

Drummers Headwear, Bearskin. 1800 - 1815



References for Infantry Drummers Headwear.

Bearskins worn during the Peninsular and Napoleonic wars.

Researched and compiled by Barry R Turnbull-Burchmore
2006-7

The Royal Clothing Warrant, 1768

‘‘Drummers' and Fifers' Caps.

The drummers and fifers to have black bear-skin caps. On the front, the King's crest, of silver plated metal, on a black ground, with trophies of colours and drums. The number of the regiment on the back part; as also the badge, if entitled to any, as ordered for the grenadiers.

Grenadiers' Caps.

The caps of the grenadiers to be of black bear-skin. On the front, the King's crest, of silver plated metal, on a black ground, with the motto, "Nec aspera terrent." A grenade on the back part, with the number of the regiment, on it.’’

The following is an article from the Journal for the Society of Army Historical Research outlining the changes in the 1802 Clothing Regulations. It was contributed by W.Y Carman.

(D.—[‘‘No alteration,’’ C.] **The Caps of the Grenadiers** to be of Black Bear Skin. On the Front, the King's Crest⁶⁷ in brass on a Black Ground with the Motto ‘‘Nec aspera terrent.’’ A Grenade on the Back part, with the number of the Regiment on it. The Royal Regiments and the six old Corps are to have the Crest and Grenade, and also the other particulars specified hereafter. The Badges of the Regts. are to be White and set near the Top of the Back part of the Cap. The Height of the Cap (without the Bear Skin which reaches beyond the Top) to be Twelve Inches.) Z.

(Para 58.) A. **Drummers and Fifers Caps.** Z.

B. [Same as D before alteration.]

(D.—[‘‘No alteration,’’ C.] The Drummers and Fifers to have Black Bear Skin Caps, on the Front the King's Crest of⁶⁸ brass on a Black Ground, with Trophies of Colours and Drums. The number of the Regiment on the back part as also the Badge if entitled to any as ordered for the Grenadiers.)⁶⁹

British Infantry Uniforms since 1660

Barthorp Michael, Blandford press, Dorset England, 1982.

(p60 Ref plate 12, Battalion Drummer, 66th (Berkshire) Regiment, 1811).

‘‘Drummers still wore reversed coats and Bearskin caps, similar to grenadiers caps, though, on service, shakos with the universal cap plate were more usual.’’

‘‘Bandsmen wore coats of facing colour... until 1812, but the lacing had been standardized and more nearly resembled that on a privates coat, the numerous chevrons on the sleeves being worn or not, as the commanding officer decided. They wore wing epaulettes, and their full dress head gear was the grenadier cap.

A short sword, with a blade about 24 inches long, was their special weapon.

The fife case was carried on the right hip, attached to the cross belt.’’

Major Barnes , R.M. A History of the Regiments & Uniforms of the British Army (p 122) Seeley Service & Co Limited, London 1957.

**Simkin's Richard, Uniforms of the British Army, The Infantry Regiments.
W.Y.Carman, Webb and Bower Limited, Devon England, 1985. (p 184)**

“A new cap or the shako was now being worn and in 1802 the clothing regulations from 1768 onwards were revised and brought up to date.” – “For full dress the caps of drummers and fifers were black bearskin with a black front plate bearing the king's crest and trophies of colours and drums, plus the number of the regiment and any badge, if so entitled, on the back.”

**Barthorp Michael, British Infantry Uniforms Since 1660, (p 52)
Blandford Press Dorset. 1982.**

“Bearskin caps were ordered for Drummers in the warrant.....”

**Barthorp Michael, British Infantry Uniforms Since 1660, (p 61)
Blandford Press Dorset. 1982**

“Drummers retained bearskin caps with the Kings crest in brass on a black metal plate with appropriate trophies, but often wore their respective companies shakos on service.”

**Haythornthwaite Philip J. British Infantry of the Napoleonic Wars
DAG Publications LTD, The Bath Press, Avon England, 1996.
(p 46, Ref Image on p 47, Drummer 66th foot, pre-1812)**

“The drummer and fifer wear ‘reversed colours’ with white lace, and fur caps with brass plate and white cords”.



Wellingtons Army, Colonel HCB Rogers OBE, Ian Allen Ltd, Surrey United Kingdom. (p 72, Ref Image – National Army Museum).

28th foot at the battle of Alexandria, shows a drummer wearing a bearskin in a battlefield situation.



Colonel Rogers HCB, OBE, Wellingtons Army, Ian Allen Ltd, Surrey United Kingdom. (p 99 Ref image – National Army Museum).

The 57th foot at the battle of Albuera 1811, shows drummers wearing bearskins in a battlefield situation.



Haswell A.E., Miller, N.P. Dawnay, Military Drawings and Paintings in the Royal Collection, The Phaidon Press, London,1966.



Image of Grenadier cap 1802.

**Barthorp Michael, British Infantry Uniforms Since 1660, (p53)
Blandford Press Dorset. 1982.**



Grenadier cap 1800-1815,

**Major Barnes R.M, A History of the Regiments & Uniforms of the British Army.
Seeley Service & Co Limited, London 1957.**



**Barthorp Michael, British Infantry Uniforms Since 1660, (p 62)
Blandford Press Dorset. 1982.**

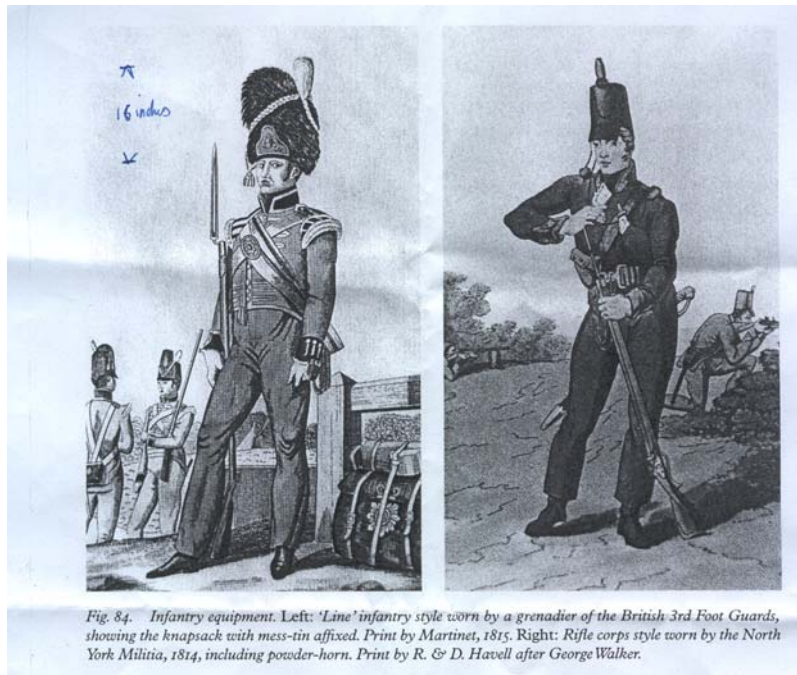


Fig. 84. Infantry equipment. Left: 'Line' infantry style worn by a grenadier of the British 3rd Foot Guards, showing the knapsack with mess-tin affixed. Print by Martinet, 1815. Right: Rifle corps style worn by the North York Militia, 1814, including powder-horn. Print by R. & D. Havell after George Walker.

Image of Grenadier cap

Haswell A.E., Miller, N.P.Dawnay, Military Drawings and Paintings in the Royal Collection, The Phaidon Press, London,1966.



315. DENIS DIGHTON: Detail sketches for Plate 316. (Cat. No. 639)

**Fosten D.S.V. & B.K,The Thin Red Line, Uniforms of the British Army between 1751 & 1914. Windrow & Greene, York House Typographic Ltd London.
(p 45 Illustration of Bearskin type by B Fosten – 1812 – 1815 Infantry of the Line)**



Information given either by Email to the author privately or via the yahoo groups – thewar1812 - 18th century field musick group - war1812.

“On uniform. I can only really talk for the 9th. They were issued with bearskins for full dress and these are listed in regimental returns for the whole period, they are also issued with the shako. Bearskins are listed for a Gibraltar Garrison, illustrating they did make it overseas, although it is unlikely on active field service.”

[Michael Stratford](#) 9th Regiment Foot.

“The Fife (fifes are called drummers on the pay roll) and Drums play together as a group under the Drum major, they all dressed the same, Bearskin caps etc no matter what company they belonged to, But as I understand they would usually store these Bearskin caps in camp or depot while in Spain (might bring them out for parade or HQ duty), as did the Fusilier regiments where everyone wears a bear skin cap. They are very costly to replace and for combat the cheaper stove pipe cap was used. Now this is depending on the Colonel of the Regiment not like now days by a general order/everything the same of the MOD, whatever the regimental Colonel wanted that's the way it went in those days.”

[Serjeant Jack Pritchard - 23rd Regt. Capt. Ferguson's Coy.](#)
[2nd Lieutenant Regimental HQ.](#)
[Royal Welch Fusiliers in America, BB. BAR, CMH,](#)

Dear Mr Turnbull,

Attached are two images of an 1800-15 pattern bearskin.

I do not believe there was a specific pattern plate for drummers for this period, unlike the earlier 1768 pattern. I do not currently have a p[attern for the drummers' plate, but will be making one in due course.

By 1800 a new pattern plate was used on the bearskin, which had lost some of its earlier mitre shape. However some units were still using the earlier pattern bearskin as well as the plate.



Mr A Clark Military Metalwork *Accoutrements, Regalia & Headdress*

“The bearskin is quite different from the American War for Independence (AWI) one. Much like the one's worn today by the guards at Buckingham Palace, it became cylindrical. All of the musicians (drummers, fifers, and hornist/buglers) wore a distinctive badge on the back of their hats (whether a shako or bearskin). It is a miniature drum (cast metal or embroidered).”

Todd E., Fifer/Drummer, 1st Coy., 1/II, Drummer/Hornist, 2nd Coy., 1/III, The BUFFS--American Contingent—

“In September the Army of the East arrived in the Crimea and by that time the men had spent five months living in the clothes they stood up in. Lance Corporal McMillan had earlier recorded in his diary,...”

‘We only carry two shirts, two pairs of boots, two pairs of socks, two pairs of trousers, one red jacket, one pair of draws – it was impossible to carry all the things we brought out here with us the weight was nearly 80 pounds and what man could march with such a load on him. We have enough now with our greatcoat, blanket, belt, firelock and sixty rounds of ammunition besides our bearskin cap’.

The Diary of Sgt. W. McMillan. Editor Keith Hingle.

http://www.thediehards.co.uk/new_page_1.htm

“The musician’s caps were also made of black bear skin the only differences were that it was two inches shorter than the grenadier cap and the front plate had pictures of trophies and colors on it.”

<http://members.tripod.com/hm10thregtmusic/id26.htm>

“Traditional head dress for the regimental drummer was a bearskin cap as worn by the grenadier company which was dressed with the appropriate plume of the company to which the were attached with a woolen cord cascading over the front of the cap. The front of the drummers bear skins were decorated with a unique brass plate of crossed colours and drums. By the Napoleonic wars drummers were leaving their bear skin caps for the parade and had taken to wearing the Shako on campaign. To make their shako's stand out from the rest of the men's the drummers wore a brass drum on the rear.”

<http://www.41st-foot.co.uk>

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<http://members.tripod.com/hm10thregtmusic/id26.htm>

Newspaper reports

THE CONNAUGHT JOURNAL

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1840

The cumbersome bear-skin cap, ordered by George the Fourth, for the use of the Fusiller and Grenadier companies of the line is, we understand, to be discontinued, and replaced by a smart chaco, not only in consideration of the extreme high price and scarcity of bear skins, from their having been as generally used by the French and English armies of late, but the comfort and great convenience which will be found in a regiment not being encumbered with them on foreign service, which would be the case, the cap being intended to last six years, and the regiments, by the new arrangements, change their station every three.

<http://www.irelandoldnews.com/Galway/1840/SEP.html>

BALLINA CHRONICLE

Wednesday, April 3, 1850

Lord Gough offers to hear the extra expense of continuing the bearskin cap to his gallant regiment the 67th.

<http://www.irelandoldnews.com/Mayo/1850/APR.html>

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The Royal Clothing Warrant, 1768

1802 Clothing Regulations.

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Todd E., Fifer/Drummer, 1st Coy., 1/II, Drummer/Hornist, 2nd Coy., 1/III
The BUFFS--American Contingent—

The Diary of Sgt. W. McMillan. Editor Keith Hingle. http://www.thediehards.co.uk/new_page_1.htm

<http://members.tripod.com/hm10thregtmusic/id26.htm>

<http://www.41st-foot.co.uk>

<http://members.tripod.com/hm10thregtmusic/id26.htm>

THE CONNAUGHT JOURNAL, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1840 (Ireland)

BALLINA CHRONICLE, Wednesday, April 3, 1850 (Ireland)