

The Napoleon Series

British Staff Pay during the Napoleonic Wars

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The British Army's rank officer structure was unique among the European armies. Until July 1814 most infantry and cavalry officers who were not on half pay, were assigned to a regiment. The officer's rank and pay was based on his seniority within the regiment. It was also called substantive rank. A regiment would have only one colonel. If it was an infantry regiment it would have one lieutenant colonel and two majors for each battalion in the regiment. A cavalry regiment was authorized two lieutenant colonels and two majors. The daily pay of these officers can be seen in the table below.

British Army Regimental Daily Pay during the Napoleonic Wars

Rank	Life Guards			Horse Guards			Foot Guards			Cavalry			Line Infantry		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Colonel	1	16	0	2	1	0	1	19	6	1	12	10	1	2	6
Lieutenant Colonel	1	11	0	1	9	6	1	8	6	1	3	0	0	17	0
Major	1	6	0	1	7	0	1	4	6	0	19	3	0	16	0
Captain	0	16	0	1	1	6	0	16	6	0	14	7	0	10	6
Lieutenant	0	11	0	0	15	6	0	7	10	0	9	0	0	6	6
Cornet, Ensign, 2 nd Lieutenant	0	8	6	0	14	6	0	5	10	0	8	0	0	5	3
Adjutant	0	13	0	0	10	0	0	10	0	0	10	0	0	8	6

For those who follow the British Army the question that quickly comes to mind, is what about general offices and those officers who hold army rank? To answer this question, we must first explain what army rank was. Army rank was rank given to officers who were not serving with their regiments but were on the staff either at home or on active service¹ outside of Great Britain. This rank was also called brevet rank but unlike brevet ranks in

¹ Active service was any duty in a theater of war outside of Great Britain. For example those assigned to Wellington's Peninsular Army were on active service.

other armies it was permanent rank.² While serving in a position outside of his regiment, he received the pay and allowances his army rank. Once the officer returned to his regiment he was still considered whatever his brevet rank was, however his duties, responsibilities, pay, and allowances reverted back to his regimental or substantive rank.

So what does this mean? As we pointed out before, there was only one colonel in the regiment and very few lieutenant colonels and majors whose rank was regimental rank. However, depending on the unit, a regiment could have many officers whose brevet rank was general, colonel, lieutenant colonel or major. Once they returned to the regiment, they were still called by their brevet rank, but they performed the duties of their regimental rank.³ For example, Captain Jones was on the staff of the army as a Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General (DAQMG). The position was to be filled by a major. When Captain Jones was appointed as a DAQMG he was promoted to major. Once he returned to his regiment he assumed his regimental duties. Although these duties were those of a captain and he only received a captain's pay he was still called Major Jones.

Up until July 1814, those officers whose army rank was that of a general became unemployed once they were no longer in a staff position. They continued to be carried on their regimental rolls, however they had no duties in the regiment. They did receive the pay of their regimental rank.

The officers on the staff continued to receive his regimental pay, but he also received staff pay. This could be a significant increase in his daily pay. For example, when Major General Stafford Lightburne was a brigade commander in the Peninsula in 1810, his regimental rank was as a lieutenant colonel in the 53rd Foot.⁴ As a lieutenant colonel, his daily pay 17 shillings. On 26 July 1809 he was appointed on the staff of Wellington's Army as a major general. He then began to receive the additional pay of a major general which was £1 17 shillings and 11 pence a day. His net pay from his regiment and his staff position was £2 14 shillings and 11 pence. This was over three times his regimental pay. After General Lightburne left the Peninsula in October 1810, he no longer received general officer's pay. Although he remained a general officer in the army, he was unemployed as a general. He continued to receive pay, but only for the last regimental rank he held, which was a lieutenant colonel's pay of 17 shillings per day. This pay was also very lucrative for a junior officer. A cavalry cornet who was appointed an aide-de-camp besides his regimental pay of 8 shillings would receive another 9 shillings 6 pence and thus double his pay.

² In modern armies an officer holding brevet rank had the authority and responsibility of the rank but did not receive the pay or allowances of that rank. He did receive the privileges of the higher rank.

³ In 1813 the 1st Foot had 5 officers with brevet rank of lieutenant colonel or above, including 2 major generals, 1 colonel, and 2 lieutenant colonels. William Gray was a brevet lieutenant colonel, but his regimental rank was only captain. There were 27 captains who were senior to him in the regiment. Of the eight majors in the regiment, only one was senior to him in brevet rank!

⁴ McGuigan; page 172

Staff Pay Per Diem

Position	£	Shillings	Pence
Field Marshal Commander-in-Chief of Forces	16	8	9
Commander of the Forces	9	9	6
General	5	13	9
Lieutenant General	3	15	10
Major General	1	17	11
Brigadier General	1	8	6
Colonel	1	2	9
Adjutant General, at home in War	4	5	4
Adjutant General, at Home in Peace	3	15	10
Adjutant General Abroad	1	17	11
Deputy Adjutant General Abroad and at Home	0	19	0
Principal Assistant Adjutant General at Home	0	19	0
Assistant and Deputy Assistant Adjutant General at Home	0	14	3
Assistant Adjutant General Abroad	0	14	3
Deputy Assistant Adjutant General Abroad	0	9	6
Sub Deputy Assistant Adjutant General Abroad	0	4	9
Quarter Master General at Home in War	4	5	4
Quarter Master General at Home in Peace	3	15	10
Quarter Master General Abroad	1	17	11
Deputy Quarter Master General Abroad and at Home	0	19	0
Assistant Quarter Master General Abroad	0	14	3
Deputy Assistant Quarter Master General Abroad	0	9	6
Permanent District Assistant to the Quarter Master General as Lieutenant Colonel of Cavalry, including 1 shilling 6 pence in lieu of a Servant	1	4	6
Permanent District Assistant to the Quarter Master General as Major of Cavalry, including 1 shilling 6 pence in lieu of a Servant	1	0	9
Deputy Assistant Quarter Master General at Head Quarters when 15 shillings a day gross	0	14	3
Temporary Assistant Quarter Master General	0	9	6
Field Officer of Militia in Canada and Nova Scotia	0	17	0
Military Secretary Abroad	0	19	0
Assistant Military Secretary Abroad	0	9	6
Military Secretary in North Britain	0	9	6
Deputy Barracks Master General Abroad	1	8	6
Assistant Barracks Master General Abroad	0	9	6
Inspector of Clothing	0	19	0
Commandant General of Hospitals	1	6	6
Commandant of Hospitals	0	14	3
Aide-de-Camp to the King or Prince Regent	0	10	5

Aide-de-Camp to a General Officer	0	9	6
Major of Brigade	0	9	6
Chaplain to the Forces	0	16	0
Chaplain to the Commander-in-Chief	0	6	4
Principal Veterinary Surgeon	0	9	6
Provost Marshal Abroad	0	9	6
Deputy Provost Marshal abroad	0	4	0
Commissary General	4	14	11
Deputy Commissary General Home	1	8	6
Deputy Commissary General Abroad	1	18	0
Assistant Commissary General Home	0	14	3
Assistant Commissary General Abroad	0	19	3
Deputy Assistant Commissary General Home	0	9	6
Deputy Assistant Commissary General Abroad	0	14	6
Director General of the Medical Department	£2000 per year		
Principal Inspector of Hospitals	£1200 per year		
Inspector of Hospitals	1	17	11
Deputy Inspector of Hospitals	1	3	9
Physician	0	19	0
Purveyor of Hospitals	0	19	0
Deputy Purveyor of Hospitals	0	9	6
Surgeon	0	18	10
Surgeon of a Recruiting District	0	10	0
Assistant Surgeon	0	7	6
Apothecary	0	9	6
Hospital Assistant	0	6	6
Hospital Assistant Abroad	0	7	6
Disperser of Medicine	0	5	0
Disperser of Medicine Abroad	0	6	6
Purveyor Clerk	0	5	0
Purveyor Clerk Abroad	0	6	6

While on active service all officers were authorized a Ration Allowance. This money was supposed to help him maintain his horses and baggage animals. An army commander would receive an additional £2 10 shillings a day to feed his animals. An ensign who was in a company would only receive 6 pence. However if the ensign was an aide-de-camp he would receive 60 pence or 5 shillings.

Ration Allowance

Rank	Number of Rations per day at 6 Pence Each
General or Officer Commanding the Force	100
Lieutenant General	60
Major General	40
Brigadier General	30
Adjutant General	20
Deputy Adjutant General	15
Assistant Adjutant General	10
Deputy Assistant Adjutant General	6
Quarter Master General	20
Deputy Quarter Master General	15
Assistant Quarter Master General	10
Deputy Assistant Quarter Master General	6
Military Secretary	10
Aide-de-Camp	10
Brigade Major	10
Surgeon to the General Commanding	10
Provost Marshal	3
Deputy Provost Marshal	3
Baggage Master General	10
Bridge Master	10
Captain of Guides	10
Deputy Judge Advocate	10
Commissary of Accounts	20
Deputy Commissary of Accounts	15
Assistant Commissary of Accounts	10
Commissary of Provisions	15
Deputy Commissary of Provisions	6
Commissary General	40
Assistant Commissaries	10
Inspecting Commissary	10
Inspector of Hospitals	30
Deputy Inspector of Hospitals	15
Physicians	12
Purveyor	14
Deputy Purveyor	6
Surgeon	8
Apothecary	6
Hospital Mate	2
Brigade Chaplain	10

Inspector of Foreign Corps	10
Town or Fort Major	10
Town or Fort Adjutant	3
Colonel Commanding a Battalion	11
Colonel Commanding	9
Lieutenant Colonel Commanding	10
Lieutenant Colonel not Commanding	8
Major Commanding	9
Major not Commanding	7
Captain Commanding	7
Captain with Company	7
Company Captain Absent	2
Subalterns	1
Adjutant	1
Quarter-Master of Cavalry	1
Quarter-Master of Infantry	1
Surgeon	5
Assistant Surgeon	1
Paymaster	5
Captain without Company	3

Beginning in July 1814, general officers were given the option of giving up their regimental commission and becoming permanent general officers. This was referred to as being a general officer unattached. If he did this, he would not longer receive his regimental pay, but would receive general's pay whether he was employed or not. His new pay was:

Rank	Daily Pay	Annual Pay
General	£1 8 shillings	£693
Lieutenant General	£1 2 shillings 6 pence	£593
Major General	£1 5 shillings	£456

What was important about this permanent rank of general officer, was that the general would always be paid as a general regardless of whether he was in a staff position. Should he be appointed on the staff, he would also receive the staff pay. For example in July 1814 Major General John Byng gave up his regimental commission. At the time he was not employed as a general because he had no staff job in Great Britain. Because he was unemployed, he only received a major general's pay of £1 5 shillings per day.⁵ On 3 May 1815 he was appointed the commander of the 2nd Brigade of the Guards Division in the Anglo-Allied Army in Belgium. With this appointment he received another £1 17 shillings 11 pence per day. This raised his daily pay to £3 2 shillings 11 pence.

⁵ McGuigan; pages 74 - 77

Sources:

Army List, May 1813 and January 1817

General Orders: Adjutant General's Office 1 September 1809

McGuigan, Ron and Robert Burnham. *Wellington's Brigade Commanders: Peninsular and Waterloo*. Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2017.

Placed on the Napoleon Series: June 2017