



Coldstream Guards 1815

Napoleonic Re-Enactment and Living History Group Information



Unit Background

We are a group of individuals with an interest in the history of the Napoleonic wars a popular period of history which many people study. However, where we differ is that we don't just want to read about it, we take it one stage further and actually live the life of a soldier or camp follower of the period for a couple of days. It's very easy to open a book and read about a soldier of the Coldstream Guards firing his Brown Bess musket through a loophole at the Château of Hougoumont during the battle of Waterloo, with the taste of the gritty gunpowder as he reloads to fire at the advancing French through the gunsmoke. Well I together with the rest of the group have actually done it, through the very loopholes used by our forefathers during the famous battle.

As a Napoleonic re-enactment group we seek to portray Number 6 Company, 2nd Battalion Coldstream Guards as it would have been at the time of the battle of Waterloo in 1815. We are a family orientated group with members spread out over a wide area with clusters in Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Oxford, London, Kent and even Devon. Members are encouraged to bring wives, girlfriends and children to take part in events as from a living history perspective no military camp could have managed on campaign without them.

As with all re-enactment units we are always on the lookout for new members, but in addition we are also looking for the right people. Practice makes perfect and while we work hard at events we also try to have as much fun as possible, it is after all a hobby. We don't expect new members to have any knowledge of the period, military drill, weapons handling or camp life, all we ask is that you are willing to learn and have fun doing it, we will do the rest. We will teach you all you need to take on the role whether it is soldier or camp follower, including period foot and arms drill, and how to fire a Brown Bess musket. No pressure is put on anyone to take part in any display until they (and we) feel that they are up to it.

We pride ourselves in the authenticity of both our drill display and our living history encampment. This means that everyone involved has to put in a great deal of effort at events. I'm not bragging when I say that we are one of the best Napoleonic Infantry re-enactment groups in the country. In 2006 we put on a private display for the Coldstream Guards Regimental Association day at Victoria Barracks in Windsor and in 2007 attended a standard dedication ceremony for the Leicester Branch of the Association. Both times we were stood alongside the regulars in bearskin and tunic and many of the Coldstream Association thought that we were in fact regulars who had dressed up in period uniform, praise indeed. Our friendship with Regimental Headquarters and the Association still continues.

We have ex-forces as well as civilian members and so there is a very good mix, some of our members have been doing it for 20 plus years, others less than a year.

Trial Membership

The prospective member pays the Regiment £15, this covers them for temporary membership, insurance and the use of all uniform and equipment for one event. If you have enjoyed yourself and would like participate again, you pay another £15. After attending two events you are entitled to attend a third event free of charge. This is quite a unique scheme and makes very good sense as it gives you the opportunity to find out if the hobby is for you without spending a fortune on uniform and equipment you might never use again.

Full Membership

After attending three events you may apply to join the unit as a full member of the Regiment, all Full Members vote to allow a new member to join and if approved by the membership you would be expected to obtain the relevant licences to enable you to legally fire a Brown Bess musket within a reasonable period. You will also have to pay a one off membership fee of £50 and then a monthly standing order of £15 for the duration of your membership, there are allowances in this for full time students and the unemployed. This covers the cost of all your uniform and equipment which means that as a member you never have to worry about obtaining uniform or equipment, it's all provided for you and paid for over time.

You will also be responsible for looking after your uniform and equipment and bringing it to events. If at some point in the future you decide to leave the Regiment, we add up what you have paid in membership fees during your time with us and then that value of equipment is yours to keep and you will return unpaid for items back to the Regiment. We would of course ask for first refusal to buy back any equipment that is yours as these items could then be re-issued to other members.

All uniform and equipment issued to you remains the property of the Coldstream Guards 1815 until paid for.

Uniform & Equipment

So that we can have the same standard of uniformity as our forebears did 200 years ago and to help us keep costs down we source all equipment from a central point, this means that what we can't make ourselves we buy from a single manufacturer to an approved Regimental standard, thereby maintaining the authenticity and integrity of our equipment. No one is permitted anything in camp during periods when the public are present that is not up to our living history standard.

Event Catering

At events as part of our living history display we cook all our food over an open fire in camp as would have been done during the period. The standard of food is high and I doubt you could eat elsewhere over the course of an event for less. The reason it is so cheap is that one member brings all the food to the event and then we just chip in to pay the person that brings it, this usually averages out at £12 per weekend per person. This is paid separately to the Sutler at an event and is not included as part of your trial or full membership payment.

In addition we also supply some squash to drink but if you want something more you can either bring your own, or at the larger events the organisers put a bar on. No consumption of alcoholic beverages is allowed while the public are present unless we are toasting the King or a Battle Honour.

Camping at Events

As part of the living history aspect we will supply you with a period tent to sleep in, you just need to bring your own camp bed and sleeping bag. Regardless of the time period we are always at the mercy of the weather when camping and while most events are held during the summer months, some are not and you should ensure you have enough bedding to keep warm at night. You will also require your own washing and shaving kit and should bring a change of civilian clothing for going home in. We normally spend the entire weekend in period clothing so there is no need to bring excessive amounts of modern clothing.

You will have the choice at most events to either sleep in the authentic encampment or to sleep in a modern day encampment, if you choose the latter you have to provide your own tent or caravan, but can still choose to eat with the rest of us.

Weapons

We use a replica Brown Bess musket in our displays, these are not toys, but real firearms which require licences to use. Some members have purchased their own guns and some members use guns from the Regimental Armoury. With regard to the use of a Brown Bess at events as a non licence holder, you would normally be allowed to carry one during display but not to fire it. However this is subject to change and at some events this may not be allowed by the local Police Firearms Licensing Department. Once you have obtained your licences you will be given full training to ensure you learn to fire it safely.

We have a very high standard of weapon handling and discipline and if anyone was found not to maintain these standards they would be asked to leave the Regiment. Even with the necessary licences no one is allowed to fire a weapon on display until our instructors are satisfied that person can handle the Brown Bess safely and correctly.

Licences

To fire on display you will need two certificates. This is best done when you are sure that you want to take up the hobby. Contact your local Police Firearms Department and tell them that you are starting Napoleonic re-enactment and require application forms for:

- 1, a shotgun certificate.
- 2, a certificate to acquire explosives (Black Powder)

They are pretty straight forward to fill in, but there are a couple of sections that are not so clear, but we can help with this.

Wives, Girlfriends & Children

We are a family group and the wives, girlfriends and children of soldiers are allowed in camp to take part as part of the living history display. Parents are solely responsible for looking after their children and ensuring their behaviour at an event. Clothing for wives, girlfriends and children can be loaned with notice but they are not included as part of the membership payment and have to be sourced and paid for within the unit. If you would like to bring your wife, girlfriend or children to an event let us know in advance so that we can arrange the required costumes.

What Next

I think that about answers the basics and I hope that this helps answer some of your questions, if there is anything else you would like to ask please let me know, our Regimental website and my contact email are listed below.

Regimental website:- www.coldstreamguards1815.org.uk

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