

Unregulated uniforms

by C. Christensen

It has repeatedly been mentioned within interested circles that a uniform regulation does not always mean that the soldiers in question, to whom the regulation applies, have been dressed thereafter.

The now-deceased Major Hvidt has written several times very informatively on this subject and it was actually one of the Major's articles that made me go hunting in my archive folders, where there are quite a few random and poorly dated records and sketches of strange uniform combinations.

The first observations can be dated exactly to the year 1911, when fairly large maneuvers were held around Vejle. (Incidentally, they ended with a royal revue for King Frederik VIII at Lerbæk Mark). For some reason, the sightings were not written down until some years later, but they concern many divisions of infantry that passed through the city. And that was in the good old days of flying plumes and tinkling games. The largest part of this crew was wearing the two-breasted dark blue/light blue uniform with a light blue cap with a white stripe around it.

But occasionally came individual companies with dark blue caps with a red stripe. In addition, in the queue of the battalions came platoons or groups (sections) in the "grey-green" field uniform, which the Life Guard still used until 1940. There were sections in a brown uniform of the same cut, i.e. falling collar, hidden buttons and two breast pockets. For some reason, this uniform stands out quite clearly to my eyes, and the color was almost exactly the same as the first Danish combat uniform in 1958. Or rather, it was the same color. On one particular occasion I saw some soldiers wearing the light blue uniform of the same cut. It was the uniform "Klods Hans" [1](#)) was so fond of in his time. Presumably because they were easier colors to print.

All of these uniforms were referred to by us incompetents as "trial uniforms", a word that I later heard a few times.

On the other hand, some officers in black/blue uniform with falling collar, hidden buttons etc. and with sleeve distinctions were real enough. Just not all officers wore this uniform.

As mentioned, my notes etc. are incompletely dated, but they lie in the period 1925 to 1935, when South Jutland was time and again the scene of autumn manoeuvres.

It was not until the twenties that it was customary for the then VII Regiment's music corps to give concerts in the county's towns. At a single one of these, everyone wore a blue uniform, single or double-breasted. However, a single one wore a single-breasted coat as well as collar distinctions and white lion buttons.



In 1925, a concert was also given during the maneuver. The band had appeared in brown 23 uniforms during rehearsals, but for the concert all men wore double-breasted blue uniforms with "small shoes". On the other hand, all the men were brandishing new Sam Browne belts that shone orange in the distance. A captain - probably of the reserve - met in the second row and with Sam Browne belted with both shoulder straps on. (See ill.)

In a later exercise, some companies went into supposed air raid shelters in the city streets. They were sort of more logically dressed. The crew was in blue uniform, corporals in gray 1915, and practically all commanders from sergeant upwards in brown 23. Here, however, the logic stopped. There was a wonderful variety in high collars and lapels, side pockets with and without spring pleats and peaked and shaded hats.

One day two companies came marching to the tune of the "Fredensborg March" for pipes and drums. It interested me and I ascertained that they were tall, handsome people in gray uniforms in 1915 - but with "Rex's" on their shoulders. It was said that it was personnel from the 3rd Life Guard Battalion who had been summoned and dressed in Aarhus. So it is not true that the Lifeguard only used the grey-green for fe1tun uniform.

One day, the 3rd Dragon Regiment from Århus passed through the city as often before. It was rainy that day and a cover was on. I got to show the way to a reserve lieutenant who can serve as an example of the uniforms: blue single-breasted uniform with the funny short lapels, black riding boots, blue helmet cap and a raincoat in heavy drapery fabric with hidden buttons and then Sam Browne. He was just one of many variations.

Another time there was old-fashioned accommodation in the city of as many as two battalions. They were in gray uniforms with helmets and, when they came in the evening, apparently had gray helmet caps. In daylight, however, it turned out that the caps were brown. To ensure calm on the streets, patrols were sent around. I saw one, consisting of 6 privates, 1 sergeant and a first lieutenant. The privates were in gray uniforms with waist belts, cartridge pouches and rifles with attached bayonets. The sergeant was in single-breasted blue uniform and breeches with black boots, the first lieutenant in blue gala with long trousers and black shoes, belt with saber pendant in silver and red (officer's sash?) and drawn saber. Everyone was wearing a helmet model 1923. Then you were just about to say an operetta.

From the late thirties I have a sketch of two artillerymen, taken at a freight yard while loading guns and horses. One had a 1923 helmet, dark blue coat of arms, gray trousers and black riding gaiters. The other had a gray cap 1915, dark blue coat of arms, gray trousers 1915 with turn up and black laced boots. Both with carbine 1889 overhung.

As far as I can remember, it was also in the late thirties that they tried to introduce a kind of undershirt or poo shirt, which was to be worn under the 1923 uniform and was supposed to be able to replace the cloak. The attempt failed

well, evil tongues claim it was because they didn't know what to do with the many black and white coats that were in the depots. The jerseys were then used as practice uniforms. I think it was at Fredericia Fællø that I saw recruits in training with gray cap 1915, brown "undershirt", waist belt with cartridge pouches, gray trousers 1915 with turn ups and black lace dusters. Also rifle 1889 and bayonet. The exciting thing was that in every phase one of the troop teachers was in a blue uniform.

The emergency response force 1939 and the war years with what followed is a chapter in itself. However, I must mention that even in the spring of 1940 I saw a first lieutenant of the artillery with a dark blue uniform with red stripes on the trousers, a regular old-fashioned waist belt, a tall hat with gold stripes and a black cloak with red edging.

As the rest of the crew had helmets 1923, gray coats 1915 and brown trousers 1923, he seemed very decorative.

Notes

1) Satirical magazine.