



Miniature 12 Pounder Napoleon Cannon Drill

Written by Sgt D. Calogero

2015-03-10

Authorized by LCol B.A. Purcell
Commanding Officer 15 Fd Regt RCA

2015-09-24

PREFACE

GENERAL

1. This précis is written primarily for detachment commanders and instructors.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

PREFACE.....	ii
GENERAL.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	iv
CHAPTER 1	1
HISTORY OF THE MINIATURE 12 POUNDER	1
USES	1
PRECAUTIONS	1
EQUIPMENT.....	2
CHAPTER 2	4
DUTIES.....	4
LOADING.....	4
POSITIONS.....	5
CHAPTER 3	6
FIRE ORDERS.....	6
FIRING.....	6
MISFIRES	7

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1: Miniature 12 Pounder Napoleon Cannon with wooden dowel rammer and hooked brass bucket.....	3
Figure 2-1: Location of the Detachment Commander in the set, kneel position	5
Figure 3-1: Lighting the fuze	7

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE MINIATURE 12 POUNDER

HISTORY OF THE MINIATURE 12 POUNDER

1. The miniature 12 pounder Napoleon black powder cannons found in the Officers' Mess and the Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess of the Bessborough Armoury were manufactured by BGen WT Wickett. In addition to the miniature 12 pounder cannons found in the two messes, a number of identical cannons continue to be held as part of the private collections of some mess members. BGen Wickett was the Commanding Officer of the 15th Field Artillery Regiment, The Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery, from 1973-1978 and later served as the unit's Honorary Colonel.

2. There are eight cannons held between the two messes, four per respective mess. BGen Wickett also supplied cannons to The Royal Canadian Artillery Kit Shop. The Kit Shop in turn sold them for many years to customers across Canada. As a result, miniature 12 pounder Napoleon black powder cannons can, to this day, be found in widespread use with individuals and organizations countrywide.

USES

3. The cannons are primarily fired at functions held by the Officers' and Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Messes. Foremost among these functions are the "Saint Barbara Special Guest Night" for Officers and the "Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Annual Mess Dinner". The cannons are also, on occasion, fired at private functions like weddings and on New Year's Eve.

PRECAUTIONS

4. By nature, the black powder used presents a risk of explosion and possible personal injury. As such, the following precautions must be observed:

- a. There must be no lit open flame or lit cigarette within 10 metres of the black powder whether the powder is in its container, being loaded or is

loaded in a cannon that is ready to fire. This is the typical distance between the west line on the parade square and the outdoor smoking area;

- b. The striking of a match or use of a lighter is only permitted just before the fuze is lit when safe to do so and when ordered;
- c. Any loose black powder that may spill in the loading process should be cleaned up immediately;
- d. The cannon barrel must be clean, dry and free of fowling. Air should pass freely between the muzzle and vent or flash port when tested. The wheels and barrel must be firmly secured to the carriage. The brass bucket should be removed from its holding hook to ensure it does not fly clear when firing;
- e. Protective equipment must be worn by gun crews at all times. Safety equipment includes safety glasses, ear protection, and gloves; and
- f. A bucket of water and fire extinguisher shall be available on the gun line.

EQUIPMENT

- 5. The following equipment is required (Figure 1-1 shows items a-c):
 - a. 12 pounder Napoleon black powder cannon;
 - b. rammer either wooden dowel tipped with a 9mm brass casing (shown in Figure 1-1) or a double ended brass rammer (not shown);
 - c. brass bucket (shown in Figure 1-1, partially obscured by wheel);
 - d. container of FFF or FF granular back powder;
 - e. fuze cord;
 - f. scissors;
 - g. wading material (bathroom tissue or tissue);
 - h. plastic funnel with a tip smaller than 9mm in diameter that will fit into the barrel via the muzzle;
 - i. safety glasses;

- j. ear protection;
- k. gloves;
- l. bucket filled with water; and
- m. fire extinguisher.

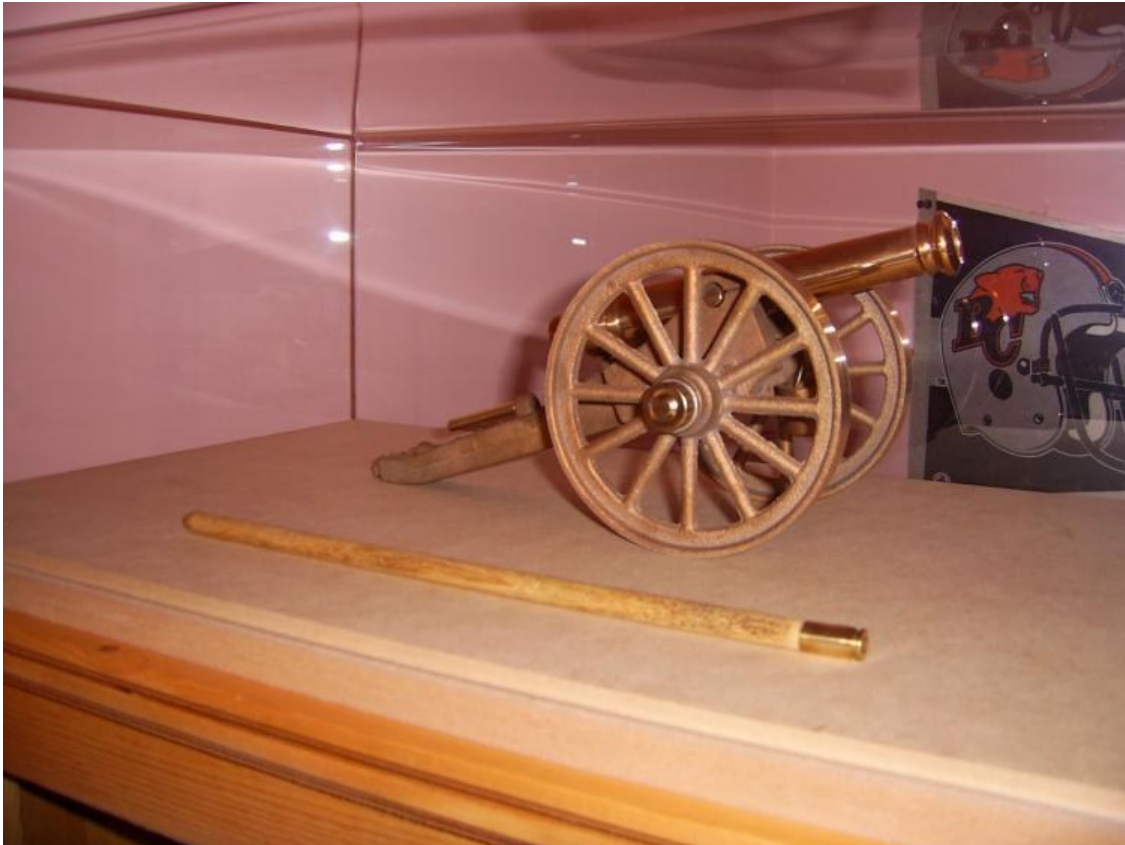


Figure 1-1: Miniature 12 Pounder Napoleon Cannon with wooden dowel rammer and hooked brass bucket

CHAPTER 2 DUTIES, LOADING AND POSITIONS

DUTIES

1. One to six guns can be used as a Firing Battery/Troop or single gun. The firing unit is commanded by the Gun Position Officer (GPO) for the Officers and the Troop Sergeant-Major (TSM) for the Warrant Officers and Sergeants. The gun detachment commanders load, fire and clear any misfires.

A memo should be sent in advance to Regimental Operations requesting that they inform local police ahead of the firing time that the event will be taking place. A call to the non-emergency line just prior to firing will confirm the event in real time and prevent any police responding to a 'SHOTS FIRED' call. Any prearranged window for firing should be observed. For example: firing can be conducted from 2200-2300 hours.

LOADING

2. Loading the cannons is done in a location away from the firing area. This separation is observed in order to keep the cache of black powder or any spilled black powder away from any accidental ignition that may occur in the firing area where an open flame is used. The fuze also sends out sparks after it is lit. Typically, the loading is done in the alcove and the firing is done on the west white line of the parade square.

Loading:

- a. Ensuring the cannon is ready for firing and has been inspected as explained in Chapter 1 subparagraph 4(d);
- b. A 1 inch (2.54 cm) piece of fuze cord should be cut and placed into the vent or flash port located at the breech end of the cannon. A longer fuze will take more time to ignite the black powder and fire the cannon. Care should be taken to keep the fuze cord in place;
- c. A single brass bucket shall be filled with black powder. The maximum charge will be one bucket of black powder;
- d. With the muzzle end pointing up, the funnel is put into the muzzle and held with the left hand which is holding the cannon upright;

- e. The powder in the bucket is poured into the funnel. The funnel is removed after all the powder has drained into the barrel;
- f. The powder is compressed by ramming it down with the rammer while the cannon is still in the vertical position; and
- g. A 2 inch by 2 inch wad of tissue is dampened slightly and rammed down the barrel, followed by a second **dry** 2 inch by 2 inch wad which is also rammed firmly down. The cannon is now ready to fire.

POSITIONS

3. The guns are moved to the 'firing line', with two metres separation between guns. The gun detachment commanders will stand properly at ease two feet behind and to the left of the vent or flash port. This location is shown in Figure 2-1. This is to ensure no loose powder will hit the commander when the cannon is fired via the vent or flash port. The GPO/TSM will stand such that he/she has sufficient vantage so as to ensure safety and control whether it be on the side of the gun line or behind. **NO PERSONNEL ARE TO BE IN FRONT OF THE GUNS.**



Figure 2-1: Location of the Detachment Commander in the set, kneel position

CHAPTER 3

FIRE ORDERS, FIRING AND MISFIRES

FIRE ORDERS

1. The GPO/TSM will call the unit to ATTENTION and order SET, KNEEL at which time the detachment commanders will shoot the left foot forward and rest on their right knee with the right leg and left knee similar to the GROUND ARMS squad 1 position. The arms are to the side as seen in Figure 2-1. All further orders are acknowledged by raising the right arm above the head, fingers extended.

ORDERS

- (1) FIRE MISSION BATTERY (TROOP or GUN)
- (2) BLANK
- (3) BEARING AS LAID
- (4) ELEVATION AS LAID
- (5) 1 ROUND FIRE FOR EFFECT
- (6) END OF MISSION
- (7) VERIFY GUNS EMPTY
- (8) CEASE FIRE

The orders can be adjusted to include AT MY COMMAND and either a time interval between rounds or a battery right, dependent on the requirements for the occasion at hand.

FIRING

2. When a gun is to fire, the detachment commander will ignite the fuze using a match or lighter while taking care to ensure that his/her body remains clear of the vent or flash port throughout as shown in Figure 3-1. When ordered to VERIFY GUNS EMPTY after the firing has occurred, the cannon will be inspected to ensure it is empty and the detachment commander will in turn report 1 EMPTY, 2 EMPTY, etc.

MISFIRES

3. The gun drill prescribed in this publication is the same as field artillery gun drill with the howitzers, except on a smaller scale. For this reason, MISFIRES for blanks are observed in the same manner as a misfire with a 105mm blank round. If the cannon fails to fire, the number 1 will report 'GPO/TSM, NO ___ MISFIRE'. The GPO/TSM will then order REST and the next gun in sequence will proceed with firing. The standard pause of 30 minutes for a misfire with blanks will be observed. The gun will then be taken away from the gun line and the powder will be cleaned out and disposed of. The requirement to inspect the gun as stated in Chapter 1 subparagraph 4(d) will be followed prior to the gun being brought back into action.



Figure 3-1: Lighting the fuze