

RNR Uniform & Equipment: Other Items

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The first portion of this article addressed the items of clothing and equipment necessary to portray an enlisted man of the RNR during the War of 1812. This Appendix looks at some of the other items, both period and modern, useful to a reenactor during a typical weekend event.

Inside the tent

Modern items important to your care and comfort can be stored inside your tent, out of the public's view.

- **Ground sheet.** Insulates you from cold and damp.
- **Bedding.** Whatever keeps you warm and dry when you sleep. Varies widely according to individual preference, from cots, air mattresses, and sleeping bags, to blankets on the ground. Period blanket was approximately 90" x 72", off-white wool, 4.5 lbs in weight, stamped with "GR" and a broad arrow in one corner.
- **Light.** At night you will need to see inside that dark tent. Enclosed candle lanterns are popular (no open-flame candles allowed; too much flammable stuff around), but a flashlight works when the public is not around.



Musket maintenance

Black powder and human perspiration are both corrosive, so your musket requires constant maintenance—field cleaning at events, plus some attention between events. Preferred maintenance items vary widely among reenactors.

At a minimum you will need some tools to disassemble your musket lock and aid cleaning: a clamp for lock springs, flat-blade screwdriver, a "worm" or brush for cleaning inside the barrel. Tools can be period (musket tool) or modern. The barrel may be flushed with water in the field. You will want cloth patches to wipe, dry and oil it afterwards. Use Ballistol or some other all-purpose gun oil. Steel wool and perhaps metal polish. *Bring spare musket flints!*



Musket tool



Spring clamp



Ballistol

Mess kit

Items to eat and prepare food with. Plate, cup, utensils should look period correct. Can purchase a reproduction Army mess kit, but many folks use simple metal plates and utensils. You'll want a cup for after-hours beverages.



Mess kit

Uniform repair and maintenance

- **Sewing kit.** You will want some basic sewing items such as needles, thread, and spare buttons, to mend the inevitable damage to clothing that occurs on a weekend in the field.
- **Polishing kit.** The brass plates on the uniform cap and the bayonet belt need to be polished, so you will want metal polish and rags; can be used on the musket brass as well. (Tip: Ballistol will also polish brass.) White liquid shoe polish works to whiten the belts.

Personal items

A basic rule in living history is that modern items should be out of public sight. This includes personal items such as wristwatches and eyeglasses. Watches may be carried out of sight, but should not be worn on the wrist. Some reenactors carry inexpensive pocket watches instead. Period-looking eyeglasses are desirable, if possible; modern prescription lenses in a period frame is best.



Personal health and hygiene

Think: the things you would want to have if you were camping. Such as: toothbrush and paste, soap & towel, medications, band-aid assortment (especially ones for blisters), effective bug repellent, sun screen.

Food

Ya gotta eat, but how you do so can vary. After camp setup on Friday the Newfs often go out to eat. Also, many events provide some complimentary meals (usually breakfast). The unit also often organizes group meals at an event, cooked on the campfire. These arrangements are always worked out via email exchange prior to an event. That said, reenactors can always bring their own food to an event if they wish. (I make it a practice to bring some basic backup food items to events, just in case.)

Clothing for extreme weather

While most reenactments occur in the summer, the RNR attends events in all seasons. You will want to dress appropriately for an event, and consider the prospective weather when packing. Here are some suggestions for some of the weather extremes we might encounter.

- **Cold.** Experienced at night during spring and fall events, and during the day at one winter event (Ogdensburg, in February). Wool socks (several pair); insulated underwear; wool flannel shirt; mitts or fingerless gloves; knit or fur cap (issued to units in the Canadas).
- **Heat.** You are outside, in uniform, sometimes little shade. Straw hat when off duty; change of shirts; the muslin drawers; sunscreen; additional electrolytes.



A plug for period fabric: The materials historically used in period garments generally perform far better than modern synthetics do. Linen lets moisture evaporate, dries faster than cotton, and is hygienic. Wool is durable, also “breathes”, and will keep you warm even when it is wet.

Attention to your kit with care and comfort in mind will increase your enjoyment of a weekend living history event.

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