



**The dress of the Rifle Corps 1800-02  
As found in “Clothing of the Infantry, 1767-1802”  
From the Rifle Brigade Chronicle 1924 pp 197-204**

*Obviously we have rather more info than the writer of this article in the RBC of 1924 (Major H.G. Parkyn, editor RBC). In fact, most of the information contained in this manuscript document is also found in The Green Book and the 1802 Regulations and some is found in the Dublin Warrant too. However, it differs in some details, is sometimes phrased differently in a way that may throw more light on the subject, and contains information not reproduced elsewhere, so I thought it worth reproducing. As with all clothing information on the Experimental Corps of Riflemen/ Early 95th it comes with the caveat that changes happened between the formation of the Rifle Corps and its service in the Peninsula, and as such should not be taken as a canonical guide to clothing worn in the Peninsular War period. I have retained the comments of Major H.G.Parkyn, editor RBC, in italics and marked as his, although they are of mixed value.*

**Introduction.**

“The Regiment is indebted to Mr W.Y. Baldry and Mr A. White, the War Office Librarians, for the following information which has recently been discovered in an old manuscript book entitled “The Clothing of the Infantry 1767-1802”.

Previous to the finding of this manuscript practically nothing was known of the first dress of the Rifle Corps beyond what appeared in the February part of the British Military Library 1801 (*article to follow-Ben*)”...

...“My Reynolds, the well known military dress expert, who illustrated volumes I and II of the Regimental History, has kindly copied out the part pertaining to the Regiment and sent them to the editor”.

**The Text.**

*“Epaulettes and How worn.-* To be of silver embroidery or lace, with rich bullion fringe according to patterns approved by their respective Colonels.

Officers of Light Infantry Companies and all Officers of the Rifle Corps when in full dress, to wear two epaulettes and on the broad end of the strap a bugle horn embroidered”.

*“Full Dress Coat.-* The full dress uniform coat for officers of a Rifle Corps is to be of dark green cloth, with long skirts, and lined with white shalloon.

The skirts turned back and fronted with white cassimere sewed down and at the joining a circle of black velvet embroidered with silver. This design was known as a skirt ornament.

Lapels collar, cuffs and wings, black velvet. The lapels, rather short and mad eto button across the body at the fifth button 3 inches in breadth at the bottom and increasing gradually to 3 1/2 inches at the top, a standing collar faced with green cloth



with which the cuffs are to be 3 inches in breadth. No slit in the cuffs, cross pocket flaps.

Ten buttons on each lapel, including one on the collar . Three on each cuff and pocket flap.

The wings laced with bullion and fringe besides epaulettes. The buttons set on at equal distance and all large excepting the collar and epaulettes.

A flat plated button with a raised bugle horn and crown over it.”

*The Service Uniform of Officers of Rifle Corps.-* The undress or service uniform for officers of the Rifle Corps to be a jacket made of dark green cloth, without lapels or skirts, and made to button over the body down to the waist. The breast fronted with green cloth and lined with green silk shalloon. A black velvet standing collar lined with green cloth, cuffs black velvet 21/2 inches in breadth, pointed and to open with five buttons; a double row of buttons on one front and a single row with buttonholes on the other. Twenty-two buttons in each row and the same number of loopings of black silk twist on each front between the rows with a knot on the outside.

The looping 71/2 inches in length at the top and reduced gradually to 21/2 inches at the bottom and in which form the buttons are set on, a loop of twist on each front of the collar. A row of the same down the seams from the shoulder to the hip buttons and a double row on the fronts instead of pocket welts. Black velvet wings and straps with bullion fringe, besides which a silver chain on the wings and straps. The buttons throughout of a round form like a ball and set on at equal distances. The lace and epaulettes silver”.

*This type of jacket continued to be worn by Officers of the Regiment until after Waterloo- Major H.G. Parkyn, editor RBC*

*“Waistcoats-* The full dress waistcoat for officers of a Rifle Corps are to be white and of similar material and form as for officers of infantry.

The service waistcoat for Officers of the Rifle Corps is to be of a dark green cloth like the jacket, cut rather short and without skirt.

A standing collar which with the breast are to be faced with green cloth and the pockets made at the breast, Twenty-two buttons on one side of the front and buttonholes at the other.

The buttons on all waistcoats to be small and a uniform button similar to those on the coat. No lace or embroidery and to be quite plain”.

*“Breeches, pantaloons etc.-* Full dress of officers or Rifle Corps is to be of same material and colour as their waistcoats (ie white).

The service uniform for a Rifle Corps is dark green pantaloons with a row of black twist down the seams.”

*“Espontoons.-* Officers of Rifle Corps to carry small pistols.

No longer used. No other arms to be carried by officers of infantry but swords excepting the Rifle Corps, who besides their swords are to carry a small pistol in a pouch which is worn with a black leather belt worn over the left shoulder. The flap of



the pouch ornamented with a small silver lion's head and a chain with a green ivory whistle on the front of the belt at the breast.”

*The statement that the flap of the pouch is ornamented with a small lion's head would seem to be wrong and that the bugle horn would have been the more likely badge for the flap, and that the Lion's head as now was used to suspend the whistle chain from. One feels please that the green ivory whistle did not survive, The pistols mentioned were six inches long. Major H.G.Parkyn,*

“Gorget.- Not worn.”

*In the Regimental collection of relics now on loan to the Royal United Service Institution are two silver gorgets, so it is evident that this article of uniform was adopted by the Regiment at a later date, but most probably only worn on special occasions such as balls levees etc. This gorget was at first a piece of armour used to protect the neck and throat, and as such traces back to the early part of the fifteenth century, when armour was abolished in the British Army; the gorget remained as an ornament and towards the end of its existence was worn only to show the officer was on duty. They were abolished in 1830. Major H.G.Parkyn,*

“Hat or helmet.- Officers of the Rifle Corps when in service uniform to wear helmets with a hair cockade and green feather with and a silver crown and bugle engraved on the right side of the helmet.”

(“Helmets” struck out and pencilled in is “caps like their men.”)

*The helmet was the light dragoon type, and in fact the service dress of officers was very similar to that arm of the cavalry in many details, Major H.G.Parkyn,*

“Boots.- Officers of Rifle Corps to wear half boots.”

“Great coats.- The Great Coats for Officers of a Rifle Corps are to be of dark grey cloth, double-breasted and with three rows of buttons, a falling collar, cuffs with slits and four small buttons.

The collar and cuffs of dark green cloth.

The pocket to open in the plait and the buttons similar to the large size of the full-dress coat.”

“Sword- Sword Knot and Belts.- Those for the Rifle Corps to be sabres similar to Light Cavalry. Carried in a black leather belt round the waist on which the mounting to be silver.”

*No mention is made of the colour of the sword knot, but it is presumed it was black leather, same as the belt, or silver for full dress. In the illustration of the dress published in the British Military Library, the knot is black and the officer wears white gloves. The sword scabbard is black leather with silver mounting. Major H.G.Parkyn,*

“The Jackets for Sergeants of the Rifle Corps are to be of dark green cloth without lining, except the sleeves, but the insides of the fronts are to be faced with green cloth, Rather short skirted, and not turned back, but cut to slope off behind. No lapels, and made to button over the body down to the waist. Standing collar, which, with the



cuffs, is to be made of black cloth and feathered with white. Three rows of buttons on the fronts of the jacket, and twelve in each row; two rows on one side and one row and holes on the other. The buttons set on at equal distances, but the rows 7 1/2 inches apart at the top, and gradually reduced to 2 1/2 inches at the bottom. The cuffs 2 1/2 inches in breadth and pointed, opening at the hand with four buttons. The pockets pretty high on the fronts of the jacket and the welts set on sloping. A button on each hip and the back skirts to fold well over, The buttons small throughout, being very much raised, with a Bugle Horn and Crown over it engraved.”

“*The Jackets for Corporals and Private Men* of the Rifle Corps are to be of dark green cloth, inferior in quality to the Sergeants’, but in formation, colour of the collar, cuffs, and shoulder straps, and in the buttons, to be exactly similar to the sergeants’. Each corporal is to wear two epaulettes or knots, which are to be of green and black worsted, instead of silk.”

“*The Waistcoats for Sergeants* of the Rifle Corps are to be of dark green kersey and at all times issued complete. To be single-breasted, with twelve buttons on one side and holes on the other, without loopings. The fronts rather short, and no skirts or pockets. The buttons small uniform ones similar to those of the jackets.

The sergeants of Rifle Corps, In Europe, North America, and the Cape of Good Hope, are to wear green cloth pantaloons, similar in quality and colour to their coats, They to be made to come down to the ankles.

Corporals and Men of the Rifle Corps, In Europe, North America and the Cape of Good Hope, are to be provided with green cloth pantaloons in lieu of breeches, in similar manner and form as the sergeants.”

“*The Jackets for Buglers* of the Rifle Corps are to be of dark green cloth; in the formation, number of buttons, and setting them on etc., to be similar to the rank and file, with the collar, cuffs, shoulder-straps, and wings of black cloth. The seams throughout to be feathered with white, and a black and white worsted fringe on each wing.”

“*The Jackets for the armourers* of the Rifle Corps to be of dark grey cloth, and in formation, buttons etc., similar to the rank and file. The cuffs and collar to be of dark green cloth, and the seams throughout to be feathered with green.”

(A pencil note in the margin says: “I believe it is intended that the Armourers shall be sergeant-armourers, consequently their dress should correspond with their rank in the regiment.” This paragraph about armourers is accordingly omitted in the ‘revised copy’ of these regulations.)

“The waistcoats and breeches, or the articles substituted for them, for Drummers and Fifers (of the line), and also for Buglers and Armourers of the Rifle Corps, to be exactly similar to what has been specified for the rank and file of their respective regiments.”



*“Caps, made of felt and leather, with a brass plate, cockade, and tuft, are to be worn by.. every description of corps of infantry.. but the Rifle corps not to wear the brass fronting on their caps, but instead, to have a Bugle and Crown, with a green cord round the cap. The sergeants and buglers to wear green feathers, the armourers and rank and file a green tuft similar to Light Infantry.”*

(In the `amended copy` the last sentence is altered to “The sergeants, buglers and rank and file to wear green feathers.”)

*The sashes for the Sergeants... Those for the Rifle Corps to be stripes of black, crimson, and green worsted.”*

*“The pouch for the Rifle Corps to have a wooden box bored for twelve rounds, and another of tin capable of holding 24 rounds. The flap of the pouch without ornaments and rounded at the corners, and fastened under the pouch by straps and buckles similar to that of the Line. They are also to have a powder-horn lying nearly on the outside of the pouch, which is suspended by a green cord that passes over the belt and across the left shoulder; likewise a small powder flask kept on the breast, and suspended from the neck by a green cord. The sword bayonet belt to be also of black leather, and the same breadth as the pouch belt. It is to be worn round the waist and over the jacket; to which the carriage for the sword bayonet is fixed, as also a ball-bag which hangs nearly in front of the body. The sling for the rifle to be of black lkeather and 13/8 inches in breadth.”*

*“The Sergeants of the Rifle Corps to wear half boots, woollen cloth short gaiters, with small white metal buttons, and to come up sufficiently high above the ankle to prevent any opening appearing between them and the pantaloons.”*

*“The Sergeants of the Rifle Corps are to carry a rifle and sword bayonet. The pouch smaller than the men’s and the flap ornamented with a brass Lion’s head. The belt similar to the men’s. They have a green ivory whistle, like t officers’ and a powder flask and horn like the men. The sword-belt, worn round the waist, to be of the same form and breadth as the men’s.”*

*“The rank and file of the Rifle Corps to be armed with a rifle gun and sword bayonet 27 1/2 inches in length”.*

*The Baker Rifle with which the Corps was armed was a far better weapon than the musket with which the Regiments of the Line were armed, the official range of which was 200 yards, but the balls as a rule began to strike the ground at 120 yards distant. Major H.G.Parkyn,*

*In 1792 a match took place between a Bowman and a Musketeer; the distance was 100 yards and the time one minute, the number of shots twenty.*

*The bow won by placing 16 arrows out of twenty in the target. The musket scored only twelve hits. The Rifle Corps did not serve in the West Indies, so no provision of special clothing for that climate was made for them. Major H.G.Parkyn,*

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