-1814 by Martin Windrow are good examples of campaign centered books that really give you a great understanding of the uniforms of the period without having to resort to Osprey (although, if you wanted to spend that much money, Osprey are great, most being very good but some still vary in quality). Both of these books have less color plates than Digby's book but give a much better view of the uniforms. And if you want a book on battle tactics of the Napoleonic era then a great place to start is Tactics and the Experience of Battle in the Age of Napoleon by Rory Muir. One of my favorite books for uniforms, as lopsided as it is, is Hourtoulle's Soldiers and Uniforms of the Napoleonic Wars. This book uses tableaux instead of Digby's individual soldiers and is therefore able to show many more examples of soldiers within a regiment (plus the backs usually) but not as many individual units overall. Still a fantastic book. Or if you have the money get Elting and Knotel's spectacular NAPOLEONIC UNIFORMS: 2 Volume Boxed Set and NAPOLEONIC UNIFORMS: Vassals and Enemies (2 Volume Set, Volumes III & IV).

I'll start by agreeing with another reviewer that many of the uniform illustrations are directly copied from a number of Osprey Men-At-Arms titles especially those of this title's author, Digby Smith. Case in point, the entire section of Bavarian & Saxon Troops as well as that of the British Infantry. Too many of the figures are unoriginal & lack imagination.....Do we really need another Sgt. of the 2nd Dragoon Guards in dismounted dress or another Scots Grey when they are common in other titles? Another "negative" is the depiction of too many musicians in the plates at the expense of "typical" privates & NCO's which is rather common to Digby Smith's books especially those on German Troops using the "Otto von Pivka" nom-de-plume. Some sections were far too brief such as the Poles & Spanish, I'd love to know why drum-majors take precedence over fighting men in the Spanish section? Despite the War of 1812 being a totally separate conflict I was pleased to see some U.S. Army Regulars of the Infantry, Light Dragoons & Light Artillery but I was dismayed to see on the following page the same boring figures of a 25th Infantry Pioneer & Foot Artillery drummer lifted straight from an Osprey book. The tables of British Infantry regimental facing colors have so many errors as to be useless & in the cavalry section are included a similar table for 1768 which in terms of regiments & facings has no bearing on the 1792-1815 period at all. Also the 6th Inniskilling

Dragoons are misidentified as "Carabiniers" (6th Dragoon Guards) and the 5th (Royal Irish) Dragoons ceased to exist in 1798 due to mutiny in the Irish Rebellion so had no uniforms for the 1812 Regulations. A major fault to the book is covering too broad a period in that the French Revolution should have been omitted so only 1805-1815 would be covered. The extra space may have allowed the cavalry of Napoleon's Imperial Guard to be covered where there is only a Horse Grenadier. In contrast to the later Lorenz/Anness Uniform Encyclopedia titles there are far less errors, here they are mostly the wrong dates for the figures depicted & for some odd reason TWO drummers of the British 27th Foot, the second being misidentified as the 17th which had different facings from the 27th & was serving in India during this period.. The best thing to say about this & the other Lorenz/Anness books is the outstanding quality of the uniform illustrations for which the publishers are to be commended. While this is far from a definitive work it is a very good overview (especially of the Austrians, Russians & Prussians) & as long as you aren't paying the full cover price I do highly recommend this book.

The previous reviewer gave this book only one star; definately way off the mark...and not fair to this great book. For one volume, priced under USD \$40, this is a great source of basic information on the uniforms of France, Austria, Russia, England and Prussia. Minor nations are mentioned, but their treatment is not very thorough. The book is packed with hundreds of full color illustrations of uniforms from the various branches and unit types; hussars, lancers, artillery, guards, infantry, sappers and many more are all represented. Facing tables are included. The book does not contain enough detail for the grognards (hardcore wargamers), but it does contain a great deal more than many other books. I would highly recommend this book to someone just starting out. I would also recommend it as a painting guide for someone who did not have hundreds of dollars to spend on other books. Certainly, this one book is a great replacement for my aging dog-eared volumes by Liliane and Fred Funcken. I do wish the book had more rear views of equipment, something the Funckens did quite well. As a bonus, the book also contains an overview of the major campaigns and structure of each nations forces. Again, great information for someone just starting to learn about the period; or those more experienced who are looking for an overview in one volume. As a napoleonic gamer, who would love to see the genre grow, a great book like this one is the stuff that will get us there. For a new gamer, napoleonics can easily seem inaccessible, because of the cost, and amount of information one must sift through to understand the period. So kudos to Digby Smith, for getting so much great information in one, well-priced book, and for a job well done!

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