

THE MERCIAN REGIMENT (CHESHIRE, WORCESTERS AND FORESTERS, AND STAFFORDS) PUBLIC DUTIES PERFORMED IN 2017

by Gary Gibbs

During the summer months of 2017 The Mercian Regiment performed Public Duties, giving the Foot Guards regiments time off for training etc. As an added bonus the Mercian Regiment's mascot and TA band was also on parade on a number of occasions. It was announced by the Secretary of Defence, Geoff Hoon, on 16th December 2004 that with the reduction of the Army, a number of new regiments were to be formed. The new Mercian Regiment was to consist of three regular battalions and a territorial battalion.

The Mercian Regiment was formed on 1st September 2007 by the amalgamation of three regiments: 1st Battalion The Cheshire Regiment, 1st Battalion The Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment and 1st Battalion The Staffordshire Regiment (Prince of Wales's). The Territorial Battalion consisted of the West Midlands Regiment, made up of elements of the King's and Cheshire Regiment and the East of England Regiment forming the 4th Battalion Mercian Regiment, which consists of five rifle companies and a HQ company. In 2012, it was announced that the 3rd Battalion (ex-Staffordshire Regiment) was to be disbanded, a proposal was submitted to the Army to have the name of the Mercian Regiment changed to reflect its entire lineage and maintain the Staffords name. In July 2014, this proposal was approved, and the regiment was renamed The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire, Worcesters and Foresters, and Staffords). The Regiment has seen operations in Afghanistan for Herrick 6, Herrick 10, Herrick 12, Herrick 14, Herrick 15 and Herrick 17 and in Iraq Telic 11.

Cap Badge

The cap badge seen worn is a white metal double headed eagle with yellow coloured beak, feet and talons with a yellow metal Saxon crown over was chosen to emphasise it recruiting area, which comprises the ancient Kingdom of Mercia. It was originally intended to use the old Mercian Brigade badge worn by the Cheshire Regiment, Staffordshire Regiment, Worcestershire Regiment and Sherwood Foresters between 1958 and 1968. At an Army Dress Committee Meeting in 2005, this badge was rejected on the grounds that it had been the badge of a territorial unit, The Mercian Volunteers; as a consequence a slightly different two-coloured (white and yellow metal) badge was adopted

Collar Badges

In facing pairs the Dettingen Oak leaves and Acorn bearing the motto FIRM, the double leaf to be outermost on each side.

shoulder belt plate might represent the Bolton or Barnstaple Light Horse Volunteers. Dixon Pickup records a silver oval shoulder belt plate of the latter corps with Exeter hallmark, bearing a crown over BLHV¹¹. The War Office listed in 1801: “Loyal Birmingham”, “Bolton” and “Barnstaple” under “Gentlemen and Yeomanry Cavalry”.¹² While the Loyal Birmingham Light Horse Volunteers clearly used ‘Loyal’ in their title, the Bolton and Barnstaple Light Horse Volunteers never appear to have adopted this prefix.

Footnotes:

1. Thomas Thealric Harman and Walter Showell, *Showell's Dictionary of Birmingham*, Birmingham 1888
 2. John Alfred Langford, *A Century of Birmingham Life: or, A Chronicle of Local Events, from 1741 to 1841*, Birmingham 1871, Volume 2, pp 179-180
 3. *The London Gazette* 7th October 1797, Issue 14051, p 956
 4. *The British Numismatic Society Journal*, John Stubbs Jordan, Die-Sinker and Medalist, David William Dykes, Volume 71, No 12, p 134
 5. Spink, London, 22nd November 2012, Lot 78
 6. James Bisset, *Bisset's Magnificent Directory*, Birmingham, 1st January 1800. Bisset, manufacturer, publisher and verse writer, was Steward of St. Alban's Masonic Lodge, Birmingham
 7. Based on Charles Joseph Hart, *The History of the 1st Volunteer Battalion, the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and its Predecessors*, Birmingham 1906
 8. John Nichols, *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle*, London 1801, Volume 71, Part 2, p 1157
 9. Christie's Sale 1264, 30th November 2000, Orders, Decorations, Campaign Medals and Militaria, Spink, London, Lot 22
 10. *The Bulletin of the Military Historical Society*, Vol. 67, No 268, May 2017, pp 182-187
 11. Dixon Pickup note to author 16th June 2017
 12. War Office, *A List of all the Officers of the Fencible Cavalry and Infantry; the Militia; the Gentlemen and Yeomanry Cavalry; the Volunteer Infantry; and the Cavalry and Infantry Associations*, 1st January 1801, pp 157-158
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Mascot

A Swaledale ram, named Private Derby XXXI, was commissioned into the regiment on 20th February 2016. This is the 31st mascot the Mercians and one of its antecedent regiments have had which dates back to the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Private Derby XXXI was officially selected by the Duke of Devonshire from his flock from the Chatsworth Estate in Derbyshire. The first Private Derby was acquired in 1858 by the 95th (Derbyshire) Regiment. The ram wears a white metal head stool in the shape of a shield in the centre of which is the regimental badge. His



Side view of the regimental mascot, a Swaledale ram

coat has a scarlet ground with a gold lace edging leaving a scarlet edge showing with a buff coloured band. In the bottom rear corner the Chinese dragon and the bottom front corner the Sphinx. In the centre of the coat on a Lincoln green ground edged with gold cord the regimental badge, around this are the regiments Battle Honours in the same order as those on the Colour. To be seen here are the medals Private Derby has been awarded, the Indian Mutiny Medal, Northern Ireland, Cyprus UN, Golden Jubilee and Diamond Jubilee medals. The other side of the coat is the same as described above but in the rear corner the Naval Crown with scroll above inscribed 1st June 1794 and in the front corner the Dettingen Oak leaves and acorn and plinth inscribed Egypt.

The Ram Major and second handler are wearing the regiments drummers tunics, which are scarlet with buff facings. Around the top of the collars the crown and inch lace. Around the cuffs, epaulettes and lower collar is scarlet and buff twisted cords. The



Close up details of the Ram Major's sash



The regimental mascot with its handlers

Ram Major does not have the cord around the bottom part of his collar. His chevrons are gold lace on a buff coloured ground. Medals are court mounted. The ram Major's sash is buff with gold lace and a Lincoln green welt. The ER cypher and crown in gold, the regimental title in gold on a Lincoln green edge gold scroll. Under the regimental badge is an embroidered rams head consisting of a black and white head with buff coloured horns. Under this is the coat of arms of South Derbyshire District Council.



Private in No 1 Dress (blues)

Dress

The dress for Public Duties was No 1 Dress (blues). A number of items of dress have been used from the Mercian antecedent regiments to make up what is worn today.

Arm badge: A gold wire Stafford knot and glider badge on a Brown Holland backing material on a black felt patch from the Staffordshire Regiment. Collar badge: Dettingen oak leaves and acorn from the Cheshire Regiment combined with the motto Firm from the Worcestershire Regiment. Epaullette: buff piping from the Cheshire Regiment. Sword frog on the Sam Browne belt comes from the Worcestershire



Warrant Officer in No 1 Dress (blues) with brown leather belt

Regiment. Warrant Officers and NCO's rank badges: Gold wire and silks on black backing from the Staffordshire Regiment. Beret badge backing: A square Lincoln green cloth backing worn behind the beret badge, from the Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters.

Warrant Officers wear a brown belt with brass buckle with the double-headed eagle in the centre surrounded by a strap with the words MERCIAN. Unlike the Foot Guards all ranks wear a broad scarlet welt down the outer seam of their trousers. For public duties all wore

white gloves. The Other Ranks wore a white plastic waist belt and bayonet frog, their chevrons are gold on black. The buttons have the double headed Mercian eagle badge and on the epaulettes in brass the title MERCIAN.

Field Officers caps has a gold band on the peak. Instead of shoulder straps officers have gold twisted shoulder cords with white and yellow coloured rank stars and crowns. Crimson waist sash with tassels on the left side and their medals are court mounted.

The history of the various badge elements carried on the Colours, Colour belts, Ram Major's belt, drums and other parts of the uniform were taken from the following.

The Firm Motto. This is taken from the 36th Regiment who fought at the battle of Lauffeld during the War of the Austrian succession in 1747. The Battalion particularly distinguished itself and was awarded the motto 'FIRM'.

The Holland Patch. The 38th Regiment served in the West Indies for 57 years from 1707 until 1764. Harsh climate and poor supplies played havoc with their red coats, they were often lined with 'holland', a coarse cloth used for sugar sacks. In commemoration the South Staffordshire Regiment was granted, in 1934, the dress distinction of wearing a buff sacking "Holland patch" behind its cap badge. This tradition is continued in the backing cloth on the special arm badge worn by the Regiment.

The Naval Crown superscribed 1st June 1794. In 1794 the 29th Regiment (Worcestershire) were serving at sea. They took part in Admiral Howe's famous victory at the Battle of Ushant on the Glorious First of June. They were awarded the naval crown in commemoration of their service.

The Sphinx, superscribed Egypt. This commemorated the action of the 80th Foot for service against the French forces in Egypt in 1801.

The Dragon, superscribed China. This commemorates the 98th Foot's actions during the First China War of 1842. The device is shown on the Mercian Regimental Colour and drums.

Lincoln Green Patch. The Lincoln green patch behind the cap badge is worn on the beret. It may also be worn on slouch hats, bush hats or on the side of helmets at the commanding officers discretion. The tradition originates from the First World War when 16 Sherwood Forester battalions served in the same brigade wearing a Lincoln green patch of various shapes to distinguish between battalions. This was later standardised as a square patch behind the cap badge. The tradition has been carried forward into the Mercian Regiment with a 60mm x 50mm patch on the beret.

Special Arm Badge. This Special Arm Badge combines, the glider, the Stafford Knot and the Holland Patch. The glider commemorates the South Staffordshire Regiment's actions as part of 1st Airborne Division in the 1943 Sicily landings.

The Colour Belt has a buff coloured ground edged with stand and fall gold lace. The regiment's title in gold on Lincoln green scrolls, which are edged in gold, the Battle Honours follow the same pattern. A Lincoln green oval edged gold bears the Mercian double-headed eagle in silver with gold, beak, feet and talons and Saxon crown, the battalion number underneath is also in gold.

The Colour

The Colours are a buff colour with a red sleeve, edged with a gold and crimson fringe and tassels. The crown is in the proper colours; the circle in the centre is scarlet edged gold with the letter in gold. Centre badge. The outer circle is cerise background with gold



*One side of the
Regimental Colour*

*Ensign wearing the
Colour belt*

*edging and writing
Captain (a Major in
rank) of the Guard,
the Ensign and
Escort all in No 1
Dress (blues)*



‘THE MERCIAN REGIMENT’, with the gold symbol bottom centre. The centre of the circlet consists of a Lincoln green background with a silver Mercian Eagle with gold crown, beak and talons. At the bottom of the Colour, centrally and below the Tie of the Wreath between the scrolls is a gold acorn with Lincoln green oak leaves and a banner with a cerise background outlined in gold with gold writing ‘FIRM’. First corner, Battalion Numeral, Second corner, a Naval Crown superscribed ‘1st JUNE 1794’. Third corner, The Dragon superscribed ‘CHINA’. Fourth corner, The Sphinx, superscribed ‘EGYPT’.

The bugles being carried have green cords.

MTP pattern combats khaki coloured beret by 50mm Lincoln Mercian eagle in the stable belt is worn with with the Mercian eagle. regiment’s diamond buff/Lincoln green on with the Lincoln green



Combat MTP, Lincoln green square backing to the Mercian beret badge, buff belt and the cerise/buff/Lincoln green diamond TRF

Other parts of the featured here but Each battalion wore a lanyard on Number for the 1st battalion, 2nd, black for the 3rd for the 4th. Those regimentally employed worn by all elements of Recognition Flashes: vertical striped diamond buff in the middle and right. Each Battalion 1st and 2nd Battalions regiment’s flashes, buff cerise and Lincoln green for the 2nd. The 3rd battalion has a black diamond with the Stafford knot and the 4th Battalion has a Mercian blue diamond with the Mercian Eagle on it.

were worn with the which has a 60mm green square with the centre. A buff coloured a union locket clasp On the upper arm is the shaped TRF of cerise/ a black backing, worn part to the front.

uniform that are not maybe of interest. distinctively coloured 2 Dress: cerise (red) Lincoln green for the and Mercian blue who were extra-wore green, this is now the regiment. Tactical Consists of a three with cerise on the left, Lincoln green on the also has their own, the use their antecedent and cerise for the 1st and

Band



The blue cloth helmet with gilt and brass fittings worn by the band

All members of the band wear the infantry dark navy blue helmet bound in leather with brass fittings. Brass universal helmet plate with a circle with the title **MERCIAN** at the top and a leaf pattern at the bottom, in the centre the double-headed eagle. Collar badges are the Dettingen Oak leaves and acorn bearing the motto **FIRM**.

Band Colour Sergeant, he retired from the Parachute Regiment band, hence he wears the parachute wings above his rank and the glider badge and brass fittings worn by the band



Scarlet tunic with buff collar, cuffs edge white, white piping down the front and on the back skirt and panels. There is no piping to the epaulettes. There are six regimental buttons down the front and two on each panel at the rear and two at the waist of the skirt. Brass shoulder titles, all chevrons gold on scarlet. The Director of Music, Warrant Officers and Drum Majors tunic has gold lace and cords around the collar and cuffs, which end in Austrian knots. The panels at the back are also in gold with three buttons on the flaps and two at the waist of the skirt. The Director of Music has gold twisted gold shoulder boards with metal badges of rank and he wears a crimson waist sash.



The Director of Music



The Drum Major

The Drum Major's tunic is as the Director of Music's except for the gold and buff wings and his sword belt and slings are white plastic a brass buckle. Dettingen oak leaves and acorn collar badges. His belt is buff, edged with two rows of gold lace with a Lincoln green welt in the centre and gold fringe. All the Battle Honours are gold on Lincoln green, the various badges as the same colours as those on the Colour. Two miniature black ebony drum sticks with gilt ends complete the belt. Four gold stand and fall pattern chevrons on scarlet ground, gold drum and the Stafford knot with a glider on the upper arm.



Side view of a band Warrant Officer

The Warrant Officer's tunics are the same as the Director of Music except they have buff edged gold epaulettes, badges of rank gold and silks on a scarlet backing.

The band carried two different side drums; one to the Band Mercian Regiment and the other to the 4th Bn The Mercian Regiment the latter has white metal rims and rod tensioners. The band drum has black and white Russian vandyking hoops. All scrolls are gold with black lettering, both drums have buff grounds, all the badges at the bottom gold with black lettering, the acorn leaves green and the double headed eagle colours a before, the Queens crown in its proper colours. The Battle Honours 41 on each side range from Ramillies to Gulf 1991 with one being blank. The bass drum has the same colour Battle Honours and badges as the side drums with the addition of the Royal Coat of Arms with four flags behind, two a buff colour and two the Union Flags. At the top ER cypher and a crown with the Mercian Regiment title.

All carriage straps are dark blue edge red with gold lace on the outer edges. Trousers dark navy blue with a broad scarlet welt, black shoes go to make up the uniform.

The information on the uniforms, Colours etc worn have been taken from Regimental and Army Dress Regulations which interestingly enough now contain information on all ranks and not just of officers as previous versions.



Side Drummer and band emblazoned drum



Base Drummer and drum