

About Danish infantry 1932-1941, Fodfolksbataljonen

Introduction

The infantry is the Army's main weapon.

Its skill in the use of its arms, its steadfast determination to endure the exertions and dangers of battle, and to maintain unbreakable unity and comradeship regardless of the losses inflicted upon it by the enemy, are the pillars on which the commander builds victory. .(Source 1.)



Danish infantry, 1932. From a contemporary postcard.

The infantry battalion

The infantry battalion consists - according to the 1937 scheme - of:

- Chief (lieutenant-colonel) with staff (8) and staff company (250)
- 4 recoilless gun companies (each 230) - See Recoil company
- Gunnery company (291) - See Gunnery company, part 1 introduction, part 2, machine gun division, part 3, mortar division and part 4, machine gun division.

The infantry battalion has a combat strength of 1,469 men [1](#)).



Battalion tab, 18 April 1934 [2](#).

The staff company

The staff company consists of:

- Connection sharing
- Anti-aircraft division
- Medical personnel
- 2 ammunition platoons
- train

The staff company has 250 men.

The connection sharing

Connection sharing

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Platoon leader | • 1 flag team (2 men) 1 |
| • Deputy Commander | • observer team (2 men) 1 |
| • Reserve horn blower | • reserve team (1 team leader and 3 men) 11 |
| • 3 telephone teams (1 team leader and 4 men) 2 signal teams (1 team leader and 5 men) | • ordinances, of which 4 bicycle and motorcycle ordinances) 1 caretaker |
| | • |

The following signal equipment is carried on the platoon's horse-drawn signal equipment wagon:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| • 6 field telephones (type B or C) 9 | • 2 signal pistols 50 |
| • cable towers with accessories and laying rod | • signal cartridges with red ball |

(cable drum type D) 4 sets

- of signal flags (each 1 red and 1 white signal flag) 4 electric
- signal stations 1 signal flag with accessories 3 signal flags
- with accessories 2 flag spikes with accessories 2 letter
- pigeon spikes with accessories 2 depeche books 20
- depeche holders
-
-
-

- 100 signal cartridges with white ball 40
- signal cartridges with green ball 40 signal
- cartridges with 4 red balls 40 signal cartridges with 4
- with 4 white balls 40 signal cartridges with 4
- green balls 40 signal cartridges with 2 red
- and 2 white balls 4 rocket forks 30 flares
- (with 6 stars) 30 flares (with 3 stars)

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*Team leader at
the staff company's
liaison division.
From Source 2.*



*Team leader at
the staff company*

connection sharing.

From Source 2.

As the team leader wears a message tower (not shown) as functional equipment, in which there is no room for his personal necessities, he is instead equipped with a bread bag, which is carried in a strap over the right shoulder.

The team leader for signal and flag teams is also equipped with single prism binoculars.

All personnel in the liaison division are equipped with rifle M.1889.

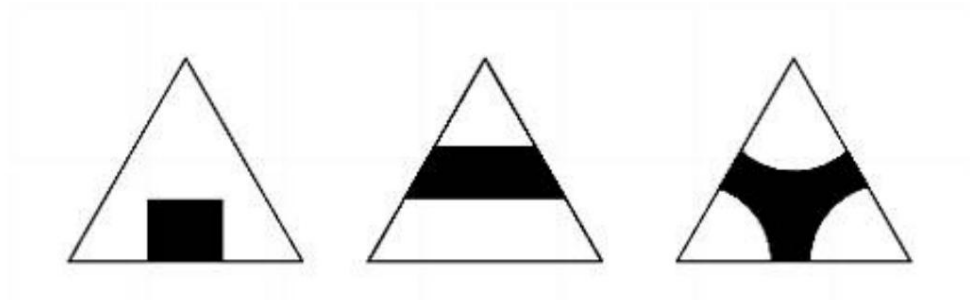
The liaison section consists of 50 men.

The signal material

Flashing signaling devices, signal flags, signal pistols, rockets and flag material are used for optical signaling mv.

Signaling with light balls (signal cartridges) is used for communication from airmen to infantry or artillery, from infantry to artillery as well as within infantry and cavalry. Rockets are used mainly within the infantry as well as from infantry to artillery. Signal cartridges (light balls) can be used during the day at distances up to 2-3 km; at night up to 6 km. Rockets: during the day up to 2-3 km; at night: up to 10 km.

The recognition flags are 3 m high and are laid out on the ground - with the top in the direction of the enemy - to indicate the staff's place for airmen.

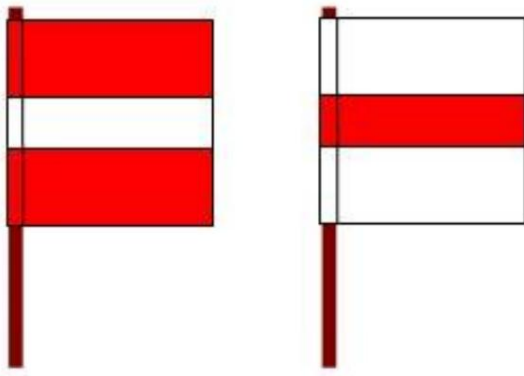


Insignia flags for infantry battalions. According to Source 3.

The recognition flags are made of white canvas, with printed black figures.

From left: the flag of the lowest numbered battalion in the regiment, followed by the next lowest and highest number.

Signal flags are used for short messages to the pilots. (I am currently not familiar with the system, but based on similar foreign systems, it is about pieces of canvas that are laid out in different combinations that form a given message.

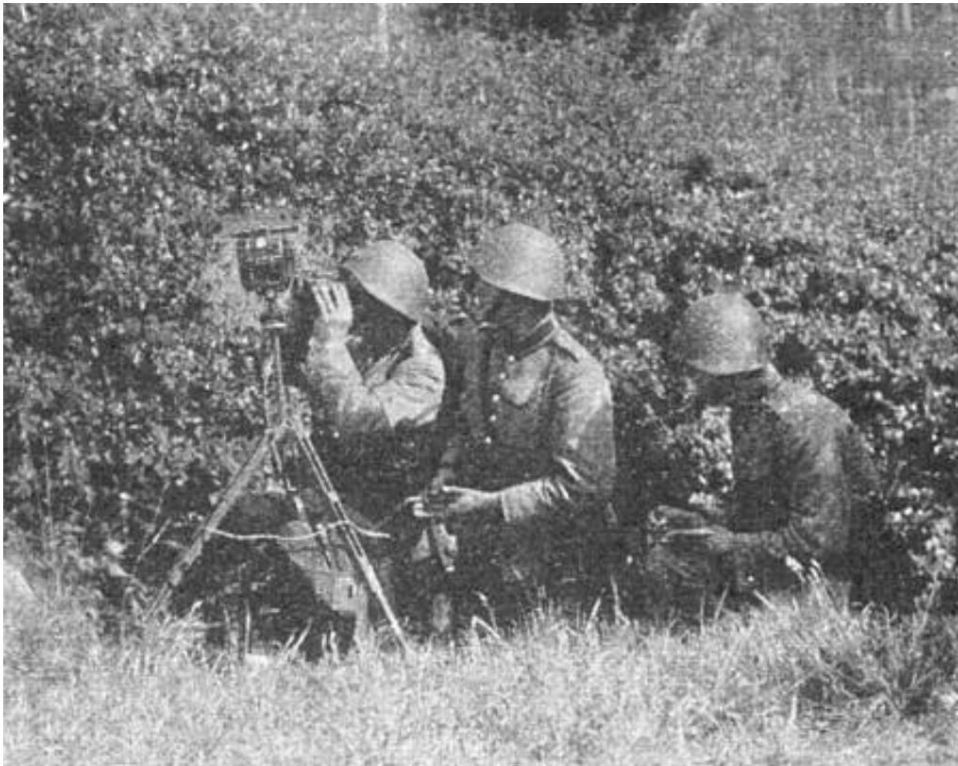


A set of signal flags.

Drawn based on Sources 5 and 6.

Swing flag signaling is done with a single signal flag of square shape, red with a white cross or vice versa, depending on the nature of the background. The signal flag is grasped with both hands.

When using both signal flags (daylight) and electric signal stations (daylight and darkness) the Morse system is used. Swing to the right (for the sender)/short blink indicates a dot and to the left/long blink a line.



Electric signal station. From Source 7.

The starting position is the signal flag held vertically.

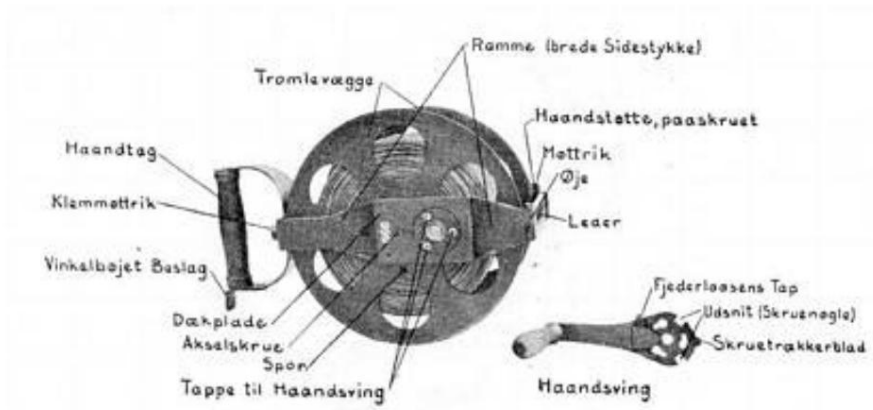
Under good conditions and with well-trained people, the transmission rate was 8 letters/minute for signal flags and 12 letters/minute for flashing stations.

The phonetic alphabet of the period, etc. can be found i.a. in Source 3.

The range of flashing stations is:

	Day Night 5 km
Without binoculars	15 km
With binoculars	10 km 25 km

The flashing stations' accumulators are charged at the telegraph companies' transportable charging stations.



Cable reel D, with 750 m of field cable [4](#).

An image of a field telephone B can be found i.a. in Danish anti-aircraft artillery 1940.



Brevduetornyster,
Fodfolket, approx. 1935 [3](#).

For further information on the use of carrier pigeons, see e.g. About the carrier pigeon service in the Danish Army.

The Air Defense Division

Anti-aircraft division

- 1 platoon leader
- 1 deputy commander

(Additional personnel may have been included in the division, but the currently available sources do not provide further information.)

4 anti-aircraft groups, each with:

- 1 group leader (with single prism binoculars) and 4 men:
- 1 anti-aircraft gunner (with water bag, buttstock and air target sights) 1 helper (with tool bag)
-

- 2 suppliers (provider 1 with water bag)
- 1 8 mm machine gun M.1929, with accessories

The air defense division has an estimated strength of 30 men.



Machine gun set up to fire at air targets.

From Source 4.

Information about the machine gun and its use can be found in the *Shooting Company, Part 2*. See also the *Recoil Company* for information on the use of the tripod gun against aerial targets.

In the anti-aircraft group, the crew is equipped with rifle M.1889. The platoon leader has pistol M.1910/21, incl. 25 cartridges.

At "ready for battle", the equipment is carried as follows:

Machine gunner:

Machine gun

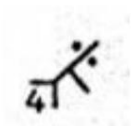
Helps:

Machine gun tripod

Supplies 1 and 2: 1

interchangeable barrel (with holster) and air target pivot

The currently available sources do not provide further information about the division's equipment, etc



*Troop insignia for
anti-aircraft machine gun.*
From Source 3.

It is the troop design for a machine gun, elevated 45° and added an "air target pivot". The number indicates the number of anti-aircraft machine guns - 4 was the normal firing unit.

The battalion's medical staff

Sanitary personnel

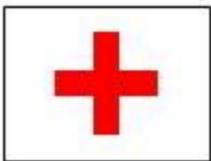
On the horse-drawn medical cart,
e.g. following equipment:

- 2 doctors
- 1 ambulance driver
- 7 paramedics 15
- ambulances 2
- canteen soldiers 1
- coachman 1 vet +
- assistants for the vet

(There may have been additional personnel in the sanitation division, but the currently available sources do not provide further information.)

Estimated strength: 30 men.

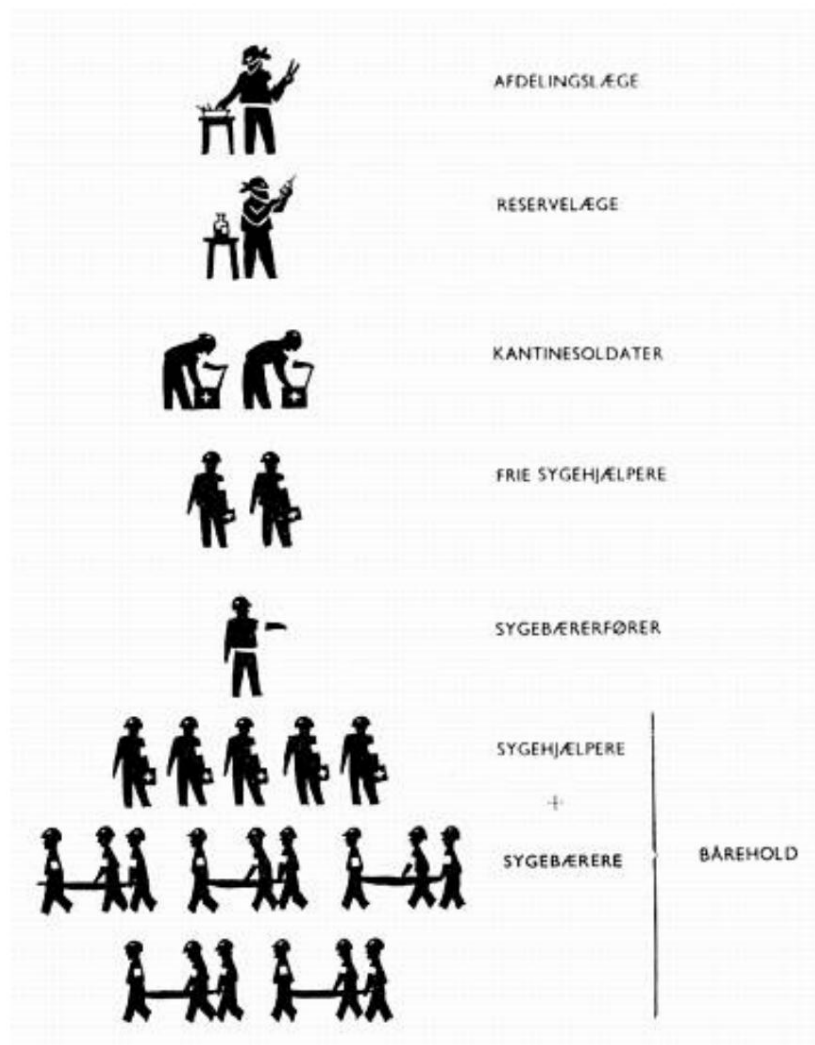
- 2 canteen trolleys 7
- paramedic bags 8 sets of
- stretcher material, with carrying straps 5 carrying pieces
- storage box 1, 2 and 3 1 large
- canteen 1 sack with
-
- Thomasskinner 1
- ward box for caustic war gases 1 oxygen vaporizer
- 2 quarter badges for doctors 2
- vet medicine chests 2 vet bandage
- bags 1 quarter badge for vets
-
-



Geneva mark.
Drawn from Source 7.

Battalion medical personnel, but not veterinarians, wear the badge as a wide, white armband with a red cross on the left upper arm.

Sanitary equipment [5](#))



A proposal for the organization of an infantry battalion's sanitary personnel, approx. 1936.

Formed after publication in Source 8.

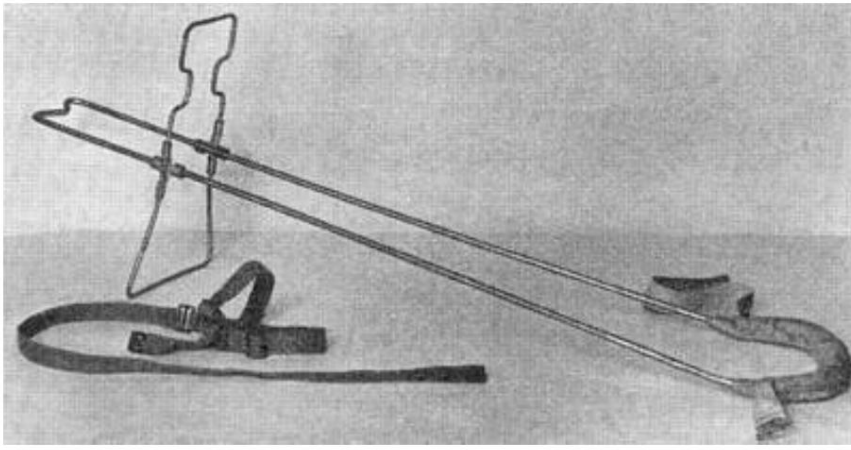
The canteen turrets contain instruments, compounds and medicine. They are worn by canteen soldiers who are nurses and usually accompany the doctor.

The carrier piece is an approx. 2 m long and approx. 1 m wide piece of tarpaulin, with 3 rope straps on each side. The carrier piece is i.a. intended to transport wounded in trenches.



Canteen box, approx. 1955 [6](#). From Source 7.

The canteen is a wooden box containing instruments, compounds, cookers, alcohol etc.



Thomasskinne. From Source 8.

The paramedic bags are intended for first aid and contain dressings, triangular scarves etc.

The depot boxes are wooden boxes containing compounds, medicines etc. for use in, among other things the connection point.

Thomasskinner is intended for - on the dressing site - to stretch a broken leg.

Armament and functional equipment

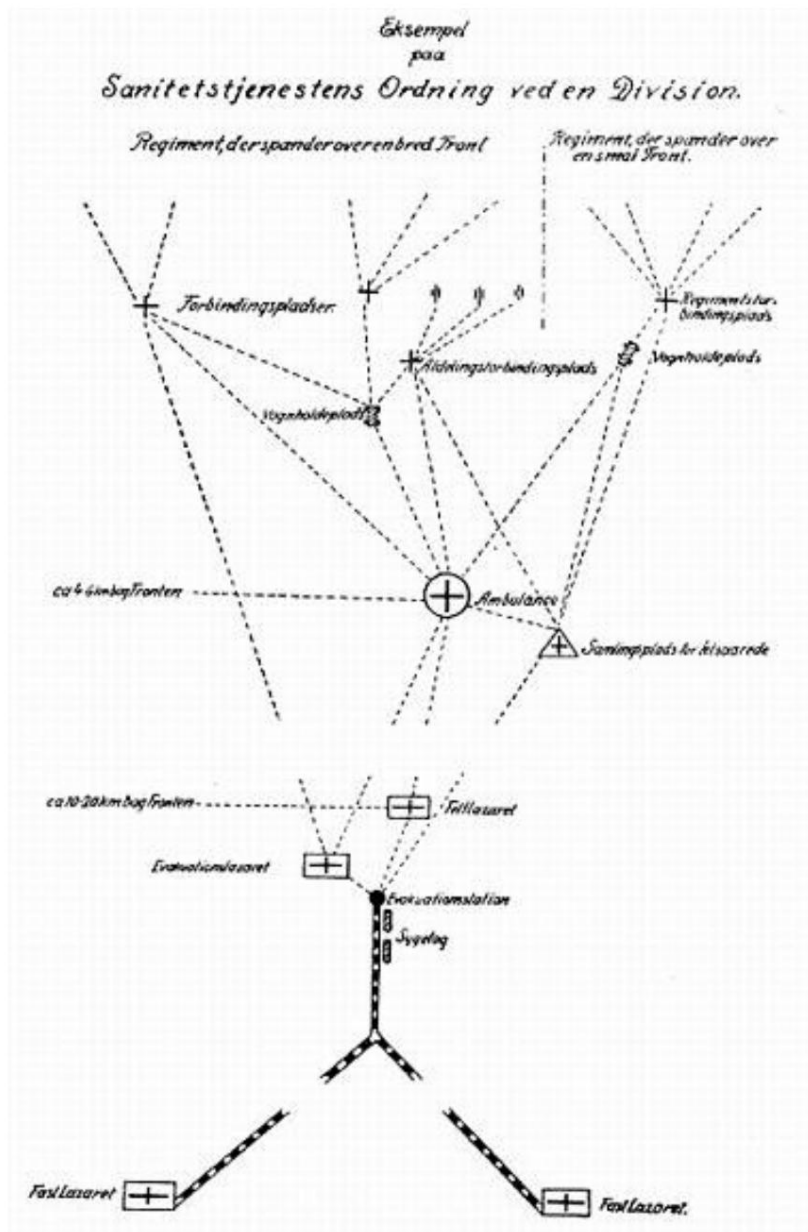
Apart from the doctors and veterinarian, who are equipped with pistol M.1910/21, the other crew are not equipped with firearms, but only the saber bayonet, which is carried in a sword pouch on the waist belt. The ambulance driver is additionally equipped with a field lamp and army glass (= an older model of binoculars which, due to its construction, cannot be equipped with a reticle 7)).

The way of the wounded

When a division is in battle, a *dressing station*, battalion, divisional or regimental dressing station is set up at this, where the doctors provide aid to the wounded and sick. The dressing area is usually located near the ward's second line. It is indicated by the doctor's quarter mark, a white flag with a red cross (the Geneva mark).

From the dressing station, paramedics are dispatched, who in small sanitary patrols search the battlefield to help and connect the wounded and gas poisoned, who cannot walk themselves, to the dressing station.

If the battle is very fierce, and there are larger forces in battle, an *ambulance* is deployed a few kilometers behind the dressing station, which acts as a large dressing station.



Example of the sanitation service's arrangement at a division.
From Source 3.

From the dressing station and the ambulance, the wounded and gas poisoned, who cannot or must not walk, are taken in vehicles, usually ambulances, back to *field hospitals* (gas hospitals), which are field hospitals.

The ambulances themselves arrange for the collection of the wounded at the dressing stations; the ambulances' medical personnel and medical motor vehicles are advanced to car stops near the dressing areas, if possible all the way to these.

The lightly wounded, who can go to the dressing area themselves, will, after treatment here, be sent to an *assembly point for the lightly wounded*, where there is a doctor, and from where the wounded will be sent back to the *field hospital*.

Near the field infirmary is usually a railway station - the *evacuation station* - from where the wounded and gas-poisoned in sick trains are sent back to *permanent infirmaries* when their condition permits.

Source 3 provides the following rules of thumb for expected losses of larger units during open field combat:

6% in normal defensive and offensive combat.

12% in stubborn defensive and general offensive combat.

18% with strong offensive in somewhat more difficult conditions.

The total losses can be calculated to be distributed between dead, seriously wounded and lightly wounded in the ratio 1:2:2. Of the injured, 50-70% are considered to be able to walk, the rest must be carried or driven to the ambulance. Wounds during a war of movement can be counted on: gunshots approx. 30%, with artillery fire approx. 58%, for other reasons approx. 12%.

Remark

The principles of the 1930s do not differ fundamentally from those of more recent times, it is just that the individual organizational units have had different designations/spellings. Eg. is called the 1930s *dressing place* later a *connecting place*.

Furthermore, it should be added that each soldier was provided with a one-man dressing pack consisting of 2 small bandages with which "the soldier must bind the gunshot wounds and lesions that he sustains in war" (Source 7).

The ammunition divisions

Infantry Battalion Ammunition Platoon (1932 Scheme)

- 1 platoon driver
 - 2 half-platoon drivers 4
 - horse-drawn carriages 4
 - reserve horses 2 bicycle
 - orderlies 1 caretaker
 -
 - 2 ammunition wagons, each with 1 coachman
- 6 groups, each with:
- 1 group leader 4
 - suppliers 2 horse
 - tractors
 - 2 cartridge horses



Patronhestes, ca. 1935.
From Source 4.

The cartridge horses are Icelandic horses, which are equipped with ammunition saddle M.1927.

8 pieces are carried on the saddle. 10-magazine bags (made of leather or iron tin) and therein 80 magazines M.1924 (for the recoilless rifle), corresponding to the cavalry's ammunition horses - see e.g. About Danish cavalry 1932-1940, Part 1.

Judging by the standing soldier's 2 cartridge pouches, he's a tank man.

The picture also gives a good impression of how small an Icelandic horse really is.

With the 1937 scheme, the infantry battalion now gets 2 ammunition divisions, as material from the ammunition division of the former machine gun company and the regiment's sniper company (mortar company) are included to form Ammunition Division II - see e.g. The Guardian Company, Part 2.

The total strength of the ammunition divisions is estimated at 100 men, with the following equipment:

Ammunition division I (for
the recoil companies)

- 2 ammunition wagons (horse-drawn) 16
- cartridge horses (Icelandic horses)

Ammunitionsdeling II (for
shooting company)

- 3 ammunition wagons (horse-drawn) 4
- cartridge carts with 8 mm ammunition (horse-drawn) 2 grenade
- carts with 81 mm ammunition (horse-drawn) 4 cartridge carts with
- 20 mm ammunition (horse-drawn)

The personnel of the ammunition divisions were equipped with rifles M.1889. Group leaders and carriage drivers also carried barbed wire scissors. Foragers, cart drivers and cart men were equipped with foot spades.

Trained

Train (*all wagons are light trucks*)

Kitchen trolley

The kitchen trolley
carries:

- 9 cooking boxes with today's dinner
- Kitchen props
- Bread and dry food for the company for 1 day
- Oats for 1 day

Baggage wagon II
(general division
and train)

Baggage van I
(the rest of the
company)

- The battalion's archive, map and quarter mark
- The crew's luggage racks (Luggage wagon I: 116; Baggage wagon II: 127)
- Commanders' Suitcases (Baggage Cart I: 12; Baggage Cart II: 2)
- Shoemaker's tool
- Tailor's tool
- Spare equipment for one person
- Polishing and cleaning agents

On the baggage wagons
are carried:

Blacksmith's cart, with the necessary tools and material for carrying out the fitting service.

Gunsmith's wagon,
incl A reserve of recoilless rifles, machine guns and tools and smaller spare parts for use in repairs to weapons, cooking equipment and bicycles etc.

It is estimated that the infantry battalion's tree has a manpower strength of approx. 30 men. Motor vehicle drivers are equipped with rifle M.1889.



The doctor inspects the yellow peas [8\)](#).

A kitchen trolley is intended for the transport of cooking boxes with the day's dinner portion. When this has been brought to a boil during a stay on the spot, it can finish boiling during the march.

Apart from picking up dinner portions for the following day (from a catering column), the kitchen trolleys are not normally used for picking up catering. This is delivered by supply wagons (train wagons or printed trucks) from the catering column.

The picture is from the Gardehusar regiment, but it is assumed that the infantry battalions' cooking boxes were of the same type as the cavalry's (where they were introduced in 1914).

The army was thus not equipped with field kitchens, in the style of the *goulash cannons known from abroad*.

Sources

1. *Textbook for Army Privates, I1. Part, Infantry - Field Service and Fencing*, Ministry of War, Copenhagen 1940.
2. *Textbook for Infantry Corporal Schools - Equipment and Train*, Ministry of War, Copenhagen 1941.
3. *Memory book for use in the field, during exercises and war games* by HH Jørgensen, N. Olaf Møllers Forlag, Copenhagen 1936.

4. *Denmark's Army, Volumes I and II* under the editorship of Captain Hector Boeck, Captain SE Johnstad-Møller and Captain Lieutenant CV Hjalp, Society for the publication of cultural writings, Copenhagen 1934-1935.
5. *The Corps of Engineers 1684-1934* by Captain Willy Andersen, Special Edition of Journal for Engineer Officers, Copenhagen 1934.
6. *The Danish Corps of Engineers 1684-1984* by Ole L. Frandsen and others, Tøjhusmuseet, Copenhagen 1984, ISBN 87-7491-143-0.
7. *Textbook for Army Privates, Part 1, Temporary Edition, Common for all weapons, corps and departments*, Copenhagen 1946.
8. *Textbook for the Army's medical personnel*, the Armed Forces Medical Corps, Copenhagen 1955.
9. *Features of the history of Danish military medicine* by Hj. Thorsteinsson, published by the Defense Health Service, December 1992.
10. *The Defense Book* by Colonel T. Andersen, Gyldendal, Copenhagen 1941.
11. *Field equipment for Individuals*, Ministry of War, Copenhagen 1936, with correction sheets up to august 1941.

Per Finsted

To note:

1) The very precise number is a tally of the dry food portions that are carried on the battalion's kitchen wagons. However, the mutual distribution between the divisions of the staff company cannot be determined quite so precisely, which is why this paper - for lack of a better one - contains some estimated strength figures.

2) From *Look straight! Conscription for debate* by Hans Chr. Bjerg, Uffe Østergaard and Hans Engell, Folk & Forsvar, Copenhagen 1999, ISBN87-987619-00. It is probably the 12th Battalion, which was located in Sønderborg at the time. Occasion? Deep Bowl Day!

3) From *carrier pigeons in the defense* of Sune Wadskjær Nielsen, FOV Newsletter no. 17.9.2002.

4) From *Textbook for Army Privates, Part II for Motorized Field Artillery*, Ministry of War, Copenhagen 1940.

5) Sanitary equipment means equipment intended for use in the treatment, care, transport, etc. of the wounded and sick.

6) Although the illustration of the canteen box is from 1955, the 1930s equipment is assumed to have been similar.

7) The explanation comes from *Artilleri i Danmark* edited by Marian Plough, Varde Artillerimuseum, 2001, ISBN 87-89834-39-9, which also shows a picture of such binoculars.

8) From *the Gardehusar regiment 1912-1937, with a summary of the regiment's history from 1762-1912* by Colonel Alf Giersing, Det Hoffenbergske Etablissement, Copenhagen 1937.