

A Guide to the Pirates Mini-figures Part III

We're seeing red!

For themed set collectors 1992 was a year of change. The new lineup included some spectacular new looks for Space and Castle sets, with new pieces, new beasties, new factions, and new colours.

These included the revamped Space Police, now in a trendy green instead of white. There were new Black Knights, with impressive three-piece dragon plumes and new shields, which also had dragons on them. Very “dragony” knights they were...

Although LEGO's old three-year rotation schedule meant that these newer figures would share shelf space with their older incarnations for a time, it was clear that every theme now had a distinctive new look...



Ha ha ha ha ha ha! Get it? Um, anyway, moving on...

Space Police II



Law enforcement in space is back in style

Black Knights



*“To be eaten by a dragon -
or not to be eaten by a dragon?”*

That is the question asked by many a knight...

Now when we mention “Imperial Guards” what springs to mind? Hopefully nothing futuristic in a galaxy far far away. No, we must look to our past to discover the answer...

The Imperial Guards

1992 - 1996

Like the Governor, **the Admiral** wears a bicorne, yellow epaulets, and white pants. His torso features the same jacket pattern in red. And yet, the Admiral seems to have a better sense of style: he wears a white plume and white gloves to match the rest of his uniform.

Even though he's all dressed up, the Admiral seems to get out more than the Governor as he was included in the moderately priced **6263 Imperial Outpost**, though he was pictured there without his plume and epaulets - it must have been rather hot that day.



The transition to Imperial Guard sovereignty took almost two years before blue Soldier regiments were phased out entirely.

The Admiral



"Clear the decks!"

Accordingly, the LEGO Group gave the old Soldiers a face-lift and with this lift came a new name: the Imperial Guards.

With their fancy scarlet colours, the Imperial Guards bring to mind the grandeur of the British Army, and they certainly stand out more than the Soldiers did.

It's possible that the Imperial Guards are even more popular than their blue coated forebearers; even though the only changes to the mini-figures were their colour and a few faces. But unlike the Soldiers, the Imperial Guards did not change hats to expand their ranks.

The Imperial Guards

1992 - 1996



Prepare to turn port.
You have arrived at your destination!

The Leftenant



"There's nothing like a tasty
1x1 red cylinder for breakfast!"



"Carry on!"

The Admiral's face is made unique by his reddish brown hair, opposed to the black coiffure of Broadside's noggin... Interestingly enough Woodhouse's facial features seem to closely follow the same pattern as the Governor. Perhaps this indicates they are distantly related, or maybe it's just a remarkable coincidence! We may never know...

The **Leftenant**, not surprisingly, is much the same as the blue-coat Soldier **Lieutenant** with white pants, black tricorn, yellow epaulets, and a jacket checked in black and gold – though of course, this one is red.

The other main difference being the pronunciation of the title. Formally the word is spelt "Lieutenant" however in British English it is pronounced "Lef-tenant" while in American English it's pronounced "Lu-tenant".

The title derives from two French words, *lieu* meaning "place" as in a position; and *tenant* meaning "holding" as in "holding a position" and thus a "lieutenant" is somebody who holds a position in the absence of his superior. So when Woodhouse was flitting about the Caribbean in the Imperial Flagship the Leftenant was busy holding the fort - and we say "holding the fort" we mean that quite literally.

The **Leftenant** has a jolly looking face uncannily similar to that of his blue-coat counterpart, though the Leftenant's is printed in black and has more hair. How dashing!

The Imperial Guards

1992 - 1996

Do you see the resemblance?



Sergeant Garcia

The Lieutenant

Much to my chagrin, this face actually bears a greater resemblance to the character Sergeant Garcia from the Zorro television show than that of the Common Striped Pirate (see Part I), which I had associated with the character long before the Imperial Guards came out. Whoops!

The Leftenant was the last Pirate figure to have his face re-used in Castle; unfortunately he sank so low as to join the ranks of the fearsome Fright Knights, who were led, as you may remember, by a man so evil that the signature LEGO simley had been corrupted into a frown. *Gasp!!!*

He also appeared at the LEGO Soccer – excuse me – Football sets as a spectator. It appears he had quite a good time too.

OK, by now you probably know the deal... The Imperial Guard soldier mini-figures were much the same as the blue Soldier Trooper with their smiley face, backpack, and all, but this time in red. Wait a minute! Didn't the old Trooper have red epaulets? Wouldn't they blend right in with the rest of his uniform? Well, the LEGO Group pulled a clever colour switch and gave the Imperial Guards blue epaulets instead of red. Sweet!



He went batty!



"Go Manchester!"

The Imperial Guards

1992 - 1996

The Guards



Looks kinda familiar...



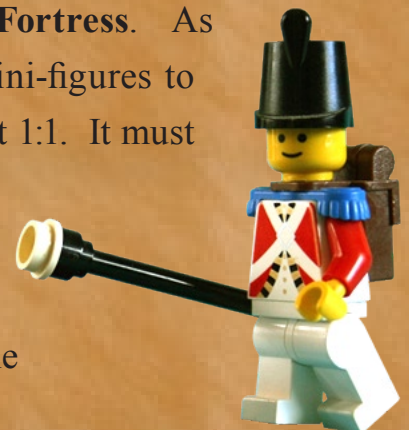
A cutlass makes a dandy walking stick...

History has dubbed red coats with affectionate nicknames like “lobsters”, “bloody backs” and a combination of the two, “lobsterbacks”. But why wear such a highly conspicuous colour such as red? Surely that would have stood out for miles?

In the days of the musket and black powder, battle field visibility was quickly obscured by clouds of smoke. Not to mention muskets had very limited range and accuracy. Bright colours enhanced morale and helped distinguish friend from foe. Also on a long campaign the vegetable dyes used in the 18th century faded to a less conspicuous pink or ruddy-brown.

Of course this went out the window after the adoption of rifles in the 1850s, followed by smokeless powder after 1880. The British quickly recognised the value of drab clothing and began dressing their men more inconspicuously.

It was much harder to build an army of red Imperial Guards than it had been with the blue Soldier Troopers. Only two sets, **Imperial Trading Post** and **Imperial Outpost**, included more than one Guard but there was never a generous helping like in the days of **6276 Eldorado Fortress**. As a result, the ratio of command mini-figures to soldier mini-figures was just about 1:1. It must have been a very militant army - or perhaps they just enjoyed giving promotions. Not that huge ground forces were required in the Caribbean anyway...



The Imperial Guards

1992 - 1996

In order to better describe the uniforms of the Imperial factions and place them in a historical context I consulted some reference books. Any historical errors or misused terms are mine alone - but please don't keelhaul me!

So without further ado here is the:

Bibliography

Sichel, Marion. *History of Men's Costume*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1984.

J B R Nicholson. *Military Uniforms; the splendour of the past*. London: Orbis Books, 1973.

Knötel, Richard, et al. *Uniforms of the World*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980.

On a good day (when the pirates conveniently stayed captured) the Admiral and Leftenant enjoyed nothing more than sipping a cup of hot Chicory outside the moderately priced **Imperial**



Ahhhh!!! That tastes good!



Outpost. Well, except on the those really hot days - on those days they drank beer instead!

Chicory is not only a substitute for coffee but has been used in medicine and is recorded in ancient books as a treatment for everyday ailments. It has been used as a tonic and appetite stimulant, and as a treatment for gallstones, gastro-enteritis, sinus problems and cuts and bruises. Perhaps beneficial to drink after having too much beer.

Of course, not all days were pleasant because Woodhouse had other grievances aside from those caused by pirates... The first is a somewhat unlikely one...

The Imperial Guards

1992 - 1996



Admiral Woodhouse had a strong disdain towards the methods employed by Governor Broadside when dealing with pirates. Upon his arrival Woodhouse wasted little time in sharing his true thoughts – in fact he outright labelled Broadside as a fool – right then and there in his face! Needless to say the relations between the two, and consequentially their factions, were precarious at best. This didn't help matters when Captain Ironhook sailed into town later that year, but we'll explore those issues sometime in the future...

Woodhouse also had another thorn wedged firmly in his side, one that was equally annoying as the pirates and Broadside's obtuse methods.

We've seen the Imperial occupation of the Pirate theme represented twice but as history shows, most territory colonised by empires was previously occupied. Who inhabited the islands long before Pirates and Guards battled for gold? And how far are they willing to go in order to stake their own claim?

Next Time...

Fierce

Islanders



Credits

Authors TalonCard & Mr Phes

Layout & Graphics Mr Phes

Proof Reading

Bonaparte & ImperialShadows

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administrator@classic-pirates.com