

THE MILITARY POLICE “BRODRICK” CAP

by Toby Brayley

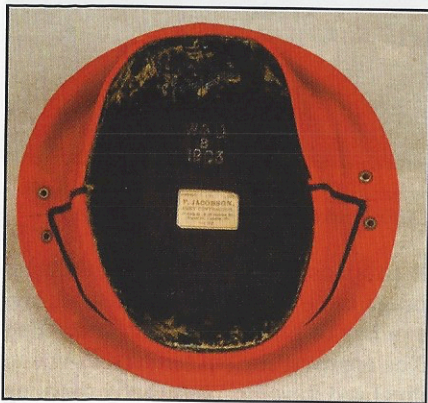
In the varied and rich history of British military uniforms there has probably never been an article of clothing more divisive than the Universal Forage Cap or the “Brodrick” as it became known. A peak-less cap was first worn by the Brigade of Guards from 1900, the rest of the Army were soon forced to adopt a similar design in 1902.

The peak-less cap acquired its namesake from the then Secretary of State for War, The Hon. William St John Brodrick, who vehemently denied ever having anything to do with its introduction!

The Brodrick was vilified by the rank and file as well as the contemporary press, who described it, among other things, as a “Pancake Monstrosity” – it even featured in its own cartoon in Punch. One press article even attributes the suicide of a Soldier to the new cap!



Military Police Brodrick cap now on display at the Royal Military Police Museum in Fareham. This example is missing its backing patch. It would have been scarlet with blue piping.



Interior of the Cap.

In 1902 The Corps of Military Police (the collective term for the Military Mounted and Military Foot Police), along with the rest of the Army, adopted the new style of Forage Cap. A sealed pattern of the Military Police 1st pattern cap is held by the Imperial War Museum and the 2nd pattern, again a sealed pattern, is now on display at the Royal Military Police Museum. There are minor differences in their construction, and these



The predecessor to the Brodrick, an 1895 dated example of the Pill Box style Forage cap worn by the Military Police.

are the only known surviving examples. Given that the size of the Corps was around 400 in the era of its issue, it is a wonder any have survived.

The Military Police Brodrick was of a striking bright scarlet construction, piped with blue worsted braid. In June 1904 the blue braid was replaced by gold "Russian" braid for Sergeants and above, Squadron Sergeant Majors (MMP) and Colour Sergeants (MFP) had two rows of a gold braid around the flap with a single row for Sergeants.

There was no difference between the Brodrick worn by the Military Mounted Police (MMP) or the Military Foot Police (MFP). In Military Police service the cap was initially worn with the MMP or MFP brass shoulder titles.



Military Foot Police c1903. Note the use of the MFP shoulder titles. The probationers at the rear retain their parent uniforms and cap badges, they wear the MFP armet in the centre of their left arm.

Prior to the introduction of the Brodrick, the two most common items of headgear worn by Military Police were the "Pill Box" forage cap – worn without a badge, and the Field Service cap, worn with shoulder titles in lieu of a cap badge. It is interesting to note that in 1892 the Corps Order Books gives approval for the Military Police to wear the Field Service cap on duty between "Retreat and Reveille", essentially meaning it was only permitted to be worn at night by the Military Police!

In January 1904 a new cap badge was approved for the Military Police to replace the brass titles. The cap badge was sealed as "Badge, Cap, Forage, Military Police" and is a crowned Edward VII cypher within a laurel wreath above a scroll reading Military Police. It was worn without distinction by both the MMP and MFP. The lion above a crown with scroll reading either Military Foot or Military Mounted Police is totally erroneous, there is no documentary or photographic evidence to support these badges ever being issued.



Military Foot Police in walking out dress c1904.

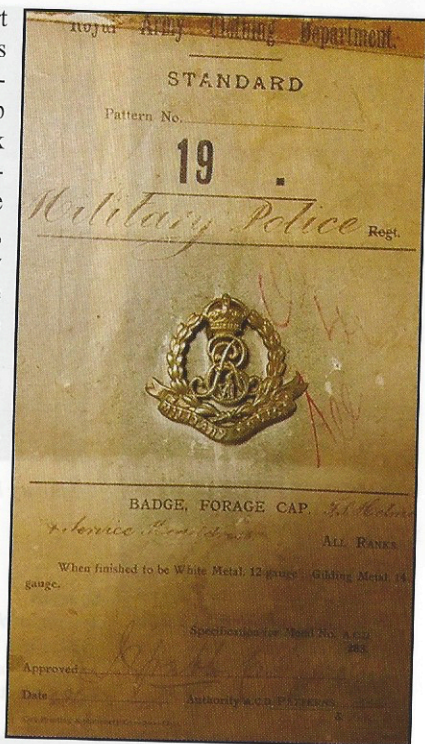
For a short period, it appears that both the old-style Pill Box cap and the Brodrick were worn concurrently by the Military Police, although only those who were issued with the "old pattern forage cap" could continue to wear it. The wearing of the old style was restricted to off duty use in camp and Aldershot town! This practice was abolished by an order dated January 1st 1904, from then on, the Brodrick was to be worn on all occasions, including walking

out and the old pattern caps were to be "done away with".

The Brodrick was worn by the Military Police in most orders of dress. In May 1904 a peaked khaki cover was issued for Musketry and Field Wear. The Military Police would not adopt the new Service Dress until the start of the First World War thus for duty and field wear, the Brodrick would have been worn with the "Tartan Frock" and khaki/drab breeches or trousers. In walking out dress, the Brodrick was worn with the cloth tunic, white gloves and cane.

Although the use of the Brodrick by the Military Police at home was widespread, it does not appear to have been used by them when stationed overseas, and in Egypt they continued to wear the pill box cap.

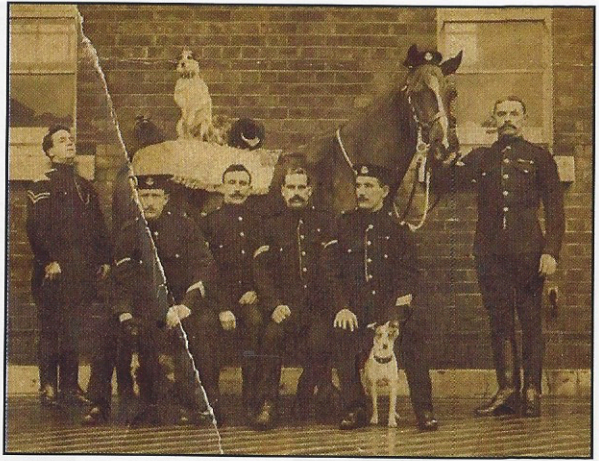
The RMP Museum's 2nd pattern Brodrick was introduced in accordance with that of the rest of the Army on the 4th May 1903. It was, however, to prove neither popular nor long-lasting, and it was declared obsolete on 20th December 1905. This short lived, unpopular but in my opinion a striking and unique piece of uniform, was eventually replaced with the new red and blue peaked forage cap from 1906.



Sealed pattern Military Police cap badge introduced for the new Forage Cap in January 1904. Prior to this style of badge the MMP and MFP titles were worn.



Military Foot Police Sergeant, Dublin 1906. Note the single line of gold braid as worn by Sergeants.

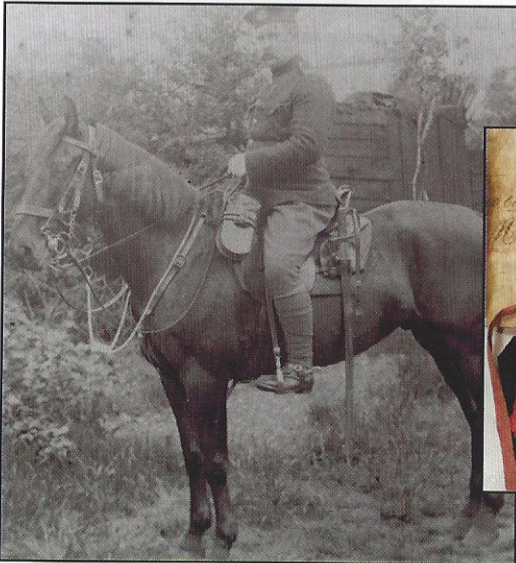


Military Mounted Police and friends, Aldershot 1905. The Brodrick was not usually issued to horses!

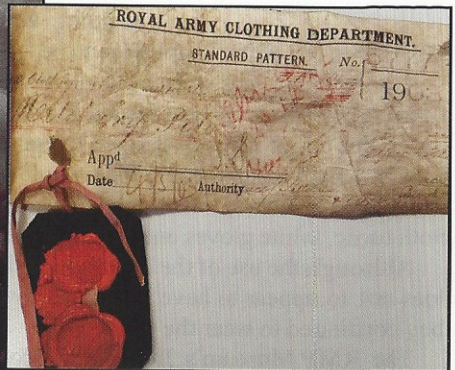
Sources

Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research Vol LX No.22 Winter 1982, Page 213 & 218.

Military Police Corps Order Books 1902, 1904 (RMP Museum). Royal Military Police Museum Archive.



Sergeant Zeall c1905. He wears the Tartan Frock with Service Dress breeches and carries the 1890 pattern sword.



The original RACD Sealed Pattern label for the Military Police, Universal Forage Cap (2nd Pattern). Although faded and difficult to make out, the approval date, of 4 5 1903 and obsolete date, 20 12 1905 are visible.