

The Greatcoat Sling

Greg Renault

Greatcoat and straps

By the beginning of the 19th century British Army experience in the field led to practical changes to the infantry soldier's uniform and kit. One important change was the addition of a cold-weather overcoat ("greatcoat") to the soldier's standard clothing issue. Savings from the change in uniform regulations made it possible for greatcoats to be issued to every soldier starting in 1801; the issue was made regular by 1803.¹

Schedule 2 of the 1803 clothing regulations, "Articles of Necessaries for Infantry", notes that all soldiers are to have these items.²

At the same time, soldiers were required to have a set of straps for carrying the greatcoat when rolled. The greatcoat straps were provided under contract to the regiment,³ and paid for via pay stoppages.⁴ This applied to regulars and embodied militia in Canada as well.⁵

Knapsacks had been a required part of a soldier's kit since the late 18th century, also one of the "Necessaries" that were regimentally contracted for, and paid for by pay stoppages. The knapsacks tended to generally be a "double envelope" style with slight variations⁶, until a standard pattern of different style was established by general order in 1811. The knapsack served to contain all a soldier's belongings, whether in barracks or on campaign. However, the envelope style knapsack predated the addition of a greatcoat to a soldier's kit, and did not feature a means of carrying the greatcoat (blankets taken into the field were carried inside the knapsack). Greatcoat straps solved this problem; when rolled in its straps, a greatcoat could be carried either on top of the knapsack, or worn on its own, slung across the soldier's back.⁷

Tumplines

The rolled bundle carried by a strap placed either across the forehead, across both shoulders, or over one shoulder is probably a prehistoric design, and is found in many preindustrial societies. Its military use as a blanket roll in North America is well-documented from the 18th century on.⁸

In the eighteenth century the British Army in North America adapted to conditions of colonial warfare, modifying its tactics, uniform and equipment so that in many respects the regulars resembled light infantry.⁹ One aspect of this change was the pervasive use of tumplines for blanket rolls.¹⁰



40th Foot at the Battle of Germantown with slung blanket rolls.¹¹

It seems that the British Army blanket roll of the American War of Independence became the greatcoat sling of the Napoleonic wars.

Period images of slung greatcoats

Below are a number of period images that show us what the straps looked like, and how they were used.¹²

(1) Greatcoat rolled in straps



(2) Greatcoat on knapsack





(3) Greatcoat only, horizontal across back



(4) Greatcoat only, diagonal across back







Detail from *Battle of Alexandria* that shows a unit with rolled greatcoats transversely slung.¹³

Following four details from *Bataille de Maida, le 4 Juillet 1806* showing units with slung greatcoats.¹⁴





Construction

Until recently there were no identified examples of original greatcoat straps, and reconstructions were based on period images. In 2011 a set of straps was found associated with an envelope knapsack belonging to an officer of the Royal Bristol Volunteers, provenance 1804-1814. Pics of straps and knapsack below.¹⁵



RBV knapsack and associated straps



Straps untangled, displayed as greatcoat sling

Here is my adaptation, based on the RBV original and period images (see the Appendix for construction notes and pattern):



Original RBV sling



Period image



Repro sling

Rolling the greatcoat

It seems that greatcoats were rolled in a standard manner, as measurements are found in some regimental standing orders. These consistently state that the rolled coat is to be **eighteen inches** long (the length of a musket bayonet blade), which approximates the width of a loaded envelope knapsack.¹⁶ This is consistent with the slung greatcoats depicted in the Battle of Alexandria painting above, which appear to be quite uniformly rolled.

We have no period description of how to fold a greatcoat for rolling.¹⁷ Here is a plausible method, derived from later military instructions for folding greatcoats, that gives us the appropriate shape & size:

- Lay the coat out flat, front buttoned, cape in a flat fan above the collar
- Fold in the sides of the body, sleeves, and edges of the cape so that the coat forms a long rectangle, 18" wide (the length of bayonet blade)
- Roll the coat tightly from the bottom up
- Buckle the two short straps of the sling around the roll



Greatcoat on the knapsack

Again, we have no period instructions for how to do this. We know that none of the surviving envelope-style knapsacks show evidence of loops or any other means of attaching a greatcoat roll.¹⁸ Further, many of the period images appear to show the longer sling strap wrapped around the sides and bottom of the knapsack, which would not be very secure as a sole means of attachment. However, if the short roll straps are also passed under the knapsack shoulder straps in the manner shown below, the greatcoat roll is snugly held to the top of the knapsack.



Long strap wrapped around the knapsack as shown in period images.¹⁹



Roll straps are looped under the knapsack shoulder straps.

Greatcoat sling

Evidence from period images, accounts, and standing orders indicates that the greatcoat was frequently worn on its own, slung horizontally,²⁰ or diagonally across the back over the right shoulder. For some units, such as the 3rd Guards or the 85th Light Infantry, this was required for parade.²¹ For others, slung greatcoats were retained as light marching order when knapsacks were left behind.²²



Slung greatcoat in light marching order (winter campaign).

As one might suspect, something as practical as the simple slung bedroll continued to be used beyond our immediate period. It appears in the ACW, where leather sling arrangements were available for private purchase, and in WW II as an issue field bedroll. Camping versions of the greatcoat sling are still being sold today.



Reproduction ACW
blanket/greatcoat
sling²³



WW II British field
bedroll²⁴



Camping blanket roll
harness²⁵

Conclusion

During our period British Army soldiers were provided with a greatcoat for cold weather wear. Each soldier was also provided with straps to roll the greatcoat in--for storage in barracks, for fastening the rolled greatcoat on their knapsack, or for carrying the rolled greatcoat slung over the shoulder in parade or in light marching order. These "necessaries" should be more often seen as part of our impression.

Toronto
March 2014, revised September 2015

Notes

The above is largely a compendium of others' research. I am heavily indebted to the "Greatcoat Sling" discussion thread on the online forum of the 2/95th Rifles (<http://2nd95thrifles.myfastforum.org/ftopic514-0-asc-0.php>). (Hereafter *Sling Thread*.) The many valuable contributions posted there over the past five years, especially the period images, made this summary possible.

A note on terminology. Period sources refer to "straps for carrying the greatcoat" and "greatcoat sling" interchangeably. I prefer to use the term "slung greatcoat" to indicate when the greatcoat, rolled in its straps, is carried independent of a knapsack.

¹ Authorized by royal warrant 23 April 1801. For details, see Robert Henderson, "Not Merely an Article of Comfort": British Infantry Greatcoats During the War of 1812" (<http://www.warof1812.ca/greatct.htm>).

Initially provided by the colonel, greatcoats were provided under Treasury contract from 1808, which meant that they conformed to a sealed pattern. In British North America the greatcoats were replaced every two years instead of three, and in 1811 a distinct coat pattern was authorized for Canada. (*Warrant authorizing a new species of great coat for the troops in Canada and Nova Scotia 28 May 1811* [NAC,R68,C30, p. 44]). Canadian adaptations included additional buttons (eight instead of five), and flannel lining to "below the loins". Coats destined for Canada were to be distinctively marked inside. [2 November 1812 note, PRO, WO 62/44, p. 48] Additional winter clothing included fur caps and mitts, "beef boots", and flannel shirts and drawers. See Rene Chartrand, "Winter Uniforms in Canada, 1675-1871" *Military Collector and Historian* 43:2 (Summer 1991).

Government orders regarding the provision of greatcoats can be found in: War Office 15 April 1807, *A Collection of Orders, Regulations, and Instructions for the Army; On matters of finance and points of discipline immediately connected therewith* (London: Egerton, 1807), 450-3, 472, 474-7. Hereafter *Finance*.

²Schedule No. 2, *Articles of Necessaries for Infantry*, appended to *Regulations for the Clothing and Appointments of the Army*, dated 22 April 1802 [1803], in *Finance*, 456:

ARTICLES OF NECESSARIES.

Furnished in the first Instance at
the Expence partly of the Co-
lonel and partly of the Public. } One regimental great coat.

This works out as follows:

Great coat STOPPAGE, to provide each man with a great coat; to defray the expense of which government allows 3s. annually per man, and the colonel contributes 2s. 6d. for each serjeant, and 1s. 10d. for each rank and file annually. The great coat is expected to last three years, and not to be provided oftener. The clothier

Charles James, "STOPPAGES", *A New and Enlarged Military Dictionary*, Vol II (London: T. Egerton, 1810), n.p.

³ Sample contract:



WO60/95 Contract Price Book, Page 5
Contract with Wm Gilpin of Villiers Street for Great coat straps. To be used on Particular service. Contract dated 4 Feb 1813. To be delivered to the Storekeeper General. 20,000 great coat straps at 10 1/2 each

Post (11 April 2011) to *Sling Thread*, (<http://2nd95thrifles.myfastforum.org/ftopic514-0-asc-90.php>)

⁴ *Finance*, 457:

Clothing and Appointments. **457**

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aid

for

by

the

Men.

One pair of shoes.
 One pair of black cloth (long) gaiters.
 Three shirts.
 Three pair of worsted or yarn socks.
 Worsted or yarn mitts during the winter.
 One black stock.
 One foraging cap.
 One knapsack.
 One clothes brush.
 Three shoe brushes.
 Black ball.
 Hair ribbon and leather.
 Two combs.
 Straps for carrying the great coat.

The same schedule of Necessaries for embodied militia is found in the 9 August 1803 circular, *ibid.*, 465.

"The necessaries which every man is to be furnished with...are as follows. His regimental suit, **great coat and straps**, pack and cap." [other necessaries follow]
Standing Orders and Regulations for the 85th Light Infantry (London: T. Egerton, 1813), 89-90.

Report of the Board established "for the Purpose of Reporting Upon the Equipment of the Infantry" 29th June, 1811
 Necessaries;
Straps for carrying Great Coat

WO 7/56, 97-99.

⁵ For example:

Outfit issued to the Lower Canadian Select Embodied Militia:--For each Man: 1 pair military shoes, shoe and cloth brushes, knapsack with straps, neck stock, flannel shirt, stockings, greatcoat slings, pricker and brush, turnscrew, worm, knife and fork, spoon, razor. In addition, moccasins were issued to the 4th Battalion.

L.C. Legislative Journals, quoted in I. Homfray Irving, Officers of the British Forces in Canada during the War of 1812 (Welland, Ontario: Tribune, for the Canadian Military Institute, [1908]).

[Items for sale:] Belts, 554 Leather Stocks, 150 Light Infantry Leather Caps, 14 Bucket Caps, 14 Felt bucket Caps, 150 woolen ditto, 18 Pouches, 15 Great Coat Slings Instruments for a Field Band 9 Clarions, 2 Triangles, 2 Bassoons, 3 French Horns, 1 Field Trumpet, 3 Tambarines, 32 Music Books, 3 Bugle Horns and 6 Fifes. Quebec, 12th April 1813. Quebec Mercury, 13 April 1813

From Rene Chartrand, "Uniform and Militia References in Canadian Newspapers during the War of 1812", War of 1812 website (<http://www.warof1812.ca/newspapr.htm>).

⁶ For a brief note on these knapsacks, plus pictures of several surviving original ones, see the section on British linen knapsacks in John U. Rees, " 'Cost of a Knapsack complete...' Notes on Continental Army Packs and the soldiers' Burden", pp. 47-56, 77 (no pagination in original). (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/210794759/This-Napsack-I-carryd-through-the-war-of-the-Revolution-Knapsacks-Used-by-the-Soldiers-during-the-War-for-American-Independence-Part-1-of-Cos>). . Part 1 of a projected seven part monograph on soldiers' knapsacks in the AWI.

⁷The rolled greatcoat could also be stored this way in barracks:

...the orderly Officer of each company is to go through their respective companies' rooms, to see that every man is present, that the rooms are clean, and the beds folded up, as ordered for the first morning inspection, that the caps of the Non-commissioned Officers and men are placed touching each other upon the pegs or shelves for that purpose, the accoutrements put uniformly on the racks, with the bayonet-belts under the pouch-belts. The arms in the racks with the cocks let down, and the greatcoats neatly rolled or folded, with each man's knapsack in their proper place.

Standing Orders and Regulations for the 85th Light Infantry (London: T. Egerton, 1813), 57.

⁸ Zack Pace comments:

Native Americans are well documented to have used leather or web straps to carry large loads. These went by many names: tumpline, tomline, trumpline, topline, burden straps, hoppis, hoppees, hoppess, etc.; all of which mean roughly the same thing: a strap for carrying things. These could be slung over their shoulder, around the chest or over the forehead. When carrying blankets, the blankets were well-documented to have rolled the blanket around the strap, tying it up with the long ends of the strap or with separate straps, forming a bedroll.

Zack Pace, "Neatly Roald & Fastnd at Their Backs': the Use of Blanket Slings by the South Carolina Continentals"

(<http://2ndsc.blogspot.ca/2012/02/neatly-roaled-fastnd-at-their-backs-use.html>)

Also:

The tumpline, also know[n] as a "squaw-line", "matump", and "topline" was commonly used with a blanket pack or roll. In its military application, it consisted of a woven linen or leather belt around which was fastened a blanket roll or pack into which foodstuffs and clothing could have been folded. (Fig. 4) The tumpline appears to have been carried by soldiers in one of two ways: worn over the chest and both shoulders, or slung over one shoulder, and hanging diagonally across the back.

Henry M. Cooke IV, "Knapsacks, Snapsacks, Tumplines: Systems for Carrying Food and Clothing Used by Citizens and Soldiers in 1775"

(<http://www.18cnewenglandlife.org/18cnel/wallets.htm>)



Reproduction tumpline, per Zack Pace

(<http://2ndsc.blogspot.ca/2012/02/neatly-roaled-fastnd-at-their-backs-use.html>)

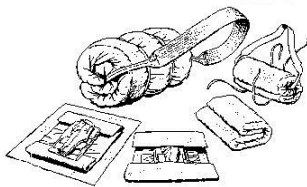


Figure 4. Tumpline, rolled with wallet of personal items. George Woodbridge illustration from George Neumann, *Collector's Illustrated Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*, p. 170. In Cooke, "Knapsacks".

⁹Significant changes that allowed the British Army to adapt to the conditions of warfare in North America included the use of a two-rank formation, space between files, faster movement, emphasis on individual initiative and aimed fire, and major alterations to uniform and equipment. These pragmatic changes occurred throughout the forces in North America. See: David E. Parker "That Loose Flimsy Order: The Little War meets British Military Discipline in America, 1755-1781." (MA Thesis, University of New Hampshire, 1988); Matthew H. Spring, *With Zeal and with Bayonets Only: the British Army on Campaign in North America, 1775-1783* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008); quotes from the orderly books of Howe, Burgoyne, and Clinton's memoirs in "Of Open Files" (<http://www.33rdfoot.org/open-files.html>). Also see the numerous period sources referenced in the following RevList posts (27 March 2002): Don Hagist, "Open Order: Don't Extend, Form that Way" post 40464; Patrick J. OKelly, "Open Order" post 40470; Patrick J. OKelly "Light infantry stuff over the years" post 40471 (<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/Revlist/conversations/topics/40471>).

Parker notes that light infantry practice was so pervasive that troops frequently had to be reminded to resume close order and to use the bayonet when tactically appropriate. Postwar, David Dundas stressed the importance of restoring the balance between open and close order tactics for line infantry in *Principles of Military Movements* (London: T. Cadell, 1788), 11-13. This work, issued by the War Office in 1792 as *Rules and Regulations for the Formations, Field-Exercise, and Movements, of His Majesty's Forces*, remained the official Army tactical manual until 1824.

¹⁰ For the Seven Years' War: Gary S. Zaboly, "The Use of Truelines in the French and Indian Wars," *Military Collector and Historian* 46:3 (summer 1994), 109-113. For example:

Their haversacks were rolled up in a blanket, which they carried as did the Indians and Canadians.

The Journal of Captain John Knox: An Historical Journal of the Campaigns in N. America For Years 1757, 1758, 1759, and 1760. 3 Vols. (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1914), vol. 1, p. 185. Cited in Pace.

For the American War for Independence see: Pace, *op. cit.*; Cooke, *op. cit.*; and John U. Rees, "The use of Tumplines or Blanket Slings by Light Troops"

(<http://www.continentalline.org/articles/article.php?date=9502&article=950202>). For example:

The Men lately Joind having received their Field Blankets, the Serjts. are Ordered, to see that they are Mark'd with the Initial Letters of each Mans Name. The Men are to be provided with proper Straps for Carrying them & Shewn how to Roll them up

1st Battn (Brigade of Guards) Orders 9 September 1779, quoted in Jim Mullins, "'1 Hoppis' David 'Hesten's' tumpline," post (19 April 2011) to *Of Sorts For Provincials* blog (<http://ofsortsforprovincials.blogspot.ca/2011/04/1-hoppis-david-hastens-tumpline.html>).

For additional period British narratives or general orders mentioning blanket slings, or occasions when blankets were to be carried without knapsacks, see Appendix B, "'Like a Pedlar's Pack.' Blanket Rolls and Slings," in Rees, "Cost of a Knapsack....", pp. 63-67.

Modern image by historical illustrator Don Troiani showing use of a blanket sling in the AWI:





Private, light company, 63rd Regiment, 1778-1781. © Don Troiani, 2005.

¹¹ Detail, Xavier della Gatta *The Battle of Germantown* (1782). Valley Forge Historical Society, Valley Forge, PA. For an analysis of uniforms and equipment portrayed in the painting, see: Stephen R. Gilbert, "An Analysis of the Xavier della Gatta Paintings of the Battles of Paoli and Germantown, 1777: Part II," *Military Collector & Historian*, vol. XLVII, no. 4 (Winter 1995), 146-162. The discussion of the 40th Foot and their equipment is on p. 155.

¹² Most of these images can be found in the *Sling Thread* (<http://2nd95thrifles.myfastforum.org/ftopic514-0-asc-90.php>)

Some of the image sources:

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- (1) Greatcoat rolled in straps
- a. Detail, *Embarkation of the 1st Foot Guards to Corunna at Ramsgate, 8 September 1808* (Loutherboung) Courtesy The Guards Museum, London.
 - b. Detail, "Battle of Waterloo decided by Wellington", (1815) John Atkinson.
- (2) Greatcoat on knapsack—posted by Paul Durant 10 November 2013 without attribution on *Sling Thread*. (<http://2nd95thrifles.myfastforum.org/ftopic514-0-asc-105.php>)
- (3) Greatcoat only, horizontal across back
- a. Detail *Piper at Vimero* (1808).
 - b. Detail of sergeant, *The Storming of San Sabastien*, William Heath etching.
 - c. Detail, *Embarkation of the 1st Foot Guards to Corunna at Ramsgate, 8 September 1808* (Loutherboung) Courtesy The Guards Museum, London.
 - d. Detail, *Battle of Talavera* (1812) Thomas Sutherland.
- (4) Greatcoat only, diagonal across back
- a. Grenadier. Ink and watercolor. Denis Dighton (1792-1827). Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University. Possibly a study for the following image. (<https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:229686/>)
 - b. Detail from *Coldstream Guards* (1821), Denis Dighton. Royal Collection RCIN 915047. (<http://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/search#/40/collection/915047/british-army-coldstream-guards-1821>)
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- c. Detail, *Bataille de Maida, le 4 Juillet 1806* (1810), Painted by I.P. de Loutherboung, engraved & published by Anthony Cardon, London, June 1, 1810. (<https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:238490/>) See n14 for full image.
 - d. Detail, *ibid*.
 - e. Detail from *Badajos taken by storm on the 6th of April 1812 by the Allied Army under Lord Wellington* (1813) by John Atkinson. Courtesy A.S.K. Brown Military Archive.
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- f. Detail of sergeant, *Storming of St. Sebastian*, William Heath etching
 - g. *Private, 3rd Foot Guards, c. 1800 (Rear View)*. Watercolor on canvas, John Atkinson. Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University.

<http://library.brown.edu/cds/catalog/catalog.php?verb=render&id=1176496768796875> Note this image shows a slung blanket, not a greatcoat.

- h. Detail, Ensign, "IXth or E. Norfolk Regiment of Infantry" (1813), Charles Hamilton Smith, *Costume of the Army of the British Empire according to the Last Regulations* (London 1815)
- i. Volunteer, unknown. Slung over the left shoulder.
- j. Detail, *The Battle of Alexandria 21 March 1801*, (1802) Philip James de Loutherbourg. Full image n13 below.
- k. *Ibid.*
- l. Detail, *The landing of British troops at Aboukir, 11 March 1801*, Philip James de Loutherbourg [1802], Scottish National Portrait Gallery PG 2681.



¹³ Here is the whole painting, located in Scottish National Portrait Gallery (http://www.nationalgalleries.org/collection/artists-a-z/L/3072/artist_name/Philip%20James%20de%20Loutherbourg/record_id/2784)



The two casualty details are below the artilleryman in the left foreground, the assaulting unit is in the left background. The scene at the right foreground portrays the mortal wounding of Abercrombie. This is from an account of that incident:

The Assistant Adjutant General, Lieutenant John Macdonald of the 89th, picked up a soldier's blanket that lay nearby, and, removing the slings in which it was rolled, he arranged it as a pillow under the general's head.

Piers Mackesy, *The British Victory in Egypt, 1801: The End of Napoleon's Conquest* (NY: Routledge, 1995), n.p.

Light marching order (slung blankets) may have been generally ordered during the Egyptian campaign. John Moore, in command of a light brigade at Minorca in June 1800 wrote

If we take the field, Sir Ralph is determined not to encumber the army with camp equipage, and to reduce personal baggage of officers and soldiers to such articles as are absolutely necessary.

Quoted from James Carrick Moore, *A life of Lieutenant-General Sir John Moore* (London, 1835) 233, in Stephen Summerfield and Susan Law, *Sir John Moore and the Universal Soldier*, V 1 (Godmanchester: Ken Trotman, 2016), 204.

¹⁴ *Bataille de Maida, le 4 Juillet 1806* tinted engraving, painted by I.P. de Louthembourg, RA, engraved & published by Anthony Cardon, London, June 1, 1810
Anne S.K. Brown collection: <https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:238490/>

Apparently Louthembourg relied on a drawing made by an officer present at the battle:

Proposals are issued for a print of the Battle of Maida, to be engraved and published by A. Cardon from a picture painted by P. I. de Louthembourg, to be taken from drawings made on the spot by Captain Pierpoint.

The Literary Panorama, Vol II (Sept 1807), 1093

Mr. Louthembourg is employed in painting the "Battle of Maida," for Earl Manvers. The design is from a drawing made by an officer who was in the engagement.

The Literary Panorama, Being A Review of Books... Vol. 8 (London: Cox, Son, and Baylis, 1810); 1473

Here is the full image:



¹⁵ Bristol Museum collections.

(<http://mbasic.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10150156882101811&id=240025126810&set=a.416230321810.191440.240025126810&source=49&refid=13>)

According to the museum site Pierre Turner drew this knapsack in the 1970s, but without the associated straps. Not only did he overlook an opportunity to document the only extant original greatcoat sling, his book *Soldiers' Accoutrements of the British Army 1750-1900* (Crowood Press, 2007) does not even **mention** greatcoat straps.

¹⁶Quotes on **greatcoat roll length**:

*To be tolerably fit for parade required three hours' work. ...his great coat must be neatly rolled up and be exactly **eighteen inches long**.*

John Spencer Cooper, *Rough Notes of Seven Campaigns in Portugal, Spain, France, and America, during the Years 1809-1815*, by John Spencer Cooper, late Serjeant in the 7th Royal Fusiliers (London and Carlisle, 1896), quoted in Antony Brett-James, *Life in Wellington's Army* (London: Tom Donovan 1994), p.221.

*The Great Coats are to be well rolled up, and of **the length of the Blade of the Bayonet**, to hang on the back transversely, and kept tight up.*

Standing Orders for the Third West York Militia (London, B. MacMillan, 1809), 68.

The great coat when rolled up, is to be sixteen inches in length.
Standing Orders for the use of the Shropshire Militia (W. Gray, 1813), 60.

The regiment will wear their great coats on all evening parades, neatly rolled ___ [blank in original] inches in length, and in an exact line with the top of the shoulder."
Standing Orders and Regulations for the 85th Light Infantry (1813), 89.

¹⁷ But we do have a description of the **rolling**:

Re rolling up of greatcoats , a court case from 1805 records:

'You desired the men to turn out at a little after nine o'clock, and to take off their great coats. The men were helping each other to roll them and in consequence of the confusion...'

'Roll for roll!' was the mocking cry of the dissenting soldiers in the incident referred to (who presumably thought the weather cold enough to merit wearing their greatcoats) ... apparently they were using a common expression when help was needed with the greatcoat.

Post (23 May 2011) in *Sling Thread*, quoting from Carole Divall, *Inside the Regiment: The Officers and men of the 30th Regiment During the revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars* (Pen and Sword 2011).

¹⁸ Frank Packer, who has examined many original envelope knapsacks, posted to *Sling Thread*:

In regards to the greatcoat straps: there is no documentary reason to believe that the sling underwent any material change through its lifetime. And also to reiterate -- we have several examples of knapsacks from this earlier period, many of which have been dated pretty definitively to the post 1801 period where the greatcoat would have already been a known and established part of kit. And NONE of these show any keepers, attachments, or even the remains of stitch work which might suggest that they once had something. Not on the top of the pack, not on the shoulder straps. As the knapsack was still not precisely defined in composition before 1811/12 it would obviously be necessary that the sling must work with ANY knapsack and not be dependent upon any specific aspect of a knapsack's construction. I think this pretty much excludes the idea of the knapsack carrying specific hardware or keepers for the task.

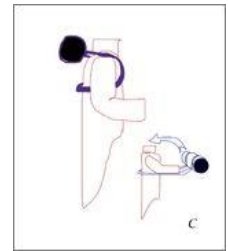
This is consistent with the pictures of original knapsacks referenced in note 6 above.

¹⁹ *Private, 2nd Foot (1810)*, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection. The knapsack shown is a Frank Packer reproduction of an original Durham Light Infantry knapsack.
(http://www.knapsackmuseum.co.uk/index.php?p=1_6_Military-Designs)

Radford Polinsky has pointed out that Charles Hamilton-Smith's period images consistently show the knapsack adjusting strap buckled **under** the crossed bayonet and cartridge pouch belts (Post, 7 June 2014 <http://2nd95thrifles.myfastforum.org/ftopic1172-0-asc-15.php>).



²⁰Although we have period images of slung greatcoats worn horizontally at shoulder height, it is not clear how this was accomplished. Tumpline straps were worn over the shoulders and chest (see note 7 above). But the first two period images on page 3 above appear to show the strap passing under the armpit (and presumably across the chest), and not over the shoulders. Paul Durant suggests this as a possible way to wear the slung greatcoat horizontally but notes that this would require a much longer strap. Post (12 December 2013) to *Sling Thread*.



Cf. Appendix A “Carrying Blankets in or on Knapsacks”, in Rees, “Cost of a Knapsack”, pp. 57-62.

²¹ See the three quotes in note 15 above which describe wearing the **slung greatcoat on parade**, the detail from the CH Smith plate on page 4 above (i) that depicts a typical 3rd Foot Guards grenadier in full (i.e., parade) dress, with slung greatcoat, as well as the detail from the 1821 Dighton image of the Coldstream Guards (b).

²² Some period quotes regarding **slung greatcoats in light marching order**:

Walcheren campaign (1809):

*"We had left our knapsacks on board; having only our haversacks, canteen and **rolled coats** with us."*

John Green, *The vicissitudes of a soldier's life; or, a series of occurrences from 1806 to 1815* (Louth: J&J Jackson, 1827), 28-9.

April 1794 in the Low Countries:

*Here some of our battalions were furnished with **straps for the purpose of carrying our greatcoats, flung across the shoulders, neatly rolled up**. This, in all sorts of weather, was part of our equipment.*

Robert Brown, *Corporal Brown's Campaigns in the Low Countries, recollections of a Coldstream Guard etc.* (Leonaur, 2008), 90.

From Lt JH Cooke of the 43rd describing the action at New Orleans:

*Soon after this the two Light Companies of the 7th and 93rd Regiments came up without their knapsacks, the Highlanders with their **blankets rolled and slung across their backs...***

Quoted in *Oxfordshire Light Infantry Chronicles* (1905), 177.

"The bugles sounded, I rolled my blanket, strapped it on to my back, and waited for the assembly call..."

George Bell, *Ensign Bell in the Peninsular War - The Experiences of a Young British Soldier of the 34th Regiment 'The Cumberland Gentlemen' in the Napoleonic War* (London: Leonaur, 2006), 86.

Correspondence in Birmingham Archives from an ex-regular Major in one battalion of the Birmingham Volunteers to the major of a second battalion, January 1804, recommending:

...a set of Straps for to carry within a Blanket or Great Coat in. The strap is the one made use of by my Regiment during our Irish Campaign [1798] ... it contained a Great Coat Pair of Shoes Shirt Brushes and shaving Box. The price was I think 10d but probably may from the advance of leather now be 12d you will Perceive it is made to sling across the Shoulder which is considered more useful than being fixed on the Knapsack is and as we have not at present Knapsacks might not Straps be found necessary to be provided immediately as they would is some degree answer the purpose of a Knapsack in case of sudden Orders to move in haste.

Quoted in post by Richard Warren (25 February 2014) to *Sling Thread*
(<http://2nd95thrifles.myfastforum.org/ftopic514-0-asc-30.php>)

²³ Reproduction by Duvall Leatherworks, based on the US patent information for "Improved Sling for Carrying Blankets & Overcoats", filed by Joseph Short on April 15th, 1862.
(<http://www.duvallleatherwork.com/shop/blanket-overcoat-sling/#!prettyPhoto>)

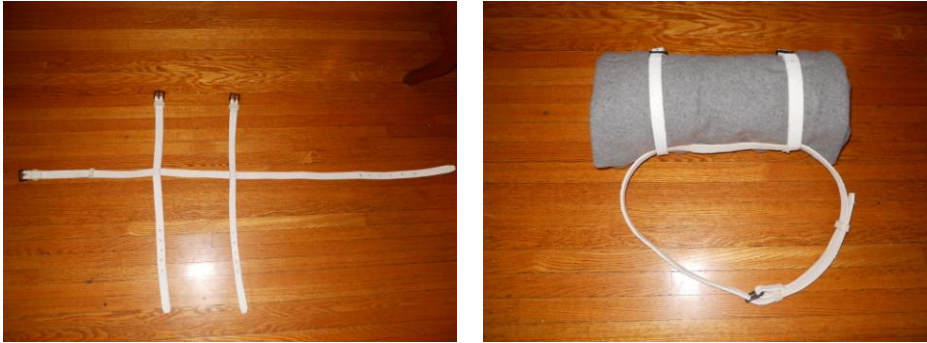
²⁴ Made of lined waterproof canvas, dated 1944. Ebay listing.
(<http://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/WW2-BRITISH-ARMY-FIELD-BEDROLL-1944-ORIGINAL-COMplete-NORMANDY-INVASION-/380789022653>)

²⁵ Sold by Frost River Trading Company, Duluth MN.
(<https://www.frostriver.com/shop/category/cabin-accessories/>)

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Appendix: Constructing Straps for the Greatcoat Greg Renault

Here is my adaptation of the original Royal Bristol Volunteers greatcoat sling.

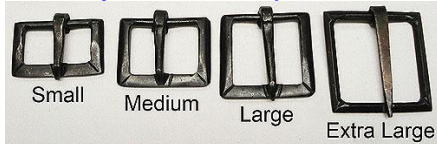


To simplify construction I made all of the straps out of 1" width leather. I also slightly increased the length of both the long strap and the roll straps from the original.¹ I found that I needed longer roll straps to get around the rolled greatcoat, and additional length on the long strap to get around the knapsack. Here is a comparison of my reproduction measurements with those of the RBV original:

	RBV original	Greg's variant
Long strap	$\frac{3}{4}$ " x 50"	1" x 58"
Roll straps	$\frac{5}{8}$ " x 24"	1" x 28"
Keepers	$\frac{3}{8}$ "	$\frac{1}{2}$ "

Using these dimensions, each set of straps can be made out of two 5-ft. lengths of 1" wide white leather (excluding the keepers, which require an additional nine inches of strap).

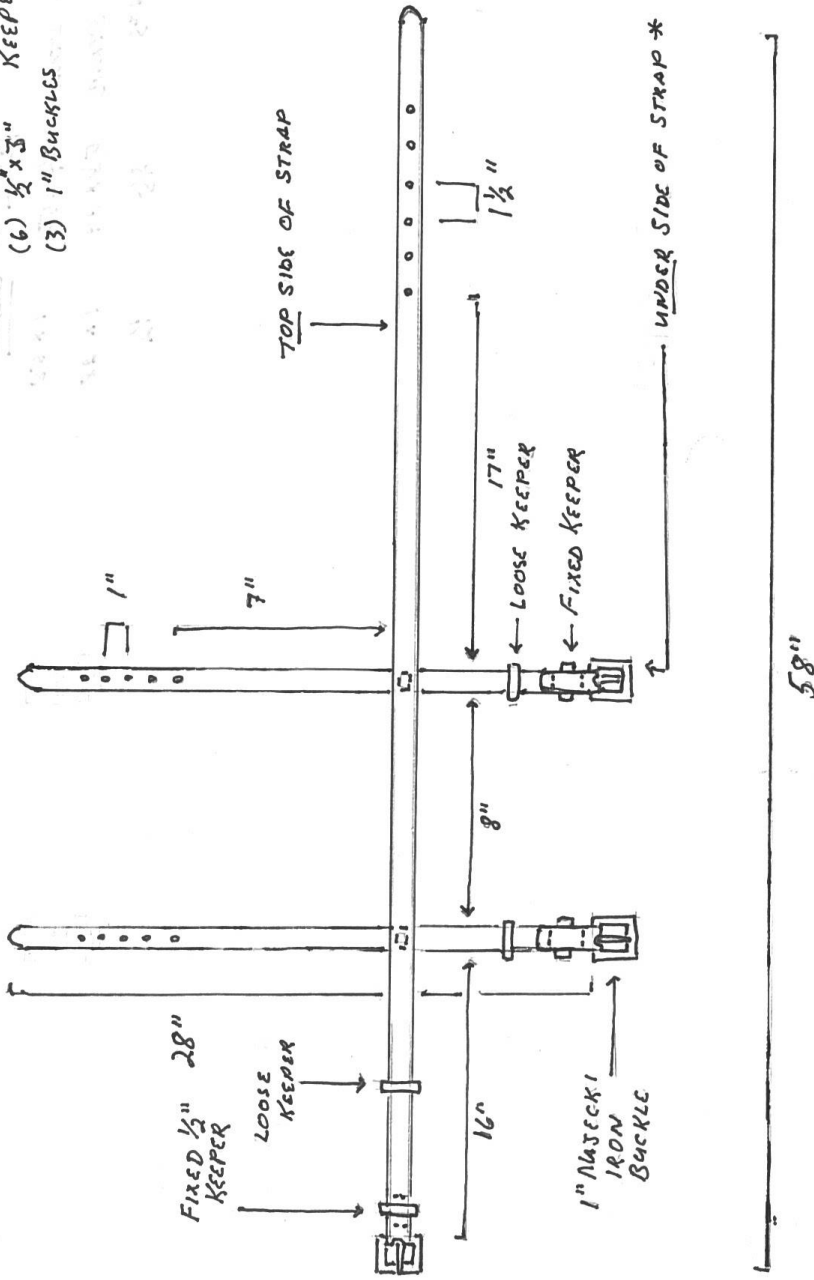
Buckles are the 1" forged iron ones available from Roy Najecki
<http://www.najecki.com/repro/IronBuckles.html>



Note that the sliding keepers should be placed on all three straps before the shorter roll straps are sewn to the long strap. Also note that if the leather used has a smooth side, that side goes on the underside of the straps. Sew the smooth sides of the short roll straps to the smooth side of the long strap; this will result in the rough ("buffed") side out for all straps, so that they can be whitened.

¹ Measurements of RBV original by two members of the 95th Rifles. Post (23 February 2011) to *Sling Thread*.

- (2) 1" x 30" ROLL STRAPS
- (1) 1" x 60" LONG STRAP
- (6) 1/2" x 3" KEEPERS
- (3) 1" BUCKLES



* UNDER SIDES OF STRAPS ARE SEWN TO EACH OTHER

GREATCOAT SLING

BASED ON THE ROYAL BRISTOL VOLUNTEERS OFFICER SLING FOR ENVELOPE
 SAMPACK. G. Renault 2013