

NITIDA

CANNON STATION

WEIGHT MARKINGS ON CANNON

In these modern times of travel and instant communication it is often difficult to visualise what conditions were like back in the 17th and 18th centuries when people were largely area bound and localised customs and standards were the rule.

The weight markings on cannon reflect some aspects of that distant way of life. Firstly there were no international standards for time and for the units of length and weight. Most countries, and indeed some districts within a country, had their own set of weights and measures and their own methods of recording them.

The official military requirement for the weight marking on a cannon was possibly twofold, firstly payment to the foundry was often based on the weight of the casting and secondly the military had various guns of the same calibre but different lengths, diameters and weights. A gun could only be accurately identified by its pattern, metal, calibre and weight.

ENGLISH

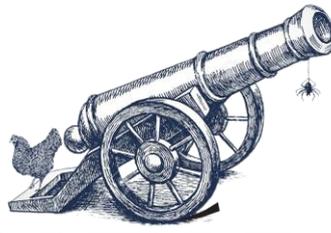
Cannon cast in England, Wales and Scotland had their weight chiselled or engraved in the format 41 – 2 – 11 being 41 Hundredweight (CWT) , two quarters of CWT and 11 pounds. With one CWT being 112 lbs and one quarter CWT being 28 lbs a gun marked in this manner would weigh 4,659 lbs. One English lb = 454 grams.

SWEDISH and NORWEGIAN

Sweden and Norway used Roman numerals with XVI : XVII : IV being *Skeppspund*, *Lispund* and *Pund* with one *Pund* weighing 340 grams. Twenty *Pund* made one *Lispund* and 20 *Lispund* made one *Skeppspund*. The above Roman numerals would indicate a weight of (136Kg X 16) + (6.8Kg X 17) + (0.34Kg X 4) for a total of approximately 2,305Kg. When a Roman numeral such as XXVII is preceded by an “N” this would be the gun number.

DUTCH

The Dutch used the Amsterdam pound which was equal to 494 grams and the marking appeared mainly on the top of the breech ring in the form 2345 A. The cross bar of the “A” was most often in the form of a shallow “V”. CAUTION – Amsterdam weights between 1650A and 1780a inscribed on the top of the base ring are often misinterpreted as the date of manufacture.



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FRENCH

Prior to 1794 the French used their own version of the pound (*poind de marc*) of 490 grams in the format P 1234. After 1794 they marked their cannon in Kg of the metric system in the manner K 2134, most often on a trunnion end.

PORTUGUESE

The Portuguese version of the pound was the *arratel* which was equal to 459 grams. Their guns were marked in the format 8q 2a 14a which represented 8 *quintals* 2 *arroba* and 14 *arratel*. 32 *arratel* = 1 *arroba*, and 4 *arroba* = 1 *quintal* of 58,75 Kg.

SPANISH

The Spanish pound or *libra* had a nominal weight of 460 grams. The Spanish also used the *arroba* and the *quintal* terms but they appear to have differed slightly from those of the Portuguese. 25 *libra* = 1 *arroba*, 25 *arroba* = 1 *quintal* of 46,13 Kg.

NOTE – The weight inscribed on a cannon is not absolute proof of origin, it is merely an indicator of a probability. VOC guns have been found with Swedish weights inscribed, an Indonesian gun with French weigh markings and several other combinations.

Source – [By generous permission] - Linear Measurement and Weights (copy No. 3) – an unpublished manuscript by Rudi Roth – November 1999