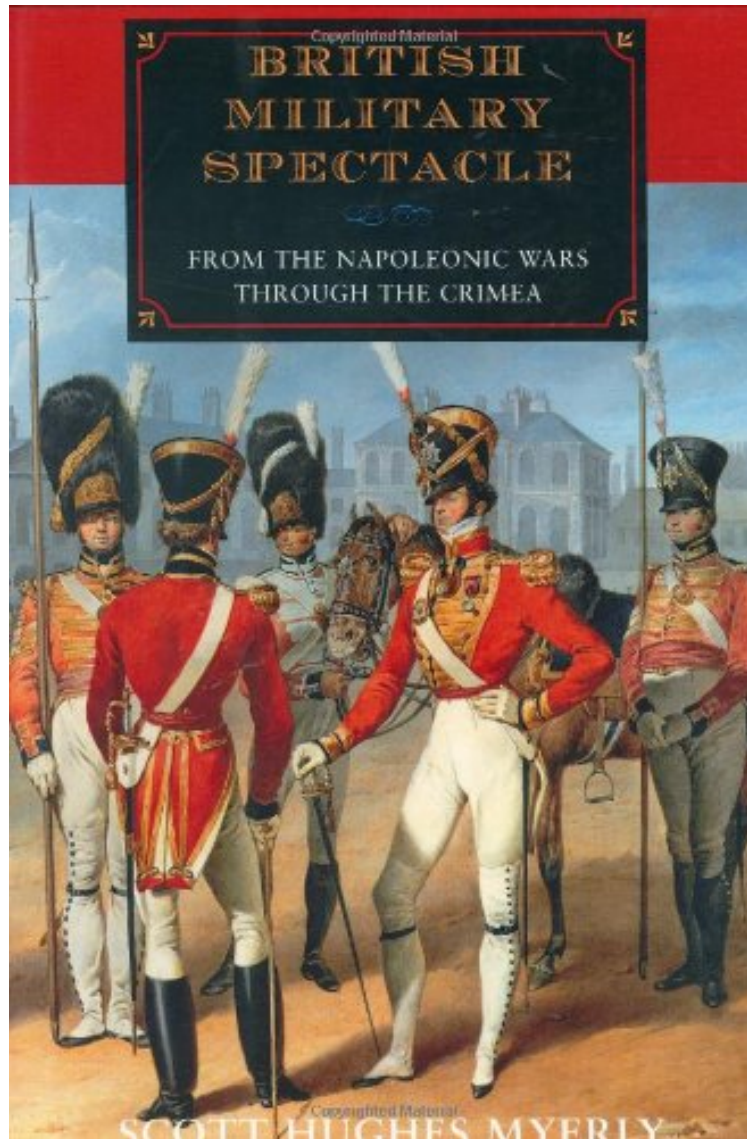


(Download free pdf) British Military Spectacle: From the Napoleonic Wars through the Crimea

British Military Spectacle: From the Napoleonic Wars through the Crimea

Scott Myerly

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Scott Myerly : British Military Spectacle: From the Napoleonic Wars through the Crimea before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised British Military Spectacle: From the Napoleonic Wars through the Crimea:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Excellent images By Kept Man Beautiful workmanship in this book giving a real sense of the period. Recommended for all history buffs interested in uniforms and equipment. 7 of 7 people

found the following review helpful. Thought provoking
By A. Woodley
It was only after I had read some way into this book that I realised that it must have been some kind of thesis. When did people start writing them so well? It isn't encumbered with that annoying pseudo-intellectualese that people who generally present theses are so proud of to confuse the reader. In fact the points it does present are in strikingly simple and wonderfully readable. The issue Myerly discusses is the development of the British army in the first half of the nineteenth century, basically the Napoleonic Wars until Crimea and it is a fascinating period. He discusses the changing attitudes to discipline, uniform, recruiting and life in general in the army - but also the effects the army had on civilian life and vice versa. There is an enormous bibliography at the end of the book, followed by extensive footnotes (some 100 pages). If you don't like footnotes then I can assure you they don't interfere with the reading in the text but help do help to clarify issues for those that want to delve deeper into an issue. The only reason I have marked the book down from 5 stars was really a bit trivial, I found the last couple of chapters a bit repetitive - or they seemed so to me. I could barely put the book down for the first 5 or so chapters, and it really got me thinking. Definitely worthwhile!
3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Interesting Thesis
By Roger Kennedy
This slightly ponderous book presents a number of interesting questions. The main point it tries to make is that the military has often been used as a symbol to both inspire and control the public in Great Britain. The author painstakingly explains how the British army attempted to mould its soldiers into a certain disciplined caste that would prove reliable in all circumstances. While other countries have allowed their military to become all pervasive and dominant, in Britain the army always maintained a close loyalty to the Crown. The power of the Crown was tempered by Parliament, which meant that the army would never assume a dominant position in British affairs. That the military was useful as a means to control social discontent in the early 19th century cannot be denied however. Before there was a reliable Police Force, the army was instrumental in maintaining the public order. This in turn ensured that the power of the elite was not threatened. The army was also an inspiration to many British thinkers and industrialists of the period, who looked upon its regimentation as an example to be followed in civilian affairs. Even fashion owes much of its influence to the army in this period. The ever popular term "Dressing to the Nines" was coined from the sharpe appearance of the 90th Foot. While this book did address many interesting points concerning the relationship between the military and civilian life in Britain, at times the material seemed a bit redundant. There were also some gaps. More emphasis should have been placed on the development and use of military bands, their music, as well as their ceremonial use. The employment of bands went very far to popularize the view of the military to many and should have been discussed at greater length. Pomp and Ceremony remains an important element in British society today, and continues to showcase the military, despite many evident cut-backs. The development of many of the great Tattoos, Military Music Spectacles etc., were instrumental in presenting a favorable impression toward the British public. While many of these events would be developed in a later period, they surely had their start in the time covered in this book. Failure to mention this influence in more detail I think is the chief failing in an otherwise worthwhile book.

In the theater of war, how important is costume? And in peacetime, what purpose does military spectacle serve? This book takes us behind the scenes of the British military at the height of its brilliance to show us how dress and discipline helped to mold the military man and attempted to seduce the hearts and minds of a nation while serving to intimidate civil rioters in peacetime. Often ridiculed for their constrictive splendor, British army uniforms of the early nineteenth century nonetheless played a powerful role in the troops' performance on campaign, in battle, and as dramatic entertainment in peacetime. Plumbing a wide variety of military sources, most tellingly the memoirs and letters of soldiers and civilians, Scott Hughes Myerly reveals how these ornate sartorial creations, combining symbols of solidarity and inspiration, vivid color, and physical restraint, enhanced the managerial effects of rigid discipline, drill, and torturous punishments, but also helped foster regimental esprit de corps. Encouraging recruitment, enforcing discipline within the military, and boosting morale were essential but not the only functions of martial dress. Myerly also explores the role of the resplendent uniform and its associated gaudy trappings and customs during civil peace and disorder--whether employed as public relations through spectacular free entertainment, or imitated by rioters and rebels opposing the status quo. Dress, drills, parades, inspections, pomp, and order: as this richly illustrated book conducts us through the details of the creation, design, functions, and meaning of these aspects of the martial image, it exposes the underpinnings of a mentality--and vision--that extends far beyond the military subculture into the civic and social order that we call modernity.

From Library Journal
The British Army is well known for its pomp and pageantry, color and precision drill. Nowhere in its history is this more evident than the period from 1800 to 1857, when the army was at its pinnacle and almost continuously engaged in one campaign or another. This is the first book to take an in-depth look at the purpose and importance of military costume and spectacle in time of war and peace. Myerly (history, Minot State Univ., North Dakota) shows how dress and discipline mold the soldier and at the same time win over the civilian population through the use of the military review. The author makes a valid point by showing the beginnings of the machine age through the managerial effects of rigid discipline and drill. Recommended for all collections. ?David Lee Poremba,

Detroit P.L. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. This book is as beautifully tailored as are the uniforms it describes...[It] is a most entertaining and scholarly work. Charm comes with the author's pleasure in anecdotes. (Hardy Amies London Times)[An] earnest foray into military aesthetics. There have been innumerable books about army uniforms and traditions, but Myerly, an American cultural and military historian, is concerned also with the impact on society of military spectacle and of those martial virtues and excellences...It is good to see American publishers backing research into facets of British history which our own publishers are eager to neglect. (E. S. Turner London of Books)[A] beautifully produced volume...Myerly has written a book that is often innovative, fusing written evidence with that of pictures and artefacts, and linking antiquarianism to broad historical themes in the best manner of cultural history. (Hew Strachan Times Literary Supplement)This well-written and ably-argued study takes an apparently thankless subject--military uniform--and shows it can be employed to throw light on the military, society and politics of the period...Based on a most impressive and imaginative range of archival and published sources, [Myerly's] book offers not only valuable insights on military history, but also an important perspective on the issue of British exceptionalism. (Jeremy Black History Today [UK])Myerly explores very effectively the psychological impact of military dress on both soldiers and civilians. His probing into the various meanings behind the sartorial finery, and its presentation in public as 'spectacle', reveals a complex picture in which the context of the presentation is all important...He makes too, a welcome contribution on the often puzzling, and at times paradoxical relationship between British soldiers and civilians. For those interested specifically in military dress, there is much comment drawn from primary sources, supported by a well chosen (and well reproduced) selection of contemporary illustrations, half of which are in colour...For the student of military history, and of the British Army and its uniforms in particular, this is a book that has much of interest. It can be interesting and insightful. (Glenn A. Stepler Army Historical Research [UK])The British Army is well known for its pomp and pageantry, color and precision drill. Nowhere in its history is this more evident than the period from 1800 to 1857, when the army was at its pinnacle and almost continuously engaged in one campaign or another. This is the first book to take an in-depth look at the purpose and importance of military costume and spectacle in time of war and peace...Recommended. (Library Journal)[T]he work is thought provoking and...well illustrated. (Major Colin Robins The War Correspondent: Journal of the Crimean War Research Society [UK]) No other book has tried to look at how military dress and mannerism interacted with details of civil society like the circus! The energy of research behind this book is impressive. Myerly has read very widely...The theme he addresses is a real one: military show did matter in British life, and affected soldiers and civilians alike. (William H. McNeill, author of Keeping Together in Time)