

**ARMAMENTS OF THE TROOPS OF THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD 1788-1931
(10)
“FIRST MODEL” PISTOL FOR CADETS AND GUARDS
OF THE ROYAL CORP OF “GUARDIAS DE LA PERSONA DEL REY”**

(Translation by Hector J. Meruelo)



Cavalry pistol of the model that equipped Cadets and Guards of the Royal Corp of “Guardias de la Persona del Rey” in the period 1814-21; Specimen with 228 mm long, 18mm caliber (“de a 17”) barrel dated 1813 bearing the Royal Arms and the inscription “RL. CVERPO DE GWARDIAS DE LA PERSONA DEL REY” and “6ª Bª Nº 71” (6th Brigade, number 71); Spanish lock marked “OLIDEN” (Nicolas de Oriden, Placencia).

In 1814 Fernando VII decreed that the name of the Royal Corp of “Guardias de Corps” be changed to Royal Corp of “Guardias de la Persona del Rey” (Guards of the Body of the King) and calling “Escuadrones” (Squadrons), still formed by “Brigadas”, what used to be “Compañías”. In 1815 it was composed of four Squadrons, all of them “Spanish”¹, of two Brigades each, and each one with

¹ In the “Guardias de Corps” the Companies, as previously explained were, a “Spanish” one, an “Italian” one, a “Flemish” one and from 1793-1807 an “American” one.

eight Cadets (four first Corporals and four second Corporals) and sixty-six Guards, all equipped with carbine and bayonet, a pair of pistols and riding sword; In 1817 a Brigade of “Flanqueadores” (Skirmishers) with eight Cadets and eighty-six Guards, equipped with “tercerola”, a pair of pistols and a curved saber.



English cavalry pistol “New Land Pattern” with a 16 mm (“de a 23”) caliber, 225 mm long barrel.

The pistol illustrated at the beginning of this article, with a design influenced by the English “New Land Pattern”, is the model contracted to the Placencia Guilds, which equipped the sixty-four Cadets and five-hundred and twenty-eight Guards of the eight Brigades in existence in 1815, with a total production of five-hundred and ninety-two pairs of pistols, seventy-four to each Brigade; On their barrels they bear the Royal Arms and the inscription “RL. CVERPO DE GVIARDIAS DE LA PERSONA DEL REY”, each individualized with the number in each Brigade with no reference to the Squadron.

The 1st and 2nd Brigades belonged to the 1st Squadron, the 3rd and 4th ones to the 2nd one, the 5th and 6th ones to the third one, and the 7th and 8th to the 4th Squadron, with unknown inscriptions that could indicate property of the brigade of “Flanqueadores”, which had eight Cadets and eighty-six Guards who may have used a pistol model with slight differences from that used by the other eight brigades in existence in 1815.

Most of the specimens of the pistol illustrated above that I have examined had a recomposed barrel with a brass plug with a drilled flash channel, in some cases lacking the Royal Arms and any references to the Royal Corp, the Brigade, and the soldier it equipped; These references were probably erased later; Also frequently they have their lock spring broken or herniated, probably due to defective construction, unusual in the “Spanish locks”.



It did not take long for Fernando VII to show how baseless were the hopes put on him by his subjects; Upon his return from France he refused to recognize the Constitution proclaimed in 1812 by the "Cortes" in Cadiz, jailed the most prominent liberal representatives and started his reign as an absolute despot, executing anyone who dared oppose him; Early in 1820 the Constitution was re-established upon the triumph of the liberal "pronunciamiento" (coup d'etat) led by Lieutenant Colonel Don Rafael de Riego and Fernando VII then decided to comply with it and to tolerate the frequent presence of the people in front of the Royal Palace, shouting at him their insolent "trágala" (Swallow it); Then treacherously on February, 4, 1821 he threw his Guards at them; On this day the Guards of the Body of the King, yelling "Long live the King and death to the Constitution" made a shameful charge against the people, which prompted the Captain General of Madrid to disarm them and cease their functions, until the "Cortes" decreed their extinction on April, 26 of the same year.

Gomez Ruiz and Alonso Juanola reproduce the document dated February, 12, 1821 in Madrid which details the armaments confiscated from the Royal Corp: The first Brigade surrendered 23 pairs of pistols, the 3rd one 30 pairs, the 4th 35 pairs, the 5th 40 pairs, the 6th 39 pairs, the 7th 45 ½ pairs, the 8th 36 pairs and the Brigade of "Flanqueadores" 60 ½ pairs giving an (erroneous) total of 336 pairs when actually there were 309 pairs; The 27 missing pairs were those of the 2nd Brigade which were omitted from the inventory by error.

These numbers included not only those of the Cadets and Guards but also those of the Officers, so the difference from the 686 required pistols could be larger if we include the 94 pairs of the Brigade of "Flanqueadores".

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Bibliography:

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