

Regulations for the British Army Required Every Soldier to have a Moustache

Uniform regulation in the British Army between the years 1860 and 1916 stipulated that every soldier should have a moustache

Before you read the complete article, look at this vocabulary and find it in the text:

find out: to discover

breach: the act of breaking a rule or agreement

unsavoury: unpleasant

seemingly: appearing to be

rampant: growing or expanding out of control

bare: having no facial hair, naked

scorn: to criticise heavily, to treat with disdain

plain sailing: easy

troops: soldiers or armed forces

compulsory: mandatory, obligatory

dropped: discarded

seal: a closure to prevent the escaping of air or liquid

Today I **found out** that uniform regulation in the British Army between the years 1860 and 1916 stipulated that every soldier should have a moustache.

Command No. 1,695 of the King's Regulations read:

"The hair of the head will be kept short. The chin and the under lip will be shaved, but not the upper lip..."

Although the act of shaving one's upper lip was trivial in itself, it was considered a **breach** of discipline. If a soldier were to do this, he faced disciplinary action by his commanding officer which could include imprisonment, an especially **unsavoury** prospect in the Victorian era.

Interestingly, it is during the imperial history of Britain that this **seemingly** odd uniform requirement emerged. Initially adopted at the tail end of the 1700s from the French, who also required their soldiers to have facial hair (which varied depending on the category of soldier), this hairy fashion statement was all about virility and aggression. Beard and moustache growth was **rampant**, especially in India where **bare** faces were **scorned** as being juvenile and un-manly, as well as in Arab countries where moustaches and beards were likewise associated with power. It wasn't all **plain sailing** for the moustache though; back home, British citizens were looking on it as a sign of their boys 'going native' and it was nearly eradicated completely.

However, in 1854, after significant campaigning, moustaches became compulsory for the **troops** of the East India Company's Bombay Army. While not in the rules for everyone else yet, they were still widely taken up across the Armed Forces and during the Crimean War there were a wide variety of permissible

(and over the top) styles. By the 1860s, moustaches were finally **compulsory** for all the Armed Forces and they became as much an emblem for the Armed Forces as the Army uniform.

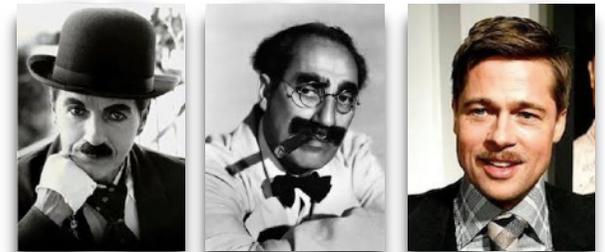
In 1916, the regulation was **dropped** and troops were allowed to be clean-shaven again. This was largely because such a superficial requirement was getting ignored in the trenches of WWI, especially as they could sometimes get in the way of a good gas mask **seal**. The order to abolish the moustache requirement was signed on 6th October, 1916 by General Sir Nevil Maccready, who himself hated moustaches and was glad to finally get to shave his off.

While no longer in force today, there are still regulations governing moustaches and, if worn, they can grow no further than the upper lip. It is also still extremely common for British soldiers in Afghanistan to wear beards, as facial hair is still associated with power and authority in many Islamic regions.

Adapted from: www.todayifoundout.com



Is this soldier a traditionalist or raising money for Movember?



Who are these people and what do you think of their 'tache?

"Let's chat about that!"

Send your answers to your ECP coach!

- Why do you think soldiers were made to wear a moustache?
- Do you know of any other interesting military uniform regulations?
- Have you ever worn a uniform? why? what was it like?
- What effect does a moustache have on someone's appearance?
- What reasons do people have for shaving their facial hair on a regular basis?
- What reasons do people have for letting their facial hair grow?
- Can you name some famous people with moustaches? what would they look like without a moustache?



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MOUSTACHE FACTS!



Western Women tend to wax or shave their upper lip, but Mexican artist Frida Kahlo actually celebrated not only her 'tache, but also her unibrow, including putting them in her very famous self portraits.

The oldest known depiction of a man with a moustache goes all the way back to 300 BC. The depiction was of an Ancient Iranian horseman.

Chaplin stated that he used the toothbrush moustache as it looked funny and also allowed him to show his expressions more fully than an alternatively comical moustache that covered more of his face would have.

The longest moustache ever recorded was in Italy on March 4, 2010, and measured in at 14 ft. long (4.29 m). The proud owner of that magnificent 'tache was Indian Ram Singh Chauhan.



ETYMOLOGY CORNER

The English word **moustache** comes from the French word of the same spelling, **moustache**, and popped up in English around the 16th century. The French word in turn comes from the Italian word **mostaccio**, from the Medieval Latin **mustacium** and in turn the Medieval Greek **moustakion**. We now finally get to the earliest known origin which was from the Hellenistic Greek **mustax**, meaning 'upper lip', which may or may not have come from the Hellenistic Greek **mullon**, meaning 'lip'. It is theorised that this in turn came from the Proto-Indo-European root **mendh-**, meaning 'to chew' (which is also where we get the word **mandible**).



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