

Getting Your Kit Together



For those who are relatively new to the Yorkers, you may be wondering what “stuff” you need over and above your issued uniform and equipment. For the guys who have been in the unit for a long time, you may be looking for ways to reduce the amount of “stuff” you carry to events. Here is some excellent advice from an old soldier named McGeachie that might help.

Over the years, in the interest of camp accuracy and common sense, I've gone a long way to personally pare things down, but I still give in to a few temptations.

You may have noticed that a lot of veterans don't bother with any sort of seat. The basic premise is to have only stuff that an original soldier would have carried on his back. Our regiment didn't have baggage wagons or bateau

devoted to personal stuff. I have a large, plain wooden box that holds a beer/food cooler. At lunch and in the evenings, I drag it out of the tent into the street for easy access where it serves as an excellent seat.

On occasions when members of my family are along, I have a mattress ticking eating utensil roll in the cooler box, tin plates or dog dishes, and mugs. However, if I'm on my own, I carry a horn spoon in my haversack and bring a plate or dog dish in a sack. That and my fingers do for all my eating needs. I also have a Soldier's clasp knife in the haversack, which can cut up veggies or fruit or do a zillion other tasks.

As the weather gets hotter and hotter and potable water isn't always right at hand, I have a much smaller wooden box which I always bring to carry three large, plastic containers of water. I also put my personal food inside for breakie and lunch: that's apples, a container of nuts and raisins, and some Landjaeger sausage. The latter doesn't require refrigeration. If the cooler isn't along, I bring a supply of vodka in the smaller box for the long hours of war stories. This small box looks okay to the average Joe, but it really is desperately wrong. Brad Mills of Duncan's has an excellent pattern based on 18C artillery shell boxes that the troops looted for use in the camps. It's a perfect answer. Before you build one, be sure to think your way through exactly what size you need. It's always easy to have it too large, but not easy to expand it later.

I no longer bring any kind of lantern or light of any type, unless lanterns are needed for a tavern. I figure I can get by with remembering exactly where I put stuff in the tent and I've developed quite a routine of laying things out that I might need in the middle of the night. That's easy to do when you're on your own, but if you're sharing a tent, that's another story. And, an open flame is extremely dangerous in a tent! Anyway, most members really get teed off if a guy or gal starts shining flashlights around. Friday night, almost anything goes in our camp, but once the event has set in, most members want all 18C stuff.

I've tied a piece of cord on my rear upright tent pole that's long enough to allow me to tie up my musket. If the ground is really wet, I can tie it through the trigger guard and suspend the firearm.

I sleep on an air mattress that's hidden in a mattress ticking cover. As mattress ticking covers were used to hold straw bedding (pallias), it's not a bad compromise. I've used straw and it's great, but a problem if you have allergies. After a bad bout with bugs, I gave it up and went back to an air mattress. In fair weather, I'll use a woollen blanket and a capote for bedding. In cool weather a sleeping bag. I bring it rolled up in a ticking bag and re-roll it each morning, stick it in the bag and, at a glance, it looks fairly 18C.

I also give in to having a pillow covered in ticking. That's a concession to a bad neck and old age, although a knapsack or regimental coat would do the job. As another concession, I bring a piece of canvas or oilcloth to lay on the ground next to where I sleep so I can keep my dainty feet off the grass and out of the mud if it rains.

Now, that takes me to a knapsack. You may have noted that every Marksman has one and uses it. Of course, most of them go trekking and it's a must-have for that endeavour. However, a large number of Yorkers also have them and use them as 18C luggage in their tents. I suspend mine from the tent ridgepole using a leather thong. That keeps it up off the ground. I bring all my 18C clothing, except my capote and rainshirt, in the knapsack. I use one compartment for underwear, roller, suspenders, handkerchiefs, garters, etc., the other for my boots. The large main compartment I use for trousers, shirts and stockings. I usually carry two shirts, two pair of stockings and sometimes two pair of trousers/breeches. For travel, I roll up the regimental jacket and waistcoat (and sometimes the capote) into the fold of the knapsack, and then buckle it shut. When I dress on Saturday morning, I store all my 21C clothing and shoes in the knapsack and re-suspend it. Again, when you're not sharing a tent, you've got the luxury of dominating the space.

The final package I use is a fairly large cloth bag with a pull cord closure. Into this, I put all my accoutrements (fatigue hat, goomba hat, tin mug, cartridge box, belt, bayonet & scabbard, canteen, haversack), musket cleaning kit, ditty bag of medicines, small cans of spare cartridges, a plate or dog dish and my rainshirt. I have holes drilled in my tent's upright pole and I slip a steel pin into one of the holes and hang this bag onto it. That keeps all my other stuff off the ground.

As long as I haven't brought corrugated boxes of stuff for recruits, the inside of my tent can look remarkably 18C when all is said and done. So, if I want to, I can leave it open for the public to gawk at.

We have far too many wrought iron cooking implements. The guys would never have carried all that crap.

They may have had it in garrison or in a town where they'd liberated it. On campaign, every cooking fire would have used greenwood uprights and cross bars with fashioned, greenwood hanging hooks. All very easy to accomplish if you have access to the bush. Cooking should be a group affair, ideally done by the men, as in 18C armies, with the ladies only helping, not being used as kitchen slaves. The guys should be helping with the fire, wood supply, putting up and taking down the fly, slicing veggies or meat, filling in the fire pit, boiling wash water, etc.

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