

# Private Royal Marines Light Infantry circa 1865 By Charles C Stadden



FIG 1

SHAKO The shako was made of dark blue cloth mounted on a cork basis, the cloth was ribbed (stitched) from the top to the bottom, the stitching was 5/16" apart, the common name given to this shako was the 'quilted shako'. The height of the front was 4 inches and the back which sloped forward was 6 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches, the flat top measured 5 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 6 inches. A black metal disc pierced with holes was placed high up on each side of the shako for ventilation.

Round the base a black lacquered leather band 5/8 inches wide double stitched. The peak, bound and stitched was 1.5/8 inches wide. The bottom of the shako went almost to a point at the back consequently covering the head well. The chin-strap  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch wide of black lacquered leather with buckle on the right side for adjustment. The brass shako, (Fig 2) an eight pointed star, the topmost point displaced by a Victorian Crown; on this a laurel wreath, within this a strap inscribed "Per Mare Per Terram"; in the centre the Globe. At the top of the wreath a 'Fouled Anchor' and at the base of the wreath, a bugle with strings. The plate measured 2 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches wide by 3.1/4 inches in depth and was struck in one piece. Dark green ball tuft measuring 1 $\frac{7}{8}$  inches in diameter, with brass tuft holder.



FIG 2

TUNIC Scarlet single breasted, eight brass regimental buttons down the front, the buttons having the design of the Crown and Fouled Anchor within a circle inscribed 'Royal Marines Light Infantry' with a wreath of laurel round. The collar, cuffs and shoulder straps of dark blue cloth also the cuff slashes, were piped around with white cloth. The cuff slashes had three white lace loops, in the centre of each a regimental button. The skirt slashes of scarlet cloth also had three white lace loops on each with a regimental button in the centre and was piped with white cloth around the edges (Fig 3). On each shoulder strap embroidered in white was the Globe and Laurel the strap edged with white piping. The collar was also piped along the top edge in white and down the front of the tunic. The cuff was 2 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches deep, the cuff slash 6 inches long. The skirt 12 inches in height with a variation  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch longer or shorter for every inch of difference in the height of the wearer. The skirt slashes were 10 inches deep.

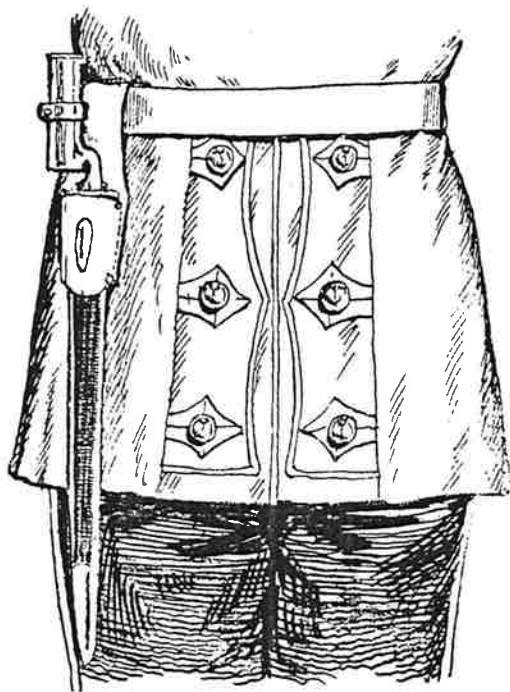


FIG 3

brass waist clasp with the design of the Royal Crest, border inscribed "Per Mare Per Terram". White canvas haversack worn over the right shoulder with brass runner for adjustment. Canvas knapsack painted black, reinforced at the corners with black leather, stiffened with wooden boards 13 inches in height, 15 inches in breadth, 3 inches in depth. Whitened buff leather straps 1.1/4 inches wide passed vertically round the knapsack, buckling underneath; the shoulder slings were fastened to the straps near the upper edge of the knapsack and secured to buckles attached to the straps on the underside. The Mess-tin in an oilskin cover was strapped to the top. Wooden Canteen painted blue/grey worn on right side with brown leather strap.

RIFLE & BAYONET Enfield Rifle, barrel 39 inches long, the bore .577 inch, the rifling 3 shallow grooves, sighting 990 yards. White buff leather sling. Bayonet, triangular socket.

TROUSERS Oxford mixture cloth with scarlet welt  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch broad down the outside seam. Black leather gaiters. Boots Black leather.

EQUIPMENT (Fig 4). White buff leather pouch belt 2 1/2 inches wide, with small leather percussion cap pouch in centre; Black leather ammunition pouch holding 60 rounds. White buff leather waist-belt with whitened leather pouch on right side,



FIG 4

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE MUSEUM



The top photograph opposite is of a shoulder belt plate which has been presented to this Museum, of which nothing is recorded or known. The actual size is 6½cm x 5cm, standard shoulder belt plate fittings on the reverse and of silver or polished pewter metal. It was presented by the family of Private John Colbourn who served in the Royal Marines from 1801-1815 with service at Trafalgar on HMS Defiance, but there is no evidence to suggest that the plate was his or that it relates to his period of service.



The device of fouled anchor, flanked by the letter RM and side laurels certainly indicate that the plate is of RM origin but the letters MMPD engraved in the four corners cannot be identified nor do they relate to a family connection. Britain's Sea Soldiers by Field, Volume II page 78 shows a shoulder belt plate of a private with a questioned date of 1802-1823 and if this date is correct, the plate which has been presented could pre-date this period. Field also places the change of belt plate to be square with lion and crown as 1797 but this probably relates only to officers.

The lower photograph is of two badges which have recently been given to the Royal Marines Museum, and which are at present unidentified. The top badge is 4cm in diameter and could possibly be the centre piece of a buckle, but I can find no illustrations which remotely resemble this badge. The lower badge may possibly be from the slide of either a Colour belt or Drum Major's belt. It would appear to be an Army badge since the laurel is of oak leaves, but is similar to the motif worn on the slides of Royal Marines Colour/Drum Major's belts.

Have any of your readers any knowledge of these badges or the plate? If so I would very much welcome such information.

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#### Acknowledgements

This edition marks the introduction of a new front cover illustration, again by kind permission of Charles C Stadden to whom we are most grateful; it depicts the Royal Marine and R M A dress of 1806 period. The Society crest was designed by our Chairman Colonel E Potts.