



# **BARRELS & BLADES**



*Battle of the Little Big Horn known as Custer's Last Stand.*

## **May 2022**



*Royal Artillery Field Batteries Taking up Position by Campion.*

**SA Members our next meeting is on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> May at the Lutheran Church Hall 57-59 Botting Street (Corner of Osborne St) Albert Park SA.** The hall can be entered from Botting Street. For those members who will be displaying items there is also car parking for approximately thirteen vehicles in the rear carpark off Osborne street), for members and visitors who are not putting on a display there is plenty of street parking.

## **2022/23 SUBSCRIPTION DUE BY THE 30<sup>TH</sup> of JUNE**

Please pay your subscription renewal for the 2022/23 Financial Year by the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2022. **The preferred method of payment** is by **Direct Bank Payment** or **PayPal** as below, using the following information.

### **Subscription fees for 2022/23**

South Australian Resident Member \$40

South Australian Resident Family membership (includes 2 voting members) \$50

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The Association Email Address is: [heritage.arms.society@gmail.com](mailto:heritage.arms.society@gmail.com)

Webpage: <https://heritagearmssa.com/>

## Membership Applications

Nominee: Craig D Bell

Interests: 15<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> century European arms and amour, 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century Scottish weapons, American revolution, war of 1812, us civil war, world war one.

Location: Virginia USA.

Any member having objection to membership being granted to the above applicants should give reasons in writing, in confidence and without prejudice, to the Secretary, c/- 32 Teakle Street, Exeter, within 21 days of this meeting. South Australian applicants that do not have a current firearm or firearms collectors' licence will require a fit and proper person check from SAPOL.

## BIG SHOW, Gun Militaria Collectibles fair

### Held in Toowoomba at the showgrounds on the 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> of May

Over 300 tables of gear for sale, Australia's largest Militaria fair. With 67 individual dealers from all over Australia. Show hours are 9 am till 4 pm Saturday & 9 am till 2 pm Sunday. Admission is \$10 (children under 15 are free if accompanied with a responsible adult)

All types of Militaria & weapons ranging from the 1500s to Modern day, assorted collectables & Antiques (very little in the furniture line, mainly small items in General antiques) Antique & modern firearms, books, medals, badges, swords ,daggers ,knives , ammunition / brass & ordnance, bayonets , uniforms, helmets & headgear, firearm accessories, Antique & Modern Jewellery, Opals, man cave item, garagenalia, Tools etc & the list goes on with much more . A great day out, food & drinks available at the venue, FREE PARKING, wheelchair access, ATM across the road at venue

#### NO COVID RESTRICTIONS EVERYONE IS WELCOME

Toowoomba showgrounds, Glenvale rd., Toowoomba, QLD, Australia, Queensland

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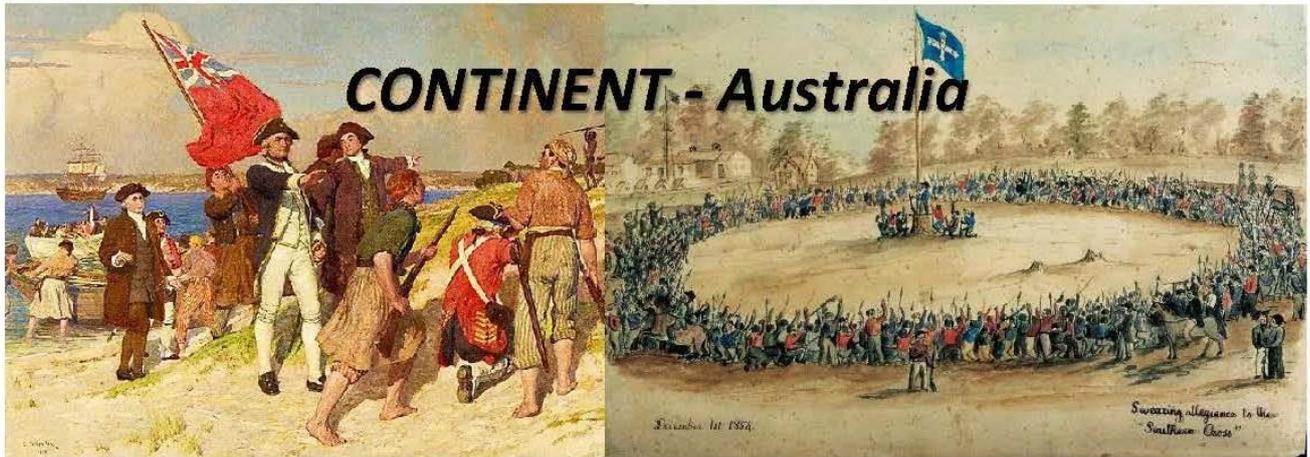
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# SA Member April Displays

## **APRIL DISPLAY TOPICS**



**SPECIALIST INTEREST- Medals, Awards, Presentation & Coats of Arms**

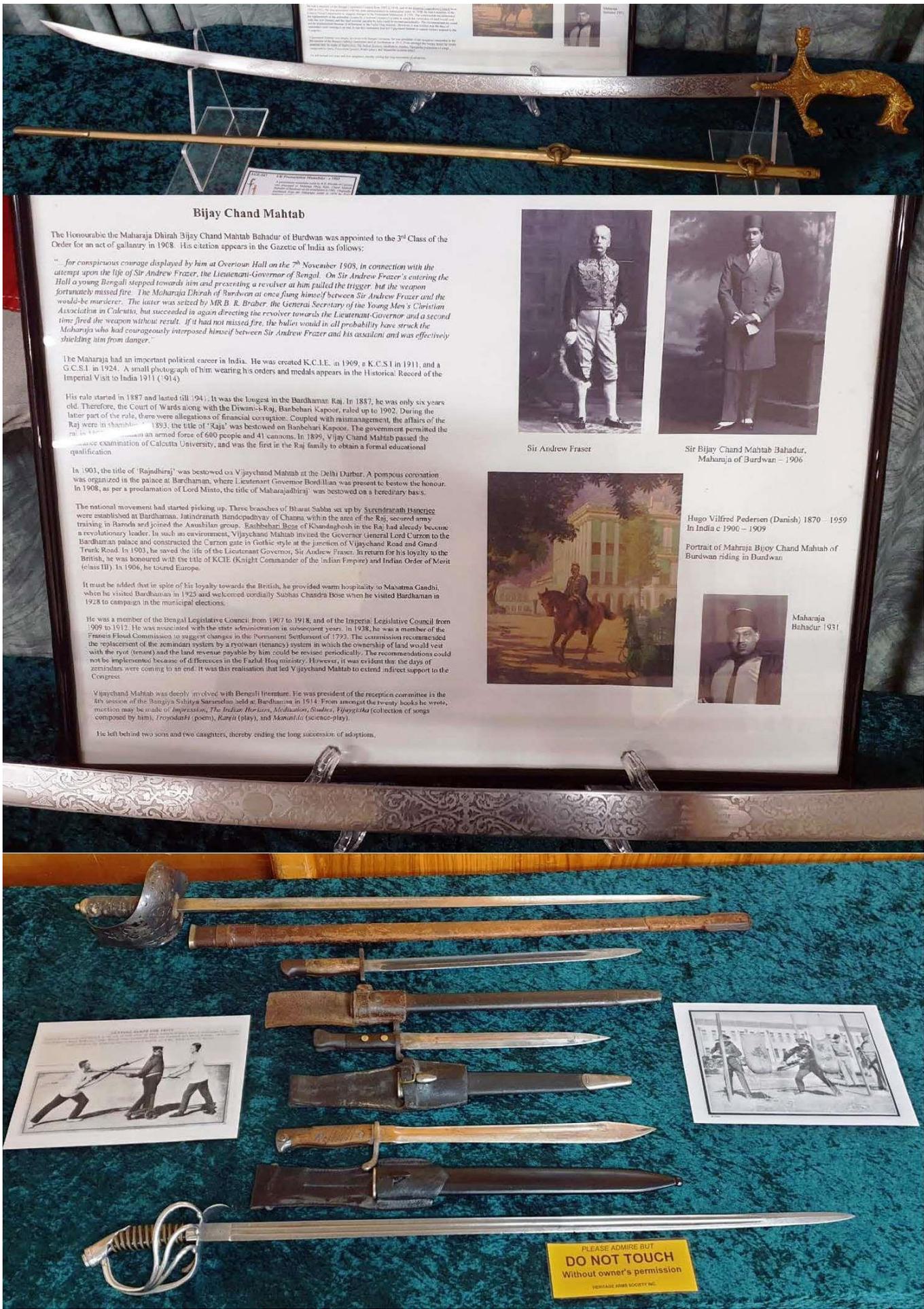


**EVENT – World War One**



**plus, anything over 100 years old**





### Bijay Chand Mahtab

The Honourable the Maharaja Dhiraj Bijay Chand Mahtab Bahadur of Burdwan was appointed to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Class of the Order for an act of gallantry in 1908. His citation appears in the Gazette of India as follows:

"... for conspicuous courage displayed by him at Overton Hall on the 7<sup>th</sup> November 1905, in connection with the attempt upon the life of Sir Andrew Fraser, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. On Sir Andrew Fraser's entering the Hall a young Bengali stepped towards him and presenting a revolver at him pulled the trigger, but the weapon fortunately missed fire. The Maharaja Dhiraj of Burdwan at once lunged himself between Sir Andrew Fraser and the would-be murderer. The latter was seized by MR B. R. Brahm, the General Secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association in Calcutta, but succeeded in again directing the revolver towards the Lieutenant-Governor and a second time fired the weapon without result. If it had not missed fire, the bullet would in all probability have struck the Maharaja who had courageously interposed himself between Sir Andrew Fraser and his assailant and was effectively shielding him from danger."

The Maharaja had an important political career in India. He was created K.C.I.E. in 1909, a K.C.S.I in 1911, and a G.C.S.I. in 1924. A small photograph of him wearing his orders and medals appears in the Historical Record of the Imperial Visit to India 1911 (p. 914).

His rule started in 1887 and lasted till 1941. It was the longest in the Bardhaman Raj. In 1887, he was only six years old. Therefore, the Court of Wards along with the Diwan-i-Raj, Barbehari Kapoor, ruled up to 1902. During the later part of the rule, there were allegations of financial corruption. Coupled with mismanagement, the affairs of the Raj were in shambles. In 1891, the title of 'Raja' was bestowed on Barbehari Kapoor. The government permitted the Maharaja to maintain an armed force of 600 people and 41 cannons. In 1899, Vijay Chand Mahtab passed the entrance examination of Calcutta University, and was the first in the Raj family to obtain a formal educational qualification.

In 1901, the title of 'Rajadhiraj' was bestowed on Vijaychand Mahtab at the Delhi Darbar. A pompous coronation was organized in the palace at Bardhaman, where Lieutenant Governor Borden was present to bestow the honour. In 1908, as per a proclamation of Lord Minto, the title of Maharajadhiraj was bestowed on a hereditary basis.

The national movement had started picking up. Three branches of Bharat Sabha set up by Surendranath Banerjee were established at Bardhaman. Jatindranath Bandyopadhyay of Channa within the area of the Raj, secured army training in Baroda and joined the Anushilan group. Barbehari Bose of Khumraghosh in the Raj had already become a revolutionary leader. In such an environment, Vijaychand Mahtab invited the Governor General Lord Curzon to the Bardhaman palace and constructed the Curzon gate in Gothic style at the junction of Vijaychand Road and Grand Trunk Road. In 1903, he saved the life of the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Andrew Fraser. In return for his loyalty to the British, he was honoured with the title of K.C.I.E. (Knight Commander of the Indian Empire) and Indian Order of Merit (class III). In 1906, he toured Europe.

It must be added that in spite of his loyalty towards the British, he provided warm hospitality to Mahatma Gandhi, when he visited Bardhaman in 1925 and welcomed cordially Subhas Chandra Bose when he visited Bardhaman in 1928 to campaign in the municipal elections.

He was a member of the Bengal Legislative Council, from 1907 to 1918, and of the Imperial Legislative Council from 1909 to 1912. He was associated with the state administration in subsequent years. In 1928, he was a member of the Francis Flood Commission to suggest changes in the Permanent Settlement of 1793. The commission recommended the replacement of the zamindari system by a ryotwari (tenancy) system in which the ownership of land would vest with the ryot (tenant) and the land revenue payable by him, could be revised periodically. The recommendations could not be implemented because of differences in the Farid Hussain ministry. However, it was evident that the days of zamindars were coming to an end. It was this realization that led Vijaychand Mahtab to extend indirect support to the Congress.

Vijaychand Mahtab was deeply involved with Bengali literature. He was president of the reception committee in the 4<sup>th</sup> session of the Bangiya Sahitya Sammelan held at Bardhaman in 1914. From amongst the twenty books he wrote, mention may be made of *Impression*, *The Indian Horrors*, *Mediation*, *Sudha*, *Vijayika* (collection of songs composed by him), *Troydahi* (poem), *Ranji* (play), and *Morathi* (science-play).

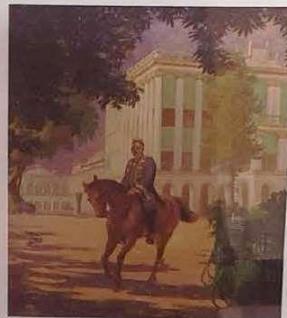
He left behind two sons and two daughters, thereby ending the long succession of adoption.



Sir Andrew Fraser



Sir Bijay Chand Mahtab Bahadur, Maharaja of Burdwan - 1906



Hugo Vilfred Pedersen (Danish) 1870 - 1959 In India c 1900 - 1909

Portrait of Maharaja Bijoy Chand Mahtab of Burdwan riding in Burdwan



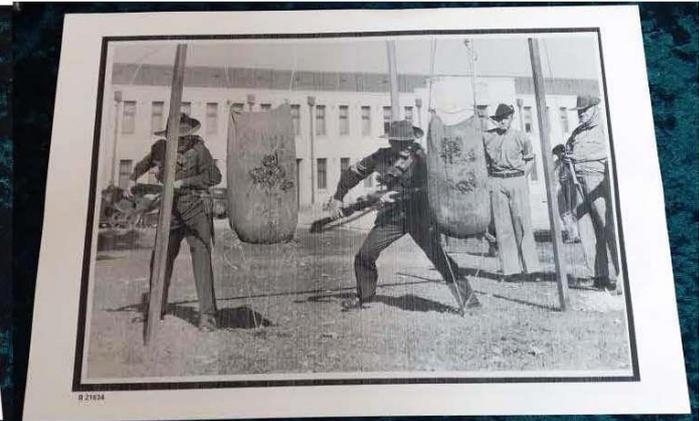
Maharaja Bahadur 1931

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Pattern 1908 cavalry sword, 1915

Cavalry reconnaissance sketching board, 1913

Cavalry and an aircraft returning from a patrol, 1914

**Mobile war**

The cavalry were able to fight in a mounted and dismounted role to great effect in a series of highly mobile holding actions at Le Cateau (26 August), Etreux (27 August), Cerizy (28 August), Néry (1 September), Crépy (1 September) and Villers-Cotterêts (1 September). They then fought in the Allied counterattacks on the









**UK-Medals-Scottish-Royal Scots-Pte J Faulkner**

Private J Faulkner, Boer War Royal Scots Fusiliers No 5299, and WWI Royal Army Medical Corp 2704. - Group Includes Queens South Africa 4 clasps TRANSVAAL, RELIEF OF LADYSMITH, TUGELA HEIGHTS & CAPE COLONY, Kings South Africa Medal with 2 clasps South Africa 1901 and 1902. WW1 British War & Victory Medal.

*Collection Cathey & Rex Brimmae*



**John Grant Duncan-Hughes**

The sword inscription "Honi Soi Qui Mali Y Pense" translates to "Shame on anyone who thinks evil of it." And is the motto of the British Chivalric Order of the Garter.



John Grant Duncan-Hughes, lawyer and pastoralist, was born into the politically minded Duncan family on 1 September 1882 at 'Hughes Park', near Waterfalls, South Australia. He was the eldest of the four timber-wealthy sons of John James (later Sir John) Duncan, pastoralist and politician, and Jean Gordon, nee Grant. His mother Walter would become a member of the South Australian Legislative Council from 1918 to 1962, and President of the Council from 1944 to 1962. John Grant's surname was changed to Duncan-Hughes when he was a child, in memory of his childless great-uncle, Sir Walter Watson Hughes, a pastoralist whose barrow from copper mines on Yorke Peninsula helped found the University of Adelaide, and whose property, including Hughes Park, was left largely to John Duncan on condition that his son take the Hughes name.

Known as Jack, John Grant was educated at St Peter's College, Adelaide, and, during a family sojourn in England, at Cheltenham College. He went on to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he graduated Bachelor of Arts (1905) and Bachelor of Laws (1906), becoming Master of Arts in 1910. He was admitted to the Bar at the Inner Temple, London, in January 1907, and to the South Australian Bar in December 1908, practising as a solicitor in Adelaide from 1909. On 20 September 1910 Duncan-Hughes married Gertrude Rosalie Dean, daughter of Brigadier General G. H. Dean, CBE, VD, at St Matthew's (Anglican) Church, Kensington. The Duncan-Hughes family were part of South Australia's social elite. John was a member of the exclusive Adelaide Club from 1907 to 1962, serving as president from 1935 to 1937. He was also a member of the Australian Club in Sydney from 1927 to 1962.

Travelling to England after the outbreak of World War I, Duncan-Hughes was commissioned in the Royal Field Artillery (Special Reserve) in September 1915. He served with distinction in France and Belgium, rising to the rank of acting major. He was awarded the Military Cross in 1918 and the Belgian Croix de Guerre. In 1920 he was appointed aide-de-camp, then private secretary to the Governor-General, Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson. Attached to the staff of the Prince of Wales during the 1920 Royal visit to Australia, Duncan-Hughes was made a Member of the Royal Victorian Order.

He entered politics following the split between the Liberals and Nationalists in South Australia. Standing as a Liberal candidate for the seat of Boothby in the House of Representatives at the 1922 federal election, he defeated the incumbent Nationalist, W. H. Story, and Labour's Henry Kneebone. Upon entering Parliament Duncan-Hughes aligned himself with the Nationalists and was absorbed into that party when the rift in South Australia was healed. Returned in 1925 he served as a temporary chairman of committees from October 1927.

In the 1931 election, he stood successfully as a senator for South Australia, accepting his party's nomination with some reluctance for, as he wrote to Latham, he hardly felt "old enough for the Senate, though doubtless sufficiently pompous".

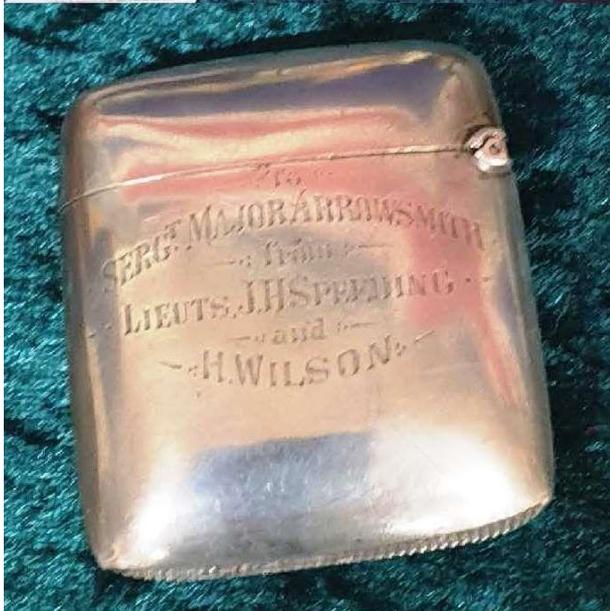
During the first half of 1937 Duncan-Hughes travelled to Britain and Europe and was in Britain at the time of the coronation of King George VI and of the 1937 Imperial Conference. He supported Britain's rearmament policy "for purely peaceful purposes". He urged Australia to follow the same path, and to A member of the Regulations and Ordinances Committee since its inception in 1932, Duncan-Hughes was an influential chairman of the committee from 1935 to 1937.

Duncan-Hughes did not stand for reelection in 1937, leaving the Senate at the expiration of his term on 30 June 1938. He believed that proportional representation on proposals to form Senate electoral divisions within each state, if carried out, would see the end of the Senate as a States House. In September 1940 he was returned to the House of Representatives as the Member for Wakefield but was defeated in August 1943.

Duncan-Hughes was proud of his Scottish heritage and, as a keen amateur historian, amassed a collection of small books and periodicals on the colonial history of South Australia.

Duncan-Hughes died on 13 August 1962 at his home of 65 years in Rose Terrace, Medford, aged seventy-nine, and was buried at Penwortham Cemetery, survived by his wife. There were no children of the marriage. It was said by one observer that "in the Australian sense Duncan-Hughes was born to the purple and he certainly wore it as much with modesty as with dignity and grace". He had been active in cultural and charitable organisations, including the Adelaide Children's Hospital, the South Australian Institution for the Blind and Deaf and Dumb, the Orphan Society, the Prisoners' Aid Association, the "Strathgry" in the Presbyterian Church. In 1927 he gave his late parents' residence, the University of Adelaide.

In 1963 his widow donated Duncan-Hughes' library, some five thousand books of English and European literature, history, politics and international affairs to the National Library of Australia.





**AGE-M002 Greek Military War Medal 1912 - 1913**

Date	1912 - 1913
War	Greek-Bulgarian war
Picture	
Branch	Army?
Regions	
Clasps	1. Xilkis Laxana (Northern Greece) 2. Mbeles, (Greek/ Bulgarian border) 3. Kresna - Tsoumapa, (Bulgaria)
Description	Front has Kings head with Konstantinos, King of the Helenes around the periphery. Rear has old kings head with Basileos above and 976 -1025 below. This is in reference to Basil II the Bulgar Slayer. Eldest son of Romanos II, Basil was born in 958. The first decade of his reign was marked by rivalry with the powerful <u>Basil Lekapenos</u> , an unsuccessful war against Bulgaria, and rebellions by generals in Asia Minor. Basil solidified his position through a marriage alliance with <u>Vladimir I of Kiev</u> , and after suppressing the revolts, he embarked on his <u>conquest of Bulgaria</u> . Bulgaria was finally subdued in 1018 after over 20 years of war, interrupted only by sporadic warfare in Syria against the <u>Fatimids</u> . Basil also expanded Byzantine control over most of Armenia. His reign is widely considered as the apogee of medieval Byzantium. Ribbon is blue and white with Green central stripe.



**AGE M001 Greek Military War Medal 1912 - 1913**

Date	1912 - 1913
War	Balkan / Greek-Turkish war
Picture	
Branch	Naval
Regions	Macedonia, Epirus, Aegean
Clasps	1. Iriskos, (Greece) 2. Ioannina, (North Western Greece) 3. Aetorrachi, (Southern Greece) 4. Ostrobon (Southern Turkey)
Description	Front has Cross with crossed swords behind and "for King and Country" engraved around. Rear has the three regions with a wreath around the edge. The top of the medal has the royal crown and the ribbon is blue and white background with a red central stripe.







Fighting sword carried by Captain Philip Broke in the boarding and capture of USS Chesapeake.



Lord Nelson on board Vanguard accepting the sword of Rear-Admiral Blanquer du Chayla.

#### ROYAL NAVY OFFICER'S CROSS BELT PLATE

About 1760 it became common to wear a broad belt over the right shoulder, sometimes outside the waistcoat and under the coat, sometimes over the coat, having a brass shoulder cross belt plate of varying design attached. This changed when the regulation sword of 1805 came in.

- Photos--
- 1 Plate obverse
  - 2 Plate reverse
  - 3 Broke sword with description
  - 4 Nelson

- References
- Naval Swords and Firearms Cmdr. WE May & AN Kennard H.M.S.O.
  - Naval Swords and Dirks Sim Comfort Vol. 1
  - Lord Nelson's Swords Sim Comfort

# Interstate & Overseas Members Displays

Norman Tyrrell NSW









# Matthew Schneiderman USA

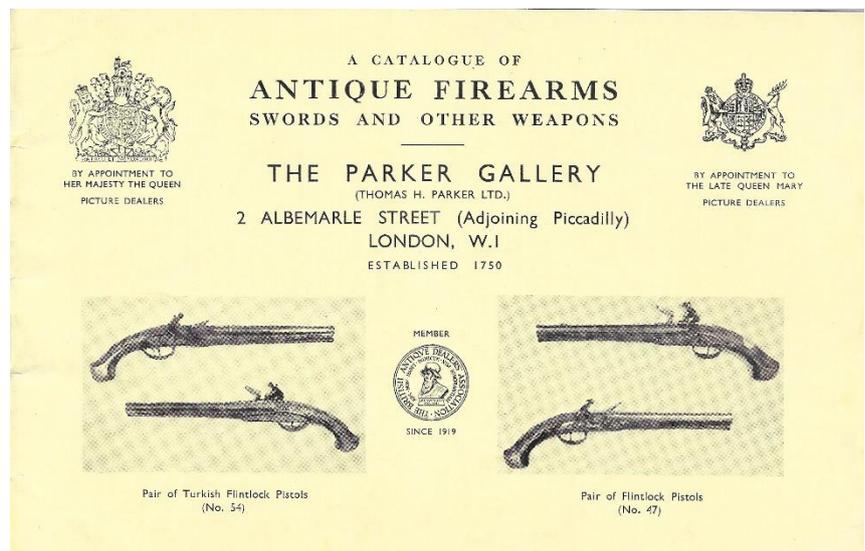
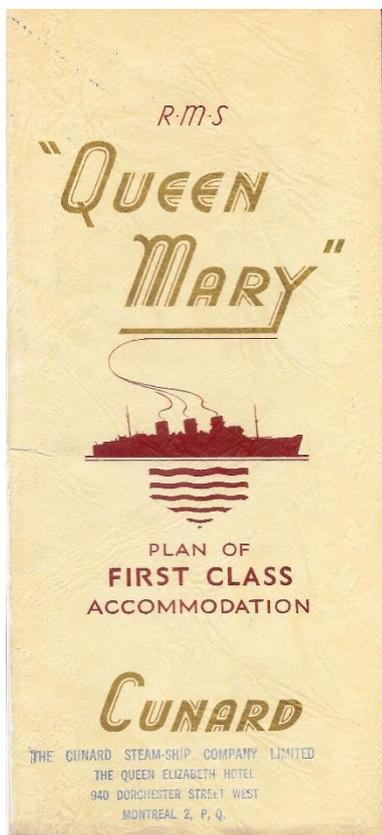
MY FIRST ANTIQUE FIREARM.

ENGLISH FLINTLOCK CAVALRY PISTOL, Tower of London Arsenal, New Land Pattern, "Paget" Model, about 1830. Note the regimental markings on the trigger guard, for the 11th Light Dragoons.



My parents bought this pistol for me on their trip to Europe in 1959; I was 11 years old. The Parker Gallery, established 1750, had an attractive group of weapons for sale. This one cost 25 pounds, at a time when the pound was worth US\$ 2.80.

I'm also the proud owner of several Queen Mary collectibles, including the delivery letter addressed to my dad. (My parents had an excellent time.)



In 1971 this pistol and its colleagues were stolen from my parents' apartment in Montreal. Quite amazingly, the collection was recovered. You can see a xerox of the police announcement, which led to the local detective contacting us. The pistol had been polished during its absence and was found with half of a U.S. \$100 bill in the barrel.



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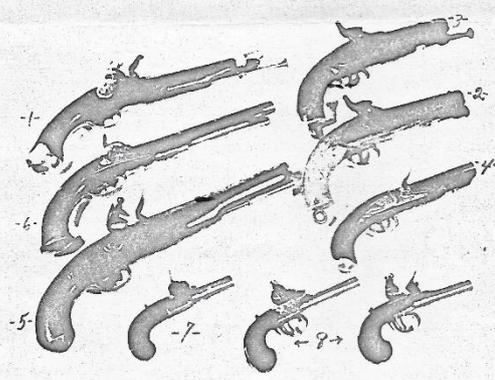
VOLUME XI

À L'USAGE DES SERVICES DE POLICE SEULEMENT - PUBLICATION NON AUTORISÉE

### ARMES À FEU

Lors d'une perquisition au Barre de Tins à Ville Laval, le 24 Septembre 1971, des armes de collection furent saisies par la Sûreté de Laval. Il y avait aussi une boîte d'un billet de \$100.00 américain, série C 6056788 A, à l'intérieur d'un des pistolets. Le propriétaire n'a pas été encore identifié. Ref: T-1-12-7003

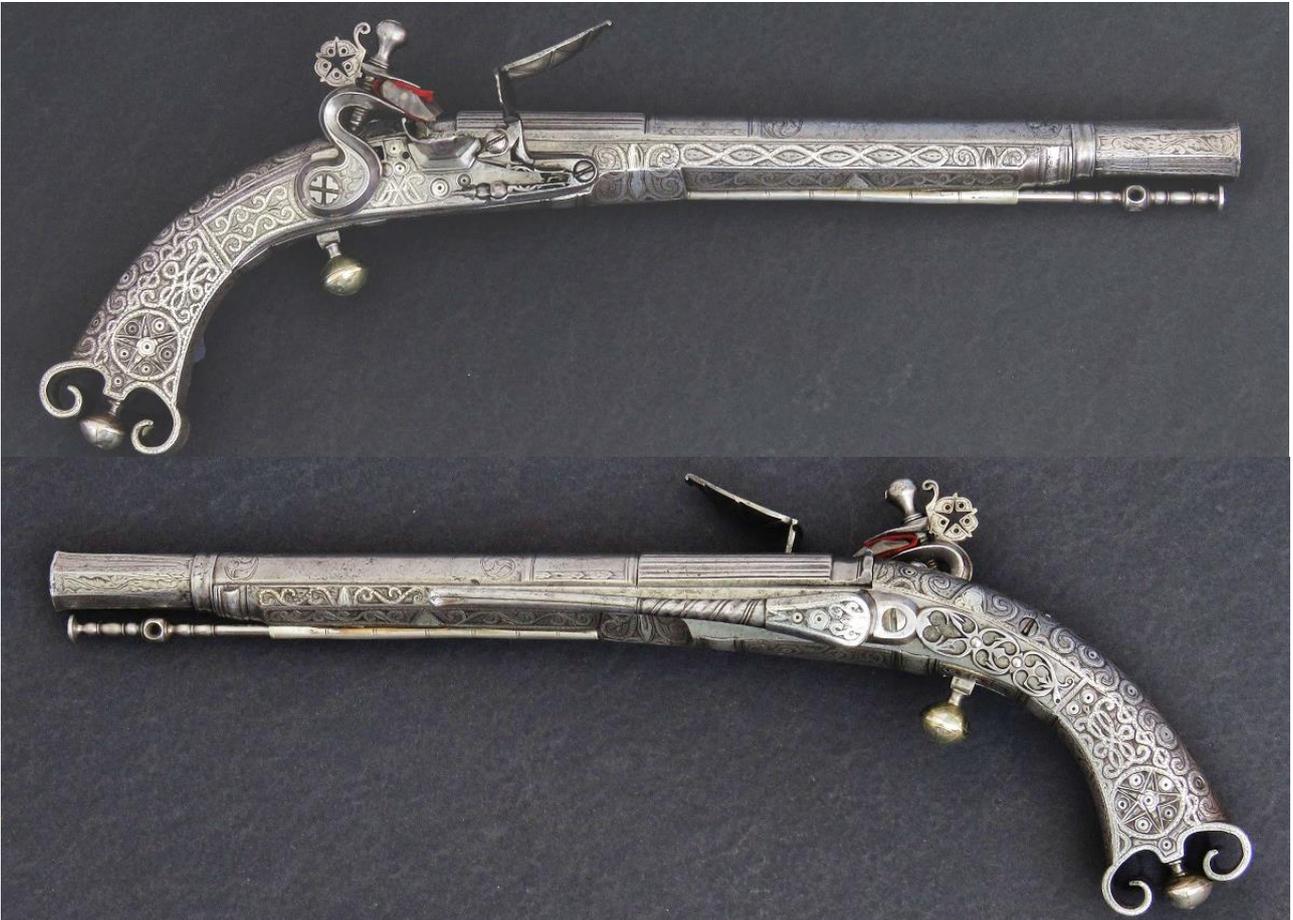
- 1- Pistolet Flintlock, anglais service militaire des années 1750, calibre 68, marque Tower & G.R.
- 2- Pistolet à percussion, anglais, service militaire des années 1940, calibre 56, marque Tower no. 17.
- 3- Pistolet à percussion, anglais, service militaire des années 1649, calibre 56, marque Tower no. 19.
- 4- Pistolet Flintlock, belge, calibre 56, des années 1780.
- 5- Pistolet Flintlock, anglais, service militaire des années 1750/1760, calibre 68, marque Huxton H.B. no. 8.
- 6- Pistolet à percussion, calibre 41, canon damassé, marque Huxton, probablement une copie de Flintlock.
- 7- Pistolet à percussion, anglais, calibre 48, marque Banks Military des années 1840, No. 3.
- 8- Deux (2) pistolets Flintlock, calibre 41, des années 1760/1800, probablement belge à canon de 8 rayures.



Tout renseignement devra être communiqué au S/D M. Chagnon de la Sûreté de Laval au téléphone 689-1761 local 21.  
Cette circulaire n'est pas nécessairement complète, si vous êtes en présence d'un individu, d'un véhicule ou d'un objet suspect, communiquez avec le fichier d'urgence par RADIO ou par FAX (21) avec le Fichier Général.

## New Member Craig Bell USA

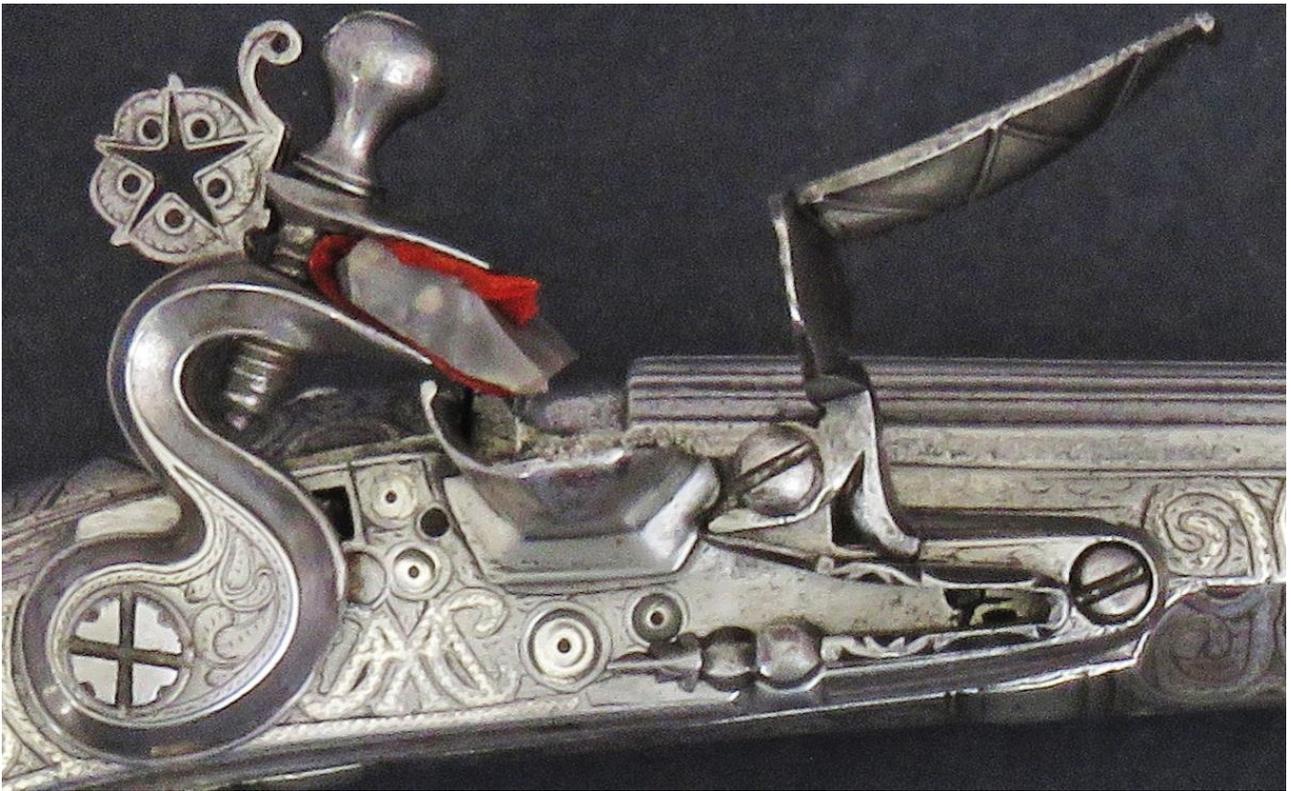
**A FINE SCOTTISH SCROLL BUTT PISTOL BY THE UNKNOWN MAKER "AC" CIRCA 1715-1725 - HAS Members Craig Bell and Tony Willis**



A fine Scottish Scroll Butt pistol dating to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, of the most elegant proportions, superbly crafted and sumptuously engraved and inlaid with silver.

The maker's mark inlaid in silver on the lock plate is a monogram of the initials "AC" in forward and reverse type. Although this maker has never been identified, the design of the pistol, with its smooth contours and high-quality silver inlay, is very similar to the work of the master gunsmiths working in Doune at this time, a town famous for the quality of its pistols, which were supplied to the Highland gentry as well as further afield.





The pistol is in excellent condition and the lock mechanism is in crisp working order. The lock is of typical "Highland form" with a horizontal sear extending through the lock plate which holds the cock in the half cock position, and a vertical sear is present extending from the top of the trigger plate through a small oblong aperture in the middle of the top part of the butt.

The cock, and the area behind the cock on the lock plate, is engraved with scrolling foliage. The spines of the butts are finely engraved and inlaid with delicate silver Celtic ropework patterns. The fore ends are engraved with panels and scrolls on four planes. The trigger and pricker are mounted in silver. Underneath the stock, the space is profusely engraved, and silver inlaid with rows of panels of scrolls, chevrons, and foliage. These are crossed with three silver bands decorated with scrolls. The butt is engraved on each side with scrolls and a silver escutcheon with a star inside.



The belt hook is finely shaped and engraved with further designs. It is mounted to the stock with an engraved and pierced side plate consisting of a triple roundel.



The four-stage barrel has a fluted section near the butt and a flared muzzle with octagonal sides boldly engraved. The middle sections of the barrel are rounded and boldly engraved with foliage. The overall length of the pistol extremity to extremity is just under 14.5 inches and the barrel length is just under 9.75 inches.



If anyone can identify the maker, I am sure Craig will be most grateful!

# Weapons and Equipment of the Great War – the Canadian Ross rifle – HAS Member Tom Lewis



*Canadian infantryman with a Ross (Public domain)*

Following an argument over rifles in the Boer War, Canada as a Dominion of the British Empire, decided to produce its own service weapon. This resulted in the disastrous Ross Rifle, produced from 1903 to 1918. At one stage in its sorry career, one officer serving in the Great War commented it sometimes took five people just to keep one rifle firing.

Sir Charles Ross, an advisor on small arms to the Canadian Government; and a rich landowner in Britain, designed the Ross rifle and offered it to the Canadian government. It was accepted and went into service from Ross's own factory.

Several problems were encountered, and variations on the design implemented to correct them. By the start of the Great War, a Mark III (1910) version was in service with the Canadian forces. However, the problems had persisted.

Although it was a 303 calibre, bolt-action, magazine-fed design similar to the superb Lee-Enfield 303 then equipping Britain, Australia, New Zealand and other parts of the Empire, the Ross Rifle was not nearly so capable.

It was heavier, longer, and prone to jamming because of dirt, of which there were plentiful supplies on the trench warfare-dominated battlefields of the war. It loaded five rounds rather than ten. The bayonet fell off during firing. The rifle would sometimes fire if the bolt had been reassembled wrongly after cleaning, leading to disaster and sometimes death for the operator. The weapon was not nearly so tolerant of quality variations in the ammunition available at the time.

In its defence the Ross could be fired slightly faster; had better sights and was a little more accurate at long range. But these minor advantages were not enough in the often-chaotic world of close quarter infantry fighting, where reliability was all. The Ross Rifle was really a hunting weapon.

The defects resulted in political infighting back in Canada between its supporters and detractors. By 1916 the supreme commander at the Western Front, Sir Douglas Haig, had ordered the replacement of the Ross, in all three Canadian divisions, by the Lee-Enfield.



Ross rifle in the Royal Canadian Regiment Museum in London, Ontario. (Public domain)



Mechanism comparison between Ross Mk III (1910) and Mk II\*\* Lee-Enfield (1907) - below. (Public domain)



Canadian Model 1905/1910 "Mark II" Ross Rifle Bayonet on Ross Rifle, close-up (Public domain)

# Swordplay & Swashbucklers - HAS Member Benerson Little

## Musings on authentic & literary adventure with ships & swords

### Buccaneer Cutlasses: What We Know



*Flibustier with captured Spaniards in chains. From the French chart Carte particulière de la rivière de la Plata by Paul Cornuau, probably 1684 based on a nearly identical chart he drew of the River Plate dated 1684. (French National Library.)*

### EXQUEMELIN'S HEROES & THEIR CUTLASSES

Although the fusil boucanier—the long-barreled “buccaneer gun” of which more blog posts are forthcoming—was the primary weapon of the buccaneer and flibustier, the cutlass was an invariable part of their armament, which also included one or two pistols and a cartouche box (sometimes two) that often held as many as thirty cartridges each. Grenades, firepots, and boarding axes were additional specialty weapons.

Yet despite all the romance of buccaneers and their swords—cutlasses usually in reality, but often rapiers in cinema—we don't know as much about the swords themselves as we would like. Much of what we think we know is based on conjecture, and this conjecture is based on what little we know about cutlasses and hangers of the late 17th century. Unfortunately, the archaeological evidence is for all practical purposes non-existent in regard to demonstrable buccaneer swords 1655 to 1688.

Cinema, the source of much of the popular image of the pirate cutlass, almost always gets these swords wrong. Typically, they are anachronistic, often imitations of nineteenth century “soup bowl” hilts (and occasionally authentic 19th century cutlasses) drawn from prop stocks. Money is always a concern in filmmaking, and it is much cheaper to use existing swords than to make historically accurate ones in large quantities, or, too often, even in small quantities. Good historical consulting and the willingness to follow it is, of course, mandatory, but some filmmakers take the view of “Who cares? Hardly anyone will notice, what matters is that the swords look cool or ‘Rock and Roll’ or otherwise meet audience expectations, and anyway, we don't have the budget for accurate ones, the actors and computer graphics have consumed it all.” On occasion, though, we do see fairly accurate swords in cinema—just not very often.

Our typical idea of a “true” pirate cutlass is taken from the illustrations, such as that above, in Alexandre Exquemelin's *The Buccaneers of America*. First published in Amsterdam in 1678 in Dutch, the illustrations have been copied to other editions, typically with little or no alteration. Herman Padtbrugge, draftsman and engraver may have been the illustrator according to the British Museum. It is unknown how much influence Exquemelin had on him, or on whomever was the illustrator. In other words, it is unknown how accurate the

physical representations of the buccaneers are, nor how accurate their arms and accoutrements. The cutlasses depicted in Exquemelin may simply reflect the illustrator's Dutch nationality and familiarity with Dutch arms.

*Rock The Brazilian Aka Roc Or (In Jamaica) Rocky Aka Gerrit Gerritsen, From Alexandre Exquemelin's De Americaensche Zee-Rovers. Amsterdam: Jan Ten Hoorn, 1678. (Library Of Congress.)*



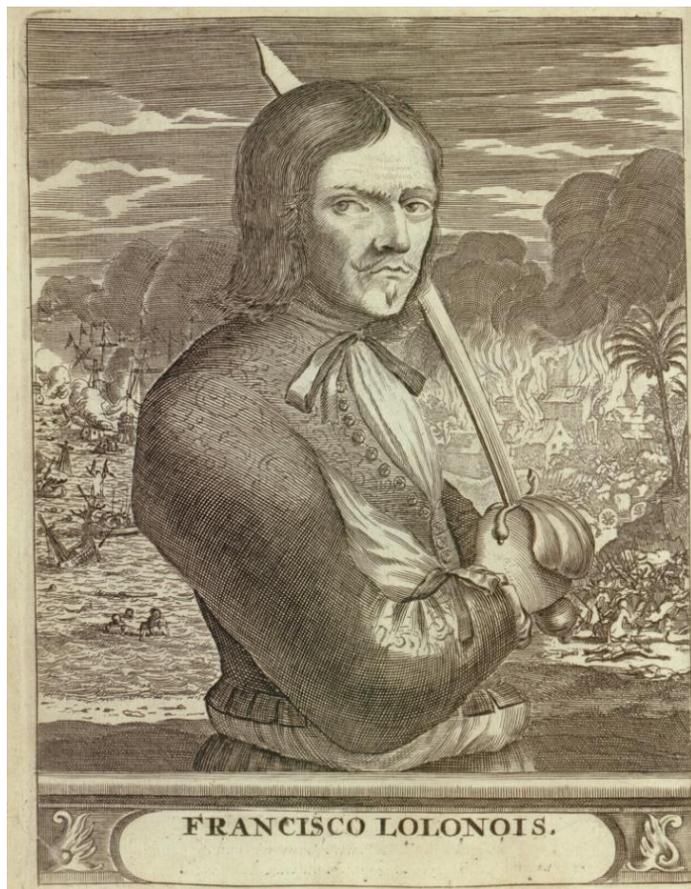
The cutlasses, however, are accurate representations of classical late seventeenth century Dutch or German weapons with large iron shell-hilts, manufactured well into the mid-18th century with basically no design changes, although such shell hilts were also manufactured by other European nations, if generally smaller. The English, for example, produced some cutlasses or hangers with moderately large similar shells during the 1660s. The Dutch and German shells are usually quite large and often scalloped, the pommels often heavy for balance, the blades mildly to strongly curved, often with clip points. Typically, these shell-hilts may have had a single shell on the outside, with or without a thumb ring on the inside, although usually with one; or a large outside shell and smaller inside shell, both most commonly facing toward the pommel. A thumb ring may be present or absent in the case of two shells. These heavy-hilted cutlasses may have two short quillons with no knuckle bow, or a conventional short or medium upper quillon along with a lower quillon converted to a knuckle bow as in the image below. Pommel style and grip style and material—wood, bone, antler, brass, shagreen ("fish skin," ray skin), wire over wood, or even iron—vary widely. Blade balance varies just as widely, with some heavy-bladed cutlasses balanced more like cleavers than fencing swords. This is not a criticism: cleaving strokes with a cutlass are quite effective at close range.

The cutlass wielded by Rock the Brazilian above appears, on close examination, to have a single outside scalloped shell, two quillons (although it's possible the lower quillon might actually be a knuckle bow, but I doubt it is), a heavy pommel, and a thumb ring.



*Late 17th century iron shell-hilt cutlass in the collection of the royal museums Greenwich, maker, and national origin unknown. The slightly curved blade does not have a clip point, but it has either a sharpened or false back edge for a short distance. The cutlass is listed as a "hanger." See discussion below on the term hanger versus cutlass.*

*“Francisco Lolonnois”—Jean David Nau Aka L’ollonois Or L’ollonais—Depicted in The First Spanish Edition of Exquemelin Work: Piratas De La America, Translated by Alonso De Buena-Maison. Cologne: Lorenzo Struickman, 1681. (Library Of Congress.)*



L’Ollonois above holds a typical Dutch or German scalloped shell-hilt cutlass of the late 17th century. Its shell is medium to large, the quillons small and curved, the pommel round and heavy, the blade moderately curved and with a clip point useful for thrusting. It appears it may have a thumb ring or an inner shell, probably the former.



*Late 17th century scalloped shell hilt cutlass with no thumb ring or shell on the inside. The blade form would make for powerful cleaving cuts but would have to be gripped tightly, given the one-sided balance of the hilt and the lack of thumb ring which might compensate for it. From George Neuman’s swords & blades of the American revolution. Harrisburg, pa: Stackpole books, 1973, page 181.*



*Dutch shell hilt cutlass with un-scalloped shell, 3rd to 4th quarter 18th century, virtually identical to some 17th century examples. There is a thumb ring but no shell on the inside. Neuman, page 181.*



*German shell-hilt cutlass listed on icollector.com and dated circa 1680. The blade is thirty inches long and the weapon’s weight almost three pounds, heavy by any standard. The heavy curved blade would make powerful cleaving cuts. The thumb ring would help stabilize this heavy weapon and help prevent the blade from shifting during a cut. The heavy pommel, while adding to the weight of the weapon, would improve its balance overall.*



*Circa 1675 Dutch shell-hilt cutlass with thumb-ring. The image is an excellent view of the construction of shell, quillons, knuckle guard, and thumb-ring. Note the heavy pommel for balance. Collection Cathey and Rex Brimage*

### **EYEWITNESS IMAGES OF BUCCANEER & FLIBUSTIER (A French buccaneer) CUTLASSES**

What we do not know is how common these swords were among buccaneers and flibustiers. Doubtless there are some among them, given how common these cutlasses were. However, the most direct evidence we have of the sort of cutlasses used by these adventurers comes from several drawings of flibustiers in the 1680s by Paul Cornuau, a cartographer sent to survey French Caribbean ports, in particular those of Saint-Domingue (French Hispaniola, modern Haiti). Typically, he included local figures flanking his cartouches, and most of these figures are flibustiers and boucaniers. Notably, these are eyewitness illustrations! (See also the [Authentic Image of the Real Buccaneers of Captain Blood: His Odyssey by Rafael Sabatini \(Updated\)](#) and [The Authentic Image of the Boucanier](#) pages for other eyewitness images.)



(See also the [Authentic Image of the Real Buccaneers of Captain Blood: His Odyssey by Rafael Sabatini \(Updated\)](#) and [The Authentic Image of the Boucanier](#) pages for other eyewitness images.)

In the image at the very top of the next page, the flibustier holds a cutlass with a small hilt of indeterminate shape, without a knuckle bow, and with a strongly curved clip point blade. There is no baldric: he wears a sword belt of the sort common at the time, with a pair of hangers with loops (one of them is not shown) hanging from the belt itself. None of these period images of flibustiers show baldrics, although they were a common way of carrying a smallsword into the 1680s for civilian use, and prior to this by infantry and other military branches. However, most infantry began abandoning them in this decade, if not earlier, and they remained in use afterward primarily by mounted troops and Scottish Highlanders.



*A Pair of Flibustiers or Buccaneers at Petit Goave, 1688, From A Chart by P. Cornuau. (Archives Nationale D'outre-Mer.)*

In the image above, we can tell little of the cutlass belonging to the flibustier on the left except that it has a clip point and that it may be of brass, based on its probably monster, beast, dog, or bird pommel, although some iron pommels have a similar profile, and some iron hilts have similar brass pommels. It appears to lack a knuckle bow. Its scabbard is worn from the belt. The flibustier on the right holds a cutlass with a moderately curved blade and clip point. Its hilt has two shells, both small and scalloped. Its pommel may also be of some sort of beast or bird, although we cannot be certain, and there is no knuckle bow. Again, the scabbard is worn from the belt. A similar illustration of a flibustier (on the [Authentic Image](#) post, of a flibustier at Île-à-Vache, 1686, from a chart by P. Cornuau) shows only a scabbard with an obvious clip point. It, too, is worn from the belt.

In the image above we have more detail of the hilt. It is clearly of the monster, beast, dog, or bird pommel type, almost always brass. There is a bit of shell showing, but what sort we can't tell other than that it is scalloped, although if brass we know it is comparatively small. Again, there is no knuckle bow. Notably, the scabbard, which also has a chape (metal protection for the tip of the scabbard), does not necessarily reveal the blade form: it may be with or without a clip point.

So, what would these cutlasses depicted by Cornuau actually have looked like? And what is their origin? For the latter answer, the cutlasses could be of Dutch, English, or possibly French origin. There are numerous English cutlasses and hangers of this form still extant, and of the Dutch as well; the Dutch are often credited as the likely creators of this form. There is less information, though, and few examples, of French cutlasses from this period, although the French may have produced similar arms. There are numerous examples from English and Dutch naval portraits. Most of these swords appear be gilded brass hilts. Although some flibustiers and buccaneers may have carried cutlasses with gilded hilts, most were probably simple brass or iron.



*Flibustier dressed and armed for a campaign ashore, from a chart of le cap francois on saint-domingue, 1686, by p. Cornuau.*

**PERIOD EXAMPLES**



*Brass-hilt cutlasses or hangers, probably gilded, worn by English admirals, from the royal museums, Greenwich, dating to the 1660s. From left to right, Penn, Lawson, Berkeley, Harman, Monck, & sandwich. Notably, admiral Penn commanded the English fleet at the capture of Jamaica in 1655.*

Starting with brass-hilt cutlasses similar to most of those in the Cornuau illustrations. We see a variety of shells and pommels above, although most grips appear to brass, or possibly wire, twisted in a sharply ascending manner. Pommels include a bird of prey, lions, and one or two indeterminate forms similar to that shown in the illustration above of the filibustier armed and equipped to march against a town or city.



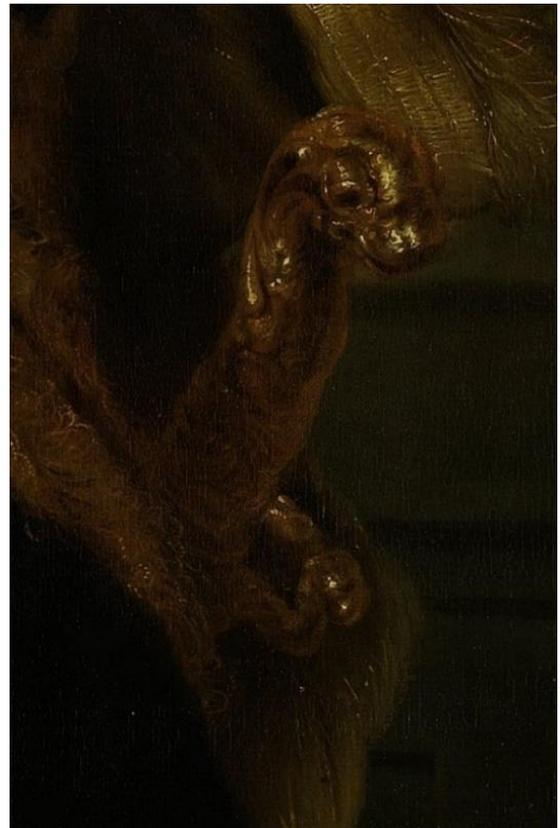
*Detail from a print of admiral sir fretsivell hollis, circa 1680 to 1685. The hilt is probably of cast brass. The knuckle guard is part solid and part chain, somewhat unusual: typically, it is solid, occasionally entirely of chain in the manner of many hunting hangers. The blade is sharply curved, an effective shape for cutting but not for thrusting. British museum.*

*De Ruyter's cutlass hilt, from a painting in the Rijksmuseum. The pommel is perhaps a dolphin?*



*If we consider that this form of cutlass is likely Dutch in origin, it behoves us to look closely at one. The image above is of the hilt of the cutlass of famous Dutch admiral Michel de Ruyter. Note that it too lacks a knuckle bow.*

Below are several hilts with a variety of knuckle bows. The 4th from the left looks somewhat like a transitional rapier or smallsword hilt, but it appears it may lack the usual arms of the hilt, plus the sword hangs low from the belt and at a steep angle, making it possible that it is a hanger or cutlass. The last image has a knuckle bow of chain, as if a hunting hanger, which it might well be. Again, we see dog or monster pommels, and also lion pommels.





Brass-hilt cutlasses or hangers with naval provenance, from the royal museums, Greenwich, dating from the 1660s to the very early 18th century. From left to right, admirals Byng, Fairborn, Balchin, Montague, & Allin. That of Montague may be a smallsword instead. However, given how low it hangs and the angle at which it hangs, it is probably a cutlass or hanger.



English brass-hilt cutlass or hanger hilts circa 1700 to 1710, from portraits in the royal museums, Greenwich. From left to right, admirals Munden, Fairborne, Shovell, Jennings, and Churchill.



Researchers will have their work cut out for them in deciphering the design on this sword hilt.

Jean Blanchet, Centre de conservation du Québec



Hilt artifacts from the 1690 wreck of the *Elizabeth and Mary*, a small New England vessel wrecked after the Phips attack on Quebec. (Montreal museum of archaeology and history: the 1690 siege of Quebec: the story of a sunken ship.)



The hilt shown above may be that of a hanger or cutlass, or other cutting or cut-and-thrust sword such as a broadsword or backsword. The shells, while identical to those of a period smallsword, are, with the form of the knuckle bow, very similar to those found on some late 17th century brass-hilted English naval cutlasses. However, it is impossible to know what sort of blade was mounted in the hilt. The *Elizabeth and Mary* was ferrying New England militia, who were armed with a variety of non-standard arms.

*The sword of Sir Christopher Myngs, who led many of the early raids on the Spanish main soon after the capture of Jamaica in 1655. (Royal museums Greenwich.) Note the similarity of the sword of Sir Christopher Myngs—possibly a transitional sword with a “rapier” style blade, or a light cut-and-thrust broadsword—to that of the shipwreck hilt.*

Thankfully, there remain a fair number of extant examples of hangers and cutlasses other than the few shipwreck artifacts, although maritime or naval provenance is often difficult to prove. A few examples are shown below. Note that two of them have iron shells and/or knuckle guards, with brass pommels. Some buccaneer cutlasses could have been of this form.



*Brass, and brass & iron, cutlass, and hanger hilts, dating to the late 17th and early 18th centuries, from a variety of online antique arms dealers, including Harvey J withers and Thomas Delmar.*



*Dutch cutlass with thumb ring and almost certainly a small shell on the outside. The blade is of the falchion type and has a large pommel for balance. The quillons, the lower serving also as a knuckle guard, appear to have dragon heads. Detail from “allegory on the Dutch raid on the Medway (1667), with a portrait of Cornelis de Witt” by Cornelis Bisschop, 1668. Rijksmuseum.*



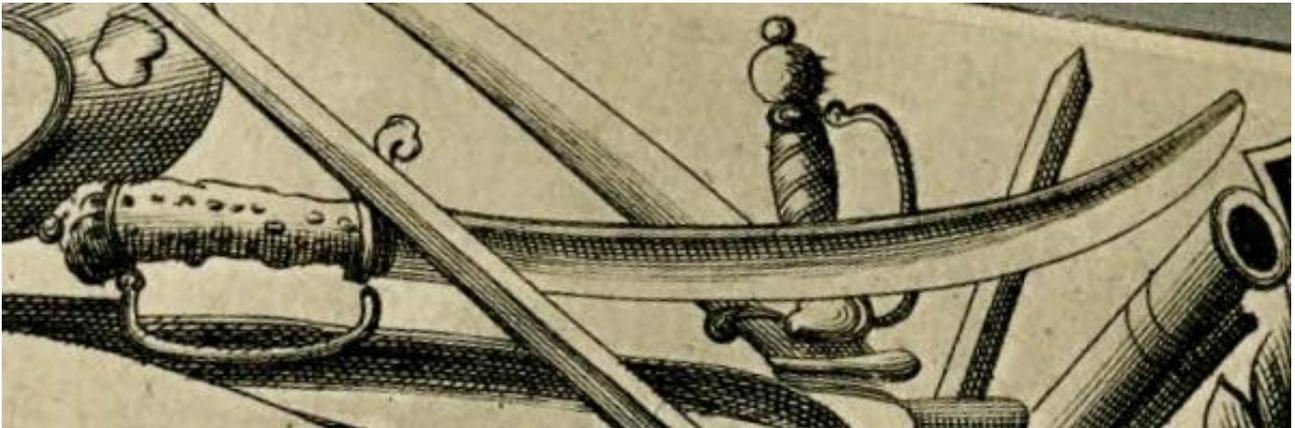
*A similar Dutch hunting sword to the one in painting above. Late 17th century by Jasper Bongen the younger. Cleveland museum of art.*



*Brass-hilted hangers with antler grips from the second half of the seventeenth century. One sword has a single shell on the outside. From the form of the blades, the upper would be more “tip heavy” and capable of short cleaving cuts, while the lower would be a better “fencing” weapon. Collection Cathey and Rex Brimage*



*Not all ornate cutlasses or sea-going hangers were brass-hilted. Here is a silver and antler-hilted hunting hanger, suitable for, and often used for, naval service. 1702. National maritime museum, Greenwich.*



*Hanger, silver- or brass-hilted, from the trade card of Nicholas Croucher, sword cutler, dated pre-1703, probably 1690s. British museum. Note that the image has been flipped (mirrored) in order to align it with the one above.*



*Ornate silver-hilted Dutch cutlass belonging to admiral Cornelis Tromp, mid-seventeenth century. Rijksmuseum.*



*Dutch cutlass or hanger with lion-headed ivory grip and gilt guard and knuckle bow. 17th century, Rijksmuseum.*



*Hanger or cutlass of Johannes Van Leenen, a high-ranking official in the Dutch east India company, last quarter of the 17th century. The sword was expensive, and probably few if any buccaneer carried such a weapon. Its hilt is made of Sawasa, an alloy of "fire-gilt copper, gold and arsenic." The hilt was made in Indonesia, the blade probably in Europe. The scabbard is covered in shagreen, that is, ray skin. Rijksmuseum.*



*Cutlass or hanger with flintlock pistol. The lock is on the right side of the forte of the blade, the barrel on the left. Although this combination arm was around during the golden age of piracy, it is highly unlikely to have been much available or much used. 1655 to 1660, Rijksmuseum.*

In addition to online sources, several good illustrations of brass-hilt cutlasses, which were typically more ornate than iron-hilted, can be found in William Gilkerson's *Boarders Away, With Steel* (Lincoln, RI: Andrew Mowbray, 1991). Images of cutlasses from Harvey JS Wither's collection for sale and sold can not only be found online, but in his book, *The Sword in Britain*, volume one. There are other available sources as well, including several additional references in this blog.

Below is a detail from an illustration of the famous Jean Bart—a Flemish corsair in French service—showing him with a cutlass. (Several other period images show him armed with a smallsword, but at least in the image below he is on the deck of a ship.) The cutlass has what appears to be a bird pommel, a small outside unscalloped shell (or possibly a disk shell), an upper quillon, and a clip point. The hilt is probably brass, and, given its owner, might be gilded.



*Detail From a Circa 1701-1702 Image of Famed Corsaire Jean Bart, By Nicolas Arnoult. (French National Library.)*

The illustration of Bart's cutlass may represent a common cutlass carried by French naval and privateer officers, or it may represent Bart's Flemish nationality. It appears to be a fairly accurate representation of a Dutch or English cutlass or hanger as discussed previously, although, if we

look at the pistol in the belt, we may draw some reservations about its accuracy. The pistol, carried as many were, tucked behind the sash or belt on the right side to protect the lock and make for an easy left-handed (non-sword hand) draw, has errors: both the belt-hook and lock are shown on the left side of the weapon, for example, and the lock is inaccurately drawn. The lock should be on the right side, and the cock and battery are unrealistic. It is possible, but highly unlikely, that the pistol represents a double-barrelled pistol with double locks.

#### **OTHER CUTLASS HILT FORMS & SOURCES**

Other forms were doubtless used, including the Dutch/German discussed above, as well as the very common smaller iron shell-hilt cutlasses as in the example below. Both William Gilkerson in *Boarders Away, With Steel* (Lincoln, RI: Andrew Mowbray, 1991) and Michel Petard in *Le Sabre d'Abordage* (Nantes: Editions du Canonnier, 2006) include a fair number of illustrations of common iron-hilted 17th and early 18th century cutlasses. These cutlasses range from a simple outside shell with no thumb ring, to inside and outside shells (the inside typically smaller) with or without thumb rings. On occasion the inside shell faces forward, especially if small. Invariably either an upper and lower quillon exist, or an upper quillon and knuckle bow. Grip material varies as with the Dutch cutlass first described, although wood and bone are the most common materials.



Simple cutlass with a small shell hilt from the first quarter of the 18th century, virtually identical to 17th century examples. There is no thumb ring or shell on the inside. From Neuman, page 182.

Another common enough form with a pair of bows, one for the knuckles, the other for the back of the hand, is shown below. This form is occasionally seen combined with small shells on brass hilts as well, as in an example above.



A fairly common form of cutlass, with a bow, rather than a shell, protecting the outside of the hand. There are no shells. Circa 1660 to 1690. A lighter-bladed cutlass like this would be more suited for conventional cut and thrust swordplay. From Neuman, page 181.



Dutch Sabreor cutting sword, 17th century. Rijksmuseum.



Dutch naval sabres or cutlasses: a half-basket or Sinclair type, and a pair with mere crossbars, falchion-like, although perhaps the knuckle guard was inadvertently omitted by the illustrator or a small shell on the outside is hidden from view. See also the European short cutting sword carried by a native American chief below. Detail of an image by Reinier Nooms from the title page of *Nieuwe Scheeps Batalien*, 1652-1654. Rijksmuseum.

Of the late seventeenth century cutlass identified as French, Michel Petard in his excellent *Le Sabre d'Abordage* describes only one form, shown below. It is iron-hilted and has a single simple outside shell, a small quillon, a knuckle bow carried to an un-ornamented pommel. Almost certainly there were brass-hilted versions of this sword; the French grenadier sword of roughly the same date is identical, except in brass. It's quite possible, even likely, that some flibustiers carried swords like these, both iron and brass hilt versions, but they do not appear to match those in Cornuau's illustrations.

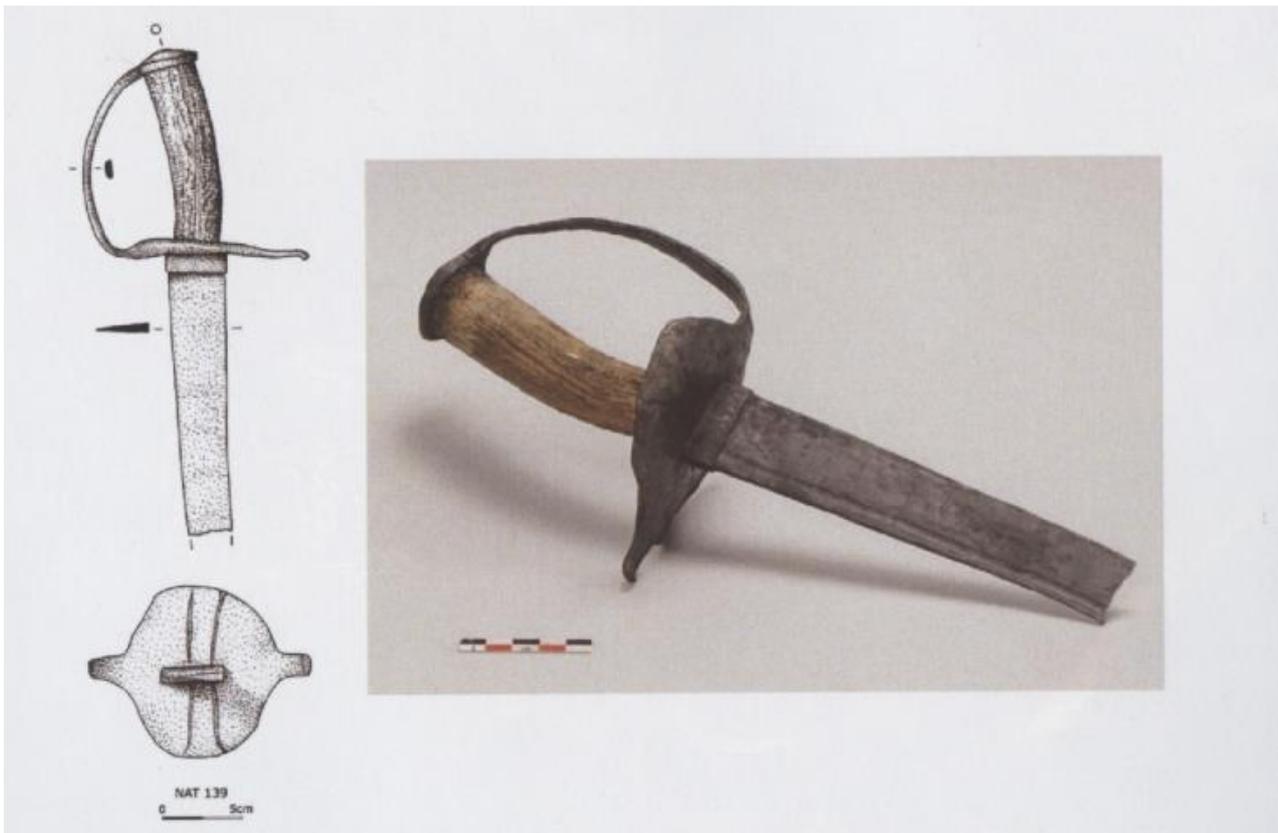
French paintings of admirals and other officers are typically of no help in identifying French cutlasses or hangers. Most of these portraits are highly stylized and show officers in full armour. When swords are shown at all they are typically smallswords (epees de rencontre).



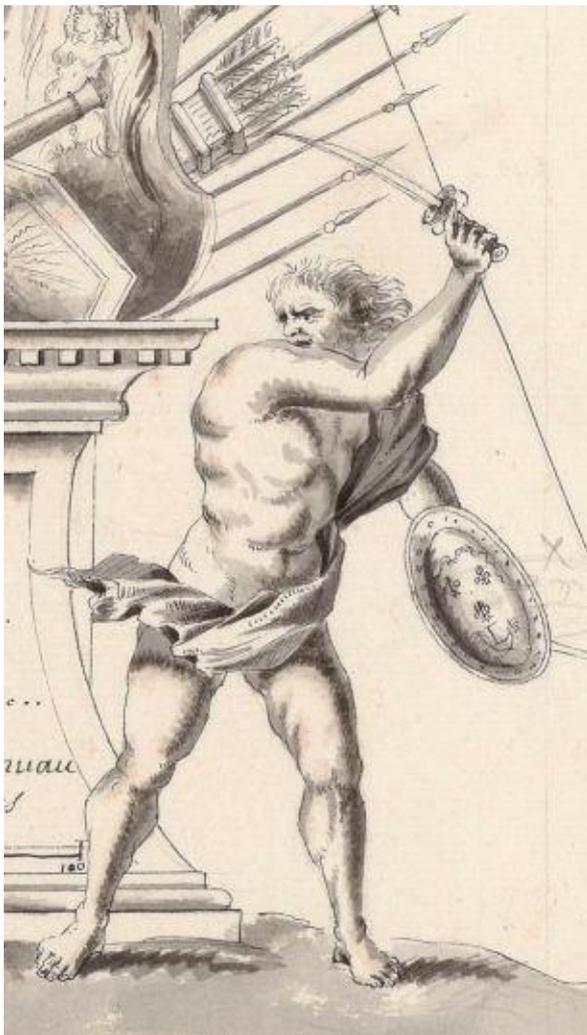
French cutlasses—Sabres De Bord—of estimated 1670 to 1680 origin, of the “Louvois” type. From *le sabre d’abordage* by Michel Petard. Nantes: editions du canonier, 2006, page 41. In general, when boarding cutlasses are mentioned in 17th century French maritime documents, the term is often “sabre,” which at the time generally referred to any single-handed European (eastern or western) cutting sword, although coutelas is also used, notably in the French editions of exquemelin as well as in some French naval store’s documents dating to the 1670s.

One of three French cutlasses discovered in the wreck of *la dauphine*, a French privateer lost at saint-malo in 1704. The cutlasses are iron hilted with antler grips. See [l’armement portatif des deux fréqates.](#)





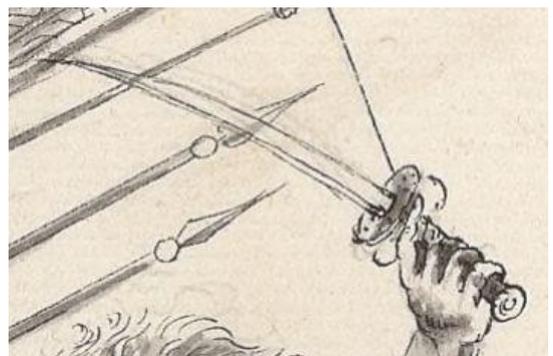
Better images of a dauphine cutlass. From *archéologie de la piraterie*, ed. Jean soulat, 2019.



Allegorical image by paul cornuau from his chart, *plan du cartier du portepaix, levé l'année, 1684*. (French national library.)

In Cornuau's allegorical image on the left, perhaps of France as Neptune or Mars, the swordsman wields a cutlass of indeterminate shell construction (possibly a simple flat disk, as in the case of some 17th and 18th century hangers and cutlasses, see image below, or a crudely drawn double shell hilt), a cap pommel, and mildly curved blade with a sharp, non-clip point and a single fuller along the back of the blade. Again, it is unknown whether this cutlass is intended to portray a filibustier weapon. Similar examples from the 17th and 18th centuries are known, including a Spanish cutlass. In general, these cutlasses consist of a simple roundish shell with a small upper quillon and a knuckle bow, or of a simple roundish shell with a small upper and lower quillon forged from the same piece of iron.

DETAIL FROM IMAGE ABOVE.



Massachusetts Historical Society, Author, Connecticut Historical Society - Short Cutting Swords or "Cutlasses."



Sword of Capt. Benjamin Church, mid-17<sup>th</sup> Century.



English cutting swords of about 1660



Early 17<sup>th</sup> Century cutting sword used by Sergeant William Hayden

Cutting swords, hangers and cutlasses with simple shell hilts from Harold Peterson's arms and armour in colonial America 1526-1783, page 81. Early to mid-17th century. A good link for a better look at the sword at top, believed to have been worn by colonel Benjamin church at the death of Metacom (king Philip) in 1676 can be found [here](#). The inner shell is turned back slightly, the outer in slightly. Shell marks are being added but the shells are actually fairly simple, almost crude as compared to many shell hilts. Many cutlass hilts were probably this simple. The blade is marked with what is believed to be a Hounslow "wolf."



British Hanger Circa 1680 – Collection Cathey and Rex Brimage

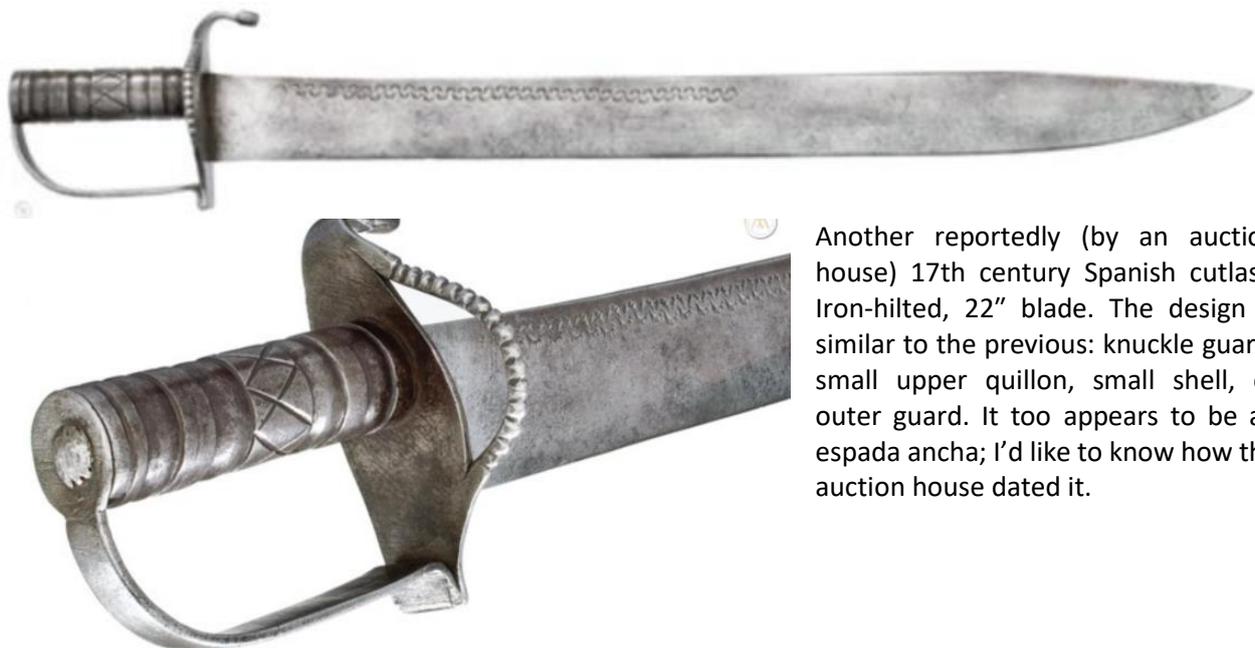


Hounslow Hanger Silver Inlaid Circa 1640 - Collection Cathey and Rex Brimage

Such hangers were also used at sea and would have likely been present at the capture of Jamaica from the Spanish in 1655, and afterward.



The sword above is identified by the Mariner's Museum as a 17th century Spanish naval hanger (cutlass, which is). The shell, quillon, and knuckle guard are iron, as are the plates on either side of the handle. The hilt is without doubt that of an espada ancha (wide or common sword) of New Spain from the 17th or 18th century, commonly used by rancheros and mounted troops as both a weapon and tool similar to a machete. Although most had straight blades, the curved blade of this one does not necessarily mark it as maritime, although surely some of these swords were found aboard Spanish vessels in the Caribbean, particularly those sailing from Mexican ports such as Veracruz. A lack of blade markings is common. Chamberlain and Brinkerhoff in *Spanish Military Weapons in Colonial America, 1700-1821* note that swords like this are commonly seen from the late 18th to early 19th centuries.



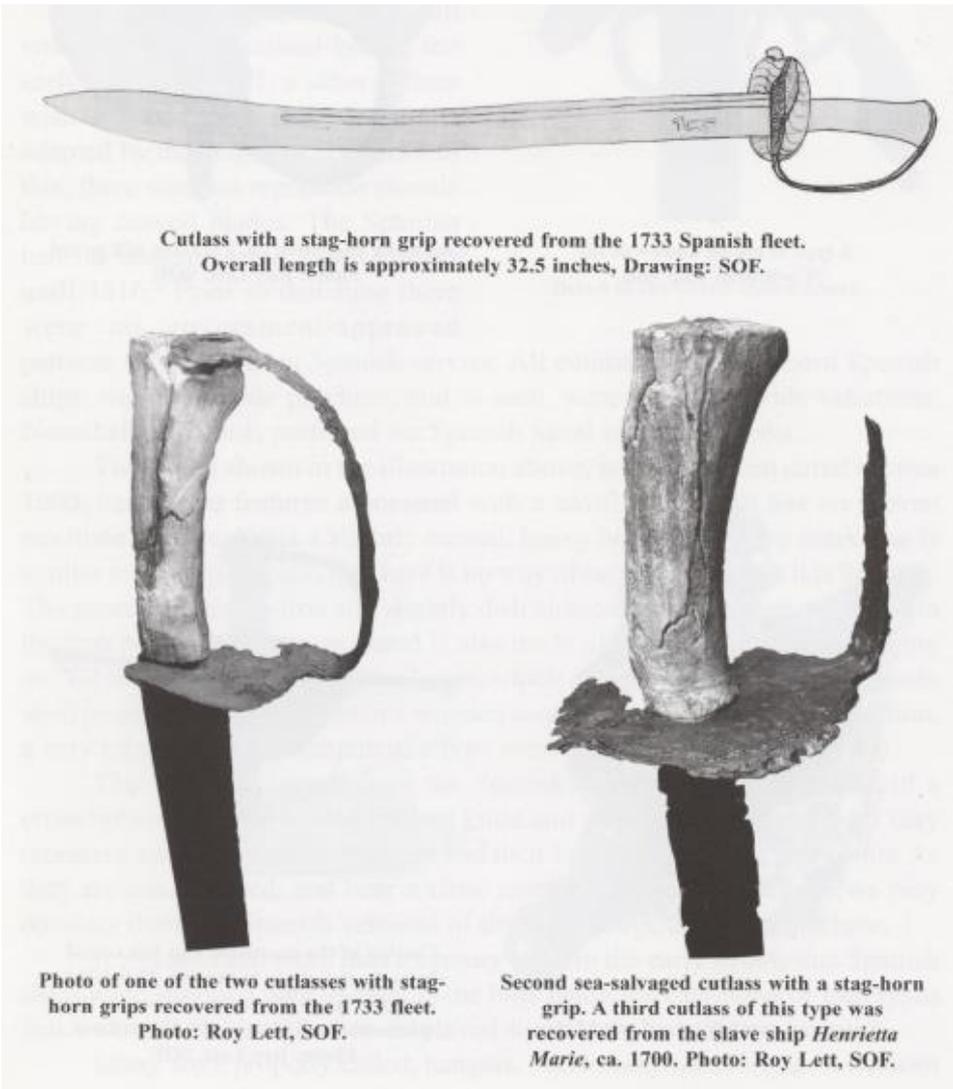
Another reportedly (by an auction house) 17th century Spanish cutlass. Iron-hilted, 22" blade. The design is similar to the previous: knuckle guard, small upper quillon, small shell, or outer guard. It too appears to be an espada ancha; I'd like to know how the auction house dated it.



*Cutlass hilts from the wreck of the *nuestra senora del guadalupe*, a “mercury galleon” lost in 1724.*

From the first quarter of the 18th century, the Spanish cutlass hilts above were authorized in 1717. The French influence is obvious.

*Cutlass examples from the wreck of the 1733 Spanish treasure fleet, quite possibly of Spanish origin. From Noel Wells, *Small Arms of the Spanish Treasure Fleets*. Dallas: Rock Bottom Publications, 2006, page 66.*



**Cutlass with a stag-horn grip recovered from the 1733 Spanish fleet. Overall length is approximately 32.5 inches, Drawing: SOF.**

**Photo of one of the two cutlasses with stag-horn grips recovered from the 1733 fleet. Photo: Roy Lett, SOF.**

**Second sea-salvaged cutlass with a stag-horn grip. A third cutlass of this type was recovered from the slave ship *Henrietta Marie*, ca. 1700. Photo: Roy Lett, SOF.**



*Allegorical image by Paul Cornuau from his chart, plan de la petite-rivière de Léogane, 1685. (French national library.)*

The allegorical image above by Cornuau, shows a man again perhaps French depicted as Neptune or Mars wielding a falchion or falchion like cutlass with a simple hilt, round pommel, and curved blade with clip point. At the man's feet lies a corpse cloven in half through the torso. It is unknown whether this cutlass is intended to portray a filibustier weapon. That said, there were similar mid to late 17th century cutlasses and hangers, the one below for example.



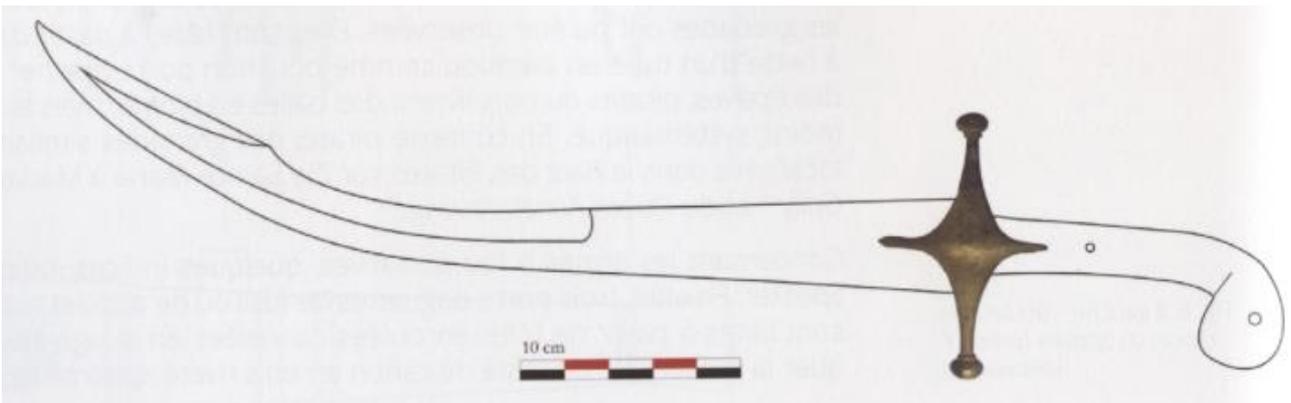
*The naval sword of Dutch admiral Cornelis Maartensohn Tromp, mid- to late 17th century. The heavily curved blade would make cutting, not thrusting, its primary purpose. Heavily curved blades are difficult to thrust with (see below). The blade appears based on Ottoman or North African swords. (Rijksmuseum.)*



*Detail from sir peter Lely's portrait of Cornelis tromp. Note the similarity of the pommel to that above; it may be the same sword. (Royal museums Greenwich.)*

Another form that may have been seen among buccaneers is that of the Eastern European short scimitar or saber, or even long as depicted below.

*Detail from a print of one of the "four Indian kings" who visited London in 1710." The hilt form is clearly that of eastern European or ottoman short sabres or scimitars. Native Americans were often equipped with European swords. Early eighteenth century, British museum.*



*A Turkish or Moorish hilt recovered from the wreck of the speaker, captain John Bowen, a pirate. The drawing of the grip and blade are conjectural. The grip is probably correct; the blade may have been longer. From *archéologie de la piraterie*, ed. Jean Soulat, 2019.*



*Shamshir belonging to admiral Cornelis Tromp. Whether he carried it into action is unknown although he did have a portrait painted while wearing the sword (and dressing in a somewhat Roman costume). He was an avid collector of swords from many places and of many peoples. The hilt is of silver and walrus ivory. Rijksmuseum.*



*A north African nimcha. Occasionally these swords appear in the possession of naval officers who had fought the barbarry corsairs. It is not impossible that some nimchas made it into the hands of privateers and even possibly buccaneers and pirates, although there is no archaeological evidence, but see the image above. Metropolitan museum of art.*



*Nimcha belonging to famous Dutch admiral michiel de ruyter. Rijksmuseum.*

### **CUTLASS DESIGN AND USE**

A few notes on the design and use of the cutlass are in order. Note that a thumb ring serves a very useful purpose in a sword with an unbalanced hilt, that is, one in which the outside shell is significantly larger than the inner, or in which the inside shell is entirely absent: it permits a stronger grip, preventing the blade from turning as a cut is made. If one's grip is not firm when cutting with an unbalanced hilt, the blade may turn slightly and cut poorly or not at all. In cutlasses with a single large outside shell, any looseness in the grip will cause the cutlass to turn in the hand toward the heavier side.

Ideally, for a cutting blade to cut properly, a "draw" or drawing action must be made if the blade is straight or mostly straight. Some backsword and broadsword texts make obvious note of this, that the blade must be drawn toward its wielder in order to cut. (It may also be pushed away; in the 18th century this was known as a "sawing" cut.) However, the diagonal cuts from high outside to low inside, and high inside to low outside, have a natural "drawing" motion as the arm is brought toward the body. To make a powerful drawing cut is fairly easy: simply draw the elbow toward the body as the cut is made. A lightly laid on cut with a straight edge, one made with small arm movement, will require a deliberate drawing motion.



*Some cutlass and pistol brandishing between the Dutch and English, mid-17th century. Detail from the battle of Livorno (slag bij Livorno) by Reinier Nooms, circa 1653-1664. Rijksmuseum.*

*Also, by Reinier Nooms, a detail of cutlass-play on the quarterdeck and poop during action. From a drawing of a sea battle for Nieuwe Scheeps Batalien, probably 1652-1654. Rijksmuseum.*



Sweeping cuts are the most common sort of drawing cuts, but they are dangerous in practice unless one is mounted (and moving quickly) on a horse, or has a shield, targe, or other defense in the unarmed hand. Sweeping cuts are easily “slipped” avoided and as such leave the attacker vulnerable to a counter stroke in tempo. They are also subject to counterattacks in opposition. Tighter cuts may also be made with a natural draw, and this sort of cutting action is generally preferable when fighting without a shield or targe, as is the case in boarding actions. Note that wide sweeping cuts are more likely to injure one’s companions in a boarding action, and to get caught up in rigging and fittings.

In particular, a straight-bladed cutlass or other sword requires a drawing action in order to cut well. A curved blade has a natural cutting action, and the more curve there is the less drawing action must be added, the severe curve suffices. However, the greater the curve the less suitable for thrusting a sword is. A direct thrust made with such a sword (see the two heavily curved examples of Tromp’s swords, for example) will result not in the tip penetrating the adversary, but with the first inch or two of the edge hitting. It is very difficult to push the edge of a sword deeply into tissue, and most wounds caused this way are superficial. Note that the clip point found on many cutlasses is designed to make a curved blade more effective at thrusting.

I am going to devote only a few words to the popular misconception that a heavily curved sword, such as a scimitar, can be used to thrust effectively. Its true thrusts must be hooked, and the typical example one finds in discussions by self-appointed “experts” is that of a hooked (aka angular) thrust made after one’s adversary has parried quart (four, inside). In theory, the attacker can roll his hand into tierce (pronated) and slip around the parry with a hook thrust. This will only work if the attacker also has a shield or targe in his (or her)

unarmed hand, or is wearing a breastplate: otherwise, there is nothing to prevent the adversary's riposte. In other words, try this with a curved cutlass, and while you may be able to make a thrust (which may or may not penetrate ribs) as an arrest or stop hit against a riposte, you will almost certainly also be on the receiving end of a powerful cut. In other words, try this at your peril in the 17th century.

I can think of only one exception to this advice: Andrew Lonergan (*The Fencer's Guide*, 1777) notes that the hussar saber, with its curved blade, has a natural cavé or angulation against quart, tierce, or prime parries (or any other parries, in fact). Notably, he's referring to action on horseback with horses typically moving at speed, the rider, executing the natural angulation with the saber, can escape the riposte as he rides by, while simultaneously cutting or thrusting with cavé, which at speed will push not the point but the edge through neck or arm. This is much more difficult to do with a simple thrust or thrust with lunge, and, as noted lacks the protection of riding past. "The bent of their swords will afford them an unavoidable Quarte over the arm, or a Cavè [sic: the wrong accent is used on cavé in the original text]." N.B. a thrust, or rather, a thrusting cut can be made with the edge at the tip, but requires great force (i.e., from horseback at a canter or gallop) and is, as Lonergan notes, primarily effective against the soft tissue and joints of the arms and neck.

One of the most effective cuts with the cutlass is a powerful drawing cut, vertically high to low, the hand drawn down and backwards, from close quarters distance, or even when grappling if the blade is free. It is a highly effective cut: I have cut through twelve inches of brisket with it. All this said, cleaving non drawing blows can cut through skin and muscle, and even break bones. One need only to test this with a common kitchen cleaver to see the efficacy of such blows, although they are generally inferior to those made with a natural drawing action. Also, a cleaving blow, even with a dull blade, can still break bones. Getting hit on the head with a heavy cutlass would be akin to getting hit with a steel rod.

The grossly exaggerated Thomas Malthus edition of Alexandre Exquemelin's *The History of the Bucaniers* (1684) notes the following of the cutlass in buccaneer hands: "Never did the Spaniards feel better carvers of Mans flesh; they would take off a Man's Arm at the shoulders, as ye cut off the Wing of a Capon; split a Spanish Mazard [head or skull] as exactly as a Butcher cleaves a Calf's Head, and dissect the Thorax with more dexterity than a Hangman when he goes to take out the Heart of a Traitor." But this may not be much of an exaggeration. Of an English seaman put in irons aboard a Portuguese carrack circa 1669 out of fear he might help lead a mutiny, passenger Father Denis de Carli wrote: "He was so strong, that they said he had cleft a man with his cutlass, and therefore it was feared he might do some mischief in the ship, being in that condition [drunk for three days on two bottles of brandy]."

Cutlass balance determines how well the cutlass may be wielded in terms of traditional fencing actions, and which forms of cuts work best. A heavily balanced cutlass, with much of its weight forward around the point of percussion (that is, near the end of the blade), makes for very effective cleaving and close cutting actions, and will cut well with even crude swings. However, it is less effective for skilled fencing. A well-balanced cutlass less point or tip heavy is a more effective fencing sword, in that it permits quicker actions such as cut overs but requires a bit more training or finesse to cut well. In other words, give a cleaver to an unskilled seaman, but a better-balanced cutlass to one with reasonable skill at swordplay. All this said, a skilled "complete" swordsman or swordswoman can fence pretty damn well with anything.

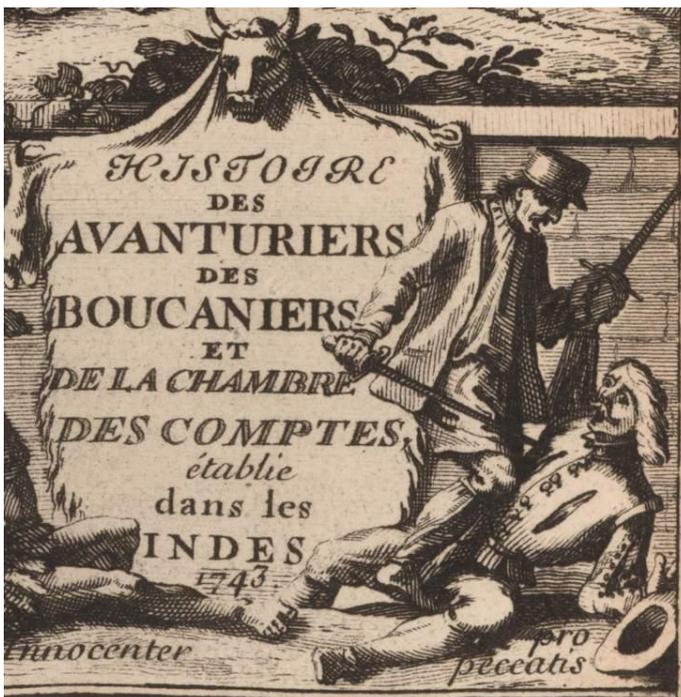
Switching to a discussion of how the cutlass is held, the cutlass grip, like that of period broadswords and backswords, is a "globular" one, the thumb is not placed on the back of the grip or handle. Placing the thumb on the back of the handle, assuming there is even room (typically there is not), given the weight a cutlass and its impact against its target, may result in a sprained thumb, possibly a broken one, and at the very least the thumb being knocked from the grip, thus losing control of the weapon. The "thumb on the back of the handle" grip is suitable for lighter weapons only.

Shells are quite useful, mandatory, in my opinion—to protect the hand. A single outside shell, especially in conjunction with an upper quillon and a knuckle bow, provides merely adequate protection to the hand. The inside hand and forearm remain vulnerable to an attack or counterattack (best made in opposition). The addition of an inner shell, typically smaller, goes far to maintain adequate protection to the hand.

As already noted, inner shells were usually smaller, given that the inner part of the hand (the fingers, basically) is smaller than the outer, typically 1/3 to 2/5's of the entire fist. Again, though, differently sized shells, especially if the difference is significant, will unbalance the weapon, making a thumb ring useful for gripping well and preventing the edge from turning and thereby not cutting.

But perhaps the cutlass's greatest virtue, and what would have made some of its technique unique as compared to the broadsword and saber (from which late 18th through early 20th century cutlass technique was drawn), was its utility at "handy-grips." I've covered this subject elsewhere, but besides the close cleaving or drawing cut described above, pommelling would have been common, and "commanding" (seizing the adversary's hilt or blade) and grappling would have been common as well. F. C. Grove in the introduction to *Fencing* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1893) wrote: "One of us once saw a sailor of extraordinary strength seize a cutlass close to the hilt, where the edge is blunt, and break it short off." This was an extraordinary example of a surely commonplace tactic.

There are few descriptions of the cutlass in action, but of those that exist, they are quite illustrative. Of a fight between English slavers and Africans on the Guinea Coast in 1726, William Smith wrote: "[F]or they press'd so upon us that we were Knee deep in the Water, and one of them full of Revenge, and regardless of his Life, got out into the Water behind me, resolving to cleave my Skull with a Turkish Scimitar, which Ridley perceiving, leap'd out of the Canoe, and just came time enough to give him a BackStroke, which took the Fellow's Wrist as Was coining down upon my Head, and cut his Hand off almost. Ridley with the violent Force of the Blow at once snap'd his Cutlass and disarm'd the Negroe, whose Scimitar falling into the Water, Ridley laid hold'of, and us'd instead of his Cutlass."



Detail from the title page of the 1744 French edition of *histoire des aventuriers flibustiers* by alexandre exquemelin.

Much buccaneer swordplay may have looked like this: closing, grappling, and cutting and thrusting at the distance of "handy grips." Here, in a conjectural image, a buccaneer has secured his adversary's sword at the hand and grip (although at the shell was considered preferable in order to prevent the adversary from shifting the weapon to the other hand), has his knee on his enemy's chest, and is in place make a fatal thrust.

A very realistic scene of four soldiers fighting with swords, probably similar to many engagements with the cutlass.

Note the close distance, the grappling including the use of the unarmed hand to grab the adversary's weapon, the fear, the anger, the lack of academic form. From the series "scenes of war" by hans Ulrich Franck, 1656. British museum.



Attempts at restraining from fighting with short cutting swords—hangers, cutlasses, or falchions—from the series “scenes of war” by hans Ulrich Franck, 1656. British museum.



A similar scene to that above, from the series “scenes of war” by hans Ulrich Franck, 1656. British museum.

There are unfortunately no cutlass texts dating to the age of the buccaneer, and few fencing texts discuss even related weapons until the 18th century. The only 17th century exception I can think of offhand is Francesco Antonio Marcelli’s treatise on the rapier (*Regole Della Scherma*, 1686), in which he devotes a few pages to saber versus rapier, noting quite correctly that the saber, and therefore also falchion, cutlass, &c., is a killing weapon even at very close range. See below. In *The Golden Age of Piracy*, I discuss to a fair degree what we know from period accounts about how the cutlass may have been used.

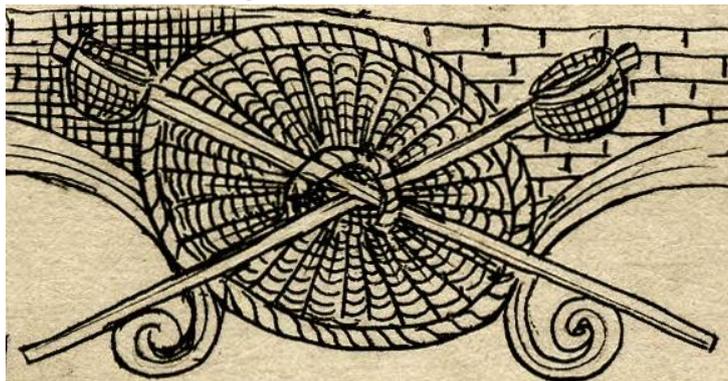


From Francesco Antonio Marcelli’s treatise on the rapier: *Regole Della Scherma*, 1686.

I’ve discussed training in the cutlass elsewhere, including a few notes in my [Fencing Books For Swordsmen & Swordswomen](#) post. In *Sea Rover’s Practice* I note that there was clearly some instruction at sea, although it may have often ad hoc as was often the case ashore. Late seventeenth century French privateer captain Duguay Trouin hired a fencing prévôt (assistant to a fencing master) to help school his crew in swordplay (and later found himself in a *rencontre*, swords drawn, with the man in the street), and mid-eighteenth-century English privateer captain “Commodore” Walker had training sessions aboard his ship, the officers practicing with foils, the seamen with singlesticks. The only pirate captain we know of who was said to have held swordplay practice aboard ship is John Taylor in the Indian Ocean in the early 18th century, according to prisoner Jacob de Bucquoy (*Zestien Jaarige Reize Naa de Indiën, Gedaan Door Jacob de Bucquoy*, 1757, page 69). Taylor’s pirate crew reportedly held practices, as Commodore Walker would later do, with foils and single sticks. I am a bit leery of this report, however. Although it certainly may be true, it is tied to a criticism of Dutch East Indiamen captains and crews, with de Bucquoy suggesting that the pirates were more disciplined and trained in a manner that the East Indiaman crews were not. Most historical accounts show a great deal of indiscipline among pirate crews.

However, it is impossible to maintain proficiency in arms without practice, thus it is likely that pirates practiced swordplay. The question is to what degree, and whether the practice was formal or informal. Further, there is the question of whether or not pirate captains deliberately outfitted their vessels with foils and single-sticks or “cudgels” as they were commonly known. Doubtless Duguay Trouin and Commodore Walker did, but, assuming the Taylor account is correct, Taylor’s were probably from captured stocks. That said, singlesticks are easily crafted (but not so foils). Please note that real weapons were not used for fencing practice! This would soon enough destroy their tips and edges, not to mention that it would be very dangerous even with protection. Fiction and film have, for ease of plot not to mention laziness or ignorance, given many the false idea that swordplay was practiced with real swords. A single-stick or cudgel, by the way, differs from a real sword “only that the Cudgel is nothing but a Stick; and that a little Wicker Basket, which covers the Handle of the Stick, like the Guard of a Spanish Sword, serves the Combatant, instead of defensive Arms.” (Misson’s Memoirs and Observations in His Travels Over England, 1719.)

*Eighteenth century singlesticks. Practice weapons like this were used for training in cutting sword techniques, particularly backsword, broadsword, and cutlass. From a late eighteenth century forged trade card of prizefighter James Figg. (British museum.)*



*Typical late seventeenth century “crowned” foil. Foils like these would have been used for smallsword practice.*

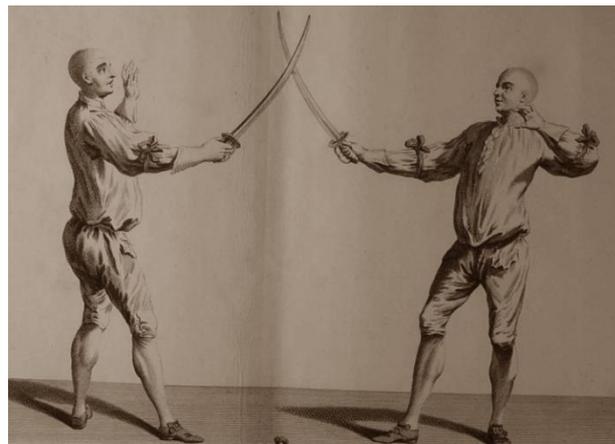
*Late seventeenth century foils with small shells similar to those of smallswords. From an illustration by Marcellus Laroon. (British museum.)*



*“German” style foil with small cup and quillons. From the trade card of Nicholas Croucher, sword cutler, probably 1690s. (British Museum.)*

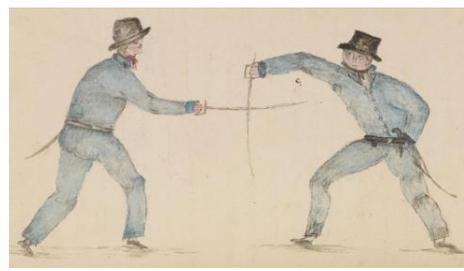
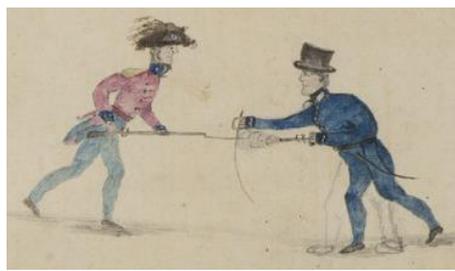


*Miller's outside guard with a falchion, hanger, or cutlass (1738).*



*Miller's inside guard with a falchion, hanger, cutlass (1738).*

Possibly one of the more practical texts, and even then, incomplete, is that of Lieutenant Pringle Green in manuscript in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. He discusses boarding actions and associated combat, with some ideas of his own. Although more than a century later than our period, there is likely a fair similarity between the two eras. See the images below.



Lieutenant Green's text makes a few important notes. First, the seaman armed with a cutlass must know more than just protect left (inside, quarte), protect right (outside, tierce), protect head (St. George, modern saber quinte), and cut & thrust. High second and prime "falloon" or hanging guards—are useful for parrying, and are mandatory to parry a musket, as he illustrates, as also half-pikes (Girard illustrated this with the smallsword in the mid-eighteenth century). The low second and prime parries are just as important. Second, the pistol can be used to parry when reversed along the forearm. In fact, even when holding the pistol by the grip a parry can be made, and also a forehand blow with the barrel. However, it is well to remember that Pringle Green's text is not an exposition of hand-to-hand naval combat in actual practice, but his ideas on how it might be done better. Caveat emptor.

I'll also point out here a rather irksome issue on occasion, that some students of historical swordplay still attempt to argue that parries with cutting swords were made with the flat rather than the edge. This is nonsense. There are some forms of swordplay, Filipino *escrima* and some Caribbean and Central American machete practice for example, that parry with the flat. Notably, these weapons do not have guards, and if parries are not used sparingly, and made carefully, fingers will be lost (which is almost certainly why serious sparring and actual combat with these weapons is often either in "absence of blade" and emphasizes tempo actions or involves grappling and other manipulations in order to control the adversary's blade). However, the forms of cutting swordplay with Western battlefield weapons—saber, broadsword, backsword, hanger, cutlass—all show the use of the edge for parrying in texts, illustrations, and other accounts. The objection is that a parry will damage the cutting edge. And so, it will. But typically, the forte is used for parrying, which is seldom sharp, and even if it is, is seldom used for cutting. Moreover, those who argue for the flat rather than the edge, in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, forget one thing: each time the adversary parries your blade, it will be nicked. A blade is going to get damaged in combat. In fact, there are plenty of

historical accounts of swordsmen proudly noting their “saw-toothed” blades as proof of just how desperate the combat was. It is also much easier to control a heavier weapon in the parry when parrying with the edge, and more powerful parries may be made this way.

### THE TERMS HANGER VERSUS CUTLASS

In regard to the myth that ‘hanger’ was the sole term used to refer to the common cutting sword at sea to the cutlass, in other words in the 17th century, and that ‘cutlass’ was only an eighteenth century term, I’ve excerpted the following from a *Mariner’s Mirror* article I wrote a few years ago (“Eyewitness Images of Buccaneers and Their Vessels,” vol. 98, no. 3, August 2012). I added it to the original draft after a pre-publication editorial reader for the journal suggested I may have used the term cutlass in error. I had to prove I was correct.

From my article: Still debated today are the issues of whether hanger or cutlass is the more appropriate English name for the short cutting sword or swords used by late seventeenth century mariners, and whether the words refer to the same or different weapons. Hanger and cutlass (also cutlash, cutlace) are each found in English language maritime texts of the mid to late seventeenth century. In some cases, there appears to be a subtle distinction made between them; in others they are used interchangeably.

The English 1684 Malthus edition of Exquemelin’s *The Buccaneers of America* refers only to ‘cutlace’ or, more generically, sword as the buccaneer’s *arme blanche*. There is also at least one reference in the *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial*, dating to the 1680s, associating the term cutlass with Caribbean pirates.<sup>[1]</sup> The 1684 Crooke and 1699 Newborough editions of Exquemelin refer to both hanger and cutlass, and use the terms interchangeably in reference to the sword of the notorious buccaneer Jean David Nau, better known as l’Ollonais. (Hanger once, cutlass twice, as well as a note that his men were armed with cutlasses.)

“It is possible that the description of l’Ollonais’s use of his sword to mutilate and murder prisoners may have given first rise to the reputation of the cutlass as the arm of the romanticized ‘cutthroat pirate,’ a reputation enhanced by Charles Johnson’s pirate history forty years later, and then by Robert Louis Stevenson and other nineteenth century novelists. Even so, the cutlass already had a sanguine reputation, doubtless inspired in part by its descriptive, alliterative name: ‘by the bloody cut-throat cuttleaxe of swaggering Mars’ wrote Thomas Coryate in 1611. By the eighteenth century, cutlass was the predominant English term for the seaman’s short-bladed cutting sword.”<sup>[2]</sup>

In the British colonies in America, the term cutlass was often used rather than hanger in lists of militia and trade arms as well: Caribs “well armed with new French fuzees, waistbelts and cutlasses” (August 3, 1689); “100 cutlasses” (Maryland, February 4, 1706); “100 cutlaces with broad deep blades” (Maryland, June 23, 1708); “2,000 cutlasses” (South Carolina, July 8, 1715). That said, some colonies used the term hanger instead in the same period. (All citations from the *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial, America, and West Indies*.)

The earliest Caribbean reference to cutlasses I’ve found to date is in “*The Voyages of Captain William Jackson (1642-1645)*,” a first-hand account describing Jackson’s most famous plundering voyage from one end of the Caribbean to the other: “The Armes delivered out to each company were, Muskitts, Carbines, Firelocks, Halfe-pikes, Swords, Cutlases, & ye like offentius weapons...” Notably the term “hangers” is not used. English naval inventories of the 17th century tend to list “hangers” and “swords” as the two sorts of swords carried aboard, sometimes listing both, sometimes only one, confusing the issue. (And no, for the occasional “expert” who wants to argue, the term hanger in naval inventories at this time refers to short cutting swords, not sword hangers.) Worse, I’ve seen “swords and cutlasses” listed among the arms of various merchantmen. Almost certainly swords other than cutlasses and, among some officers, smallswords, were commonly carried aboard ship. Certainly, they were aboard Spanish men-of-war, which had a large proportion of soldiers aboard: perhaps the earliest “Bilbao hilt” cutting sword, popular in the 18th century, dates to the 1660s and was found aboard a Spanish wreck. [See Sydney B. Brinckerhoff, *Spanish Military Weapons in Colonial America, 1700-1821*, regarding the Bilbao hilt. Jackson’s journal was published in *Camden Miscellany* vol. 13, 3rd series vol. 34, 1924; the quote refers roughly to September-October 1642.]

There are plenty of other seventeenth century references to the cutlass as the predominant maritime sword or term for maritime cutting sword, as opposed to the hanger: a July 1667 report of a Dutch descent on the English coast describes the attackers carrying muskets and with cutlasses drawn; there are at least two references in the papers of Charles II to Biscayners and Dunkirkers (privateers) assaulting English merchant captains with cutlasses; the 1682 inventory of the English merchantman *St. Christopher* of South Carolina included “ten swords & Cutlasses;” mariner Robert Everard noted a cutlass among the arms of a dying French pirate who had boarded his ship, the *Bauden*, in 1686 (another witness referred to it as a scimitar, a generic term for a sword with a curved blade); the 1690s broadside ballad “A Satyr on the Sea-Officers” included the line, “With Monmouth cap, and cutlace by my side...,” clearly denoting its naval use; and witnesses to the fight between the *Dorrill* and the pirate ship *Mocha* in 1697 noted that the pirates were armed with “cutlashes”; and an authority-abusing Scottish captain, part of the Scottish expedition to Darien, was described thusly: “Capt. Drummond sent his men with drawn cutlasses on board a ship, *Adventure*, John Howell, master, and bade deponent, who was piloting her, to anchor her under the guns of his ship.” In the Deposition of William Fletcher, May 2, 1700, the said ship master described being his beating by pirates “with the flat of the Curtle-axes.” See also the endnotes below for other seventeenth century cutlass references associated with pirates and sea rovers.

It is quite possible that the distinction between cutlass and hanger was originally determined by the blades: a broad bladed weapon with a short blade length used by soldiers and seamen was originally defined as a “curtle-axe” (Shakespeare even uses the word) or cutlass, while one with a narrower blade was a hanger. Cutting blades heavy “at the tip” are excellent for cleaving cuts even at close distance: anyone who’s used a cutlass with such a blade for cutting practice will recognize this immediately, as will anyone who’s used a Filipino bolo knife. I’m speculating, of course, but the cutlass may have found preference at sea due to its greater ability at close quarters. Clearly, swords by both names were used, but the name cutlass stuck perhaps due to its greater efficacy.

This theory of cutlass versus hanger is supported by the French definition of *coutelas* from the 1694 edition of *Le Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*: “*Coutelas*. s. m. Sorte d’ espée courte & large, qui ne tranche que d’ un costé. *Coutelas* bien tranchant. *coutelas* de Damas. un coup de *coutelas*. il luy a fendu la teste de son *coutelas*, avec son *coutelas*.” That is, a kind of sword with a short wide blade, which cuts only one side. A 1708 Maryland arms list notes “100 cutlaces with broad deep blades” (cited above), suggesting that the term had become associated more broadly with short cutting swords in general.

It is also likely that longer swords were often carried in addition to cutlasses, given that we find accounts of “cutlasses and swords” and “hangers and swords” in ship inventories (although the occasional ignorant Internet pedant, more often than not a re-enactor) will attempt to assert that hangers refers only to sword-belts).

An associated trivium is in order: the French term *hasségaye* (from Old French *azagaie*, Arabic *az-zağāyah*, etc.) derives from an old word meaning “short spear,” and in the nineteenth century meant a short boarding pike. However, in the late seventeenth century it’s described as the word for the cutlass a ship’s captain wielded in action by holding it aloft, usually to inspire the crew as well as to intimidate the enemy. By waving it, the captain was demanding surrender, that is, ordering enemy colors and topsails “*amain*” lowered, that is. “*C’est un coutelas que le Capitaine tient en la main au bras retroussé pendant le combat.*”

In any case, I leave you with a quote from a witness to de Ruyter’s raid on Barbados in 1665: “I did see him [de Ruyter] on the poepe, with a cane in one hand, and a cuttle axe in the other, and as he stayed [tacked] I did see most part of his quarter carried away.” The cutlass may even have been the one whose hilt is depicted above. [From “A True Relation of the Fight at the Barbados Between the Fort and Shipping There...,” in *Colonising Expeditions to the West Indies and Guiana, 1623–1667*,” edited by V. T Harlow (London: Hakluty Society, 1925). The “cane” was almost certainly de Ruyter’s long admiral’s baton.]

## MORE INFORMATION

For more information on the use of the cutlass at sea and ashore 1655 to 1725, in particular on its effectiveness as well as on its use in dueling, see *The Golden Age of Piracy: The Truth About Pirate Myths*, chapter 8. (My publisher won't appreciate my repeating the information here; by agreement I am not supposed to.) Both *The Sea Rover's Practice* and *The Buccaneer's Realm* also include information on the cutlass and other swords; the latter has an entire chapter devoted to associated late 17th century swords and swordplay. In sum, there's a bit more information. For example, Bras de Fer missing his Spanish adversary and cutting through his hat instead, then tripping over a root as he attempted to renew his attack; the possibility of techniques similar to those used with the dusack (e.g., grazing and yielding actions in a single tempo); &c.

That said, I will add a note to dueling here even though far more information is in *The Golden Age of Piracy* (including the only confirmed description of a duel fought between buccaneer captains). Although it's unlikely that duels were regularly, or even occasionally, fought aboard ships, for reasons and evidence discussed in *The Golden Age of Piracy*, it doesn't mean there weren't occasional affrays with swords aboard ship. Peter Drake, an Irish officer, one of the so-called "Wild Geese" who left Ireland after the defeat of James II, describes how in 1701, as he joined a Dutch regiment in Dublin and waited aboard a Dutch ship to sail to the Netherlands, "Among the recruits we had two prize-fighters, who, getting drunk, fell to quarrelling; the company declaring, each for the one whose cause he espoused, an uproar ensued, and several strokes were exchanged." But this was a brawl more than anything else, and among soldiers, not seamen. Note that prize-fighters fought primarily with various swords, as well as with quarterstaff, and occasionally with fists. (Peter Drake, *The Memoirs of Peter Drake* [Dublin: S. Powell for the Author, 1755]. Stanford University reprinted the memoirs in 1960, edited by Paul Jordan-Smith.)

## NOTES

[1] *CSPC*, 1681-1685, no. 1509. January 19, 1684. "A Relation of the capture of Providence by the Spaniards. On Saturday, 19th January, about 3 o'clock, Juan de Larco with two hundred and fifty Spaniards came down the harbour and landed at Captain Clarke's, half a mile to east of Charlestown. Captain Clarke being out of doors near the waterside, some men in ambush shot him through the thigh and cut his arms with a cutlass, and then they marched away with all haste to the town, firing into some houses as they went..."

Another instance described in *CSPC*, 1677-1680, no. 1624. December 30, 1680, deposition of Robert Oxe. "The Spaniards killed two men and cruelly treated the deponent, hanging him up at the fore braces several times, beating him with their cutlasses, and striking him in the face after an inhuman cruel manner." The Spanish pirate hunters were commanded by Captain Don Felipe de la Barrera y Villegas. Under his command were Juan Corso and Pedro de Castro, two captains noted for their reprisal cruelty against English and French seamen.

[2] Thomas Coryate, 'Laugh and be Fat' in *Coryat's Crudities* (reprint London, 1776), vol. 3:n.p. Regarding foreign terms for cutlass, the original Dutch edition of Exquemelin's work (1678) uses *sabel* (*saber*), as does David van der Sterre's 1691 biography of Caribbean sea rover Jan Erasmus Reyning, but a 1675 English-Dutch dictionary notes *kort geweer* as the Dutch term for cutlass. Exquemelin's Spanish edition (1681) uses 'alfange' (*alfanje*), whose root is the Andalusian Arabic *alhánġar* or *alhánġal*, from the Arabic *hanġar*, a dagger or short sword, which some scholars have suggested is the origin of the English word *hanger*. The OED (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) doubts this and derives it instead from the Dutch *hangher*. Although the Spanish connection to the Low Countries, and thus a connection to the Dutch term, appears suggestive, the English use of *hanger* predates Spanish rule. *Alfanje* is typically translated as *cutlass*, *hanger*, or *scimitar*. Exquemelin's French editions (1686, 1688, 1699) refer to both *coutelas* and *sabre*, noting that *flibustiers* were armed in one instance with a good *coutelas*, in another a *coutelas* or *sabre*. Labat, describing the early *flibustiers*, notes each having a well-tempered *coutelas* among their arms. Most etymologists consider *cutlass* to be derived from *coutelas*. *Saber*, *sabre*, and the Dutch *sabel* derive from the German *sabel*, with authorities noting the term's Slavic origin.

Regarding the various spellings of cutlass in the mid-seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries: *cutlass*, *cutlace*, *cutlash*, *curtlass*, *curtelass*, *courtlass*, *courtelass*, and *curtle-axe* are all common.

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## Captain John Henry Purvis, Highland Light Infantry – HAS Member Benny Bough

*JOHN HENRY PURVIS (HARRY), D.S.O.*, of Kinaldy, born 4th April 1866 at Kinaldy, Cameron Parish, near St Andrews, Fife, Scotland.

J.H. Purvis joined the 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade Scottish Division, Royal Artillery (Militia) on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 1886. After two years in the Militia, he was commissioned Second Lieutenant into the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May 1888, moving quickly, he transferred to the Highland Light Infantry as Second Lieutenant on the 30<sup>th</sup> of the same month. He was promoted Lieutenant on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 1889, and to Captain on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January 1895.



Being a John Henry Purvis (2<sup>nd</sup> Left)

fine horseman Purvis was seconded for Service with the Mounted Infantry in South Africa on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January, and quickly given the local rank of Major in command of the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion Mounted Infantry on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 1901 and rising to the rank of Brevet Major in October of 1902. He received a mention in Dispatches for a successful action at Zanddrifts. His Brother Robin also served in the Transvaal and was severely wounded. (see photograph) After service in South Africa J.H. Purvis re-joined the Highland Light Infantry and retired Captain 19<sup>th</sup> of October 1907.

At the outbreak of the First World War, he again re-joined the Army in September 1914, by September 1915 he was Lieutenant Colonel commanding the 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion Highland Light Infantry and took part in actions at Loos and Hill 70 where he was awarded the D.S.O. in the course of the battle he was wounded in the head by a fragment of artillery shell. J.H. Purvis survived WW1 and In 1921 purchased the Kinaldy Estate from his

brother Alexander Burridge Purvis, he became a Justice of the Peace in 1924 and died of pneumonia at Kinaldy House on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 1962.

I suspect the group that was bought by my father in the 1970s is a mixture of his WW1 and Boer War items, Several items are marked with his name, the Sam Brown is marked Lt Col Purvis so is undoubtedly WW1, his compass is dated 1899 as is the Holster, the Water Bottle and Bandolier I added for display, the Bandolier is Marked 1899 to the London Sharp Shooters. Note on the reverse Photo, the 4 Pleats down the spine on the back of the tunic which is unique to the Highland Light Infantry. Apparently, his medals came up for sale on an Australian Website some years ago but were gone before I could enquire about them.

Campaign: — **1914-15**

(A) Where decoration was earned.  
(B) Present situation.

Name	Corps	Rank	Reg. No.	Roll on which included (if any)
(A) <b>PURVIS</b>	<b>12/HLI.</b>	<b>LTCOL</b>		<b>MEDAL</b> <b>PAGE</b> <b>VICTORY</b> <b>H.L.I./OFF/111-4</b> <b>BRITISH</b> <b>20</b>
(B) <b>J.H. (DSO)</b>		<b>LTCOL.</b>		<b>15 STAR</b> <b>OFF/111</b> <b>1</b>

Action taken

*1914-15 Star. B.W. & V.M. & Emblems. I.V.B. 443. 4/21.4.27. EF/4/8404*

**THEATRE OF WAR.** **FRANCE**

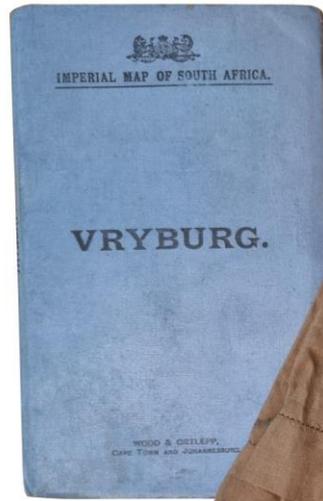
**QUALIFYING DATE.** **10.7.15** **NOM ROLL** **9/1166/2**  
*EF/4/8404*

(6 34 46) W234—HP5590 500,000 4/19 HWV(P240) K608 [OVER.]

**Correspondence.**

*Appln. for Medal dt. 24-10-23*  
*879. 6/4/27*

**Address.** *Kinaldy*  
*Strathie*  
*Fife.*







# 19THC MEWARI SHIELD – HAS Member Runjeet Singh



## 19THC MEWARI SHIELD

PLACE OF ORIGIN:	Mewar, India
DATE:	19th Century
DIAMETER:	560mm (22 Inches)
REFERENCE:	420
STATUS:	Available, could be yours!

This shield originates from Mewar, India, and belongs to a group wherein the main decorative display consists of striking painted scenes showing prey and predator animals locked in an intense struggle which surround a central portrait of Surya, the sun god from whom many Rajput elders claim descent and the insignia of the Mewar royal court.

The present example, though, shows some distinct and interesting stylistic features: Surya and the animal scenes, for example, are painted with finer lines, and the prey-animals' wounds within the four main scenes are highlighted with trickling sprays of saffron-coloured paint.



Perhaps the most eye-catching element of this shield are the four bosses that surround Surya. The silver frame of each is inlaid throughout with luminous blue-and-green enamelling, the central arrangement depicting azure-coloured peacocks in profile amidst sky-blue flowers and emerald-green leaves. The six arches that emanate from the centre are likely stylised flowerheads set between curving leaves, though they are possibly also intended to mimic the fanning plumage of the bird that lends its pallet to the entire display.

The schema of the enamelling may be unique, though similar shields include an 18th-century example published by Runjeet Singh Ltd in *Arms, Armour & Works of Art* - London 2019 ([Cat. No. 31](#))[1] and another preserved at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York ([Accession Number 29.158.598](#)).[2]

#### Provenance

Private collection, England.

Purchased in India in 1964, purportedly from the collection of the Maharana of Udaipur.

[1] [http://runjeetsingh.com/inventory/350/18th\\_century\\_shikargah\\_shield](http://runjeetsingh.com/inventory/350/18th_century_shikargah_shield)

[2] <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/34132>



<https://www.runjeetsingh.com>



# LACQUERED SHIELD – HAS Member Runjeet Singh

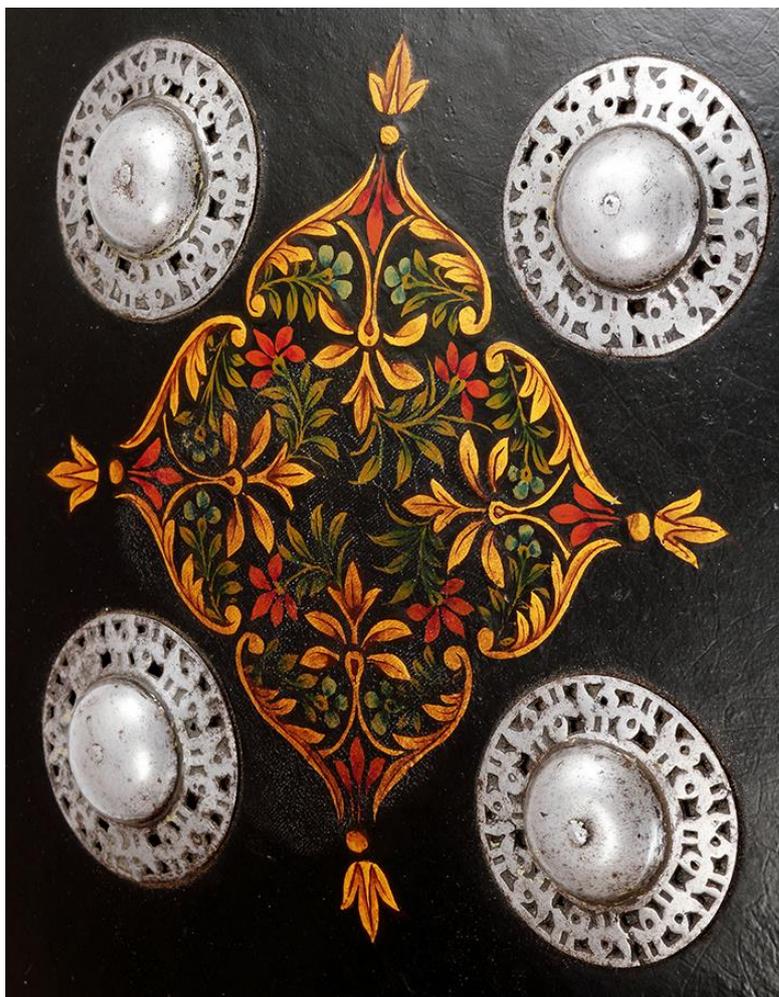


PLACE OF ORIGIN: Rajasthan, India  
DATE: 19th Century  
OVERALL DIAMETER: 630mm (24 ¾ inches)  
REFERENCE: 431  
STATUS: Available, Could be yours!

#### FULL DESCRIPTION:

Originally presented as a diplomatic gift from India to the family of a Japanese ambassador, this black-painted leather shield may be related to a group produced by a single workshop in Rajasthan (see further discussion below).

Borders of thick black-and-gold paint adorn the shield's upturned brim, from which majestic floral splays in gold rise and intermingle with foliage in verdant green- and crimson-coloured paint. Four steel bosses, equidistant from one another, are attached to the shield's centre and cut to convey the repeating Devanagari characters which translate as 'MA' – perhaps initials of an individual involved in the shield's manufacture, or of the armoury that produced it. A central painted panel en suite with those that extend from the shield's brim completes this object's charming decorative schema. The reverse face of the shield is fitted with a small red cushion, to which are attached the iron suspension rings and fabric straps originally used to secure the wearer's arm in place.



It is difficult to pinpoint the present shield's precise origins, though a group of examples preserved in the Royal Collection Trust may provide some guidance, particularly with respect to the colour palette and floral decoration (see RCINs [37945](https://www.rct.uk/collect/37945/shield), [\[1\] 11348](https://www.rct.uk/collect/11348/shield), [\[2\] 38090](https://www.rct.uk/collect/38090/shield-dhal), [\[3\]](https://www.rct.uk/collect/38090/shield-dhal)). As is explained in the case of the first shield just cited: "This Japanese-influenced style of decoration may have been inspired by seventeenth century Indian shields that were sent to Japan to be decorated with lacquer by Portuguese merchants based in the Indian subcontinent. These were subsequently presented as diplomatic gifts in India. The Prince received several examples of these Japanese-inspired shields decorated with similar designs suggesting that they were made in one workshop." Whilst the floral patterns of the present shield are not precisely similar to those from this group, it may be that our own example represents a style inspired by them, as its decoration comprises floral motifs with a largely similar palette of gold, red and green painted on a black ground.

[1] <https://www.rct.uk/collect/search#/7/collection/37945/shield>

[2] <https://www.rct.uk/collect/search#/20/collection/11348/shield>

[3] <https://www.rct.uk/collect/search#/19/collection/38090/shield-dhal>

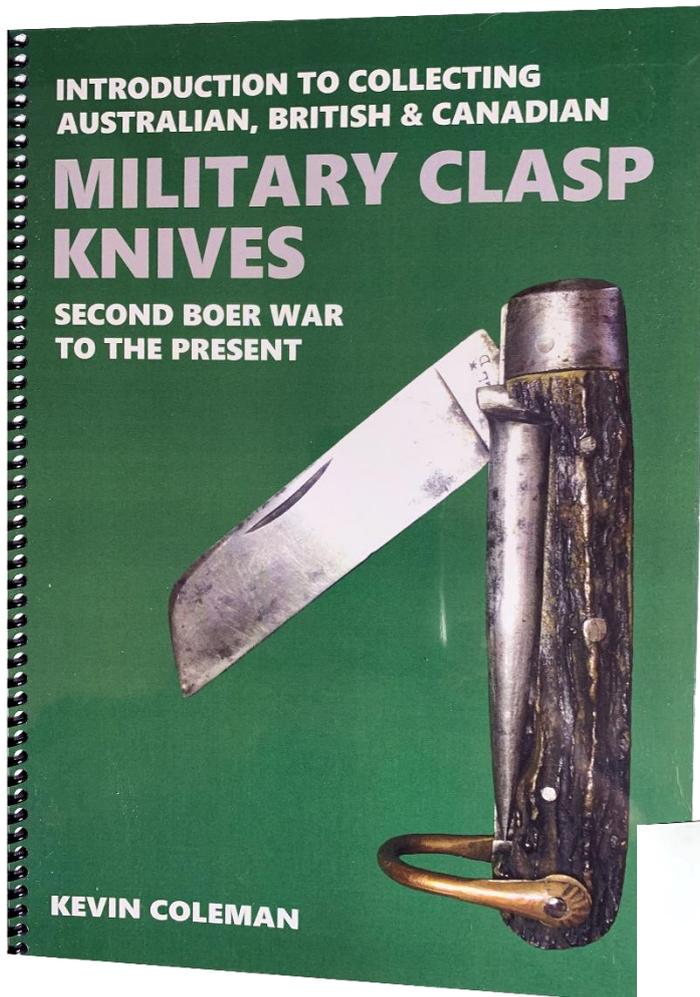


<https://www.runjeetsingh.com>



# New Book Release – Military Clasp Knives

## HAS Member Kevin Coleman



this book is an introduction to collecting military clasp knives and includes examples from the Boer War until the present. In all there are about 88 plates covering examples of the various knife patterns during the different periods.

There is a section on what collectors should know and a section on research projects which the author believes will help collectors build up their knowledge. In all the book has 90 pages.

All profits from the sale of this book go to the RSL. The purchase price is \$20 with just \$6.15 postage Australia wide.

Kevin can be contacted at:  
[kevandmarg2@gmail.com](mailto:kevandmarg2@gmail.com)  
 mobile number 0434 015 752  
 Kevin is happy to talk to members, however the preferred method of contact for ordering the book at the moment is email.

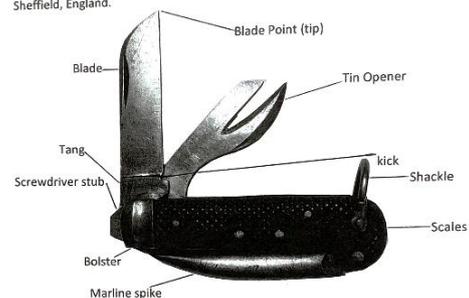
Kevin is hoping to attend the June Heritage Arms Society meeting in Adelaide and will have about 20 of his books with him.

If Adelaide members would like to pre-order books to be available at this meeting, please let me know.

### Part One: Clasp Knife Components and Military Markings

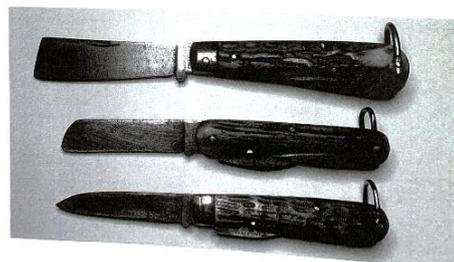
#### Components of Clasp Knives

The image below shows the main components of a clasp knife. This example is a 1942 three blade clasp knife with a steel bolster made by Taylor Eye Witness in Sheffield, England.



**Blades:** There are a number of different types of blade including the square point, sheep's-foot, spear point and clip point. The blade will vary depending on the date of manufacture. The plate below shows the three main blade types. The clip point blade can be seen in plate 84.

Plate 2; Top to bottom square point blade, sheep's-foot blade and spear point blade



# Meeting Topics

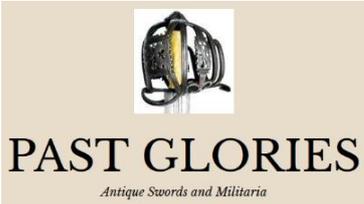
All members are reminded and encouraged to bring along items for display. **If you don't like the topic categories on the night, no problem, pick your own, if it is over 100 years old, we would love to see it.**\_\*  
 Note: All ammunition, loose or packeted / boxed, must be securely contained to prevent handling.

## Calendar of Topics

**Note: Display topics may change as required to accommodate special requests.**

Meeting	CONTINENTS	SPECIALIST INTEREST	EVENTS	OVER 100 YEARS
May	Disputed Territories	Firearms, Cannons, and Artillery	Military Blunders	Anything in your collecting interest over 100 years old. You Choose, Surprise us
June	Caribbean <a href="https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/carib.htm">https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/carib.htm</a>	Helmets and Head Dress	Crimea	
July	Islands	Japanese	Boxer Rebellion	
August	Central America <a href="https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/camerica.htm">https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/camerica.htm</a>	Edged Weapons	Napoleonic	
September	South America <a href="https://www.worldatlas.com/continents/south-america.html">https://www.worldatlas.com/continents/south-america.html</a>	Armour and Shields	Revolutions & Rebellions	
October	North America <a href="https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/na.htm">https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/na.htm</a>	Curiosa	Civil Wars	
November	Oceania <a href="https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/au.htm">https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/au.htm</a>	Hunting & Sport	Zulu & Boer Wars	
December	Africa <a href="https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/af.htm">https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/af.htm</a>	Accoutrements, Badges & Buttons	Great Sea Battels	
January	Middle East <a href="https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/me.htm">https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/me.htm</a>	Loading tools and Flasks	Ashanti, Egypt, and the Sudan	
February	Asia <a href="https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/as.htm">https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/as.htm</a>	Uniforms	Northwest Frontier	
March	Europe <a href="https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/eu.htm">https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/eu.htm</a>	Police, Bushrangers, Outlaws, Gangsters, & Pirates	Indian Mutiny	
April	Australia <a href="https://www.worldatlas.com/maps/australia">https://www.worldatlas.com/maps/australia</a>	Medals, Awards, Presentation & Coats of Arms	WWI	

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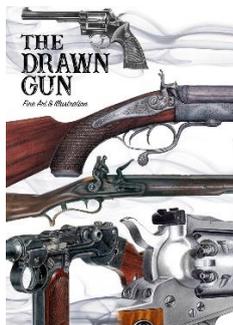


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If you are interested, contact HAS Member Martin Scott Edwards at [scott@naked-army.com](mailto:scott@naked-army.com)

'FULL' indicates each group is 'hat to heel' ready to display,' I have attached photography of each.

**RAGA GUNNER c1912 review order - Repo boots, needs bayonet, FULL \$4500 AUD**



(as previously featured in B&B October 2020 issue - headgear on this ensemble is particularly rare, the group was reviewed / authenticated by Keith Glyde)



**5TH BATTALION - DEMOBILISATION  
1918-19 \$13, AUD**

5Th Batt LG group review order; tunic, slouch hat, SBR, breeches, p08 belt, repo boots FULL (previously featured in B&B – article about OR’s pistol rig September 2020 issue. **Please note The pistol rig is rare and not included in the group.**

**VSR 1938-1940 GROUP –INTERWAR-WW2- ‘MOBILISATION! \$12000 AUD**

includes: 5th Batt VSR OR’s summer 1940 (named/attrib) shirtsleeve, pith, kilt, cover, boots FULL. 5th Batt VSR officers’ (Attrib) 1939 doublet, Sam Browne, trews FULL. 2/5th Batt officers’ (Attrib) 1940+ service dress, Sam Brown, SBR, needs boots/shoes FULL. 5th Batt officer’s ephemera named/attrib suitcase, incidental gear



(this is a 3-uniform group. The officers’ uniforms are offered with Sam Browne’s, the OR’s kilted uniform is offered with p08 belt - but I do have a p08 set I could potentially part with) Much is attributed to an individual, as well as various names/issues as would be common with peacetime/reserve units)

SUPPORT MATERIAL high resolution digital library included which is a combination of my own semi-professional photography, period images collected & scanned and/or from ‘open source’ SLVIC, SLSA, etc.



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