

# The Danish Infantry Uniforms and Equipment through-out The Past 200 Years

## The Danish Infantry Uniforms and Equipment through-out The Past 200 Years

A. N. Hvidt:



Until 1842 each Danish Infantry regiment had its own uniform, the Guards and the Rifle-regiments included. Coat, trousers and headgear differed in shape and colour, but red dominated in the Line Infantry. Green and black was used in the Rifle Regiments and the Light Infantry, from the moment they came into existence at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century until they all were absorbed into the Infantry of the Line in 1855.

Until 1842 the scarlet coat had collars, facings and shoulder straps in different colours, varying from one regiment to another. But that year all these colours were replaced by light-blue in the Line Infantry whose identity was indicated by a regimental number on the epaulettes or shoulder straps.

Simultaneously light-blue trousers became regulation for all infantry (and cavalry).

In 1848 the scarlet coats were abandoned, also by the Royal (Danish) Artillery and most cavalry regiments, and the Army said good-bye to the colour which had given its nom-de-guerre amongst Danes. "The Red Service". As the red uniforms were discarded and became history, the army said good-bye to a tradition, which for centuries it had shared with the British Army. All other armies in Europe had been, or were, dressed in blue, yellow or green coloured uniforms.

Now the dark-blue double-breasted tunic with light-blue trousers became a feature of the dress of Danish Infantry (with a light-blue or dark-blue peaked cap, for a short period a shako), until 1915, interrupted between 1903 and 1906, when the first camouflage-coloured uniform (greenish-grey) was introduced but soon given up.

From 1915 until 1923 the colour was light grey, after that khaki until 1961, when olive-green was adopted.

Until 1958 only woollen cloth had been used for the Danish soldier's uniforms. That year a light denim fabric replaced wool. Otherwise most of the changes covered the style of the outer garment.

After 1855 the Foot Guards were alone amongst the infantry with a special regimental uniform for active service and another for ceremonial purposes. But in this folder ceremonial and other uniforms are not included.

From 1842 until 1903 this particular regiment wore a dark-blue/light-blue field-uniform which differed from that used by the other infantry regiments, and until 1890 it included a bearskin cap for active service. This head-dress is still in use when guard duties are carried out at the Royal residences. The Foot Guard's blue uniform was replaced in 1903, simultaneously with the other infantry regiments, by the greenish/grey, and when this was given up in 1906, the Guards retained it for active service until 1923, including the period when other regiments were in the light-grey 1915 pattern uniform.

Thus, the last individual pattern of regimental uniform did not disappear from the Danish infantry until 1923. Also at this time another, much older uniform which had survived all changes, i.e. the light-blue cavalry and Service Corps uniform, Pattern 1855, disappeared, and from then onwards all Danish soldiers were clad in khaki with badges as the only means of regimental identification.

Throughout the history of Danish Army uniforms, the uniform actually worn in peacetime has differed from the current officially adopted pattern. The reason for this was that the Army's war strength has always been based on larger numbers of trained reservists, which permitted the peacetime establishment to expand up to 20 times on mobilisation. Therefore huge quantities of uniforms stored for emergency had to be used up before a new pattern could be issued to the peacetime-serving personnel (mostly conscripts under training). Very often this calamity brought about mixtures of different patterns also due to the fact that, for example trousers are more easily worn out than great-coats. The same disparity applied to the individual load-carrying equipment.

The pictures in this folder cannot show all the improvisations which were necessary in this respect, but accurately indicate every detail in the uniform exactly as it was authorised at the time it was adopted, always by a Royal resolution.

The equipment, or the load-carrying method, has rarely been changed in conjunction with the changes in the uniform patterns. It is not easy to state the exact year of adoption, as the equipment has been subject to long series of minor changes. The year in brackets indicates the year in which an outstanding feature of the equipment shown was introduced or a major change authorised, or when a component that dominated the appearance of the equipment was adopted.

Only privates are shown and with the individual weapon - the rifle - which was regulated the year the uniform was adopted, with bayonet and cartridge pouches.

Since 1937 the infantryman had some of his equipment carried by regimental transport, but although these items (e.g. pack, greatcoat, and blanket) sometimes were or are actually carried with the equipment, the pictures show the rifleman in ordinary battle order.

As it would be impossible to show the numerous infantry uniforms since Danish Infantry was formed at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, only one example from before 1842 has been used in this folder, a private from DANSKE LIVREGIMENT, Copenhagen (The Danish Life Regiment). This regiment was chosen for two reasons. It is the old "1<sup>st</sup> of Foot", but although it is a rather young unit, it has a magnificent battle-record, and its name is the only reminder of the Danish-Norwegian Army. It was affiliated with The Norwegian Life Regiment - the old "2<sup>nd</sup> Foot", until the war with England cut the Danish-Norwegian kingdom into two halves. All reference to any connection between the two realms was forbidden in the peace treaty (1814), including any use of the word "Norwegian" as part of the name of a Danish Army unit. But here "the opposite number" indirectly reminds of ancient glory.



Fig. 1, 1763

Fig. 2, 1842

Fig. 3, 1848

### 1763

Fig. 1. 1763. Danske Livregiment. An example of an infantry uniform in the period when each regiment had its own. The red frock coat dominated with cuffs and facings varied in regimental colours - here yellow - which was used for the shoulder slings as well as for the belt. Shoes with long canvas gaiters, and a white linen haversack was slung over the right shoulder. A flintlock musket M/1750 with socket bayonet. Black cartridge pouch of leather over the left shoulder, small sword over the right. No greatcoat, mess-tin or waterbottle is carried.

*At its raising (7/12-1763) Danske Livregiment wore blue facings, but later changed to yellow (paille) - as shown here - in 1765.*

### 1842

Fig. 2. 1842. The first uniform common to all infantry, apart from the Foot Guards and Rifle Regiments. Scarlet coat, light-blue trousers, black shako. Light-blue collar, sleeve facings and shoulder straps with regimental number, black leather pouch on a white leather sling across left shoulder, sword, bayonet, haversack, and black tinned waterbottle slung over the right shoulder. On the back a sealskin knapsack with rolled greatcoat on top, and mess-tin. Flintlock rifle with bayonet.

### 1848

Fig. 3. 1848. All infantry of the line changed to double-breasted dark-blue tunics with scarlet collars, worn with a field cap and trousers, which were light -blue and a dark-grey greatcoat. The composition of the colours is shown in Figs. 5 and 7, while this figure shows the uniform of the same design, but in the dark-green version used by the Rifle Regiments and the Light Infantry. Apart from the shoulder slings and the belt, which were white with the blue uniform until 1849, and black with the dark-green uniform, arms and equipment were as shown on Fig. 2. The rifle is M/1848, which was used by all Rifle Regiments before it was issued to all the infantry of the line. The mess-tin disappeared in 1844.



Fig. 4, 1855

Fig. 5, 1889 (1892)

Fig. 6, 1903

## 1855

Fig. 4. 1855. In this year a dark-blue cap replaced the light-blue one. The boots that the national service men brought with them as private property were allowed with long legs which could be worn with the trousers inside in cold weather and snow. The slings that carried the sword, the bayonet, the cartridge pouch, and the waterbottle went out of use and these items were attached to the waistbelt. The large pouch was converted into two smaller ones to which the shoulder straps of the knapsack were hooked and the tinned waterbottle was replaced by a glassbottle with a leather cover (M/1852). The linen haversack was provided with a waterproof cover of oiled fabric. The rifle was still the 1848-Pattern. The Rifle Regiments changed their green uniforms in 1860 to this M/1855 uniform. A new shako, shaped like a cone, was introduced in 1855, but disappeared soon after the 1864-war when it was used on active service by only one regiment. The greatcoat was rolled and strapped around all four sides of the knapsack. From 1860 the carrying method was changed and the greatcoat was rolled like a horseshoe, fastened around three sides.

## 1889 (1892)

Fig. 5. 1889 (1892). The light-blue cap was reintroduced with a circular white stripe. The row of buttons on the tunic became curved. The sealskin knapsack was the same year replaced by a black canvas pattern and a 4-pint mess-tin made of tinned iron plate became regulation; it was strapped to the lid of the knapsack. From 1873 a smaller and flatter type of the waterbottle was adopted; the same year the haversack's weather flap was developed into a complete envelope of canvas around the linen haversack. In 1870 the world-patented Danish Linnemann entrenching-tool became regulation initially for every third man; the sword disappeared eventually. 1889 was also the year when the 8-mm Krag-Jørgensen repeating rifle together with a short bayonet (see Fig. 6) replaced the 11,45-mm Remington Rifle Pattern 1867. A new waistbelt was introduced, also new pouches (with pockets for oil, pull-through and cleaning pads) - all made of black leather.

## 1903

Fig. 6. 1903. After extensive troop-trials in 1901-02 the single-breasted greenish-grey uniform was adopted in 1903,

characterised by a very loose jacket with a turned-down collar. A suggestion to replace the greatcoat with a woollen undergarment (to be packed in the knapsack, when not in use) proved no good, but delayed the introduction of the greenish-grey greatcoat until 1904. A semi-long laced boot for the national service men who joined up with no private footwear was adopted. All leather items in this equipment became brown, including a new pattern cartridge pouch with a lid that opened outwards. Knapsack, mess-tin cover and haversack were made from greenish-grey canvas; the haversack had no sling but was attached to the waistbelt. The equipment included the first waterbottle and mess-tin made of aluminium, both of the 1895-Pattern. The rifle and bayonet is the same as in Fig. 5. Denmark did not adopt any ground sheet (or shelterhalf) as most other countries in that period.



Fig. 7, 1910 (1906)



Fig. 8, 1915 (1906)



Fig. 9, 1923 (1937)

### 1910 (1906)

Fig. 7. 1910 (1906). The introduction of the M/1903 uniform terminated in 1906 due to some criticism of the greenish-grey cloth, and the old light-blue/dark-blue uniform was re-introduced in 1910, together with black equipment! The tunic became single-breasted, with scarlet collar facings formed as two parallel stripes. Black greatcoat. Further the M/1873 black haversack was re-introduced. A more elaborate version of the 1903 knapsack (since 1906 again made of black canvas) included an easily detachable 60-rounds ammunition pouch. The rifle - still the M/1889 - was improved with a safety-catch, and the ammunition was improved too.

### 1915 (1906)

Fig. 8. 1915 (1906). The light grey M/1915 uniform was similar in design to M/1910, apart from the collar. Light grey greatcoat. The equipment was the M/1906 pattern, apart from the mess-tin, which was reduced from 4 to 3 pints. From this period onwards, the trousers were always worn outside the boots, a habit that could not be justified in the cold winters, but the fashion was considered "manly". The rifle was unchanged, but the bayonet was in 1915/16 replaced by an 8" longer type. The first primitive gasmask was also adopted in 1915.

### 1923 (1937)

Fig. 9. 1923 (1937). This was the first khaki uniform introduced, however officially and more correctly described as

"yellow-brown". As the steel helmet was introduced the same year, the cap was formed as a soft peak-less design, which could be carried in a pocket when the helmet was worn. It was a copy of the cap worn by the Danish Boys Brigade, originally designed by Danish Boy Scouts who had volunteered as bicycle-dispatch riders in 1914. Huge quantities of black leather equipment barred the change from black to brown leather equipment, except from the boots. To save space and weight, the equipment, which now included a helmet and a real gasmask, had to be reduced. In 1937 the haversack was discarded and its contents transferred to the knapsack or pack, together with the mess-tin hitherto strapped outside to the lid. What had to be carried in the knapsack went into a kit bag on the regimental transport. To prevent collision between the helmet and the horseshoe-rolled greatcoat, it was turned around with the open ends at the top. The gasmask was carried in a sling over the right shoulder. The old 52" long rifle was shortened in length, and the cartridges carried by the infantryman were reduced from 140 to 40 rounds, carried in one pouch.



Fig. 10, 1944 (1950)



Fig. 11, 1958 (1959)



Fig. 12, 1961

### 1944 (1950)

Fig. 10. 1944 (1950). Although the German occupation-forces during the latter part of World War Two claimed the Danish Army to be wiped out, a small force of free Danes managed to continue its unbroken existence - as a combined brigade - in "neutral" Sweden in 1943-45. In order to mark this distinction by all means, it was decided to describe the uniform, which had been issued to the free forces in Sweden as M/1944. It was a copy of the British 1937 battledress and was initially made from Swedish army cloth of greyish brown fabric, but after 1945 khaki replaced this colour. Between 1945 and 1950 a set of khaki webbing equipment was adopted, including the British M/1944 waterbottle and M/1925 mess-tin. Further the American poncho, steel helmet and folding shovel was adopted. In 1949 regimental badges in bright brass, to be worn on the collar, were authorised. The pack, greatcoat and blanket roll was generally carried by mechanised transport. The American self-loading rifle M/1936 (Garand) was introduced in 1950.

### 1958 (1959)

Fig. 11. 1958 (1959). Constant complains over the M/1944 uniform for inefficient protection of the soldier against the

weather, resulted in the adoption of a uniform entirely made of light cotton-duck, and thus marked the re-introduction of the tunic. Simultaneously heavy woollen underwear replaced the lighter type, and a peaked soft field cap became regulation. The field jacket furthermore got a hood, which could be worn over the helmet, while a parka-coat was adopted instead of the greatcoat. In 1959 the web equipment was altered slightly, the big universal type pouches disappeared, and a smaller pattern to be worn considerably lower, was introduced. The poncho, which hitherto had been carried under the haversack lid, was transferred to a light carrier, fastened to the back of the waistbelt.

## 1961

Fig. 12. 1961. The colour of the M/1958 uniform was changed from the khaki (or drab) introduced in 1923, to an olive-green shade. The reason for this was that the olive-green colour did not stand out in infrared light the same way as the khaki colour. At the same time the colour of the web equipment was changed too. Fig. 12 shows the olive-green M/1959 equipment seen from behind. On the back the haversack, on the left side the waterbottle carrier (with bottle, mug and water purifying kit), on the waistbelt the poncho (with tent-pitching gear), and below the container for the gasmask. Carried on the right side, is the entrenching tool (of folding-type) in its carrier, with the shaft upright. Motorised and armoured infantry do not normally carry the haversack, but leave it in their vehicles together with the bedding-roll. The bedding-roll can also be strapped to the haversack (See initial photo).

Years of approved patterns including all visibly worn or carried items of uniform and equipment referring to each single picture.

Ref. to picture-plate	1763	1842	1849	1855	1889	1903	1910	1915	1923	1944	1958	1961
Headgear	o	1808	1848	1855	1889	1903	1910	1915	1923	1944	1958	1961
Coat	o	1842	1848	1848	1889	1903	1910	1915	1923	1944	1958	1961
Waistbelt	o	o	o	o	1888	1903	1888	1888	1888	1945	1945	1945
Trousers	o	1822	1848	1822	1822	1903	1822	1915	1923	1944	1958	1961
Boots	o	o	o	o	1877	1903	1903	1910	1923	1944	1958	1958
Great-coat	x	1839	1848	1855	1871	1904 <sup>1</sup>	1910	1915	1923	1944	1958	1961
Rain-cape	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	1948	1957	1957
Knapsack	x	1819	1819	1850	1889	1903	1910	1914	1914	1950	1950	1950
Haversack	o	1819	1819	1852	1873	1903	1871	1871	x	1949	1949	1949
Water-bottle	x	1819	1819	1852	1873	1895	1895	1895	1895	1948	1948	1948
Mess-tin	x	1819	_3	-	1889	1895	1895	1915	1915	1945	1954	1954
Helmet	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	1923	1948	1948	1948
Gas-mask	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	1915	1931	1949	1949	1949
Entrenching-tool	x	x	x	x	1870	1870	1870	1870	1870	1948	1948	1948
Rifle	1750	1828	1848	1894	1889 <sup>2</sup>	1889	1889	1889	1889/24	1950	1950	1950
Bayonet	1750	1828	1848	1848	1889	1889	1889	1915	1915	1950	1950	1950
Cartridge-pouch	o	o	o	1855	1894 <sup>1</sup>	1903	1906	1906	1906	1950	1959	1959
Sword	o	1838	1838	1854	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

### Forklaringer

**o:** Casually developed pattern, rarely in use outside the regiment, not registered pattern.

**-:** Not part of the regulation issue that particular year.

**1:** In a few cases items are shown, although they are not adopted until a later year.

**2:** Between 1867 and 1889 a breechloader-rifle Pattern 1867 of the Remington design was regulation in all infantry regiments, but it remained in the stores for many territorial units up to 1940!

**3:** From 1844 and until 1884 no mess-tin was included in the Danish soldier's personal equipment.