Monmouth Cap

Colleen Humphreys
neen@stitchingintime.com

2 caps, from different needle sizes, pre-felting

Reenacting/research notes:

This pattern is made from the extant Monmouth Cap, seen here:
http://www.gtj.org.uk/en/small/item/GTJ01788/
from The Nelson Museum & Local History Centre

I have copied the stitches and shaping as close as I can from the photos.   I benefited from tips and suggestions and ideas from Tamar, dicconf@yahoo.com.   There are a variety of other versions of this and similar caps, but I have not found another that has all the details that I have included.

Probably the single most important detail is that the original cap is taller than it is wide, so that when it fits on a head, there is a small gap between the crown of the head and the top of the cap. This air space is useful for warmth, of course, and adds greatly to the attractiveness of the cap.   Most extant 18th C knitted caps have this feature.   The discerning reenactor will also notice that none of the extant caps are turned up such as to give a "jughead" effect when worn.   Any cuff is made such that it is worn by the ears.   See http://www.rijksmuseum.nl/zoeken/search.jsp?query=gebreid,%20muts&lang=en&start=0&focus=assets (a Dutch museum) for many more examples.

Supplies:

Needles either US size 11 (8mm) or 13 (9mm) dpns   One smaller dpn

Yarn: approx 330 yds of worsted weight 100% real wool (NOT washable, must felt!)   such as 2 balls (with leftovers) of Patons Classic Merino, 100% wool or   Cascade 220
> **or**
> 130 yds bulky 100% bulky wool, such as 1 ball Knit Picks wool of the Andes, Bulky

1 yard thin waste yarn/string, preferably cotton or sock yarn for a lifeline for picking up the brim.   This method is for teaching/learning purposes.   I suspect that cappers just did their pickups without a lifeline.   I suggest using it for your first cap, then abandoning the method, or not, as you please.

random bit of yarn or string, working yarn or not, as it suits you, to tie around the work to keep it from slipping, if necessary

12 inches of contrasting yarn/string, to cut up to use as markers.

If using worsted weight, hold 2 strands together throughout. The directions won't mention this...please consider your yarn as being 2 strands, at all times!

Gauge: 2.5-3 sts per inch   Gauge, for once, is not crucial, it must be loose, to felt, other than that, close is adequate.

Key:
k: knit
k2tog: knit 2 together
sts: stitches
inc: increase by inserting left needle under the strand between the needles, from back to front, and knitting this, through the front

Using backward loop (aka simple) cast on, cast on 62 sts.   Turn and knit back, keeping needle tips close together and treat the work gently, to keep the cast on loops from tightening up, and gaps appearing between. Sliding the needle tips in and out of the stitches, and never separating the tips should prevent the unsightly gaps!   Use the backward loop cast on, not a long tail or more constructed cast on, for easy of picking up stitches later.   I have found this method to be the most efficient, more so than provisional cast ons, so until I can take apart an extant cap (or examine a rip closely), this method is my best guess at being accurate.

Being careful not to twist, join work in a circle.   Knit the first stitch. Tie a scrap of marker yarn through the stitch you just worked.   This stitch is the first stitch of your first row. When counting rows, this marked stitch is the first row, and the loops on the needle are the last row. Finish that row. You may find it convenient to place another marker, of a knotted loop of yarn on the needle, after the last stitch, to mark your ending/beginning of rounds.   Slip this marker each time you come to it.

Rnds 2-3:   knit.

Rnd 4:   k2 (k2tog k18) 3 times (59 sts)
Rnds 5-7:   knit

Run a life line: Thread the thin yarn onto a tapestry needle and run it through each stitch on the needle.

Rnds 8-16:   knit
Rnd 17:   k8 (k2tog k17) twice k2tog end k11 (56 sts)
Rnds 18-27:   knit
Rnd 28:   (k16 k2tog) three times end k2 (53 sts)
Rnds 29-38:   knit
Rnd 39:   (k3 k2tog) around, end k3 (43 sts)
Rnds 40-42   knit
Rnd 43:   (k2 k2tog) around, end k3 (33 sts)
Rnds 44-45   knit
Rnd 46:   (k1 k2tog) around (22 sts)
Rnds 47:   knit
Rnd 48:   k2tog around (11 sts)
Cast off, leaving a 12 inch tail, thread the tail onto a sewing up/tapestry needle.   Bunch up the cast off and wrap the tail around the bunch, just below the cast off ridge, 3 times, then pass the needle through the bunch, several times to secure, pass the need to the inside, and weave in as usual.

Turn the hat inside out, hold it upside down, and go back to the life line. Following the life line, at the tail, pick up the stitches onto a needle. Pulling on the life line will make this easier.   The needle should match or parallel, the lifeline. (59 picked up funky looking sts)

Place a yarn loop marker (slip marker when you come to it) then with the working yarn, leaving a 6 inch tail:
Rnds 1-2:   knit
Rnd 3:   k2 (inc k19) 3 times
Rnd 4-6:   knit

Weave the tail from attaching the yarn.

Now the interesting part!

Turn hat right side out (it should be hanging, upside down, of course).
Starting at the gap at the join, working right to left, pick up each cast on stitch onto a smaller needle (I do 10 or 20 at a time).   Hold both sets of needles parallel. Working from the right side, insert right needle into front stitch and then directly into the back stitch, wrap and pull new loop through both loops, then drop both loops off their respective needles.   Repeat.   Now pass the 2nd stitch on the right needle over the first stitch (closest to tip). Do not pull tightly, the "leap frog" stitch you passed over should remain loose, but neat.   Continue working 2 sts together then passing over the 2nd stitch on the needle. .   When you have worked the last sts and have only one stitch left on the right needle, work 10 to 15 chain sts, incorporating the original tail in this chain, if you like.   Break yarn and pull through the last stitch.   Use tails to fasten into a loop and close gap.   Weave in.

Felt until it fits!