



Bonjour mon ami and welcome to the world of French Napoleonic re-enactment and in particular the 45eme Regiment d'Infanterie de Ligne. The 45eme is a French line regiment comprised primary of Fusiliers but with musician, medical and civilian personnel attached to it with occasional artillery and cavalry as well. So there are plenty of roles to choose from. Members are based across the UK, Ireland and further afield and we work closely with other French units at events to provide the best camp and 'show'.

The Napoleonic Era is a fascinating period which shaped Europe as well as the rest of the world and the effects are still felt today culturally, legally and in national borders and memories. You may have read Cornwall's books, seen Sharpe or sailed with Aubrey and Maturin but how much do you know about the French experience 1792 to 1815? 1792? Well, for many the age of Napoleon begins with the fall of the house of Bourbon and the Revolution Francais and French re-enactors are also in demand to portray the Revolutionary period and its wars (as Napoleon was rising to power), not just the time when The Boss was First Consul and Emperor. So it's a very wide period we have to work with, many different roles and each one can take years to master and learn about - and that's if you only choose one as some people like to have a main role as a soldier but dabble in something else as well, build up a civilian impression or a tradesman of some sort, learn to dance, sew, play a musical instrument, etc.

If you are already a scholar of the period and of the French experience, then that's great and you'll have plenty to share with the unit. We have a Regimental Newsletter which is always open to submissions and a number of members have some sort of personal research project they're working on.

The hobby has a lot to give so throw yourself in and ask as many questions as you like. Veterans - or 'grognards' meaning grumblers- will guide you and help you make the most of your time in the regiment and French Brigade as a whole. You'll sometimes find you're being drilled by a member of another French unit and not your 'home regiment' but we all share skills as much as possible and it helps us to have a uniform appearance on the field. There are a number of different units in the Brigade and whilst there is some friendly rivalry or joshing at times, we're all on the same side against Perfidious Albion and her damned allies! The main thing is, we're here to have fun and learn more about a period that fascinates us whilst helping educate the public about a side of history they probably won't know much about. We have rules for safety and authenticity but never just for rules sake.

This guide is to give you a basic understanding of the 45eme and help you find your feet before or at your first events, so you have a better idea of what to expect in camp and on the field but never be afraid to ask questions.

Creation of the Regiment

The 45eme Regiment d'Infanterie de Ligne was originally created in 1643 as the Regiment de la Reine-Mere. It was part of the Armee d'Italie in 1792-94 and formed part of the l'Interieure and de Reserve during the period 1795-99. A flag taken at the fall of Mantua on 30 July 1799, and currently on show in the Army Museum in Vienna, belonged to the 3e bataillon 45eme and has the Pont de Lodi, Bataille de Castiglione, combat sur la Brenta, Bataille d'Arcolo, 1re et 2e Bataille de Rivoli and the Bataille de St George shown on it.

In 1802 the Regiment saw service in Switzerland and from 1802 to 1805 it was part of L'Armee de Hanovre. The Regiment took part in the campaigns in Austria, Prussia, and Poland and was sent to Spain and saw service at Talavera, Chiclana, Albuhera, Alba de Tormes, Vittoria and in Germany at Dresden in 1813. The rest of the regiment were seeing action at Nivelle, Orthez, and Toulouse. In 1815 it took part in the Waterloo campaign.

An abridged history of the 45eme Infanterie Regiment de Ligne (1643 -1898) translated from the original version by Captain X.Poli is available from the units website.

- 1643: Created as Regiment de la Reine-Mere
- 1666: Renamed Regiment d'Arois
- 1673: Renamed Regiment de la Couronne
- 1791: 45eme Regiment de Infanterie

- 1793: 45eme demi-brigade de bataille (formed from the following)
1er bataillon 23e Regiment de Ligne
1er bataillon Volontaires des Basse-Alpes
1er bataillon Volontaires de la Lozere
- 1796: 45eme demi-brigade d'Infanterie de Ligne (formed from the following)
100e demi-brigade de bataille (2e Bat 50eme Regt d'Inf, 7e Bat Vol des Bouches-du-Rhone and Bat Vol de Tarascon)
105eme demi-brigade de bataille (1er Bat, 53eme Regt d'Inf and 1er and 2e Bat Vol du Gers)
Bataillon Volontaires des Basse-Alpes
- 1803: 45eme Regiment d'Infanterie de Ligne

The original Latin motto for the Regiment was '*Hanc Coronam Mastreka Dedit*' which translates as '*Maastricht gave this crown*'.

Regimental War Record (Battles and Combat)

- 1792: Valmy and Siege of Lille
- 1793: Nerwinden and Wattignies
- 1794: Courtrai and Capture of Ypres
- 1796: Lodi, Mantoue, Saint-Georges, and Castiglione
- 1797: Mantoue
- 1799: Magnano, Cassano, Novi, Gavi, and Tortone
- 1801: Casa-Nova
- 1805: Austerlitz
- 1806: Crewitz and Lubeck
- 1807: Ostrelenka and Friedland
- 1808: Espinosa-de-los-Monteros
- 1809: Alcantara, Aspern-Essling, Wagram, Talevera-de-la-Reina and Almonacid
- 1811: Barrosa, Fuentes-de-Onoro, and Albuera
- 1812: Cadiz
- 1813: Vittoria, Echalar, Nivelle, and Bayonne
- 1813: Dresden and Dantzig
- 1814: Garris, Orthez, and Toulouse
- 1815: Waterloo

Battles Honours

- Lodi 1796
- Austerlitz 1805
- Friedland 1807
- Essling 1809
- Wagram 1809

The importance of drill

Without drill we look a mess. Not like the army which conquered or liberated most of Europe and overthrew the 1000 year old Holy Roman Empire, but a rabble. Unless you're skilled in the language those of us in the French Brigade have it harder than our honourable foes as we have to instantly translate our orders into English and then act. This comes with practice, just as the muscle memory builds up for the steps to discharging a musket or wheeling right by file. There will always be some drill at an event and ask an NCO or officer if you'd like more or something specific. When you're on the field in your regiment or as part of a brigade crisply and confidentially marching, turning and firing as ordered you'll feel invincible and totally immersed - and it really wows the public. The Allied side will always have more troops so it's vital that the smaller French forces drill well and we look like the danger the units we portray were. And we look deadly by drill. Drill is critical for overseas events and a high level of proficiency

is a priority for attending one. The regiment may be honoured with command of an area or flank and we need to show our continental friends that we take it seriously and can be trusted.

Safety on and off the field

Always assume you're automatically being safe – or at least not deliberately being dangerous - all the way through this handbook. Our campsites are full of sharp objects, fire, gunpowder, working firearms and - when the battle is done- wine, beer and whatever else a good patriot needs to relax after a hard day. Be aware of yourself and your surroundings as safety is an individual and a collective responsibility. If you have allergies, food intolerance, an epi pen or a medical condition let your regiment know. You can keep things private to a point of course but your comrades need to be aware if, for example, a bee sting would kill you. First aiders are always present and ready to be called upon so make sure you find out who they are. If you're first aid trained let the regiment know, just as for any other skill. If you're present at an accident and don't know what to do (epileptic fit, broken bone, etc) make sure they're okay / immediately safe and get help.

Part of safety is keeping the public safe as well. They may be wandering around your camp or display loving what they're seeing and for some reason not think that fire is hot or that shiny metal is sharp. Keep an eye out if you're chopping wood that no one is getting too close to get a picture for example. If you have a firing musket then for someone to hold it they will need to possess a valid shotgun certificate and have it on them. Better for them to hold one of the very accurate non-firing muskets that are around now as that way there's no risk legally. It's also important to not do silly things like take pistols and big knives out of the grounds of the re-enactment if you go to the pub or to pick up supplies. Opening a can of Pringles at Sainsbury's with a sabre looks great, but the Police may take an interest. Likewise, if they hear all and sundry have been handling live firearms without licences and proper supervision.

Overall, accidents are perhaps more likely in camp than on the field. Posing for a photo opportunity with bayonet fixed and not paying attention to who's walking behind you as you shoulder arms. Guide ropes from a tent in the dark after going to the pub. Standing too close to the cooking fire with gunpowder and bacon grease on your trousers. But if you're sensible and remember where you are you'll have no issues.

The Campsite and Personal Impression or 'Living History'

It takes a good deal of money, dedication and attention to detail to get together your kit as a civilian or soldier but it's important to remember that can all be thrown away in an instant by carelessness. Check yourself before you head out or the public come in and if you see someone else who forgot to take their watch off then a friendly reminder is good. If someone gets a brilliant action shot of you storming an artillery position but everyone's wearing digital watches it will look a bit rubbish and make you wonder why you spent hundreds of pounds on your kit.

Uniform

When you start you'll probably have borrowed kit from the depot and have a mixed bag of other odds and ends. You'll look the part but not be parade ground ready which is fine. But be careful not to have brightly coloured or patterned socks on display, boxer shorts showing, visible bra straps, t-shirts, etc, under or showing from your kit. As you get more of your uniform and kit together this will be less of an issue but do bear it in mind. Clearly seeing a Rolling Stones logo underneath a linen shirt when a soldier is in camp takes away the impression we're all going for.

The regiment has lists of what a soldier needs and the order in which to get it. There can be bargains to be had but if a deal sounds too good to be true it probably is. Many have had bad experiences with uniforms bought from India and Pakistan but also from European and British suppliers as well. Talk to the unit. Depot kit is available but make sure you request it in advance (at least a few weeks as a minimum) because it has to be taken from storage, sizes sorted, packed, etc. Make sure you hand it back after the event and don't just chuck it in a tent as you leave so it's ready for you next time or another new recruit can borrow it. If you are particular tall, broad, short or notably big or small headed then you may have to make do a little more at times but it's all a good spur to get your own kit.

Wrist Watches

Obviously a no no. If you need to know the time, then a cheap and acceptable pocket watch can be had which you can slip into a pocket. Ask to see other peoples for an example. Watches weren't common for the ranks so nothing too flashy.

Jewellery

Some is okay – plain gold ring or an earring - but dripping with bangles, bracelets, rings, necklaces, multiple piercings, clearly modern designs, etc, will take away from your authenticity. Likewise a Fusilier in the ranks with a diamond ring. Jewellery could be used as a way to carry some wealth around regardless of where a soldat was billeted

Phone

Must be hidden away such as being locked in a car or hidden in a watched tent with the ringer off until the public leave. No one wants to hear Crazy Frog when the Emperor is reviewing his troops. They can also easily get broken in combat.

Tattoos

Unlike the medieval period there were more people with tattoos at the time we portray but you should take care when the public are around if you have a clearly modern tattoo which could be seen. Gloves, keeping your habit on or even bandages can cover up tattoos which would be out of time.

Glasses

If you don't like or can't wear contacts then period appearance glasses are best and these aren't too expensive especially when you consider the fine addition they make to your look. If you really need specs then wear them for safety but you might want to take them off for pictures.

Modern camping and modern kit

It's not always possible to be accommodated in a period tent and there is sometimes a modern camping area set aside for plastic, brightly coloured tents. Check ahead before the event to see what the situation is. If you are in a plastic tent you'll be in a non public display area but your home will be the camp especially the fire. Store your stuff in the plastic tent but you'll want to spend your time in camp with your comrades. Depending on what time the public enter a plastic tent may be pitched next to the display tents but must be cleared away as soon as possible so as not to ruin the illusion. Putting it up must wait until the site is clear and your NCOs and officers can give you site specific advice and keep in mind where the fire pit is if you have a plastic tent as not all are fire-proof.

Fire

Fire is a key part of a campaign socially, to stare at alone with your own thoughts, for cooking and to warm up. Don't let the public mess about near the fire (if it's lit) and make sure you're careful and know where an extinguisher or water bucket is. Natural fibres only near the fire they don't burn like our modern clothes.

Headgear

As soon as you're up and about you must have something on your head. This was fashion, tradition and military standing orders and it will be your bonnet de police as opposed to a shako unless you're on duty.

Food

You might bring your own or you might want to join in any unit meals provided for a small fee. If the latter make sure you've told the Catering Corps and bring along some cash. Eating communally regardless of where your rations came from is a great pleasure of the weekends away and you'll be amazed at what some people / units whip up in the field. If the public are about don't eat a packet of Walker's Smoky Bacon or a Snickers in front of them but if you need to eat one do so discretely.

Language

You'll be surprised by how many people assume that because we're in French uniform we must all be French over on a day trip or at least speak fluent French. You don't need to be able to speak French (your author here got an E at GCSE) but all battle commands are in French so you'll need to build up a small vocabulary. Practise it so you react like a well drilled soldier from a little village in Provence or the Midi. In fact, many of Napoleons soldiers weren't French or spoke it as a second or third language so there a historical precedent here for those under the Eagle to have to mentally translate 'right wheel!' but you'll be surprised how quickly you learn and remember to core commands. In camp, it's nice to greet visitors with bonjour, ca va, etc. It adds to the sense of living history. If they then turn out to be / speak fluent French....

Singing

Songs and singing have always been important to an army and the French are no different. The French Brigade is often well blessed with drummers for revile, battle commands and singing around the fire with more instruments always welcome. Joining in a song on the way to or from battle makes the march easier as well as being impressive to the public.

Water

A canteen should be one of the first items you pick up (it's not sexy kit but it is critical) and you must always, always have water in your canteen regardless of the weather. You must make sure you're hydrated as our uniforms can be very warm. It also means you can help a comrade if they run out on a hot day. Finding out where a drinkable water point is at an event is always worthwhile, as is volunteering to go and fill people's canteens up.

Death

We all die and in planning or on the field an officer or NCO will ask for casualties at points in the battle. There may also be scripted deaths. Sometimes you'll be resurrected to make up numbers again so watch out for a comrade coming over to 'help you back into the line' and go back with them. There are many ways to die - fall straight down, knocked back, clutch and die - so choose one. But when dead be dead or at least wounded. Not too hammy but don't lounge around, chat to others, munch a sandwich, etc. The audience want to believe they're watching a battle so help them by being a good corpse. Nothing dispels the magic and thrill of watching the Battle of Waterloo more than three soldiers killed in the melee having a fag and a giggle as Napoleon fights for his life 10 feet away. Even if you're them miraculously healed and marching again 5 minutes later, die well mon ami! The Emperor and the public are watching.

As the French are usually (although this may be slowly changing) out-numbered on the field you may find that you are musket and cannon ball proof for a good part of the battle so it's not all over in a couple of minutes. This is where the importance of drill comes into its own as spectators don't notice the lack of dead bodies when the unit is marching, wheeling, forming up and reforming well to shouted commands and drum-beats.

Rank and Orders

Your Officer's and NCO's have their position due to the time, effort and dedication they have put into the hobby sometimes over decades. They haven't bought their rank, they have earned it and they are keen to pass their knowledge onto you and to improve the hobby for everyone. So listen to them and try and take on board what they say - although it will be a lot to start with! They also may have unit responsibility for important matters like cooking, when does the bar open, where are the toilets, need help bringing over firewood for later, etc, so will ask for volunteers or ask you to do something to help out at times.

On the battlefield, as well as marching to and from it, its critical you listen to them and follow orders for safety as well as for the impression the unit makes on the public and on our enemies. When drilling or in camp when the public are around then although the French army of the period was not as class riddled and utterly rigid as the British army could be (there was more rank mixing due to the impact of the Revolution) the importance of rank was still there. Treat it more as 'helping out' rather than 'following orders' and you'll never be asked to do something stupid or unnecessary just for orders sake. We're all here on our free time and to have a good time.

Basic French Commands

Below are some basic commands in French – there are of course quite a few to learn and it's better to practise when you're actually moving about, going through the motions with a musket / broom, etc, but these common orders it's handy to know straight away. The standard format for orders is that there will be an 'alert' and then the 'order'. So in English it would be 'Stand at <Pause> Ease. You'll pick up the pauses in time it just takes practise. There are full guides to where to put your feet, how many beats per order, how many motions, etc, and these are freely available (The Ecole de Soldat for example) and the firing commands are not here as you need to see it done to understand it well but there are various videos on YouTube which can be helpful. British, Prussian and French are all slightly different though so make sure you watch the right ones

Droite	Right
Gauche	Left
Fixe	Front
Garde à vous	Attention
Repos	Stand at Ease
Peloton / Escouade	Platoon
Tête à droite	Eyes to the Right
Tête à gauche	Eyes to the Left
Peloton par le flanc droite	Platoon will face to the right
Peloton par le flanc à gauche	Platoon will face to the left
Demi-Tour à droite	To the right about face
Demi-Tour à gauche	To the left about face
En avant	Forward
Marche	March

Drum Commands

These are used at events where there are drummers so listen out for them. Like verbal commands you'll soon pick them up.

5 things to remember on the Field

- Safety above all.
- Consent. Don't start a ruckus with someone who doesn't know what's going to happen or doesn't look ready. Close up and complicated hand to hand is arranged and practised beforehand by volunteers. You'll need to be ready to improvise in the battle at times but follow your NCO or rank mate until you get a feel for it. If someone else starts working with you then be led by them and if you're in doubt die.
- Look and listen. There's a lot going on and you need to be aware of danger (muskets, cavalry, artillery) and listening to orders (so the unit looks good and responds to commands well and not as a rabble) but it's also really exhilarating and you won't want to miss it. Watching 30 Brits under a billowing flag unload their Muskets on you as you're advancing at 76 paces a minute is unlike anything else. Just like feeling four horses hammer past you at full speed suddenly helps you understand why they could smash larger formations that weren't in square.
- Remember your left and right rank mates. When the unit reforms you need to quickly get back into rank so memorise who they are for the battle.
- Without drill the unit looks undisciplined and untrained. We're not leve-en-mass, we're the Grand Armeel! Despite popular opinion the French have been a formidable fighting force for many centuries and it's the Napoleonic Association not the Wellington Association. So let's honour that history by doing our homework.

5 things to remember in Camp

- Always have a hat on.
- Never leave anything modern where it can be seen.
- Don't loaf around unless you're there to loaf – in which case loaf like a true son of Gaul. Help create the living history illusion even if that's cutting bread, cleaning a musket, playing cards, volunteering for things, etc.
- Be helpful to others in your unit.
- If you're on picket or guard duty take it seriously. You'll enjoy it and so will visitors.

Events domestic

Where there is a battle or skirmish/es the officers of both sides will meet and thrash out a basic plan beforehand. This takes into account the battlefield size, space and terrain, units and troops available, specialist units such as artillery or cavalry, how many troops are firing (as opposed to carrying dummy muskets), any particular scenario which is being portrayed, etc. They'll return and brief everyone else maybe asking for volunteers for specific things like choreographed hand to hand combat, prisoners, etc. Whether being in the ranks to fight and die gloriously or with a specific job or role to play you'll always have something to do.

As a rule of thumb for a weekend event the French are usually victorious on the Saturday and defeated on the Sunday, so don't worry about always being 'on the losing side.' And remember – if the French always lost and can't fight why did it take most of Europe, millions of men, a global war and nearly 20 years to finally subdue them?

Events foreign

There are quite a few of these around these days other than the big one in Belgium. If you do attend one it's critical that your drill is of a high standard, your kit – borrowed or owned – is in good shape as well and that you have any and all legal documents to travel, carry a firearm, handle black powder, etc.

Additional Info

Warning Orders

These are sent out by the NA or by the event organisers and cascaded to you by the regiment. Take the time to read them as a good one will explain camping areas, water and toilet situation, wood supply, powder delivery times, time restrictions for site entrance and leaving or noise, parking, outline of the day/s, scenarios, site or event specific elements and more.

Powder

Unless you have the required legal certificates stay away. Let a veteran explain and you can watch and roll paper cartridges but don't handle the powder. Only handle a firing musket with the permission of the owner and under their close supervision as they are legally responsible for it and what happens to and with it.