

ARMAMENTS OF THE TROOPS OF THE ROYAL HOUSEOLD, 1788-1931  
 (3)  
 PISTOLS OF THE BRIGADE OF ROYAL "CARABINEROS"  
 DURING THE REIGN OF CARLOS IV

(Translation by Hector J. Meruelo)



**Model of Cavalry pistol, made around 1790, which equipped an uncertain member of the Brigade of Royal "Carabineros"; 18 mm caliber ("de a 17"), 320 mm long barrel inscribed "...N/OLA/BE", under Crown (¿Joaquin de Olabe, Eibar?) and with the Royal Arms and "CARABINEROS REALES", also engraved; Silver front sight and Spanish lock, Model of 1789. (Andres Barnes Collection).**

In each Army Cavalry Regiment one Company was denominated of "Carabineros", as its members were equipped with rifled carbines; The Brigade of Royal "Carabineros", was formed in 1732 by uniting the companies of "Carabineros" of all the Cavalry Regiments into the First Cavalry Corp of the Army; It's excellent performance during the war in Italy motivated the King to declare it a Corp of the Royal Household in January of 1742.

In 1788 it was composed of a Main Staff and four Squadrons of three companies each; The Main Staff included one “Comandante” and aids, one secondary “Comandante” and aids, one Sergeant major, two Adjutants Major, two secondary Adjutants, one Chaplain, one Surgeon, one Kettle Drummer, one “Mariscal” (blacksmith), one Saddler, one Armourer, and one “Picador” (horse tamer); And in the Squadrons each Company included one Captain, one Lieutenant, one “Alferez” (sub-Lieutenant), two Sergeants, four Corporals, forty six “Carabineros”, and one Bugler.

In 1802 it was ordained that each Squadron be composed of two Companies and soon after two more Squadrons were added, one of Hussars and one of “Cazadores” (Chasseurs, Jaegers); These two last squadrons had been created as the “Guardia del Almirante” (“Admiral’s Guard”)<sup>1</sup> but were kept separate from the Brigade until 1805 when they were fully integrated in it as Light Cavalry Squadrons in contrast to the other four which were Cavalry of the Line; There were then a total of twelve Companies with 39 Officers and seven hundred and eighty mounts (paid by the King), including the drummer .



**Cavalry pistol made around 1790, a Model which equipped an unknown member of the Brigade of Royal “Carabineros”; 18 mm caliber (“de a 17”), 275 mm long barrel, marked “JPH/BUS/DUI”(José Joaquín de Bustindui Erquiñigo, Eibar), with the Royal Arms and “CARABINEROS REALES” engraved; Spanish lock, Model of 1789. (Photos Lluc Sala)**

Just as with the pistols of the Royal Corp of “Guardias de Corps”, in my opinion the only arms that can be defined as equipment of the Brigade of Royal “Carabineros” during Carlos IV’s reign, are those bearing the Royal Arms and “CARABINEROS REALES” engraved on the barrel and of these there are three known models; The first one , illustrated in the photograph at the beginning of this article, with the barrel pinned to the furniture, and the other two, with

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<sup>1</sup> Manuel Godoy, exalted by Carlos IV with the titles of “Príncipe de la Paz”, “Generalísimo” and “Almirante”

different barrel lengths, with the barrel coupled to the furniture by barrel bands; The model with the shorter barrel is the one shown in the second photograph; Of the longer barreled model one specimen is shown in the work “El Ejército de los Borbones” (The Army of the Borbons, Volume IV, page 577).

Evidently, both models, with pins and with barrel bands, are very similar to the pistols that equipped the Royal Corp of “Guardias de Corps”, and both models were also issued, in the same era, to the Officers of the Army Cavalry Regiments, also in two barrel lengths and all made by the Armourers Guilds in Placencia, in contrast to the regular troopers issue models which were made by the Royal Factory.



**Cavalry pistols, made around 1790; 18 mm calibre (“de a 17”) with 320 and 266 mm barrels, both with Crowned maker’s markings, the Royal Arms, and “REGIMTO. DE CABALLA. DE BORBON”, engraved; Contracted by this Regiment for its Officers. (Robert E. Brooker collection).**

The Squadrons of Hussars and “Cazadores” of the “Guardia del Almirante”, which were attached to the Brigade in 1802, were equipped with pistols of a different model to that made before the war with France (1793-95), in my opinion similar to that “new model” adopted as regular issue by the Army.



**Cavalry pistols “of the new model”, which equipped the Cavalry of the Line and the Light Cavalry respectively; Both with 230 mm long barrels, dated 1807 , in 18 mm caliber (“de a 17”); Mixed lock, “Model 1801”.**

I am not aware of the existence of any specimens of this “new model” bearing inscriptions or details that can identify them as equipment of the Light Squadrons of the Brigade of Royal “Carabineros”.

**Juan L. Calvó  
September, 2011**

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