

THE GREEN BERET

During the early days of Commandos, the men continued to wear their own regimental headdress and cap badge. There were 79 different ones in No 1 Commando alone! Towards the end of 1942, the officers of the Commando decided that matters should be regularised and that a beret would be most practicable. The Royal Tank Regiment had worn a black beret for many years and the recently formed Parachute Regiment had chosen a red one. No 1 Commando flash was a green salamander going through fire which gave a choice between green, red and yellow. Green was deemed to be the most suitable and a local firm of tam-o'-shanter makers in Irvine, Ayrshire produced a beret made from some green cloth of the colour worn today.

The first green beret reputed to have been worn by a Royal Marine commando is that of Lieutenant Colonel B J D (Bertie) Lumsden, who commanded 41 (RM) Commando in the landings at Salerno 9th September 1943. He happened to be visiting the Special Services Brigade HQ in Italy when the first consignment of the new green beret arrived and Brigadier R H Laycock presented him with one. It is now on display in the Royal Marines Museum, Eastney. However, in his history of 40 Commando RM the author, Major J C Beadle MBE MC RM, who was at the time serving in the unit, the first RM Commando to be formed, states that the initial issue was made to members of the unit on 26th October, 1942. He remembers how many men were reluctant to wear it at first, considering the colour to be effeminate. Their feelings soon changed and it was worn with pride, on parade and in action in preference to any other form of headdress.

After the war, although the commando course eventually formed part of the training of all Royal Marines, the green beret was only worn by ranks serving in a Commando Formation or Unit. Since 1960 the green beret has been the headdress of all Royal Marines who have completed training; the blue beret only being worn by recruits and young officers under training.

All ranks and ratings of the Royal Navy and Army serving with 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines are required to have passed the commando course and are therefore entitled to wear the green beret.

A.J.D

Appendix to the RMHS Short History, 2002

During the early days of Commandos, ranks continued to wear their own regimental headdress and cap badge. There were 79 different badges being worn in No 1 Commando alone! In 1942, the officers of this Commando decided that matters should be regularised and that a beret would be most practicable. The Royal Tank Regiment had worn a black beret for many years and the recently formed Parachute Regiment had chosen a maroon beret. No 1 Commando wore a flash on their arm depicting a green salamander going through fire, which gave a choice between green, red and yellow. Green was deemed to be the most suitable. Their submission to the Chief of Combined Operations was forwarded by Lord Mountbatten to the Under-Secretary of State for War in a letter of 1st May 1942 and the first issue to Royal Marines Commandos was made in October that year. A firm of tam-o-shanter makers in Irvine (Ayrshire) produced the beret made from some green cloth of the colour still worn today.