

# Looping the Loop

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(Note: A great deal of this has been lifted directly from the October 1982 issue of the 22nd Regiment of Foot Newsletter, by Don N. Hagist, to whom we are greatly indebted.)

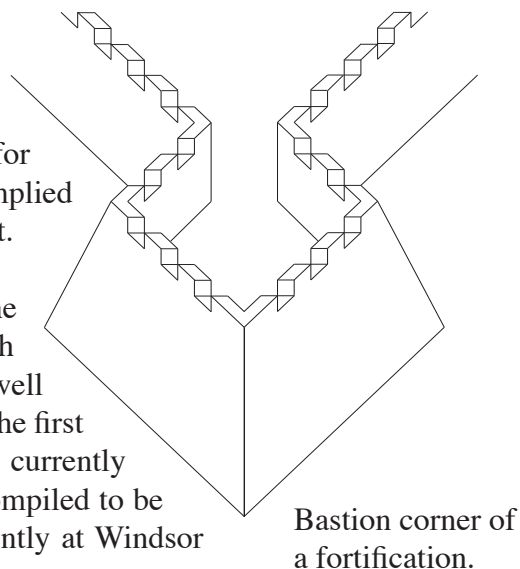
The following observations result from conversations with Dennis Krowe, careful study of photographs of a 1st Foot Guards coat belonging to the National Army Museum, and various primary source documents.

The Royal Warrant of 1768 for the Regulation of the Colours, Clothing, etc. of the Marching Regiments of Foot states (in part):

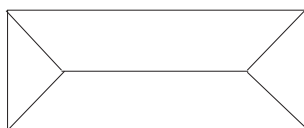
*“The Men’s coats to be looped with worsted lace, but no border. The ground of the lace is to be white, with stripes... The breadth of the lace which is to make the loop round the buttonhole, is to be about half an inch. Four loops to be on the sleeves, and four on the pockets, with two on each side of the slit behind.”*

A loop, then, is the enclosure of lace applied to various parts of the coat, hence the adjective “looped”, and the comprehensive noun “looping”. Worsted is a period term for woven wool - note that the material as well as the form is implied in the single word. To say “worsted wool” is to be redundant.

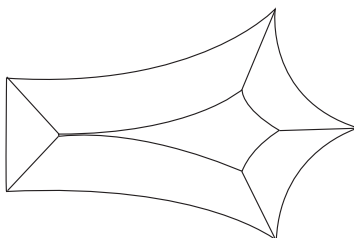
Each Regiment uses its own pattern of lace, fixed by the Colonel, and approved by the King. The pattern included both the arrangement of colored stripes woven into the lace, as well as the shape of the loop. Photographs of the lace patterns of the first seventy Regiments of Foot are available, taken of originals currently existing in the Lace Book, which is a collection of loops compiled to be approved when the Warrant was issued. This book is currently at Windsor Castle.



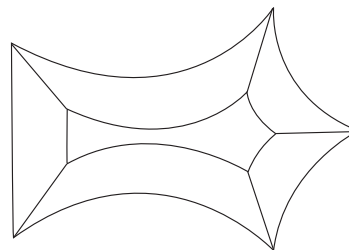
Three forms of loop are shown to have been used. The 33rd was one of eight Regiments which used “open” bastion loops, so named because of their likeness in shape to the part of a fortification bearing the same name (derived, incidentally, from the old French “bastion”, which means “to build”). Five Regiments used “closed” bastion loops, and the remainder used “rectangular” or “square” loops.



Rectangular or “Square” Loop



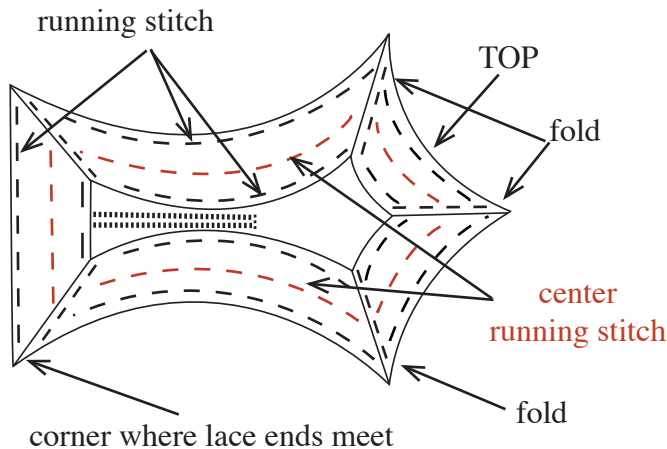
“Closed” Bastion Loop



“Open” Bastion Loop

In order to properly loop a coat, one must keep in mind the purpose of the loops. Rather than simply decoration, the loops were applied as reinforcement to particular parts of a garment. This is readily apparent both from study of actual pieces, and reading of descriptions of the application of loops. Around a buttonhole, the loop is stitched into the buttonhole with a running stitch along the inside edge of the lace. This technique was much stronger than simply working the buttonhole, and did have the desirable side effect of adding decoration. There is scholarly debate whether the looping

Right Lappel/Left Cuff/Left Pocket/Left Cape

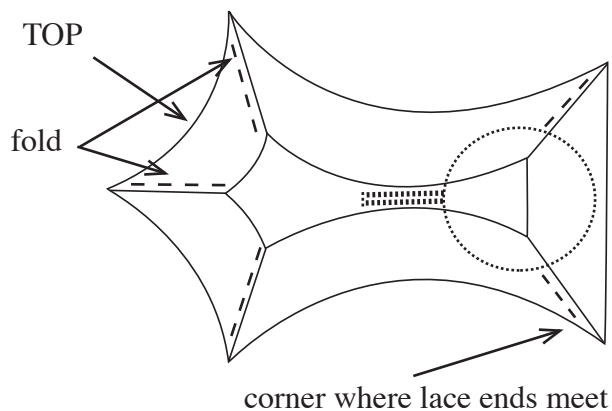


ing does away altogether with the need to work the buttonhole with a buttonhole stitch. As a square loop completely encloses the buttonhole this may be true. However, as the bastion looping of the coats of the 33rd Foot exposes part of the buttonhole, we choose to work the buttonhole in addition to placing the looping on the coat. Clothing warrants from earlier periods call for “fully looped” coats and waistcoats (the 1768 Warrant specifies no looping for waistcoats), which entailed using lace to bind all the exposed seams of the garments as well.

Close examination of looped garments reveals that, besides the running stitch at the edges, the lace is further bound by a running stitch along the center of the lace. This provides shear strength, resistance to being torn off by, say, constant rubbing from accoutrement straps. The Foot Guards coat mentioned earlier has about six running stitches per inch through every bit of lace in it.

This coat has open bastions, and so is a very valuable reference for our group, however, the garment is also fully laced, and has plain white lace, which seems to result in a few minor changes in style. In addition, it does not have working buttonholes. There are left and right handed bastions. This refers to the method of folding. When folding the point at the front, the lace gets doubled back on itself to one side or the other. Which side it is folded to determines whether the loop is “right handed”, or left “handed”. The “top” of a loop is always made

Left Lappel/Right Cuff/Right Pocket/Right Cape



on the side opposite to the corner where the ends of the lace are joined together. The lace is sewn on the coat such that the top side of the loop is always above the other side (the top goes on top). On the cuffs, which hang vertically, the top is away from the coat, on the pockets the top is toward the front of the coat.

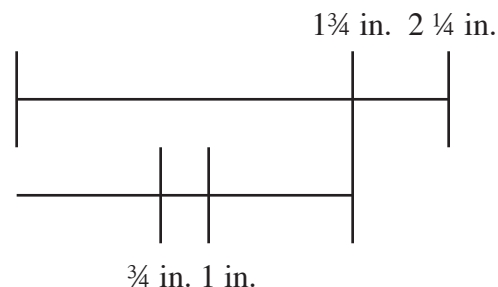
The straight edge of the bastion is always toward the nearest exposed seam. Hence, loops point toward the center on the lappels, upward on the pockets, downward on the cuffs, and outward on the rear vent. Place these latter loops so the the uppermost points are on a line with the side vent buttons. The straight edge of the loops should be one eighth inch from the seam, and the loops should be close enough so that the points just touch.

As to the actual looping of a coat, there are two schools of thought. One is to take cuts of lace, and then form the loop as you sew it to the coat while following a traced outline of a loop, shaping the curves and stitching in the corner angles as you go (this can be done by either stitching around the outside of the loop, or by basting the loop to shape down the center using the running stitch mentioned above). The other is to cut the lace to length, then pre-form the loop by stitching the ends together, tacking down the five corners, and then sewing the pre-formed loop to the coat, easing in the curves as you go.

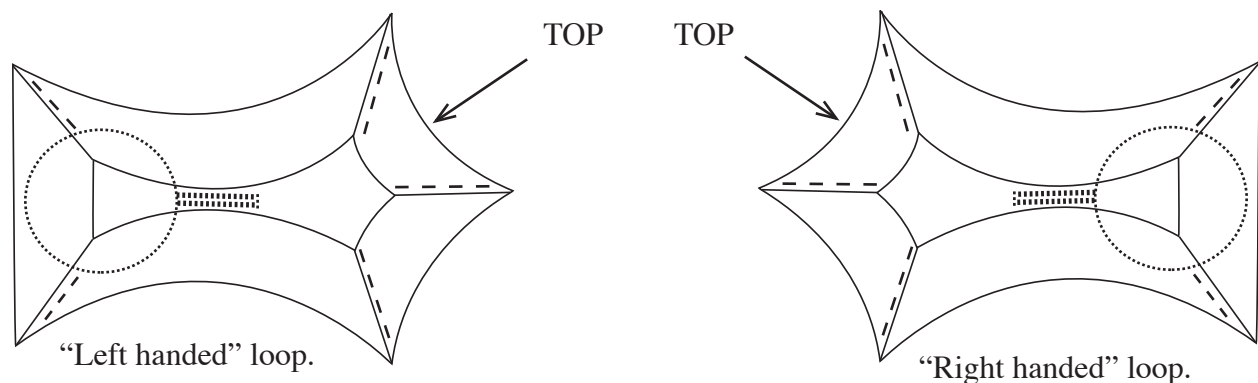
This second method is the one used in the 33rd Foot. It can be seen that some of the loops in the Lace Book are sewn using this method. A caution is that the dimensions quoted in this article are as used by the 33rd Foot, and yield a loop which is one and three quarters inch wide at the base, one and seven eighths inch wide at across the points, and two and five eighths inches from base to tip. If you are planning to use these instructions to form loops for another Regiment, you may find in your research variations of as much as a quarter inch in these dimensions, and will have to adjust your measurements accordingly.

A Regimental Coat requires 42 loops (21 right handed, and 21 left handed); four on each cuff, four on each pocket, four at the rear vent, two on the cape, and ten on each lappel. It is easier to loop the coat before sewing the cuffs, cape, lappels, and pocket to the coat.

The first thing to do is make a jig for folding the buttonholes. Take a stout piece of cardboard and draw a line on it two and one quarter inches long. Draw another one one half inch directly below it. Draw a line at one and three quarters inch from the upper line to the lower line. Put a mark on the lower line at three quarters inch, and one inch. As mentioned above, if your loops are a different size, you will have to alter these dimensions.



Cut 42 strips of lace nine and one eighth inches long. Fold the ends together (all of these folds are with the right side together), and tack one side as close as you can to the end. Lay the lace on your jig, with the tack at the upper left of the upper line. Take a tack at the three quarter inch mark on the lower line, then fold the lace open from tack to tack. Stitch the fold down with a running stitch. Lay the loop down on the jig as before, with the tack at the upper left of the upper line. Keeping this side lined up, fold the lace so that the new fold is lined up with the line at the one and three quarter inch mark. Take a tack at the one inch mark on the lower line. Fold the lace open from the tack to the fold, and stitch down with a running stitch. You have now formed the base of your loop, and the stripe should line up perfectly. Lay the top right corner of the loop against the upper left of the upper line. Fold the lace over on itself at the two and one quarter inch mark. Take a tack at the one and three quarter inch mark of the lower line, then fold the lace back to form a ninety degree angle, and stitch it down with a running stitch. Fold the lace over on itself with the two corners of the base lined up, and make a fold on the opposite side of the lace to match the one you have just stitched down. Fold the lace back on itself to form a ninety degree angle, and stitch. Fold the lace on itself again, lining up all the corners you have stitched in, and then fold the tip back at a ninety degree angle, and stitch. Remember, which way you fold this last corner determines which is the “top” of your lace. For uniformity’s sake, put the top of the loop opposite to the join where the lace ends meet. When you have finished making 21 right handed loops, you form the left handed ones in the same way, but with the join and top on the other side.



When you are ready to put them on your coat, trim the raw edge as close as you dare, so you will have less to tuck under. The proper positioning of loop to buttonhole is shown. Pin the loop into position, making sure that it lines up neatly with whichever edge it is supposed to line up with, and, using a running stitch, start with the base of the loop, taking care to keep the base as straight as you can, tucking under the folds of lace at the base corners, and easing in the curves as you go around. Pull the loop taught as you stitch the inside, and don’t forget to catch some stitches into the buttonhole at the deepest turn of the curve. Finish the loop with a running stitch in red thread down the center. Until you get used to forming them freehand, you may find it helpful to trace an outline of the finished loop in position on your coat. Once the loops are sewn down, press them flat. Use lots of steam, and a press cloth.

