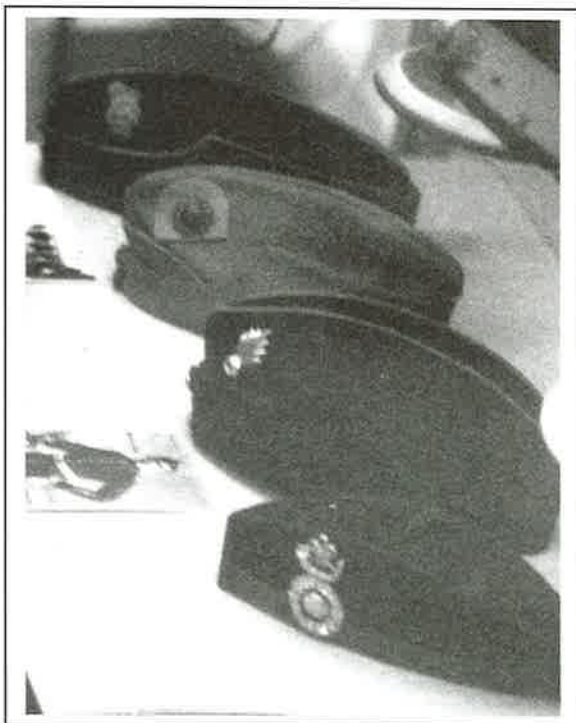


“About – TURN”, usually followed by “Squad, Stand At – EASE”, “Stand – EASY. Now pick up your Caps!” Those of us who were familiar with those orders and instructions from our Drill Instructor, are probably getting few and far between, but what was the origin of the Field Service Cap, incorrectly known as a Forage Cap or by a very rude name which cannot possibly be printed in this publication!

The Field Service Cap

by Alastair Donald

Although some sources state that a new pattern field cap was approved for wear in India by the Army in 1894, and was adopted by the Royal Marines also in the following year, Dress Regulations in the July 1893 Appendix to the Navy List mentions a “*Forage Cap for Active Service and Peace Manoeuvres*” for wear by officers of the RMA and RMLI. This cap was a development from the Glengarry cap, authorised for the Army in 1880, and the Austrian cap worn by the cavalry, and which is sometimes known as the Torin cap. It was later known as a ‘side hat’, often incorrectly referred to as a ‘forage’ cap, but in the Royal Marines normally called a ‘fore and aft(er)’.



Above: A Torin Cap from a detail in the painting by Augustus Earle dates c 1837.

Left: A line of caps with, in the foreground, an other ranks' Glengarry, with above it an RMA officers' blue Field Service cap, an RM officers' khaki Field Service cap (showing the red patch behind the bronze 'collar' badge) and at the top a Colonel's blue Field Service cap.

Strangely there is a painting (above right) showing a Royal Marine wearing a Torin Cap. This is by Augustus Earle (1812-1842) and titled “Life on the ocean representing the usual occupation of the young officers in the steerage of a British Frigate at sea”. This painting was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1837!

Royal Marine Officers 1893-1902

The cap mentioned above in the 1893 Dress Regulations was described as “*Blue cloth folding cap 4½” high, with scarlet superfine cloth piping round the crown and down the back seam, side flap 4” deep, to*



turn down when required, and when folded to form a band 2¼" deep fastened with two small Corps buttons in front. Small blue cloth peak 2¼" deep, turned up in front under band." (BADGES: RMLI – a small button of red twist in front surmounted by a small silver bugle (left). RMA: A gold embroidered grenade in front, top in line with top of the cap). In the April 1897 Appendix the depth of the side flaps was reduced to 3½" and after 'two small Corps buttons in front' was added "(Austrian pattern)" and the piping for the RMA cap changed to ".....gold French braid welts round crown and down front and back seams....." and the description of the badge was changed to ".....grenade on the left side, worn at an angle".

This cap was abolished, along with the pillbox for RMA officers, when the new cap, of a similar pattern to that worn today, was introduced at the time of the major changes in dress for officers in May 1902. The Field Service Cap was therefore not included in the Appendix for July 1902.

RM Other Ranks 1897-1903

For other ranks a blue field service cap was introduced with effect from 1 May 1897 to replace the Glengarry in the RMLI, but for the RMA in addition to the Forage Cap, Blue (the pillbox). A white cap cover was included. The field service cap was also to be worn by Staff Sergeants RMLI. When the Brodrick cap was introduced in 1903, the field service cap was phased out but could be worn at the discretion of Colonels Commandant until the issue of a second Brodrick.

RM Officers 1905-1921

The cap appeared again for both RMA and RMLI officers in the April 1905 Appendix this time under the heading *Field Service Cap*. The description was more or less the same except that the RMA cap had reverted to *scarlet superfine cloth piping*, but in both cases this was to be "*.....down the back and front seams*" and the grenade badge was to be "*.....as worn on the collar of the blue frock*" (see line of caps on previous page). In the case of RMLI officers the badge was also to be "*Metal globe and laurel as worn on the collar of the blue frock. To be worn on the left side*". It is worth noting that RMLI officers wore the blue FS cap at an angle, unlike other Light Infantry officers who wore it straight on the head, and still do. The field service cap was still included in the April 1920 Appendix but had been removed by January 1921.

Khaki Field Service Cap

In the army a khaki field service cap arrived in about 1937, at the time that khaki battledress was introduced. The coloured FS cap was authorised at about the same time and is still worn today by officers in some regiments.

RM Officers 1938-1949

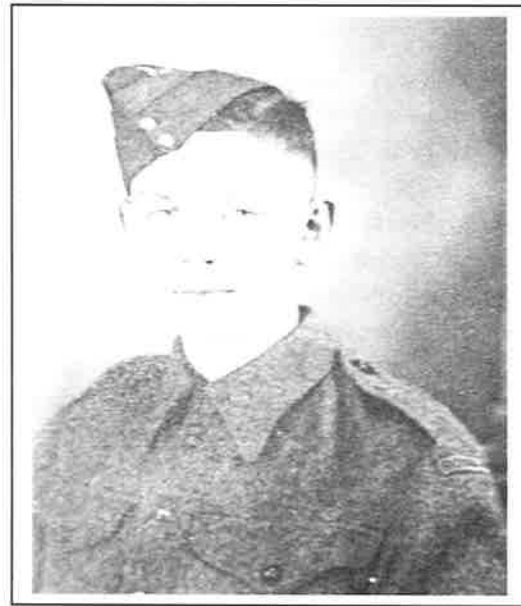
In the Royal Marines the FS Cap next appeared in Dress Regulations in December 1938 under the heading *Field Service Cap (Blue)* (right) with the same description as in the April 1905 Appendix, except that the side flaps had again been reduced, this time to 3" and with the addition of "*Chin strap of black patent leather ¼" wide*". (In the army a chin strap was to be worn by mounted officers, but there is no mention of 'mounted officers' in the RM regulations) *Badge as worn on collar of blue frock. To be placed*



on side of cap at an angle". Now there is an addition of "Cap Field Service Khaki. To be of similar pattern to Field Service Cap (Blue) but without piping round the crown and down back and front seams. Mounted officers only will wear the chin strap (brown leather). Badge as worn on the collar of the Service Dress Jacket. To be placed on the left side of cap at an angle. Buttons to be bronze." In 1941 an instruction was issued stating that the scarlet patch worn (see line of caps on first page) in the khaki field service cap was not to be worn in the blue FS cap. A fortnight later authorisation was given for it to be worn by officers whilst serving in the RM Division. Both these caps were included in the December 1948 Appendix, but had been removed by the June 1949 issue. During the Second World War it was common for officers to wear a pair of mess dress buttons on their blue FS caps, but this was not in keeping with the original 1893 dress regulations, which specified 'small Corps buttons', which meant the normal small tunic buttons. When Lieutenant Colonel B W Leicester commanded the 1st RM Battalion it was the custom for his officers to wear a brown leather chin strap with their khaki field service caps

RM Other Ranks – Second World War

After 1904, when it was still being worn awaiting issue of the second Brodrick cap, there had been no mention of the blue FS cap for other ranks until the Second World War. In 1942 it was issued again on embarkation for wear on board only and one forage cap was withdrawn. The Khaki field service cap first appeared in the 1939 Orders of Dress for NCOs and Men and from 1940 there are a number of photographs of recruits at the Reserve Depot (now Lympstone) wearing the khaki FS cap with service dress (see the author right). In 1940 RM despatch riders were authorised to wear a brown leather chin strap with the khaki FS cap. The blue beret began to replace the khaki FS cap in 1943 and it can be assumed that the other ranks' blue FS cap also started to be phased out at that time. RM Officer cadets wore a white insert in the front of their caps whilst RM 'flying' cadets undergoing flying training with the Fleet Air Arm wore a white band all round their FS caps.



RM Officers 1949-1963

In the December 1949 Appendix *Caps F.S. Blue* appears under *Obsolete Uniform* as 'may' be worn with modified mess dress. In the 1960 Regulations this was clearly extended to Ball Dress, Mess Dress, Mess Undress and all the tropical equivalents. There was no reference to this item in the 1964 Appendix. BR 81 "Royal Navy and Royal Marines Uniform Regulations" was issued in 1966, but Caps FS Blue do not appear to have been included. However it is known to have been worn much more recently!

Note: A number of references link the 'Torin' style cap with the 'Austrian' style. However in the Appendix to the Navy List 'Austrian pattern' has been shown in brackets alongside the heading for the Field Service Cap. In illustrations the Torin cap is shown as a very specific style worn by certain army regiments, particularly cavalry and Yeomanry; a similar cap is worn today by the King's Regiment.