

ARMAMENTS OF THE TROOPS OF THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD, 1788-1931  
(12)  
SWORDS OF THE ROYAL CORP OF  
“GUARDIAS DE LA PERSONA DEL REY”, 1816-1821

(Translation by Hector J. Meruelo)



Riding sword of the model used by Cadets and Guards of the Royal Corp of “Guardias de la Persona del Rey”; 894 x 31 mm blade inscribed “*Rl. Cuerpo de Guards de la Persona del Rey, Rl. Fabrica de Toledo Año de 1816*” on its spine; No makers markings on its hilt or scabbard; The scabbard on this specimen is marked “1A BA N° 53” (1st Brigade, Number 53).

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of September of 1814 the Province of Guipúzcoa offered His Majesty the King to pay for the manufacture of 700 sword hilts and 700 scabbards for the swords that were to equip the Royal Corp of “Guardias de la Persona del Rey”; The offer being accepted, the Joint Juntas of Guetaria decided to offer, on December, 10, 1815, the contract to Gabriel Benito de Ibarzabal of Eibar .....” for the merits he earned in the fine manufacture of the saber and sword that he crafted for their Royal Highnesses the Most Serene, Prince, and “Infante”, of Spain”.

These hilts, with wired ebony handles were made in two models, differing in the border of the pommel cap being plain or etched with oak leaves and, by the lower ferrule of the grip, either plain or fully engraved; I have, so far, been able to examine only specimens with a plain hilt but always inscribed “*Rl. Cuerpo de Guards. de la Persona del Rey, Rl. Fabrica de Toledo, Año de 1816*” on their spine, otherwise with the same characteristics as the riding sword model introduced for the Cavalry of the Line in the Regulations of 1803: single edged and with a square spine in its first two thirds, and double edged the last third; Iron scabbard with oversized locket or top mount, two bands with rings, and a less pronounced end mount or chape retaining band, than those made for the Army; Both the scabbards and hilts lack any maker’s markings.

Just as with the “1<sup>st</sup> Model” pistols of this Royal Corp these swords were individualized by inscriptions indicating to which Brigade and which number they belonged to: Eight Brigades, two per Squadron with 8 Cadets and 66 Guards each; The scabbard of the specimen illustrated above is inscribed “6A BA N<sup>o</sup> 53” (1st Brigade, number 53), while others are inscribed on the hilt; From the inscription “6A BA 2<sup>o</sup> SUB- BRIGADIER” in one of these, we can deduce that the same simple model equipped the “Sub-Brigadier” (two for each Squadron), the Cadets and the Guards.



**Specimen of the simple model, individualized: “6A BA 2<sup>o</sup> SUB BRIGADIER”;**  
**Notice the irregular welding of the middle quillon to the guard.**

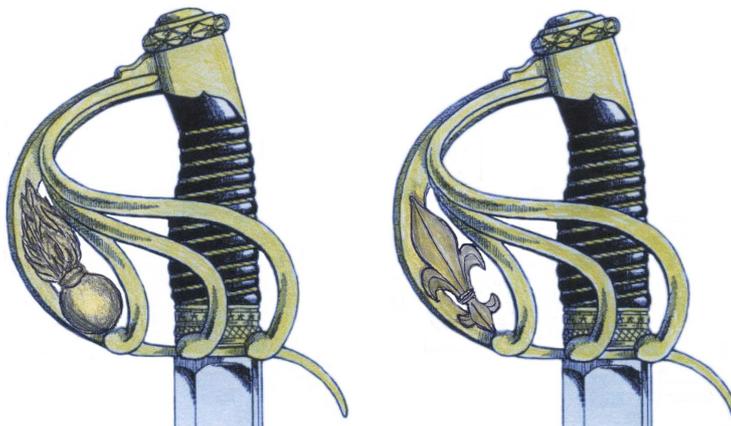
The specimens found nowadays of this model sword usually have their hilts in poor condition, the guard missing its quillons or with these poorly welded to the guard, indicating that they have been refurbished.



**Specimen showing the usual defects seen in this model; Notice the small orifice in its guard, present in all examples I have so far examined.**

It was my friend, Manolo Patiño, who one day pointed out to me the orifice in the guards, present in every example I had examined, and later on concluded to have served to attach a badge or emblem to it ; This badge is described in the text relating to a new organization of the Corp dictated by Royal Decree of October,28,1816 where , after ordaining an increase of the force by one Brigade of “Flanqueadores”, it specifies :”.....where the first and second Squadrons will be of Grenadiers , and the Third and Fourth ones of light cavalry , and where the members of these squadrons shall measure no less than five feet, two and a half inches and the dress of the light squadrons shall be the same as that of the Grenadiers, differing only in that , instead of the grenade that these bear on their sword, badge and coats, they will bear the fleur de lis, and instead of the Grenadier’s “mantilla” and square packs they will use light “chabracs” and round packs”

We can deduce that these sword hilts bore a Grenade as a general emblem and that this Royal order limited its use to only those two squadrons designated as “Grenadiers” while in those two squadrons designated as “Light”, the emblem would be a fleur de lis; I know only of one specimen still bearing its grenade but of none still having its fleur de lis.



**Drawings of two specimens of the model with etched pommel cap and totally engraved ferrule; The grenade and fleur de lis are located in between the guard and the quillons; Drawing by Eduardo Jimenez Sanchez-Malo.**

After their collision with the people of Madrid on February, 12, 1821 the following swords and sabers were surrendered by the Brigades: 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade 22 swords, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade 28, 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade 32, 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade 34, 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade 31, 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade 33, 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade 31, and the Brigade of “Flanqueadores” 63 sabers, giving an erroneous total of 298 as the real number is 274; The 24 missing swords were surrendered by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade which was omitted from this inventory by error.

**Juan L. Calvó  
November, 2011**

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