

# Musketeer



Musketeers were part of the infantry which meant they fought on foot. These soldiers were often drawn from the lowest levels of society. They were not issued with armour. They carried a matchlock musket (a large, heavy, long-barrelled gun), a cheap sword and ammunition.

To fire this gun the musketeer clamped a burning match (a piece of rope soaked in saltpetre which helped it burn slowly) into the curled metal 'serpent'. When he pulled the trigger the serpent moved, dipping the burning end of the match into the gunpowder pan. There was a flash and fire travelled along a tiny 'touch hole' and lit the gunpowder in the barrel of the gun which shot the musket ball. It took about 30 seconds to reload a musket.

Muskets had a range of around 100 yards (about 92 metres). They were not accurate even at this range and so were best fired in a volley (a group all firing at the same time) to make sure they hit the enemy. These weapons could fail to fire if:

- the touch hole became blocked causing a 'flash in the pan';
- the match moved out of position or was covered with ash;
- rain put out the match or soaked the gunpowder.

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## Equipment

- **Matchlock musket** - a type of gun. The barrel of the gun was usually 4 feet long (1 metre 22 cm) and of 12 bore. This meant that when 12 musket balls were made from a lb of lead they would fit in the barrel.
- **Matches** - pieces of hemp rope soaked in saltpetre, one of the ingredients of gunpowder, to keep it burning all the time.
- **Bandolier** - a leather belt across the chest carrying 12 gun powder flasks and a pouch for musket balls. Each flask or 'box' contained a single charge of powder and was made of wood with a wooden or lead cap. The musketeer poured the contents of one flask into the barrel of the musket each time he fired. These 'boxes' could become tangled and were noisy. Wood could easily catch fire or swell in wet weather, causing the cap of the flask to jam.
- **Musket ball pouch** - to carry lead musket balls
- **Sword** - a cheap sword mostly useful for chopping fire wood. When too close to the enemy to fire a shot, a musketeer would be more likely to use the club end of this musket to kill his attacker than this sword!

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