

Redcoat:

The Regimental Coat of the British Infantryman, c 1808-15 (3)

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Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the British infantryman's coat was its regimental lace, or 'looping'. Such 'looping' had first appeared in the British service in the late 17th century as a distinction on Grenadier dress, and was to disappear from general use only in the mid-19th century. Its last vestiges are still to be seen today on the uniforms of the Brigade of Guards, on tunic skirts and cuff flaps.

In the early 19th century the lace was woven with various coloured stripes and 'worms' of regimental pattern, and was used not only as an edging to the collar, shoulder straps, wings and turnbacks, but also as 'loops' formed as an ornament at buttons and buttonholes. It was used further to decorate the rear of the coat, between

the hip buttons. Regiments were distinguished not only by the pattern of their lace, but also by the shape into which the 'loops' were

formed; and by whether the loops and buttons were set on 'regular' (i.e. single or evenly spaced), or in pairs, or in threes (as were those of the 3rd Regiment of Foot Guards).

LOOP SHAPES AND PLACING

Modern convention has assigned only three shapes into which the 'loops' were formed: square-ended, pointed and bastion. In fact, however, early 19th century practice recognised at least five shapes, and it is possible that there were even more. The 'bastion' loops were of two sorts: 'Flowerpot' and 'Jew's Harp'. The pointed loops included a common 'straight point' and a rarer

'Coldstream' loop. There may also have been another variation to the pointed loop, folded in a manner ascribed later in the 19th century to the 93rd Regiment of Foot⁽¹⁾. The square-ended loops were also referred to as 'double-headed' loops.

When the existing clothing regulations were reviewed in 1802 it was noted that the infantry were to use ten loops on each side of the front of the

Light Company, unidentified regiment; coat (3); Musée Royal de l'Armée, Bruxelles. The nine 'flowerpot' loops down each side of the chest well illustrate the problem of fitting bastion-style loops onto regimental coats. The regulation ten, described in 1802, was simply too many, especially for the shorter coat of later years, and the notes of the Pearse firm make consistent reference to only nine. Where bastion-style loops were to be set on in pairs the Clothing Board allowed eight, which number was also sanctioned in 1802 for the 'jackets' of Highland regiments.

The coat has yellow facings, and its lace is described as having a blue or black stripe. The wings are decorated with thick green tufting. It has not yet been possible to identify the buttons, though they are all 'small', as is correct for Light Infantry clothing. Possibly it is an Irish Militia coat.

Intriguingly, the National Army Museum has a photo of this coat which identifies it as being from the Coldstream Guards. Can there in fact be any possible association? The provenance of the coat is not clear, but it is said to have once been in the museum which Cotton set up at Waterloo. In the latter years of the Napoleonic wars many regular regiments received militiamen as drafts, taking them directly into their ranks still wearing clothing provided by their original regiments. Such clothing was worn until replaced in the next annual clothing of their new regiment. Men who had been clothed by the Militia were indeed serving in the Coldstream in Flanders in early 1815. All of the Coldstream were reported to have their coats in a very poor state and many men had their coats patched, 'particularly those who were last clothed by the Militia'. The Coldstream did not receive their new clothing for 1815 until after Waterloo. Is there a possibility that this coat was actually worn by a militiaman serving in the Coldstream in 1814/15—perhaps even at Waterloo? Unfortunately it has not been possible to examine the coat for other clues.



Right:

'Mess.' J. N. & B. Pearse', Records Book, c. 1803-1819. Typical entries giving details for privates' coats of the 7th and 9th Regiments of Foot, with samples of their regimental lace. This is a unique source for the study of early 19th century uniform, but one constrained by poor writing, idiosyncratic abbreviations and later alterations which make many entries difficult to decipher, or to date precisely. (Canadian War Museum)



Above:

Grenadier and Light Company privates of the 29th (Worcestershire) Regiment, after Charles Hamilton Smith, 1813. While both are shown with pointed loops, those on the Grenadier (left) appear to be set on evenly ('regular') while those of his companion are conceivably in pairs. In his schematic tables (Costume of the Army, London, 1815), Hamilton Smith indicates square ('double-headed') loops set in pairs; but De Bosset (1803) shows pointed loops in pairs. On the better evidence of Pearse's notations, De Bosset would appear to be correct: pointed loops in pairs. Pearse also includes a sample of the lace, which again conforms exactly to De Bosset.

The coats have been left unbuttoned at the top to expose the shirt frill. (Photo courtesy P. J. Haythornthwaite)

coat, with a further four on each cuff and on each pocket flap. Highland regiments wore jackets, and were to have only eight loops down each side of the front and three on each pocket flap.

Alone, the 3rd Foot Guards had nine loops, set in threes, on each side of the front, and three on each cuff and pocket flap. In practice, however, the number of loops appearing on the breast of the coat varied with the shape of the loop being used, and might be further altered in respect of the size of the man or boy being clothed.

Whereas the square (or 'double-headed') loops and the pointed varieties presented tailors with little problem, the bastion-style loops were distinctly awkward. They required more space, and when set on 'regular' the custom was to use only nine loops (instead of the prescribed ten) on each side of the front. In addition it was 'well known that the Reg^{ts} which wear their Loops by two's and are made Bastion Button holes, cannot possibly have more than Eight on

the Breast, unless upon a very large sized Coat, and then it is too much crowded⁽²⁾. The difficulty was brought to the attention of the Clothing Board, and in January 1809 it was decided to grant permission 'to Regiments having the Bastion Loop to wear eight Button Holes provided the Lace is put on by Two's; but in no other Instance⁽³⁾.

In 1802 it was also noted that the coats and jackets of corporals and private soldiers were 'to be exactly similar . . . in setting on the Lace, Buttons, Shldr. Straps, & Pocket Flaps . . . as . . . described for the Sergeants of their respective Reg.^{ts} or Corps'. This indeed seems to have been the usual practice (though a narrower white 'braid' was used on sergeants' coats), but there were exceptions. In the 22nd Regiment of Foot the coats of the private men were made with eight Jew's Harp loops set in pairs, but those of their sergeants were made with five pairs of square-ended loops⁽⁴⁾.

Buttons

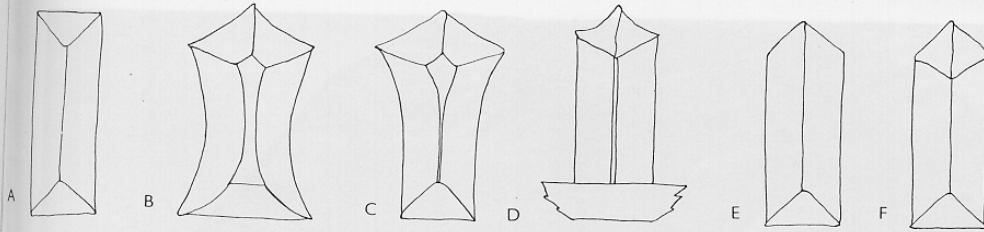
The buttons, apart from being themselves distinctively marked to each regiment, were used to make a further distinction between regiments and companies, depending on the size and the number of buttons used. Battalion and Grenadier company coats were adorned with both 'coat' and 'breast' buttons, the former being used on the cuffs, pocket flaps and hips, the smaller 'breast' buttons appearing down the front of the coat, on the shoulder straps and frequently as a closure on the pocket flap. The number of large buttons used on such

coats seems to have been 18; but the exact number of small buttons depended not only on the number of chest loops, but also on whether or not the coat was made with a button with which the soldier could close his pocket. The number of small 'breast' buttons thus varied from ten to fourteen⁽⁵⁾.

The jackets of the Light Infantry companies and of the Light Infantry regiments – and also of the 5/60th and the 95th (Rifle) Regiment – were embellished only with small buttons, the usual number being 30 (and 44 on 'rifle jackets'). Evidence on the 43rd Regiment of Foot shows that prior to its conversion to Light Infantry in 1803, the Battalion and Grenadier coats of the regiment had required a total of 32 buttons (18 coat and 14 breast); but the regiment's new Light Infantry 'jackets' needed only 30 (all breast buttons), on account of the pockets being sloped diagonally and the opening into the pockets being moved to the pleats, where no button was used to close them. The Battalion and Grenadier companies of Highland regiments, although wearing 'jackets', seem to have had a conventional combination of both coat and breast buttons⁽⁶⁾.

'Mess.' J. N. & B. Pearse'

Reconstructions of the soldier's coat worn during the Napoleonic period have had to rely heavily on the information supplied in schematic form by Charles Philip de Bosset's *A View of the British Army . . . 1803* and Charles Hamilton Smith's *Costume of the Army . . . according to the Last Regulations, 1814*. Neither, however, tells us everything. Although unnoticed in modern uniform studies which use De Bosset's work as a reference, De Bosset was in fact careful to distinguish between those bastion loops which were 'Jew's Harp' and those which were 'Flowerpot'. Hamilton Smith was less so, and frequently his bastion shapes are indistinct. Some of the differences in detail between De



Left:

Loop shapes: (A) 'Double-headed' or 'square'. (B) 'Jew's Harp'. (C) 'Flowerpot'. (D) 'Coldstream'. (E) 'Straight Point'. (F) Pointed (a type of folded point later ascribed by Pearse to the 93rd Regiment). Britain's early 19th century military clothing trade recognised at least five loop shapes for infantry coats, and possibly more. The bastion-style loops were of two sorts, 'Flowerpot' and 'Jew's Harp', while the pointed loops included a common 'straight point' and a 'Coldstream' loop, and possibly another variation folded in a manner noted by Pearse, c.1840s, for the 93rd Regiment. The Pearse notes of c.1803-1819 indicate a 'Coldstream' loop for the 93rd. The 'Coldstream' loop shown here is taken from a surviving coat of the Coldstream Guards, c.1790.

Matching the terminology used in Pearse's records to the actual loop shapes is not straightforward, and has been deduced from internal evidence from Pearse and by a comparison of the Pearse notes with De Bosset. Just to confuse matters, however, there is also other early 19th century evidence which indicates that some in the military clothing trade may have switched the terms 'Flowerpot' and 'Jew's Harp' as given here! The labelling used here, however, does seem to be what Pearse meant by these two terms.

As in all other aspects of the making of the soldier's coat, there was always variation due to hand working, poor workmanship, etc., and the neatness of the results in the folding and sewing of the lace was no exception. It was common, upon receiving the year's clothing from the clothier, to have the lace completely resewn by the regimental tailors.

Bottom:

Battalion Company, 83rd Regiment; coat (6); Musée de l'Armée, Les Invalides, Paris. An excellent view of a Battalion Company 'Cross Pocket Flap' with a small functional button as a closure. As in coat (7) - Grenadier, 87th Regiment - access to the real pocket is from the top of the pocket flap. Note also the diagonal forward slant given to the two loops nearest the turnback. Unfortunately Pearse's notations on the 83rd Regiment are very scant, mentioning only that there were ten 'double-headed' loops in pairs, the lace to be set on with the 'Green Edge in'. All of these details are seen in both surviving coats of the 83rd, nos. (5) and (6). The facings are yellow; the lace has one red and one green stripe. (Musée de l'Armée, photo courtesy Martin Windrow)

Bosset and Hamilton Smith can certainly be explained by changes which were made after 1803 in the lace patterns and loop shapes of some regiments; but confidence in both these sources, especially in Hamilton Smith, can be shaken by discrepancies in the original colouring (done by hand) between one version and another. Some of the resulting problems can now be resolved by evidence from an early 19th century records book associated with the London clothiers 'Mess.^{rs} J. N. & B. Pearse'.

The acquisition about ten years ago of several Pearse items by the Canadian War Museum is of no small importance, for during the Napoleonic Wars Pearse was a principal supplier of regimental clothing. The Pearse family had a long association with the military clothing trade; and in the early 1800s, as evidenced by their records book, supplied clothing at one time or another to over 70 different regiments of the Line. In addition they supplied Militia clothing, and that of various of Britain's 'foreign corps'. Their importance is further indicated by the fact that in 1814 all of the standard patterns held by the army's Inspectors of Clothing, for infantry coats and jackets, were supplied by Pearse⁽⁷⁾.

The Pearse book is an important find, but it is not without its difficulties and limitations. It was very much a 'working' record and consequently there are numerous alterations, rubbings-out and new entries. Not all is legible, and much is in a very cursory note form. The precise dating of many entries is uncertain. The paper is watermarked to '1803' and internal evidence suggests that the book was probably begun early that year. Most of the entries date

between 1803 and 1817 or 1819, and a few towards the end were added as late as 1840⁽⁸⁾. The book was used principally to record the amounts of regimental lace and the number of buttons needed for each coat or jacket, but includes other incidental notations as well. Samples of many of the laces

were glued to the pages, but sadly many are now missing. As entries were changed from time to time, there are often several different ones for the same regiment. Some are extremely sparse on detail; the most useful are summarised here in tabular form.

While the Pearse records add a great deal of new infor-



mation on the details of the soldier's coat, they also point very clearly to the fact that there remains much which is unknown. This is certainly

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Privates' Coats: Notations from 'Messers. J. N. & B. Pearse', c. 1803-1819

Regt	Facings (a)	Lace Sample (b)	Yards of Looping	Type (c)	Loops No. (d)	Spacing (e)	Buttons		Sergeant's Coat (f)	Other notes (g)
							Large	Small		
1st	-	-	-	-	9	R	-	-	-	-
2nd	-	-	-	-	10	R	-	-	'Broad Bread for serjeant'	-
3rd	'Buff'	One narrow black stripe between one red and one yellow stripe, all together and to one side, red stripe near edge	12	DH	10	T	18	12	Same as private	-
4th	'Blue'	Narrow blue stripe along one edge	13	FP	9	R	18	13(11)	Same as private	'Blue edge of lace in'
5th	'Olive drab'	Missing	14	JH	9	R	18	11	Same as private	-
6th	'Yellow'	One red stripe near one edge and one pale yellow stripe near other edge	12	DH	10	T	18	12	Same as private	'Red edge of lace out'
7th	'Blue'	Blue stripe near one edge	12	DH	10	R	18	12	Same as private	'Blue edge of lace out'
8th	-	-	-	DH	10	R	-	-	Same as private	'Yellow edge out'
9th	'Lemon'	One black stripe near each edge	12	DH	10	T	18	12	Same as private	-
12th	'Lemon'	Missing	12	JH	8	T	18	10	-	-
13th	-	-	12	-	10	T	18	14	-	-
				JH	8	T	18	10	Same as private	-
14th	'White'	Narrow pale yellowish-buff stripe near one edge with a blue/red worm near other edge	12	DH	10	T	18	12	Same as private	'Broad edge of lace out'
15th	-	-	-	DH	10	T	-	-	Same as private	'as 34 lace'
16th	'Yellow'	Dark red stripe near one edge	12	DH	10	R	18	12	Same as private	'red edge of lace out'
17th	'White'	One yellow stripe between two black stripes, all together and to one side near edge	12	DH	10	T	18	12	Same as private	'Broad edge of Lace out'
20th	-	-	12	-	-	-	18	14	-	-
21st	'Blue'	One blue stripe along one edge	12	DH	10	T	18	12	Same as private	'Blue edge of lace in'
22nd	'Buff'	-	12	JH	8	T	18	10	'10 loops by Twos, Dbl. Hd.'	-
23rd	-	-	-	JH	9	R	-	-	Same as private	-
24th	-	-	12	-	-	-	18	14	-	-
25th	'Blue'	One wormed blue stripe in centre	12(14)	FP(JH)	9	-	18	13(10)	Same as private	-
26th	-	-	12	-	-	-	18	14	-	-
28th	-	One yellow stripe in centre, and one black stripe near each edge	-	DH	10	T	-	-	-	-
29th	'Yellow'	One yellow stripe along each edge with a black stripe running beside it	12	Ptd	10	T	18	12	Same as private	-
32rd	'White'	Missing	12	DH	10	T	18	14	Same as private	'narrow edge of lace in'
33rd	-	One red stripe in centre	-	JH	8	T	18	10	-	'Loops revert on cuffs flaps white shoulder strap'
34th	'Yellow'	One wormed scarlet stripe near one edge, and one blue/yellow worm near the other	12	DH	10	T	18	12	Same as private	'red stripe of lace in'
37th	'Yellow'	One broad scarlet stripe near one edge, with a broad yellow stripe next to it.	12	DH	10	T	18	14	Same as private	'red edge of Lace out'
38th	'Yellow'	One scarlet stripe near each edge and one yellow stripe in centre.	14	JH	9	R	18	14	Same as private	-
39th	'Green'	Missing	12	DH	10	T	18	14	Same as private	'green edge of lace out'
41st	-	One wormed black stripe in centre.	-	JH	9	R	18	11	Same as private	-
42nd	-	One broad scarlet stripe near one edge	12	JH	8	R	18	10	'Sertj. same except turnback lac'd on Blue cloth and Silk Bread'	'red edge out'
43rd	'White'	One black stripe near one edge and one scarlet stripe near the other edge	12	DH	10	T	18(X)	14(30)	Same as private	-
44th	'Yellow'	Missing	12	DH	10	R	18	14	Same as private	-
46th	-	One red and one dark blue stripe set together in centre	-	DH	10	T	-	-	-	'Black edge in'
47th	-	-	-	DH	10	T	-	-	Same as private	-
48th	-	-	-	DH	10	T	-	-	Same as private	'Black edge in'
49th	-	-	-	FP	9	R	-	-	-	-
50th	'Black'	One scarlet stripe in centre	12	DH	10	T	18	14	Same as private	-
51st	-	-	14	-	-	-	18	14	-	-
	'Green'	Missing	14	Coldsm.	10	T	-	30	Same as private	'Green edge of lace out'
52nd	-	-	15	-	-	-	-	30	-	'Privates Jacket'
53rd	-	One scarlet stripe in centre	12	DH	10	T	18	12	Same as private	-
54th	'Olive drab'	Missing	12	DH	10	T	18	14	Same as private	-

Regt	Facings (a)	Lace Sample (b)	Yards of Looping	Type (c)	Loops No. (d)	Spacing (e)	Buttons		Sergeant's Coat (f)	Other notes (g)
							Large	Small		
55th	-	-	-	DH	10	T	-	-	Same as private	-
56th	'Blue'	Missing	12	DH	10	T	18	12	Same as private	-
58th	-	-	12	-	-	-	18	14	-	-
	-	-	-	DH	10	R	-	-	-	-
60th	'Blue'	Missing	12	DH	10	T	18	12	Same as private	'Broad edge out' 'New regulation'
5/60th	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	44	-	'Rifle Jacket'
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	44	-	'Red cuff and collar'
61st	'Salmon Coulered'	One blue stripe near one edge	12	DH	10	R	18	14	Same as private	'Blue edge out'
62nd	-	-	12	-	-	-	18	14	-	-
64th	'Black'	One red stripe near one edge, and one black stripe near the other edge	12	DH	10	T	18	14	-	'red edge in'
65th	-	-	12	-	-	-	18	14	-	-
	-	One black stripe near each edge	-	JH	9	R	-	-	Same as private	-
66th	'Olive drab'	Missing	12	DH	10	R	18	14	Same as private	-
	'Olive'	-	12	DH	10	R	18	12	Same as private	'narrow edge in'
68th	'Green'	Missing	12	DH	10	T	18	14	Same as private	'Private Coat altered to Jacket' 'yellow edge in'
69th	'Green'	One green stripe in centre and one scarlet stripe along each edge	12	DH	10	T	18	14	Same as private	-
70th	'Black'	One black stripe in centre	12	DH	10	R	18	14(12)	Same as private	-
71st	-	-	12	-	-	-	-	30	-	'Privates Jacket'
72nd	-	-	14	-	-	-	18	14	-	-
	'Yellow'	One green stripe near one edge	13	JH	9	R	18	11	Same as private	'Green edge out'
74th	'White'	One scarlet stripe set off centre	12	DH	10	R	18	14	Same as private	'red edge out'
77th	'Yellow'	One red stripe near one edge, and one black stripe and one yellow stripe set together near the other edge, the black to the outside	12	DH	10	R	18	14	Same as private	'sky blue edge in'
78th	-	-	14	-	-	-	18	14	-	'Jacket'
	-	-	-	FP	9	R	-	-	Same as private	-
80th	-	-	12	Ptd	10	T	18	14	-	-
	'Yellow'	One red stripe in centre, and one black stripe along each edge	-	Ptd	10	T	18	12	Same as private	-
83rd	-	-	-	DH	10	T	-	-	-	'Green edge in'
85th	'Yellow'	Missing	12	DH	10	T	18	14	Same as private	-
87th	'Green'	Missing	12	Ptd	10	T	18	14	Same as private	'red edge out'
	-	-	12(X)	Ptd(X)	10(X)	T(X)	18(X)	12(X)	Same as private(X)	-
88th	'Yellow'	Missing	12	DH(Ptd)	10	T	18	14	Same as private	-
89th	-	-	12	-	10	-	18	14	-	-
	-	-	-	Ptd	10	T	-	-	-	'Blue edge in'
90th	-	-	-	DH	10	T	-	-	-	'Blue edge in'
93rd	-	-	13	-	-	-	18	12	-	'Jacket'
	-	One yellow stripe along one edge	13(15)	Coldsm	8	R	18	10	Same as private	'yellow edge of lace out'
94th	-	-	-	JH	9	R	-	-	-	'red edge out'(X)
95th	-	-	-	-	-	-	'44 Buttons'	-	-	'3 yards wte. Braid for feathering' 'Rifle Jacket'
(Rifle Brigade)	-	-	-	-	-	-	'44 Buttons'	-	Same as private	'3 yards of white braid for feathering. Coller straps & cuff only.'
96th	'White' ('Light Buff')	One black stripe near one edge and one red stripe and one yellow stripe set together near the other edge, the red on the outside.	12	DH	10	T	18	12	Same as private	'red edge in'
97th	'Blue'	One blue stripe in centre and one yellow stripe near each edge.	12	DH	10	R	18	12(14)	Same as private	-
99th	-	-	-	DH	10	T	-	-	-	'late 100th'
103rd	-	-	-	DH	10	T	-	-	Same as private	-

Explanatory Notes:

Later alterations are given in brackets. A 'x' in brackets indicates that the entry was later struck out.

(a.) Description in Pearse entries, if given.

(b.) Description of lace sample glued into book, some are now missing, other entries were originally without any sample.

(c.) Abbreviations for the loop shapes are:

DH - 'Double-headed' (square)

FP - 'Flowerpot'

JH - 'Jew's Harp'

Ptd - 'Pointed'

Coldsm - 'Coldstream'

(d.) Number of loops on the breast.

(e.) Spacing of loops: R - 'Regular' (single, or even)

T - 'by 2' (in pairs)

(f.) The notations include many terse references to

sergeants' coats, usually entered simply as 'Same for Private', but occasionally there are other notations, all of which are reproduced with-out correction of spelling or punctuation. Thus braid has been left as 'Bread', etc. Some entries include no reference to sergeants' coats, and are left blank.

(g.) These notes usually refer to the placement of the regimental lace in forming the loop. They are reproduced without correction of spelling or punctuation.





Left:

Grenadier Company, 87th (The Prince of Wales's Own Irish Regiment; coat (7) in the sequence adopted in Part 1 of this series, 'MI' No.20; RIF Museum, Armagh. Prior to 1811 the regiment's title was without the word 'Own'.

The coat is of special interest, being both an example of a Grenadier's and also one having pointed loops. Pearse made coats for the 87th Regiment, but not necessarily this one.

The coat has the usual 18 large buttons, but only 12 small. Notations on the 87th are entered three times in the Pearse records—the first two include 14 small buttons, and what appears to be the last entry mentions only twelve, but this final entry is entirely struck out. The lining of the survivor is stamped with what appears to be a maker's name, but it has not been possible to decipher it. (Royal Irish Fusiliers Museum)

Right:

The wings conform to the 1802 requirements for Grenadiers, being of red cloth with '6 Darts of Lace on Each' with 'a Row of Lace on the Bottom'. In cut they are of a more oval shape and much fuller than the common Light Infantry wing. As they are, the wings are without any of the additional fringe so popular with many other regiments — though possibly the tailors of the 87th would have intended to add it

themselves? The small shoulder strap buttons, apparently contemporary, are quite unlike those used elsewhere on the coat. Unfortunately it has not been possible to identify them.

Above right:

Grenadier coats, like those of the Battalion Companies, had 'Cross Pocket Flaps', adorned with four large 'coat' buttons, each with a loop of the regimental lace. The diagonal slant given to the pair of loops nearest the 'turnback' is also seen on the surviving coats of the 83rd Regiment, (5) and (6) in our sequence. The buttons bear an arabic '87' surmounted by a harp, over which appears the plumed device of the Prince of Wales.

An opening along the top edge of the pocket flap admitted the hand into the real pocket, but is without any small functional button to close it. The Pearse notes, calling for 14 small buttons, presumably included two which were to be used for closing the pocket flaps, as on the coats of the 83rd Regiment — (5) and (6); that of the 9th Regiment — (1); and one of the 26th Regiment coats (2).

Above left:

The cuffs bear the usual four large 'coat' buttons, each with a loop of regimental lace, formed here into a common 'straight point', the lace being set on with the 'red edge out' as per Pearse's notes.

