

Mystery Object 02



Leather Cannon

The leather cannon, or leather gun, was an experimental weapon, first used in northern Europe in the 1620s. The aim was to construct a light and cheap weapon that would bridge the gap between the musket and the heavy stationary cannon. The varnished leather from which the gun got its name acted merely as the outer protective surface of the piece. The first working examples were built by Swiss and Austrian engineers.

The first attempts to use them in combat were made by **Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden**, during the Polish–Swedish War (1626–1629), but were largely unsuccessful. They were used extensively during the English Civil Wars in the 1640s and 1650s, especially by the Scottish Covenanter army

Artillery batteries were situated as close as possible to the enemy position without exposing the gunners to enemy fire and usually consisted of a levelled area protected by earth banks with the cannon mounted on wooden platforms. The main marching armies were usually well-equipped with field artillery.

The heavier field guns were set up at the beginning of a battle and remained in place. Their purpose was to fire upon the enemy army from long range before the troops came into direct contact. The opening cannonade could continue for several hours, sometimes forcing enemy troops to move from a good position and often weakening the morale of the troops under fire, as we saw at Newburn Ford.

The lightest guns could be moved with the infantry as it advanced to bolster the firepower of the musketeers. These lighter '**Swedish**' pieces were made of a tin bore, with leather hides strapped around them, and being very light they were easily transportable. They were only good for ten or twelve discharges before they fell apart, but using **grape-shot** they were murderous at short range.

