

Rebel Uniform Suggestion Pack

Vinegar Hill Battle Re-enactment August 3rd and 4th 2013



Image from: The Uniforms of 1798 – 1803 by F. Glenn Thompson; Page 17. This image was based on a contemporary illustration of an insurgent leader from Co. Wexford.

The National 1798 Rebellion Centre would like to thank everyone who volunteered their services to form the Rebel Army for this year battle re-enactment. The following pages offer guidelines and suggestions for assembling a “uniform” for the re-enactment. Please note it is of vital importance that the rebel army are dressed in keeping with the period and unfortunately those who wear items which are inaccurate for the time e.g. wellingtons, sandals, shorts, raincoats etc. will not be permitted to the field of battle on the day of the re-enactment. If you have difficulty in assembling your “uniform” or have any additional enquiries please don’t hesitate to contact us on 053 92 37596 or info@knightsandrebels.ie.

Basic Rebel Uniform – Minimum Requirements

The majority of the Rebel forces wore the ordinary day to day clothes as demonstrated by

figure 1. Figure 1 also represents the minimum requirements needed for a rebel uniform to take part in the Vinegar Hill Battle Re-enactment 2013. This consists of the following;

1. Grey/White/Off-White Shirt

The sleeves of shirts from this period were baggy and the shirts collar was generally left up.

2. Knee length Breeches

At this time, it would be very unusual to wear full length trousers however they did exist. The vast majority of the population would have worn breeches. These extended an inch or two below the knee and ended with a row of three or four buttons to the side of each leg. Breeches had no fly front but had what was called a narrow fall front, this was essentially a flap which extended from the crotch to just below the waist line. Breeches were made from cotton or corduroy. They could be of any colour, usually white, cream, tan or brown but **seldom black**.

3. Various Colour Knee length Stockings

The lower leg was covered by a long sock which extended above the knee, again these could be of any colour.

4. Black/Brown/Tan Shoes

Shoes during this period were generally fastened with a large buckle which was either Brass or Steel.



Figure 1 Image from: *The Uniforms of 1798 – 1803* by F. Glenn Thompson; Page 13.

How to assemble your basic uniform

In this current economic climate we do not expect nor want anyone to go to any great expense while assembling their uniform. This page examines how to create the basic rebel uniform in a cost effective manner. At present there are seven charity shops in Enniscorthy town alone and we recommend supporting these good causes when putting together your uniform.

Shirt: normally grey/white/off-white but can be any plain colour

Although the sleeves of this shirt are not baggy as they would have been during the 18th century, the shirt is still suitable for the purposes of the battle re-enactment. It was purchased at the Chernobyl Charity Shop, Weafer St., Enniscorthy for €4.00.

Knee length Breeches: normally white, cream, tan or brown but can be any plain colour, preferably **not black**.

Knee length breeches are not available to buy in most shops and are considerably expensive to buy online. Therefore we suggest that when putting together your uniform simply cut the legs off of an old pair of trousers to an inch or two below the knee. Sew a hem onto the ends of shortened trousers leg to prevent the material from unravelling. Finally sew 2-3 buttons onto the outside of both the right and left leg trousers leg, just below the knee line. The breeches that you see on the following page were made from a pair of trousers purchased from the Sue Ryder Charity Shop, Abbey Square, Enniscorthy for €4.00.

If anyone owns or can borrow a pair of knee length boots then their trousers can simply be tucked into the boots and does not have to be cut to below knee length.

Knee length Stockings: various colours

If wearing breeches it is important that you have a pair of stockings that will extend as far as the knee and therefore under the end of the breeches. Many clothes shop will stock knee length stockings and some GAA stockings may be suitable provided that they are a solitary colour as multi coloured stockings are not acceptable. We would ask people **not to** simply pull their stockings over a pair of trousers.

Shoes: black, brown or tan in colour

If possible try to avoid using a shoe with laces as laces were uncommon during the 18th century. Slip on shoes may be the best to use for uniform purposes as an old belt buckle can be simply stiched on to the front of the shoe to make it resemble one worn during the 18th century. It is also important to remember to choose a pair of shoes/boots which you feel comfortable wearing as it may be tedious to march in uncomfortable shoes/boots. The shoes in the picture on the following page were purchased from N.C.B.I. Charity Shop, Court

Street, Enniscorthy for €6.00. The buckles stitched onto the shoes were taken off of old belts.

Tips:

When creating your breeches sew a length of material /string between the hem of each trousers leg which will allow you to pull the hems tight and tie the bottom of the breeches around the leg.

Tips:

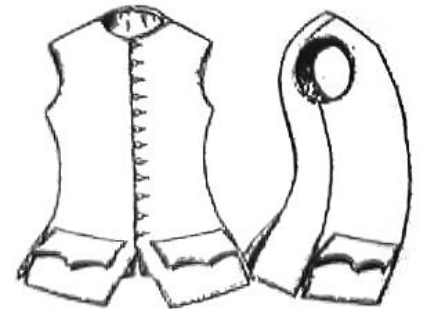
Shirts during the 18th century generally did not have buttons running down the centre as we have today. To make the shirt in the picture or any shirt like it more accurate simply remove the buttons and sew it together in the centre from the bottom of the shirt up to the V shaped neckline.

Tips:

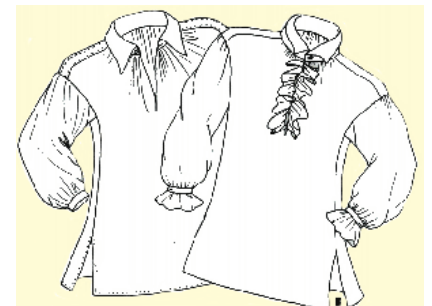
Any length of material can be used to form a simple cravat which can be worn over the shirt see the following pages for other accessories for you uniform.



18th Century Style Breeches



18th Century Style Waistcoat



18th Century Style Shirts



18th Century Frock Coat

Additional Items of clothing which can be used for rebel uniforms



Waistcoats

Waistcoats during this period would have extended as far as the waist and ended in a straight cut. Most generally had stand up collars. Waistcoats from the time could be various colours however **black coloured waistcoats would have been unusual.**

Coats

Coats from the period were usually the cut away types with tails and large stand up collars. Colours varied the most common would have been Brown/Tan/Grey/Black. Buttons, leather or metal buttons would have fastened the coat. Lengths varied but most civilian coats from the time fell as far as the knee.

Hats

Hats at the time varied quite a lot, many contemporary illustrations depict Rebels wearing tall hats with a narrow brim nicknamed "flower pot" hats, these were very prevalent at the time but there were variations in the width of the brim. Many of the Rebels wore a green or white band around their hats. Sometimes with the inscriptions "Liberty and Equality" or "Erin go Braugh"

Also shown in contemporary drawings was the liberty hat, this being a knitted or cloth cap associated with the French Revolution.

Figure 3 Image from: *The Uniforms of 1798 – 1803* by F. Glenn Thompson; Page 15.

Cocked hats or tricorns had generally died out at this time but someone of older years could probably get away with wearing one.

Rebel leaders are also known to have worn broad-brimmed hats

Boots

More prosperous civilians from the period may have owned boots which extended to just under the knee. Some would have folded down flaps which would vary in colour.

Belts

Belts from the time were quite simple, made from leather and were usually fastened by a brass or steel buckle. Again the colours varied but were for the most part tan or brown.

Cravats

Cravats were used during the period to tie up shirt collars. Cravats were generally white but could vary in colour.

Cockades

Cockades were ornaments usually worn on the hat as a badge. These again can be any colour. Many rebels wore sprig of greenery as a cockade to represent the green bough of liberty.

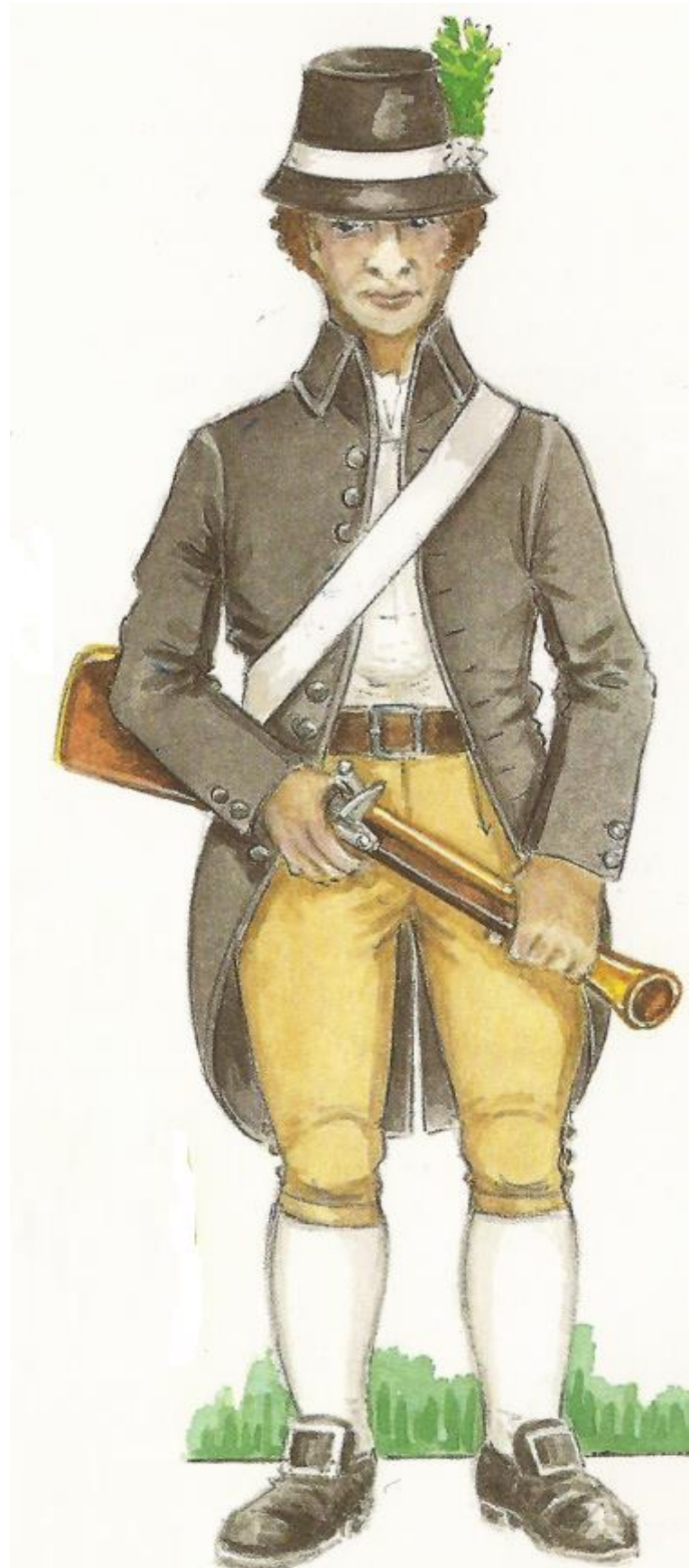


Figure 4 Image from: The Uniforms of 1798 – 1803 by F. Glenn Thompson; Page 15.

Female Uniform Suggestion Pack

Women can dress in the male uniform if they wish alternatively they can dress in in the female fashion of the day.

Shawl:

Shawl was a simple item of clothing usually square of rectangular in shape and would have been folded to for a triangular shape. They could vary in colour normally they would have been off-white and would have been usually made from cotton or wool.



Blouse:

Blouses during the 18th century were often made from cotton or silk. Normally during this period a woman's blouse would have been loose fitting with puffed sleeves and a square neckline. Blouses could vary in colour but the normally would have been grey, white or off-white.

Dress/Gowns:

Dress/Gowns were fitted garments consisting of an upper bodice section and lower skirt section usually reaching low calf to floor length. Colours and patterns varied considerably but for the lower classes would have simply been a dull solitary colour.

Apron:

Aprons would have usually been white or off-white. The would have been tied at the back of the waist and extend from the waist to ankle length.

Shoes:

Shoes would have been the same as men for the lower classes either black, brown or tan in colour during and fastened with a large buckle which was either Brass or Steel.

Skirt:

Skirts from the period would have extended from the waist down to the ankle/floor. They were usually grey or a similar dull colour.

Bonnets:

Bonnets during this period were generally brimless head coverings which were secured by tying under the chin. They generally didn't come down over any part of the forehead and only covered an area extending from the hairline to the back of the head.

Things not to wear as part of your Rebel Uniform

Wellingtons, Sandals, Runners, any plastic footwear, Caps of any kind, woolly hats, watches, jewelry or associated accessories, rain-coats or any plastic material, shorts, jumpers, hair bobbins or hair clips, any items of clothing with zips or Velcro, medals/badges, brooches or pins,

Charity Shops in Enniscorthy:

HOPE Cancer Support Charity Shop, Millpark Road, Enniscorthy

N.C.B.I. Charity Shop, Court Street, Enniscorthy

Chernobyl Charity Shop, Weafer St., Enniscorthy

Sue Ryder Charity Shop, Abbey Square, Enniscorthy

The Irish Wheelchair Association Charity Shop, Millpark Road Enniscorthy

The Touched by Suicide Organisation Charity Shop, Castle Hill, Enniscorthy

Bart's Cancer Charity Shop, Duffry Street, Enniscorthy

Useful Websites:

A couple of web sites that stock 18th century clothing some are very pricy but the picture are good reference point for the accuracy of clothing.

<http://jas-townsend.com/>

<http://www.sutlers.co.uk/Sections2.html>

<http://www.hiddendirkmmercantile.com/>

<http://www.thequartermastergeneral.com/>

Reference, Bibliography and Further Reading:

Glenn Thompson, F (1998). *The Uniforms od 1798-1803*. Dublin: Four Courts Press

Reid, S. (2011). *Armies of the Irish Rebellion 1798*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing