British Infantry Gaiter Reproduction
Greg Renault

At the outset of the Napoleonic Wars, the uniform for the British soldier stipulated white woolen breeches to below the knee, and high black gaiters which extended from below the knee to cover the top of the shoe.[1] By the end of the 18th Century, these garments were protected by linen "overalls" (allowed for marches and fatigues from 1807 on).[2] The utility of wool trousers over breeches for field service led by 1811 to the stipulation of grey woolen trousers and short "half" gaiters of the same material for troops on foreign service.[3]

These are instructions to reproduce the regulation short half-gaiter used in this period.

Construction
Each gaiter is made of three pieces sewn together in a "strip", buttons at one end of the strip, and corresponding buttonholes at the other. When worn, the gaiter is wrapped around the ankle, and buttoned shut. When fastened, buttons are on the outside of the ankle (viz, right side of the right leg, left side of the left leg). The gaiters are held down by a leather strap sewn to both sides of the gaiter, which passes under the arch of the foot and in front of the shoe heel.

Aspect 1: View of right ankle gaiter, "inside" aspect. The visible seam will sit at the back of the heel, so when fastened the buttons will be on the outside of the ankle.

Aspect 2: View of the same gaiter's "outside" aspect. Part of the inside of the previous pieces can be seen, indicating how the segment with the buttons would wrap around to fasten with the outside segment shown. The two parts with the downward curve are also sewn together along their curved edges. This results in a gaiter comprised of three pieces sewn into a continuous length, with buttons at one end, and corresponding buttonholes at the other.

Preparation

Materials
Get the same grey mix kersey "Oxford cloth" as your trousers are made of. One yard will be more than enough.

Thread should be at least heavy duty carpet/coat weight. I used an unbleached cotton.

You will need a couple of 1x7" leather straps, one for the bottom of each gaiter.

14 plain white-metal 5/8" buttons; 2 long shoelaces to secure the buttons.

Useful tools: ¾" chisel (for buttonholes); leather punch (for button shank holes); leather awl.

Pattern
Below are patterns for the three pieces you will need for each gaiter. They are copied directly from the pattern I used to make my gaiters. The finished gaiter shown above was made using this pattern.
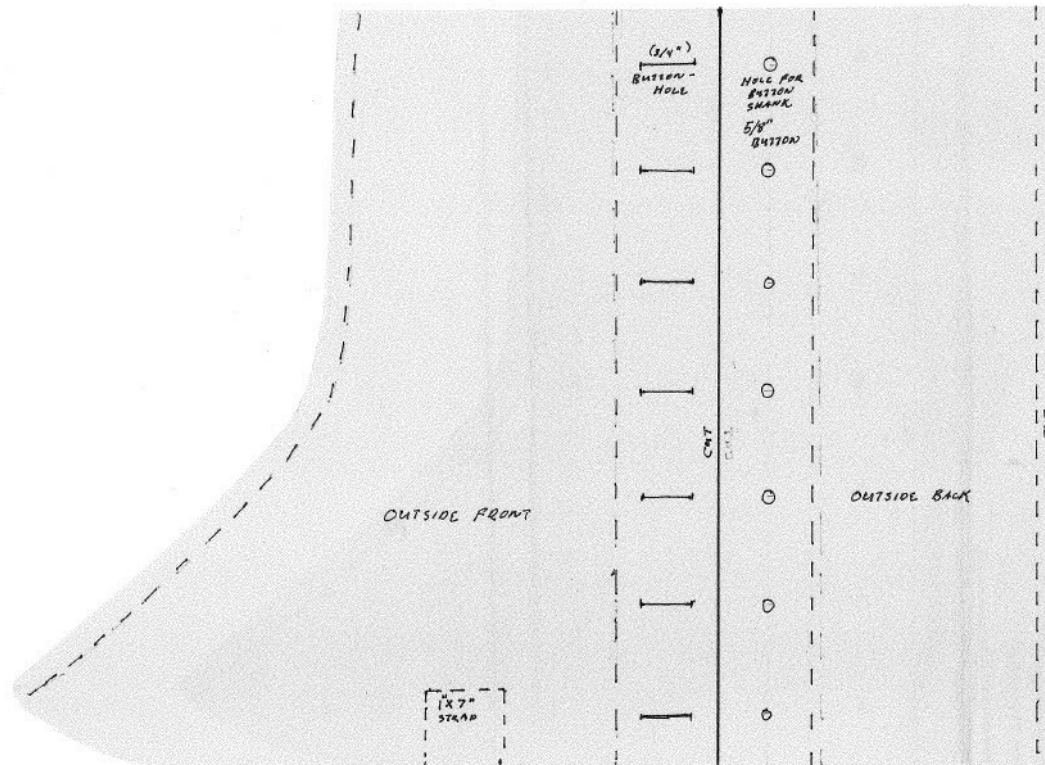
Some comments regarding size. I wear a size 9 shoe; as these patterns are direct scans of my pattern, printing them at actual size on 11x17 paper should give you a ready-made pattern. The pattern is available on the unit website:
https://www.rnrfi.com/_files/ugd/8e1f50_9a3c620448a4497d9f40f5bd6e58ba42.pdf

This will work if your feet are close in size to 9. If your feet are significantly larger or smaller, I suggest enlarging or shrinking the pattern as needed. Proportions are true, so they will be retained if the image size is modified prior to printing. Some trial-and-error may be necessary to do this. When in doubt, go larger, as you can always adjust the fit along the straight seam at the back of each gaiter. Bottom front of the gaiter should cover shoe laces.

Pattern 1: Pieces A and B
The image below shows two of the three pattern pieces, Piece A (marked "outside front") is on the left, Piece B ("outside back") is on the right. The two pieces are divided by the vertical solid line which runs between the markings for the buttonholes and the buttons. A & B can be cut out as one piece, then divided on the line as shown.

For size comparison, here are original measurements for the above gaiter:
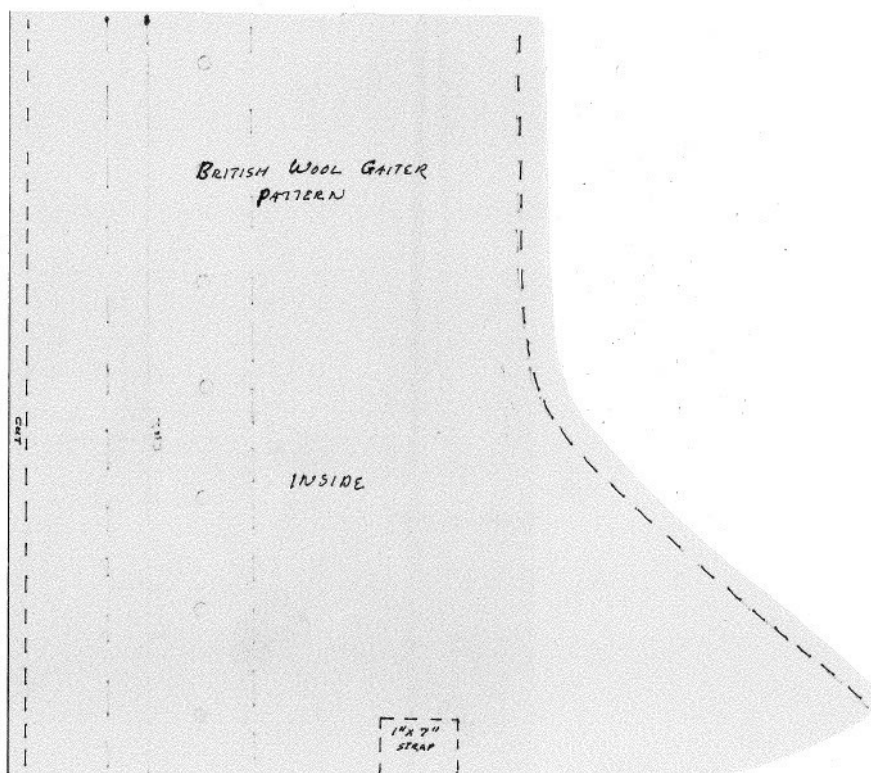
Piece A:
	bottom--8"
	ankle top--4.5"
	straight (buttonhole) side—10"

Piece B:
	top/bottom—5"
	sides—10"

Pattern 2: Piece C (inside)

BRITISH WOOL GAITER
PATTERN

INSIDE

CUT

1"x 7"
STRAP

Measurements for Piece C:
	bottom—9"
	ankle top—6.5"
	straight side--10"

Assembly

1. Fold the straight edge on Piece A under on the dotted line shown (1" from edge), and hem with whip stitch. This will be the inside of the gaiter.
2. Do the same for the straight edge on Piece B.

3. Mark spots for 7 buttonholes on Piece A; line up Piece B and mark spots for button shank holes to correspond to the button holes. Buttonholes start approximately 1" from top and bottom of gaiter; 1 ¼" between buttonholes.

4. Use chisel to cut buttonholes in Piece A.

5. Sew buttonholes with buttonhole stitch.

6. Use leather punch to make holes for button shanks in Piece B.

7. Sew the straight edge of Piece B which is opposite the button shank holes, to the straight edge of Piece C. Seam allowance should be on inside of gaiter as shown in Aspect 2 above.

8. Attach buttons to Piece B. Thread one shoe lace through the shank holes, button shank, and back through the shank hole again, doing this for each button in turn. Leave some slack at the top and bottom in order to secure the shoelace to the buttons above and below. The shoelace can be tightened or loosened to adjust the fit of the gaiter.

9. Sew the leather strip to the insides of Pieces A and C as shown on the pics and patterns.

Toronto
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1 "Regulations for the Clothing and Appointments of the Army, dated 22nd April, 1803", in War Office, *A Collection of Orders, Regulations, and Instructions for the Army; on Matters of Finance and Points of Discipline Immediately Connected Therewith*. (London: T. Egerton, 1807), 436-7, 456-7.

2   Horse Guards Circular Letter, 8 June 1809. Public Records Office, War Office 123/135 p. 311.

3   "Regulations for the Provision of Clothing…, 15th July 1812", in War Office, *A Collection of Orders, Regulations, and Instructions for the Army on Matters of Finance and Points of Discipline Immediately Connected Therewith* (London: T. Egerton, 1819), 456-457. Also: "Report of the Board established for the Purpose of Reporting Upon the Equipment of the Infantry 29th June, 1811."

   Robert Henderson summarizes this development in "Elegance or Comfort: Breeches and Trousers in the British Army, 1803-1815 (https://www.warof1812.ca/trousers.htm).

For greater detail regarding the evolution from breeches to trousers, see Ben Townsend, *Fashioning Regulation, Regulating Fashion: The Uniforms and Dress of the British Army 1800-1815*, Volume II, Chapter 7 "Changes in Legwear", 154-171; and 138-140.