

# 1797 India Pattern Musket

"Brown Bess" is a nickname of uncertain origin for the British Army's muzzle-loading smoothbore flintlock Land Pattern Musket and its derivatives.

The musket design remained in use for over a hundred years with many incremental changes in its design. These versions include the Long Land Pattern, the Short Land Pattern, the India Pattern, the New Land Pattern Musket and the Sea Service Musket.

The Long Land Pattern musket and its derivatives, all 0.75 inch calibre flintlock muskets, were the standard long guns of the British Empire's land forces from 1722 until 1838, when they were superseded by a percussion cap smoothbore musket.

By 1797 the exigencies of war spelled the demise of the Short Pattern, and all manufacture was turned to building the more Spartan India pattern. For the most part, the gun underwent few changes from its introduction until Waterloo, with the exception of the cock, which was altered from the traditional gooseneck style to a sturdier, reinforced version in 1809. In all, more than 1,600,000 India-pattern Brown Bess muskets were manufactured between 1804 and 1815. As well as British usage, some were also carried by King George's allies, among them the Russians and Prussians.

The Brown Bess employed a flintlock ignition system, whereby a piece of shaped ("knapped") flint was held between the jaws of a cock, and when the trigger was pulled it was then brought down by the force of a mainspring to scrape against the surface of a combination striker and pan cover to produce a shower of sparks, which would then ignite the priming powder and set off the main charge through a touchhole in the side of the breech.

While seemingly primitive by modern standards, the flintlock was a head-and-shoulders improvement over the earlier matchlock. First appearing in various forms in the early 1600s, it became the preferred form of ignition in less than a century.

Flintlocks had the advantages of reliability and relatively low cost of production. If the flint was changed regularly and adjusted properly, weather conditions appropriate to the use of the gunpowder of the period and the touchhole kept clear, reliability was excellent.

The Brown Bess, as mentioned earlier, was a smoothbore musket, as were most of the military arms of the period. The reason for this was ease of manufacture and simplicity of loading. Rifles, which were still in their fledgling state for military use in the late 18th century, took far too long to load, required specialized training and were more expensive to manufacture. The British did have some rifle troops, but Napoleon eschewed them completely as being not worth the bother.

Tactics of the period called for a soldier to load and fire at massed troop formations as rapidly as possible, the object of the exercise being to get as many balls flying in the direction of the enemy in as short a time as possible. Though styles of deployment (column vs. line, etc.) might vary from country to country, basically a textbook-style battle would go something like this: A large number of troops, spaced just close enough together to be able to manipulate their muskets, faced each other at a given distance--usually between 100 and 200 yards. They would be placed in several ranks. The order to fire would be given, and this having been carried out, soldiers would reload and advance, firing at increasingly closer ranges until the command to fix bayonets would be given and the contest decided by hand-to-hand fighting.

The War of 1812 (which lasted from 1812 to 1814) was a military conflict between the United States and Great Britain. As a colony of Great Britain, Canada was swept up in the War of 1812 and was invaded several times by the Americans. The war was fought in Upper Canada, Lower Canada, on the Great Lakes and the Atlantic, and in the United States. The peace treaty of Ghent (1814), which ended the war, largely returned the status quo. However, in Canada, the war contributed to a growing sense of national identity, including the idea that civilian soldiers were largely responsible for repelling the American invaders. In contrast, the First Nations allies of the British and Canadian cause suffered much because of the war; not only had they lost many warriors (including the great Tecumseh), they also lost any hope of halting American expansion in the west, and their contributions were quickly forgotten by their British and Canadian allies (see First Nations and Métis Peoples in the War of 1812).



An example of a soldier from the War of 1812



Grenadier Private of the Royal Newfoundland Fencibles

## **SPECIFICATIONS**

### India Pattern Flintlock Musket

Caliber	.75 inches
Barrel length	39 inches
Overall length	55 inches
Weight	93/4 lbs
Stock	Walnut
Finish	Bright steel, brass furniture
Bullet(ball) weight	545 grains
Black powder charge	100 grains
Muzzle velocity	1000 feet per second
Muzzle energy	2,425 foot-pounds
Number produced	2,800,000 plus



Socket bayonet for the India Pattern Musket