

# A BRITISH LIÈGEOIS DRAGOON'S CARBINE OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY WAR PERIOD

by Michael Samuels

## Introduction

The British Board of Ordnance, in an effort of standardization, provided pattern arms—sample arms exhibiting required specifications-- and/or parts to contractors producing them under contract with the Board. Patterns for some uncommon small arms produced are currently unknown or not fully described. One such pattern resulted from the British Board of Ordnance, due to the pressures of the American Revolutionary War and the brewing conflict on the European continent, breaking from their established domestic System of Manufactures and entering into a series of contracts with, foreign, Liège arms manufacturers to produce what was ultimately to be a very large number of muskets. In addition to the muskets, the Board of Ordnance also ordered a much smaller number of what was described as a “Dragoon’s Carbine”. Very few of these carbines are currently extant (or known), and they have not been, to date, described in any reference sources known to the author. What follows is a description of the Liège-made Dragoon’s Carbine; its comparison to similar contemporaneous British long-arms; and its history and historical significance.



Figure 1. “The South View of the Tower of London” complex (Nathaniel & Samuel Buck engraving, 1737).

## Background to production of the pattern

The 1707 Act of Union merged the English and Scottish Monarchies and Parliaments, thus creating a unified “British” government. As a result of a consolidated government and an increased tax base, the British Board of Ordnance was on an improved financial footing and acted to increase its stores of small arms in an effort to prepare for future conflicts on the European continent. The Board of Ordnance began to contract with Birmingham arms manufacturers to produce a myriad of weapon parts, which were to be stored at The Tower of London (Figure 1) for future needs. This process began in a fragmented form, cobbling together several manufacturers, which laid the foundation for the comprehensive Ordnance System of Manufactures.<sup>1</sup> The System began to organize the production and supply-chain logistics of gun-lock makers, barrel makers, brass founders, small-work makers, rammer and bayonet makers, barrel filers, and rough stockers. These craftsmen were provided with sample (“pattern”) parts to faithfully duplicate. The production of these various makers flowed to the Small Gun Office Stores in The Tower of London where they were inspected for quality and adherence to specifications. The small arms components were then, when arms new arms were needed, forwarded to

setters up, who completed the arms and returned them to the Small Gun Office Stores for final inspections and storage in arsenals or distribution to troops (Figure 2).<sup>2</sup>

This Ordnance System of Manufactures, which almost exclusively used Birmingham manufacturers, undermined the monopolistic powers of the Worshipful Company of London Gunmakers. The Board of Ordnance found the Gunmaker’s Company to be unreliable at meeting the Board’s demand for arms. When there was a lack of Board of Ordnance work, the London gunmakers often found steadier work and contracts producing arms of a lesser-quality for the royal-chartered British trading companies—East India, Hudson’s Bay, and the Royal African Company. The ease with which these lower-quality arms, produced for these companies as trade items, passed inspection appealed to the London gunmakers in their employ. Arms produced for the Board of Ordnance had to pass a higher bar of inspection, which resulted in a higher rejection rate of completed arms. When the Board of Ordnance needed to have contracts for arms fulfilled, they often found the London gunmakers otherwise engaged, unable, and unwilling to work for the Board of Ordnance. The Birmingham manufacturers were eager to fulfill Board of Ordnance small arms contracts.<sup>4</sup>

However, during the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-14), Birmingham could not keep up with, despite increased production, the Board of Ordnance’s demand for arms. Subsequently, the Board of Ordnance began to purchase completed arms from the Dutch (in the United Provinces of Holland, not the Habsburg Spanish Netherlands). In 1707, after the Act of Union, the Worshipful London Company of Gunmakers lodged a formal complaint with Parliament concerning this policy. As a result, a parliamentary committee and Queen Anne resolved that troops were to be equipped with British-made arms “as far as is consistent with the service”, i.e., arms are to be procured in Great Britain, but only if the British manufacturers could keep up with the needs of the Board of Ordnance.<sup>5</sup> With the progression of the American Revolutionary War, later in the 18th century, manufacturers would once again fall short of providing services for the Board.

Equipping British and loyalist troops during the American Revolutionary War became a great challenge for the Board of Ordnance and depleted the inventories of small arms and parts available to the Small Gun Office Stores in The Tower of London. The primary bottleneck of supply was due to difficulties with the British lock-makers, who made, arguably, the most technically-complex component of a firearm. Most British lock-makers, at that time, were actively producing locks for the East India Company, who paid more money per piece (only a schilling per lock more) than the Board of Ordnance was willing to pay.<sup>6</sup> The Board may have tolerated this situation because the East India Company was also supporting the Crown in the American Revolutionary War by supplying “Indian trading guns” to their native allies in Florida.<sup>7</sup> Negotiations with the British gunmakers were at an impasse, the result of which allowed the Board to legally enter into arms-production contracts with foreign manufacturers.

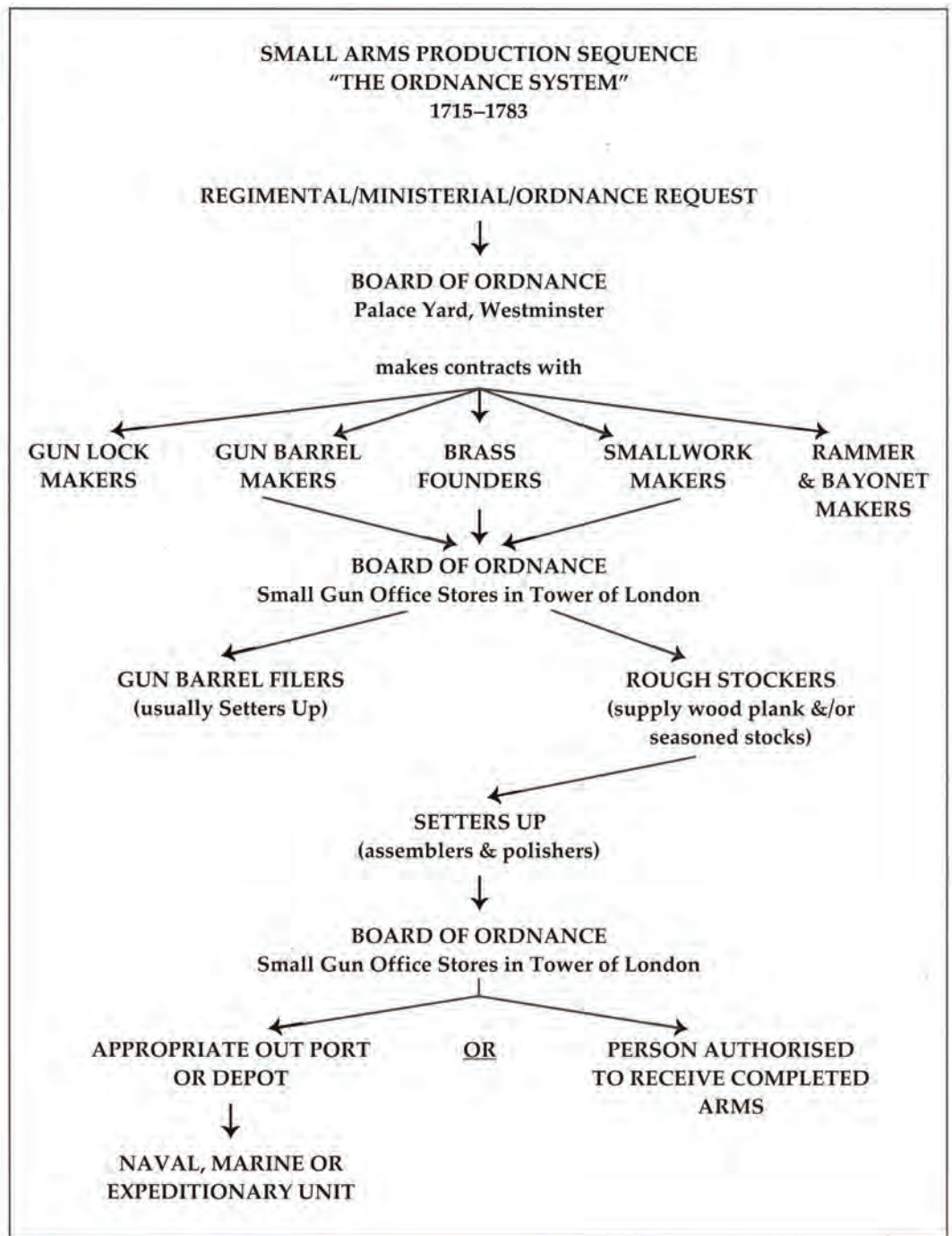


Figure 2. An illustration of the logistical flow of the Ordnance System of Manufactures.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 3. Top: A Liègeois Short Land Pattern Musket (The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Gift of Mr. & Mrs. John R. Muckel of Indiana Plumbing Supply, accession #1986-167). Bottom: A Liègeois Dragoon's Carbine (The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Museum Purchase, accession #1982-15).

The City of Liège, until 1795, was governed as a Prince-Bishopric—a theocratic monarchy, where the prince-bishop had legislative, executive, and judicial powers. The city was geographically surrounded by the Austrian Netherlands, but it operated as an independent entity within the Holy Roman Empire. Liège was also a very large center of firearms manufacturing with many skilled craftsmen in residence. At that time, the Prince-Bishopric was not very concerned about international political pressures, but more with obtaining lucrative foreign contracts from the highest bidder. The British Board of Ordnance had determined that many new Short Land Pattern Muskets would be required for the war in the American Colonies, and potentially for a future conflict with the French. To fulfill this need, the Board turned to Liège manufacturers for what turned out to be the largest order of Liège arms in history. In addition to procuring arms, the British government is also believed to have had the goal of keeping the Liège gunmakers busy with British contracts, thereby making them less likely to produce arms for the enemies of the British Empire—the French and the rebelling American colonists.

It was as early in the American Revolutionary War as April of 1776, that the British Board of Ordnance contemplated sending an officer to Liège as an “emergency” measure to determine if a contract for 40,000 locks could be arranged to alleviate the lock supply bottleneck<sup>8</sup>, but this contract is not believed to have been completed, and the locks never produced.<sup>9</sup> In December of 1777, Thomas Fitzherbert, a contractor from Portsmouth who supplied the Board of Ordnance with artillery and wagon horses and drivers, went to Liège to negotiate a contract, on behalf of the Board of Ordnance, for 2,000 “Dragoon Carbines” and bayonets. On this trip he supplied the manufacturer with a pattern Dragoon’s Carbine and bayonet. On 20 February of 1778, two weeks after the Franco-American Alliance had been signed, Fitzherbert also delivered a Short Land Musket pattern (the Pattern 1769/75) for the Liège gunmakers to copy. The contract with the Board of Ordnance resulted in a complaint from the Secretary to the French Minister at Liège of “how disagreeable it [the contract] would be to the French Court”. The Bishop-Prince of Liège was apparently unimpressed by the grievance, calling the Secretary “an imbecile” and advising complete disregard of the complaint. A month later, Fitzherbert contracted for 20,000 Short Land Pattern Muskets (Figure 3). The first contract was completed in May of 1778, but only with 1,000 of the Dragoon’s Carbines, and shipped to Dover by way of the port of Ostend in the Austrian Netherlands. In December of 1778, he finalized a second contract, and in July of 1779, he started work on a third contract. In total, Fitzherbert’s contracts resulted in the production of about 50,000 Short Land Pattern Muskets and bayonets; and the production of 1,000 Dragoon’s Carbines and bayonets. The additional 1,000 Dragoon’s Carbines that were stipulated in the first contract were probably delivered at a later date.<sup>10</sup> The output of the Liège manufacturers was so rapid and voluminous that the Board of Ordnance felt it was necessary to send an inspec-

tor (“viewer”) to Liège from the Small Gun Office at The Tower to expediate inspections of arms prior to shipment.<sup>11</sup> But, with the third contract, Fitzherbert began to develop some troubles finding qualified Liège craftsmen to manufacture muskets for the Board of Ordnance.

It was during negotiations for the third contract that Thomas Fitzherbert heard and reported rumors to the Board of Ordnance that another agent was competing for Liège manufacturers. The Board assured Fitzherbert of their commitment to him as an agent for the Board. However, there was indeed another agent, George Craufurd, who was busily engaging all the best Liège manufacturers, thereby freezing Fitzherbert out of completing his third contract. Craufurd offered the Board of Ordnance an accelerated schedule of musket production—800 arms shipped per week, with a total production of 20-40,000 muskets. The Board of Ordnance accepted Craufurd as their new agent, and Craufurd entered into his first contract with the Liège manufacturers. The contract specified that the arms were to be made “exactly in conformity” to the pattern delivered by Fitzherbert of 20 February 1778, thus conforming to the “pattern”.

Over the course of all the Board of Ordnance contracts with the Liège manufacturers, from 1778 to 1783, there were approximately 111,000 Short Land Pattern Muskets and, 2,000 Dragoon’s Carbines produced. Of these, 40,000 of the muskets were inspected and then refused while still in Liège. These arms, at a later date, found their way into the hands of the American rebels; use in the Belgian Civil Wars of 1787-89; and use in the French Revolutionary Wars of the 1790s. Most of the accepted arms shipped either to The Tower in London, or to Portsmouth to be issued directly to troops departing for America, but a shipment of 400 Dragoon Carbines were shipped directly to Provincial Georgia in Colonial America for the use of the loyalist “cavalry”. By the end of the American Revolutionary War, the Storehouses of the Board of Ordnance were filled beyond capacity with Liège-produced muskets and bayonets. Much of this excess inventory was sold at auction at The Tower in 1784-85 and/or broken up for the re-use of barrels, and the melting and recycling of brass furniture. Many of the remaining muskets and carbines were sent to colonial garrisons in the Caribbean for the use of local troops. The inventory returns of The Tower in February of 1786 indicated the presence of 6,500 muskets and 1,050 carbines (hence the belief that the second 1,000 of the carbines were indeed produced) of Liège origin.<sup>12</sup>

#### **The Liègeois Dragoon’s Carbine – a description of the pattern**

De Witt Bailey, when discussing the Liège-produced Short Land Pattern Musket, indicated that it can be very difficult to identify this pattern of musket without understanding its external and internal differences in design and marking when compared to the British-produced equivalent. The very same can be said of the



Figure 4. The Liègeois Dragoon’s Carbine examined for this limited study (author’s collection).

Liège-produced Dragoon's Carbine, which is not only rare, but also can be difficult to detect-- masquerading as a Short Land Pattern Musket with a small bore and slightly diminutive furniture. As can be seen in the previous Figure 3, the carbine and musket are almost identical in general appearance, but there are distinguishing features that are key to identifying these arms and the location of their manufacture. There are very few extant examples of the Liège-made Short Land Pattern Musket, and there are markedly fewer examples of the Liège-made Dragoon's Carbine (the only examples known to this author are illustrated in Figures 3 and 4). Certainly, other extant examples of the carbine may exist and are as of yet unidentified as such, or have been identified and are unknown to this author.

What follows is an examination and description of some of the features and dimensions of one Liègeois Dragoon's Carbine. Because these carbines were produced in two batches and delivered in three shipments (the first group of 1,000 to England, a group of 400 to Provincial Georgia, and the remainder to England), it is unknown if there may be some variability in the design of some of its components. It is known that two different pattern arms were delivered to Liège for the production of the Short Land Pattern Muskets, which resulted in slight variations in design between subsequent contracts. Therefore, we will be comparing the Liègeois Dragoon's Carbine to other contemporaneous similarly-designed British Ordnance small arms-- the British-made 1777 (non-S sideplate first model) Short Land Pattern Musket; the 1760 Light Infantry Pattern Carbine; and only certain specific features of the Liègeois Short Land Pattern Musket. A summary of some of the salient features of the former two long-arms and the Dragoon's Carbine may be seen in Table 1.

### Proportions

As can be seen in Table 1, the Dragon's Carbine resembles the 1777 Short Land Pattern Musket and the 1760 Light Infantry Pattern Carbine in overall proportion. The Liège-made carbine has an overall length of 57", with a .68-caliber smooth-bore barrel of 42" length. The stock is walnut, with a butt-to-trigger distance of 13-1/2", and a butt-comb length of 8-3/4". These dimensions are very

similar to those of the 1760 Light Infantry Carbine, including the locations and distances between barrel pins and swivels. It almost appears that the pattern carbine provided to Liège may have been a 1760 Light Infantry Pattern Carbine that, aside from the lock, was equipped with an iron ramrod and furniture almost similar to that of the Short Land Pattern Musket. It should be noted that dimensions between individual arms within a pattern may vary, but not considerably. Dimensions quoted in the text and in Table 1 are derived from published literature and an examination of the subject Dragoon's Carbine.

### The Lock

The Dragoon's Carbine is equipped with a 1756 Land Pattern Carbine lock. This lock (Figure 5) is a pre-1777 style lock which features a short sear spring with a single exposed screw on the lock-plate face (just behind the cock attachment). The lock-plate, with dimensions of 6-1/4" x 1-1/8", is smaller than the plate found on a 1777 Pattern lock. There is a well-defined trefoil finial extending from the feather spring, which differs from the lobular finial found on later locks. There is also a double-line engraved paralleling the edges of the cock, top jaw, the rear steel surface and the lock-plate face. The inner surface of the lock-plate bears the Liège lock-maker's mark (Figure 5, bottom left)— "HO"—which does not match the identity of any British Board of Ordnance contractor of this time period.<sup>13</sup> The motif of a sunken rectangle containing initials is a typical design for a Liège maker's mark (for additional examples see Figure 5, bottom right). There are no inspector marks on the inner lock-plate, as would be expected with a British-made lock. The carbine lock-plate face is lightly marked "TOWER" on its tail; has a very faint "<coronet><over>GR" on its center; and a very faint small "<coronet>" inspector's mark below the pan. This inspector's mark would typically also be associated with a small broad-arrow mark, but the Liège-manufactured locks for both the musket and carbine appear to lack this mark. The engraving on the Liège-made locks is usually crude. All marks found on these long-arms have fade with time and repeated cleaning, as was required of British soldiers, to a bright finish (see Figure 6 for Liège-made 1777-style musket locks with well-preserved engraving).

**Table 1. A summarized comparison of three similar long-arm patterns.**

Longarm Pattern	Overall (OA) Length	Barrel Length	Barrel Bore Caliber	Lock Type & Dimensions	Sideplate Type & Dimensions	Buttplate Tang Length	Thumbplate Type & Dimensions	Noseband Material & Type	Triggerguard Type & Length	Front Rammer-Pipe Types	Middle Rammer-Pipe Types	Rammer Material & Type	Stock Comb Length
Liègeois Dragoon's Carbine (Subject Carbine)	57"	42"	0.67	1756 Carbine 6 1/4" x 1 1/8"	Flat Land Pattern 5 11/16" OA 3 1/4" btwn screws	3 3/4"	Land Pattern 2 5/16" x 1 15/16"	Cast Brass	Land Pattern 10 1/2"	Trumpet	Barrel	Steel w/ Button Head	9"
1779 Short Land Pattern Musket (non-5 Sideplate)	58"	42 3/16"	0.75	1777 Pattern 7" x 1 1/4"	Flat Land Pattern 6 3/16" OA 3 13/16" btwn screws	4 3/8"	Land Pattern 2 5/8" x 1 15/16"	Cast Brass	Land Pattern 11 5/16"	Trumpet	Barrel & Trumpet	Steel w/ Button Head	8 7/16"
1760 Light Infantry Carbine	57"	42"	0.67	1756 Carbine 6 1/8" x 1 1/16"	Rounded Land Pattern 5 1/2" OA 3 1/16" btwn screws	2 3/4"	Lord Loudoun Pattern 2 1/8" x 1"	Sheet Brass	Lord Loudoun Pattern 10 1/2"	Barrel	Barrel	Wood w/ Brass Tip	8 3/4"



Figure 5. The Liège-made 1756 Land Pattern Carbine lock (top and middle). Note the Liège lock-maker's mark inside below the hammer, close up of "HO" lower left. Examples of other Liège lock-maker's marks <sup>14</sup> (lower right).<sup>15</sup>

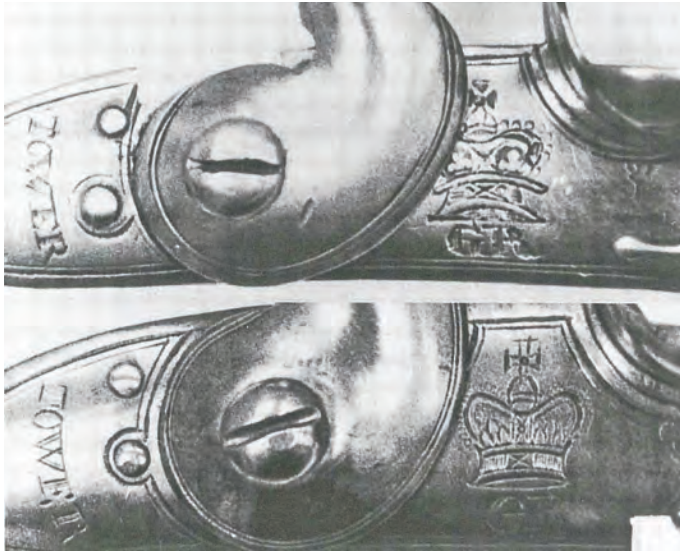


Figure 6. Liège-made 1777 Pattern musket locks with well-preserved engraving—note the crude engraving, and the inspector’s crown lacking a broad arrow mark.<sup>14</sup>



Figure 7. Assembly marks on the front inner edge of the lock-plate (left) and tumbler (right).

When manufacturing the carbine lock, the Liège lock-makers marked major lock components with hash marks or roman numerals—assembly marks. After disassembling and inspecting this Liège-made Dragoon’s Carbine, it was determined that the lock is the only component to have these marks (Figure 7), which is decidedly dissimilar from long-arms made by British makers, who marked almost every component, including the stock, for ease of



Figure 8. The flat side-plate of the Dragoon’s Carbine (top), the 1777 Short Land Pattern Musket (middle; photo courtesy of Morphy Auctions, [www.morphyauctions.com](http://www.morphyauctions.com)) and the 1760 Light Infantry Pattern Carbine (bottom; photo courtesy of Morphy Auctions, [www.morphyauctions.com](http://www.morphyauctions.com)).<sup>18</sup>

re-assembling individual arms from a batch of parts. It may be speculated that the Liège makers were assembling arms so quickly, and/or that they may have had a different process of setting up, that they did not have a need for these assembly marks. However, the lock is a unique component that required hand fitment of the cast and filed parts (they were not interchangeable). The completed lock had to be disassembled for the hardening and tempering processes of its springs; and the case hardening of its lock-plate, cock, frizzen, sear, bridle, and tumbler.<sup>16</sup> These lock parts underwent case hardening by placing groups of individual parts, which could not touch, from several locks in container within layers of charcoal, which was then maintained at a high temperature for many hours or several days.<sup>17</sup> After this process of hardening by carburization, the parts then were properly sorted, with the help of their assembly marks, prior to reassembly.

The Short Land Pattern Musket was equipped with a 1777 Land Pattern lock, which is slightly larger than the 1756 Land Pattern Carbine lock. The 1760 Light Infantry Carbine, however, was equipped with the carbine lock, but of British manufacture.

### The Side-plate



Figure 9. The brass founder's mark found on the underside of the tail-end of the side-plate of the Dragoon's Carbine.

The side-plate of the Dragoon's Carbine (Figure 8) is very similar in shape to that of the 1777 and 1779 (first model non-S side-plate) British-made Short Land Pattern Musket side-plate. Both plates are flat and composed of cast brass, but the side-plate for the Dragoon's Carbine is slightly smaller (5-11/16" vs. 6-3/16")

and with slightly closer screw holes (3-1/4" vs 3-13/16"), which correspond to the slightly smaller 1756 Land Pattern Carbine lock. The side-plate for the 1760 Pattern Light Infantry Carbine has a silhouette similar to the former two side-plates, but its surface is rounded, which was more expensive to produce.

The inner surface of the Dragoon's Carbine side-plate is marked with a typical Liège maker's mark—initials within a sunken rectangular mark. This mark probably represents one of the sub-contracting Liège brass founders (Figure 9). This mark does not correspond with any known contemporaneous British Board of Ordnance contractor.

### The Stock and its Markings

The stocks of all three long-arms are very similar in proportion. While there are not any assembly marks in the barrel or ramrod channels, as there are on most British-made military long-arms of the period, the Dragoon's Carbine does have some marks stamped into its stock. On the right flat of the butt there is the storekeeper's mark (Figure 10) of the quartermaster or armorer at the first armory to receive the carbine after its manufacture. This may have occurred at a warehouse, a depot, The Tower, or at a colonial outpost. The mark is a "<coronet> <over> GR".



Figure 10. The storekeeper's mark on the right butt-flat (left) and a graphic of the storekeeper's mark.<sup>19</sup>

On the Dragoon's Carbine there are three other marks, which are located in a longitudinal row, on the underside of the wrist of the stock (Figure 11). These marks, although difficult to decipher, are the Liège stock-maker's mark—initials in a sunken rectangle; the inspection mark for the stock itself-- a crown-like mark; and the final inspection mark of the viewer from The Tower— "<coronet> <over> <number>".

### The Trigger-guard

The brass trigger-guards from the three long-arms considered here vary either by shape or size. The trigger-guard on the Dra-

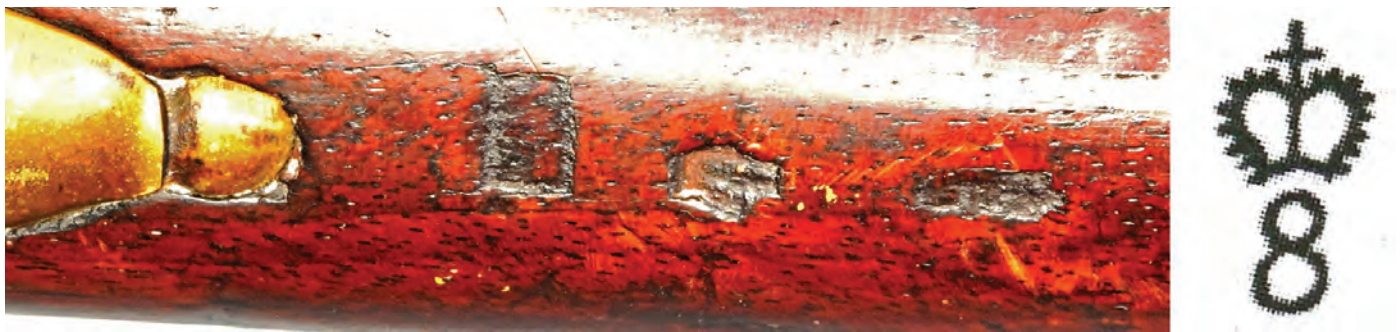


Figure 11. The marks of (starting adjacent to the trigger-guard): the stock-maker, the stock inspector, and the final inspector (left) and a graphic of the "<coronet> <over> <number>" mark of a viewer from The Tower (identified in figure 17 as the mark of the final inspector).<sup>18, 21</sup>



Figure 12. The trigger-guard of the Liège-made Dragoon's Carbine (top), Short Land Pattern Musket (middle; photo courtesy of Morphy Auctions, [www.morphyauctions.com](http://www.morphyauctions.com)) and 1760 Light Infantry Carbine (bottom).<sup>23</sup>

goon's Carbine (Figure 12) is essentially the same as that on the Short Land Pattern Musket, but the carbine version is slightly shorter in length (10-1/2" vs 11-5/16"). The style of trigger-guard on the 1760 Light Infantry Carbine, although the same length as that on the Dragoon's Carbine, is derived from the 1745 Lord Loudoun Light Infantry Pattern Carbine and has an entirely different shape from the Land Pattern trigger-guard.

### The Thumbpiece

The thumbpiece, located at the top of the wrist of the stock, found on the Dragoon's Carbine is of a Land Pattern style, but slightly smaller (Figure 13). The Short Land Pattern thumbpiece is larger and more drawn-out in its longitudinal curves. The Light Infantry Carbine has a distinctive thumbpiece, which, however, is not exclusive to that pattern of carbine. The same style Lord Loudoun Pattern thumbpiece may be found on the rare Pattern 1770 Serjeant of Grenadiers Carbine.

The thumbpiece of British military small arms was routinely marked with the military unit information, to which it was issued, and a rack or weapon number. When surplus weapons were sold in auctions at The Tower, the unit information was removed prior to sale. The subject Dragoon's Carbine bears a thumbpiece that is marked "E <over> 99", which probably indicates "weapon 99" of "Company E". A weapon number of "99" is quite high; all British military companies deployed overseas (after 1778) in this time period numbered 77 men who carried a long-arm—70 privates, four corporals, and three sergeants.<sup>24</sup> It is possible that a colonial storekeeper (the Dragoon's Carbines were designated for the use of colonial troops) numbered all the carbines in one shipment consecutively. Loyalist units in the southern theater of the American Revolutionary War, where some Dragoon's Carbines were shipped for use by troops, did not have military companies that numbered anywhere near 99 men. Because this subject carbine still bears its unit markings, it may be speculated that this carbine never re-

turned to The Tower and may have remained in the Caribbean or in America after issuance and use.



Figure 13. The thumbpiece of the Dragoon's Carbine (left), Short Land Pattern Musket (middle; photo courtesy of Morphy Auctions, [www.morphyauctions.com](http://www.morphyauctions.com)), and 1760 Light Infantry Carbine (right; photo courtesy of Morphy Auctions, [www.morphyauctions.com](http://www.morphyauctions.com)).

### The barrel

The barrel of the subject Dragoon's Carbine was originally 42" in length, but this example has lost approximately half-an-inch of its length due to muzzle damage sometime in its history. The muzzles of many British long-arms of the period suffered similar damage because of the thin nature of the barrel walls at the muzzle. There is a bayonet stud, that was originally approximately 2" from the muzzle, which is similar to those found on the Short Land Pattern Musket and the Light Infantry Carbine. Of course, the carbines required a bayonet with a narrower socket to accommodate the 0.67-caliber barrel, versus 0.75-caliber for the musket.

The subject Dragoon's Carbine barrel does not have any surviving maker's or inspection marks on the external surfaces of the barrel, which is probably due to repeated cleaning while in service. However, the underside of the breech bears furtive and incomplete marks which may represent a maker's mark (Figure 14) and an inspection mark. The Liège-made Short Land Muskets are known to have marks from both maker and inspector stamped into the top of the breech.



Figure 14. A possible maker's mark on the underside of the breech (left) and a possible incomplete crossed-scepters inspector's mark on the underside of the breech (right).

### The rammer, nose cap, and rammer pipes

The Dragoon's Carbine (Figure 15) and the Short Land Pattern Musket are both equipped with iron rammers with button-style ends. The Light Infantry Carbine has a tapered wood rammer with a tapered closed-end brass cap. In the latter 1770s, some of these 1760 Light Infantry Carbines were equipped with replacement iron rammers. The Dragoon's Carbine has four brass rammer pipes (Figure 16), as do the Short Land Pattern Musket and the Light Infantry Carbine. The first pipe on the muzzle-end is of a trumpet design for both the Dragoon's Carbine and the Short Land Pattern Musket. The first three rammer pipes of the Light Infantry Carbine are of the barrel-type. The second pipe of the Short Land Pattern Musket is of the Pratt-type—conical with a flared mouth. The middle two pipes of the subject Dragoon's Carbine are barrel-type, but the second pipe of the Dragoon's Carbine in the Williamsburg Collection is a Pratt-type. It is possible that the second 1,000 Dragoon's Carbines produced for the Fitzherbert contract were equipped with the Pratt-type rammer pipe. All three long-arms are equipped with a tailpipe.



Figure 15. The muzzle end of the Dragoon's Carbine with its iron rammer and cast-brass nose-cap (top), Short Land Pattern Musket with its iron rammer and cast-brass nose-cap (middle, photo courtesy of Morphy Auctions, [www.morphyauctions.com](http://www.morphyauctions.com)) and 1760 Light Infantry Carbine with its wood rammer and folded-brass nose-cap (bottom; photo courtesy of Morphy Auctions, [www.morphyauctions.com](http://www.morphyauctions.com)).



Figure 16. The brass rammer pipes of the subject Dragoon's Carbine. Note the spoon-shaped rammer retention-spring on the tail piece (bottom).

### The butt-plate

The butt-plate is the final design element to consider with the Dragoon's Carbine. The Liège-produced carbine and musket both have a uniquely shaped butt-plate tang, which helps to distinguish these long-arms from similar British-made long-arms. The Liège-made butt-plates have longer tangs that also have more steps to their tapering edges (Figures 17).

The Liègeois Dragoon's Carbine was a long-arm uniquely designed, contracted for, and produced for a purpose. Because of some distinct features, it can be differentiated from other similar British military long-arms.

### The Use and Possible Disposition of the Liègeois Dragoon's Carbines

The Minutes of the British Board of Ordnance refer to this uniquely designed carbine as a "Dragoon's Carbine". The carbines intended for dragoon troops, in the third-quarter of the 18th century, usually were equipped with sling bars and had much shorter barrels to facilitate their ease of handling for mounted soldiers. Mounted dragoon troops were intended to be a rapidly deployed force that could quickly dismount and skirmish with the enemy. Over the course of the century, there was an increasing emphasis on the value of troop mobility and the value of firepower in the developing field of linear tactics.<sup>26</sup> Earlier, in the mid-18th century, dragoon troops were equipped with longer-barreled carbines that lacked sling bars. The carbines were carried along the right side of the saddle, with the butt of the carbine in a holster just to the front of the stirrup. This arrangement is illustrated in several mid-century paintings of mounted British troops by David Morier. After 1770, by order of the King, there was a rapid increase in the use of carbines by dragoons and infantry troops, this included commissioned and non-commissioned officers.<sup>27</sup> The Liègeois Dragoon's Carbines were intended for loyalist troops in the colonies, and as such, the Board of Ordnance may have wanted a more-versatile weapon that could be utilized as a carbine for both mounted dragoons and infantry troops.

At the time of the Liège arms contracts the British military campaign in the American colonies began to take on a new strategic tack. The British campaign for dominance in the northern colonies came to a standstill, because the British forces were unable to maneuver the Continental forces into any decisive engagements. In addition, in early 1778, the war had expanded into more of a global conflict with the decision of the French king, Louis XVI, to

Figure 17. Butt-plate of the Liège-made Dragoon's Carbine (left; The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Museum Purchase, accession #1982-15), Liège-made Short Land Pattern Musket (second from left; The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Gift of Mr. & Mrs. John R. Muckel of Indiana Plumbing Supply, accession #1986-167), British-made Short Land Pattern Musket (second from right; photo courtesy of Morphy Auctions, www.morphyauctions.com) and 1760 Light Infantry Carbine (right).<sup>25</sup>



support the cause of the American rebels. In an effort to assuage the grievances of the American colonies, the British Parliament repealed the Stamp Act and most of the Intolerable Acts that appeared to have triggered the revolution. Parliament also formed a peace commission to approach Congress with an offer of the suspension of hostilities and the pardon of rebels if the colonies declare allegiance to the Crown. It was believed that the terms of peace offered by the commissioners would be “gladly embraced” by the Americans, and that this would make any further military campaigns unnecessary.<sup>28</sup> Congress, in response to the overtures of the peace commission, financed the publication of 1,300 copies of *Observations on the American Revolution*, which made it very clear that the American rebels “will not submit” to the Crown.<sup>29</sup> On 22 April 1779, Congress resolved that it would have no dealings with the peace commission and “that the only negotiable points were British withdrawal and recognition of independence.”<sup>30</sup> October of 1778 was set as a deadline, by the British government, for progress on the battlefield or in peace negotiations, and those goals having not been achieved, a plan was undertaken to redirect the thrust of the British war effort towards the southern colonies of Georgia and South Carolina, where it was believed, erroneously, that the sympathies of the population leaned heavily in favor of the Crown.

On 29 December 1778, a sea-borne force led by Lt. Col. Archibald Campbell captured Savannah as a part of a plan to enlist the aid of loyalists from Georgia and South Carolina, as well as those that had taken refuge in Florida. In addition, it was believed that there were many Native American allies that would rally to the British cause in exchange for a limit on colonial encroachment on their lands. In addition to the regular troops that accompanied Lt.

Col. Campbell to Savannah, local loyalist units were formed. As an example, one of the loyalist units established by Lt. Col. Campbell was the Georgia Light Dragoons. Recruitment for the Georgia Light Dragoons occurred in August of 1779, with enticements of enlistments bounties, clothing and full dragoon equipment.<sup>31</sup> It is unknown if the Liègeois Dragoon's Carbine was a part of this equipment for this unit, but it is known that 400 of these carbines were shipped directly from Liège via a port in the Austrian Netherlands to either Savannah or Sunbury, both ports in the Georgia colony, for the use of loyalist troops. It is unlikely, considering the eventual failure of the British southern campaign, that any of these 400 Dragoon's Carbines ever found their way back to The Tower of London.

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