

# Dragoon



A dragoon is a foot soldier (or infantryman) who rides a horse. Dragoons did not fight on horseback, like cavalry. The dragoons used horses to ride to quickly to the parts of the battlefield where they would be the most useful. Once they got there, they would get off their horses and fight on foot. A dragoon's horse, weapons, armour and equipment were cheaper than that of a cavalryman.

Dragoons would be sent ahead of the main army to protect (or cover) the army as they approached their position. Dragoons could stay behind after a battle and protect the army as they are leaving (or retreating) from a battlefield. Dragoons were often used to protect areas vulnerable to attack, like the baggage train (the place where the army left their personal belongings), or a cannon crew. Dragoons were often used to ambush enemy soldiers, as they could be easily hidden.

In the middle of a battle dragoons could be used to support friendly cavalry, or attack enemy cavalry. During the Battle of Naseby Oliver Cromwell hid his dragoons in a hedge. As the Royalist cavalry charged past, the Roundhead dragoons fired into the sides of the enemy horsemen. It was also at Naseby where Roundhead dragoons performed the only mounted dragoon attack of the First Civil War.

Nobody agrees on how dragoons got their name. They may have been named after a French pistol called a Dragon, or because the French mounted infantry sometimes decorated their pistols with dragon carvings, or because early dragoons looked like dragons riding across the battlefield, with their flapping coats resembling like dragon wings and the burning wicks of their matchlock muskets looking like dragon flame.

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## Equipment

Dragoons did not usually wear armour, making dragoons vulnerable to attack by swords or gun.

A dragoon's main weapon was a **carbine**, a mini single shot musket. A carbine shot further than a pistol but not as far as a musket. It fired a round lead bullet called a ball. Carbine balls were heavier than pistol balls.

A Dragoon's backup weapon was the **sword**. Dragoon swords would be cheap and the quality not very good.

A dragoon's horse was called a "**cob**". It was cheaper, weaker and less impressive than a cavalry horse. The horse was for transporting the dragoon quickly to where he needed to be, where the dragoon would dismount and fight on foot. A dragoon would hardly ever fight on horseback.

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