

# OFFENSIVE MINIATURES

1944 British Airborne  
& Paratroopers

Painting Guide



Offensive Miniatures make 28mm metal British Airborne Paratroopers. Airborne troops captured Pegasus Bridge on D-Day. During Operation Market Garden the Red Devils fought bravely at the Battle of Arnhem, famously “A Bridge Too Far”.



Marco Capponi

Offensive Miniatures British Paratroopers painted by Dan Withers at Valhalla Games

The Offensive Miniatures range comprises of more than 70 figures, which includes command troops, infantry sections, support weapons and specialists. All are clothed in the famous Denison Smock with a mixture of hard and soft head gear, perfect for late war operations such as operation "Market Garden" the famous "Bridge Too Far", where they came up against units of the 9th and 10th Waffen SS amongst others, and Operation "Varsity" the air assault on Germany.

## History

The British were much later than other nations in introducing Paratroopers to the regular army strength. Impressed by the success of German airborne operations during the Battle of France, Winston Churchill directed the War Office to investigate the possibility of creating a corps of Paratroopers. Early parachute operations were undertaken by Commando units and the 11th Special Air service Battalion, later designated as the 1st Parachute battalion (later named the Parachute Regiment). In February 1942, Operation Biting, also known as the Bruneval raid, was its first parachute drop in anger, the objective was to capture a Würzburg radar on the coast of France. The raid was a complete success and carried out under the command of Major John Frost.

The Parachute Regiment had their own distinctive uniform including the maroon beret, and in fighting against German Fallschirmjaeger they would earn the nickname "Die Roten Teufel" (the Red Devils). The Parachute Regiment would eventually raise 17 battalions during the Second World War. The regiment took part in six major parachute assault operations in North Africa, Italy, Greece, France, the Netherlands, and Germany, often landing ahead of all other troops.

The Parachute Regiment was armed with the bolt action Lee-Enfield rifle and the Enfield or Webley revolver. The standard submachine gun used in Northwest Europe was the British Sten. Paratroopers attached to Eighth Army used the Thompson submachine gun in the North African and Mediterranean theatre and during Operation Dragoon, one of our "old sweats" in the range still has his! Each section had a Bren light machine gun, and the platoon had a 2-inch mortar. The only battalion heavy weapons were 3-inch mortars, Vickers machine guns and after 1943, PIAT anti-tank weapons.

## Uniform and Equipment Notes

British uniforms were consistent over all branches of the army. Commandos, infantry, artillery, and many

Commonwealth forces engaged in Europe had only slight variations of insignia and beret. Airborne forces were similar but with the addition of a camouflaged Denison smock jacket. Towards the end of WW2 some units received windproof jackets and trousers in camouflage.

## 1943 Denison Smock

In 1940 the British produced an expedient grey-green paratrooper jump-jacket for the Special Operations Executive (SOE) copied directly from the German parachutist's Knochensack. This first "smock" had leg holes that were designed to be stepped into and the jacket pulled up over the body like a set of overalls. With the creation of Airborne Infantry units in 1942 there was a much greater need for this type of garment; this British Knochensack was redesigned to simplify production. The camouflage for this jacket was designed by Major Denison, a member of a camouflage unit under the command of stage designer Oliver Messel. Thus, was born the "Airborne Smock Denison Camouflage". The first pattern smock was made from heavyweight twill material in a yellowish-sand colour with the pea green and dark brown non-colourfast water-soluble dyes being hand applied in broad stripes with mop like brushes. In late 1942, early 1943 as the new Airborne Forces expanded, the need for smocks grew, to speed production, the Denison pattern was screen printed on the fabric with colourfast dyes. All other features remained unchanged. A 2nd pattern smock was produced starting in 1944, the base colour was changed to a medium olive green with the overlying colours now a reddish brown and deep olive green. It was decided that these colours were better for the Northwest Europe.

## Battledress

The standard uniform was Wool Serge cloth in a brown shade that was relatively colourfast. Vallejo English Uniform 70.921 is best but Flat Earth 70.984 or US Field Drab 70.973 can also be used.

## Webbing

Webbing, anklets and ammunition pouches were issued in Sand and Green shades. They were made from were cotton canvas and faded rapidly. Webbing straps and the backpacks were made in beige canvas and coloured using a cream called Blanco. Blanco was available in four colours.

- Blanco KG3 Khaki Dark - Vallejo English Uniform 70.991
- Blanco 61 Buff - Vallejo Khaki 70.988

- Blanco 97 Khaki Medium - Vallejo Russian Uniform 70.924
- Blanco 103 Khaki Green Light - Vallejo Green Grey 70.886

In theory, the correct shade is a match for the battledress fabric. Khaki Battledress is worn with Blanco KG3. Khaki Drill is worn with Blanco 61. Jungle Green is worn with Blanco 97. Soldiers on parade would have the regulation colours. Troops on campaign were issued with whatever was available. Also, as replacement kit was issued in

combat zones, it was often the case that the pouches were a different colour to the backpack and webbing. Painters and costume designers for film and television frequently select the webbing and pouch colours to provide a more visually attractive uniform.

## Metal Items

British made vehicles and metal items were dark green (Reflective Green). American made vehicles and metal items were olive green drab (US Dark Green 70.893).

## British Paratrooper Colours

This painting guide is intended as a quick way to get historically accurate wargames figures ready to battle. The method is suitable for moderately experienced painters. As your skills grow, you can add more highlights and insignia to make your own masterpiece.

Colour		Vallejo Model Colour	Item
	Flesh	Main - Cork Brown 70.843 Shade - Flesh Wash Highlight - Flat Flesh 70.955	Face & Hands
	Khaki Brown	English Uniform 70.921 or US Tan Earth 70.874	Battledress Jacket & Trousers, Greatcoat
	Khaki Beige	Khaki 70.988	Denison MK2 base colour
	Pale Green	Pastel Green 70.885 or Deck Tan 70.986	Denison MK1 base colour
	Dark Green	Camouflage Olive Green 70.894 or US Dark Green 70.893	Denison Camo splashes, Helmet
	Red Brown	Red Leather 70.818	Denison Camo splashes
	Maroon	Burnt Red 70.814	Beret
	Steel	Gunmetal 70.863	Firearm Metal Parts, Entrenching Tool Blade, Belt Buckle
	Beige Brown	Main - Beige Brown 70.875 Shade - Dark Brown Wash	Rifle Stock, Shovel Handle, Water Bottle Cover
	Gold	Gold 70.996	Brass Cartridge Cases
	Black	German Dark Grey 70.995 or Black 70.950	Boots

## Step by Step Painting Guide

### 1. Clean and assemble the figures

These figures are one-piece castings. The figures should need very little cleaning. Check for small silver hairs from mould vents and stubs from the casting sprue. Remove these with flush cut clippers. Sand the underside of the bases flat by sliding the figure back and forth along an emery board.



### 2. Base the figures

Mount the infantrymen on 25mm diameter x 1,5mm thick laser cut plywood bases from Warbases, or any base of your choice, including coins and washers. Fix them in place with cyanoacrylate gel (Superglue).



### 3. Blend the Bases Together

If you have already decided how to base the figures, it is a good idea to do the groundwork with Milliput before priming the figure. Make a thin sausage of Milliput, and blend figure bases into the wargames base so that the contours are smooth.



### 4. Prime in Black

Prime the figures with black acrylic Gesso applied with a brush. Dilute the Gesso with a small amount of water to ensure that it goes on thinly. If you add too much, the paint will tend to draw back and leave gaps.



### 5. Overbrush with White

Overbrush the figures with white. Overbrushing is like drybrushing but with the brush damp with paint so that it leaves a light coat on the higher areas but does not touch the recesses. This helps with the visualisation and makes the following painting steps easier. It gives a brighter base coat which means brighter highlights later. This step also highlights and faults such as mismatch or flash. If casting faults are found, trim off vents and file any mismatch smooth.



### 6. Paint the Base and Exposed Flesh

Paint the bases with Beige Brown 70.875. Paint the exposed flesh of the hands and feet with a base coat with Cork Brown 70.843 for the Caucasians. Allow this to overlap onto the weapon and the shirt collar. Then coat the flesh with a wash of Citadel Reikland Fleshshade This dries to emphasise the borders of the face and hands, making it easier to see where the connections are.



## 8. Paint the Trousers

Paint the trousers with English Uniform 70.921.



## 9. Paint the Smock & Pouches

Paint the Denison Smock in Khaki 70.988. At the same time, you can paint all of the pouches, webbing and gaiters in Khaki as this was a common colour.



## 10. Paint the Headgear

Paint the Steel Helmet with US Dark Olive Green 70.893 or Camouflage Olive Green 70.894. Paint the beret with Burnt Red 70.814. Mix one part bright red, e.g., Vermillion 70.909 to two parts Burnt Red to make a highlight for the beret.



## 11. Paint the Red Brown Parts

Paint angular shapes on the smock using Red Leather 70.818. Aim to cover about a third of the garment with brown. At the same time, you can paint the wooden parts of the weapons with the same colour.

Alternatively, you can paint the wood with Beige Brown 70.875.



## 12. Paint the Black Parts

Paint the metal parts of the rifle and sub machine gun and boots with a very dark grey colour. True black will be created later using a wash.

To emphasize the metal parts, mix some metallic silver with the dark grey and paint highlights on the weapons.

## 13. Paint the Green Camo

Paint angular shapes on the smock using Camouflage Olive Green 70.894. Aim for one third brown, one third green and the remaining third khaki.



#### 14. Paint the pouches etc (optional)

If you want more variety, you can paint the pouches, gaiters and webbing with Russian Uniform 70.924 or Green Grey 70.886 to simulate different colours of Blanco.

#### 15. Paint the Eyes (optional)

Paint the eyes were painted with a white horizontal dash and a black dot. This will give oversized and slightly misshapen eyes. Then form correct eye shapes by painting the flesh colour above and below. It should be noted that the eyes are only visible if you pick up the figure, so this step is not needed.



#### 16. Shading with Washes

The next shade is to apply washes to emphasize the shading. Citadel Shade colours from Games Workshop are good but need a little practice. Sometimes wash effects can be quite heavy, so in each case, do an experiment first and, if needed, dilute the shade with water or acrylic Matt Medium to ensure that the shading is subtle enough.

- Give Caucasian flesh a wash of Reikland Fleshshade.
- Give the uniform greens a wash of Athonian Camoshade, or if you prefer a blue green tint, use Coelia Greenshade.
- Shade black parts with Nuln Oil.



#### 17. Add Sand

Put some sand in a plastic bowl. Cover the upper surface of the bases with PVA glue and then dip in the bowl of sand.

#### 18. Paint and Drybrush the Sand

After sand had been added to all the figures, dilute the remaining PVA glue was with water and colour it with a brown colour such as German Camo Medium Brown 70.826. Leave this to dry overnight. The following day, the highlight the sand with a light drybrush of Iraqi Sand 70.819.



#### 19. Helmet Camouflage Net

A light drybrush of Green Grey 70.886 after the wash will highlight the camouflage net on the helmet. Interwoven in the netting was scrim which could be Russian Uniform 70.924 or Khaki 70.988.

#### 20. Highlights

Examine each figure for mistakes and when necessary, make corrections. Highlight the uniform and some pouches with the original colours.

#### 21. Decorate the Base

You can add grass tufts to the base for rural combat or rubble for house to house fighting.

## 22. Insignia

These can be hand painted on, or procured from specialist providers such as Company B who have water transfer (decal) sheets with insignia for British Airborne. This is easiest to do on a gloss varnished surface. Cut out the individual badges and wet them. Lift the badge on the backing paper and then slide it into position with a wet paint brush.

## 23. Varnish

If the figures are going to be frequently used for gaming, it is a good idea to varnish them. This can be applied from a spray can or with a brush. If some parts of these figures are glossy, give the whole figure a coat of Windsor and Newton Galleria Matt Varnish with a brush.

### The finished product!



Offensive Miniatures British Paratroopers painted by Michael Farnworth

### Other examples of Offensive Miniatures British Paratroopers



### Painting Guide Video Watch on YouTube



Click the icon below to see all our figures and website  
[www.offensiveminatures.com](http://www.offensiveminatures.com)



## Reference Materials

### Books

#### Britain

Jean Bouchery: **D-Day Paratroopers, British, Canadians, and French** (Histoire & Collections). This is the best reference for British Paratroopers. It is illustrated with diagrams and colour photographs showing original uniforms and equipment.

Jean Bouchery: **1944-45 British Soldier: From D-Day to V-Day: Part. 1 and Part 2.** (Histoire & Collections) Taken together these two books are very comprehensive. Part 1 covers uniforms. Part 2 covers vehicles and weapons. Both are illustrated with diagrams and colour photographs showing original uniforms and equipment.

Martin Brayley: **The World War II Tommy: British Army Uniforms European Theatre 1939-45** (The Crowood Press Ltd). A very useful book with colour photographs showing original uniforms and equipment.

#### Historical Reading

Martin Middlebrook: **Arnhem 1944: The Airborne Battle** (Penguin Books Ltd)

Major General John Frost: **A Drop Too Many** (Caxton Publishing)

Peter Harclerode: **Arnhem: A Tragedy of Errors** (Barnsley, Pen & Sword Books Ltd)

### About the Author

Michael Farnworth is a painter and modeller who has written many painting guides for small wargame companies. He is also a production engineer and has worked on military apparel and backpacks. His book, *Modelling and Painting World War II German Military Figures* (Crowood Wargaming Guides) is available from the Offensive Miniatures webstore.

#### General

Andrew Mollo: **The Armed Forces of World War 2** (Little, Brown and Company). This book is a very useful overview of uniforms and insignia. There are 250 colour drawings and 100 photographs which cover every nation involved in WW2. The original 1981 version is a large format book. There is an A5 reprint that does not include the Eastern front.

**Osprey** books are also very good but there are several which touch the subject, so it is difficult to recommend one item.

#### Films

**The Longest Day** - Epic film of D-Day including the capture of Pegasus Bridge.

**A Bridge too Far** - Operation Market Garden and the battle of Arnhem.

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