



Brown Bess Firelock Field Cleaning 101

Disclaimer: I took pictures and decided to this at the last minute while cleaning my firelock at home, and not in the field. Until we have a field cleaning follow-up, I've added notes to help you choose how far you go with your field cleaning. Also, since I did this at home and not in the field, feel free to replace any non-period equipment with the period-correct equivalent.

Firelocks Need Attention

- These marvelous weapons need constant attention to keep them combat ready and to protect your investment!
- Work she may...
Shine she **MUST!**



Tools Needed

- Old Toothbrush (optional)
- Screwdriver (period musket tool)
- Small C-Clamp (period spring vise)
- Worm (you really should have one)
- Any gun oil or similar
- Black powder cleaning solvent (optional)
- Metal Polish
- Steel Wool (brick dust)
- Greenies (optional)
- Pipe Cleaners (optional)
- Paper towels (really handy)
- Rags



Remove the Sling

- To better clean the area around the trigger guard, and clean the sling swivels, you may want to remove the sling.
- Remove the two screws securing the sling swivels and remove the sling.
- It's been suggested that you may not want to mess with the sling in the field, but wait till you get home.



Start to Disassemble the Lock

- Make sure the lock is at half-cock.
- Failure to do so may result in the mainspring popping free after the cock is removed.



Remove the Flint

- Loosen and remove the cock screw, the upper vice jaw and the flint.
- Set them aside to be cleaned.



Remove the Cock

- Remove the tumbler screw securing the cock to the lockplate.
- It's been suggested that for a field cleaning, to not remove the cock. A corner of oily rag can slip in between the space where the cock rests over the lock plate and remove the powder in there, which is usually just a very little.



Remove the Frizzen Spring

- Use the hammer spring vise or a c-clamp to compress the frizzen spring.
- Remove the frizzen spring screw and frizzen spring.
- Set the parts aside to be cleaned.
- It's been suggested that for a field cleaning, to not remove the frizzen spring but clean around it with an oily rag.



Remove the Frizzen

- Remove the frizzen pivot screw, frizzen, and flash guard.
- Set the parts aside to be cleaned.



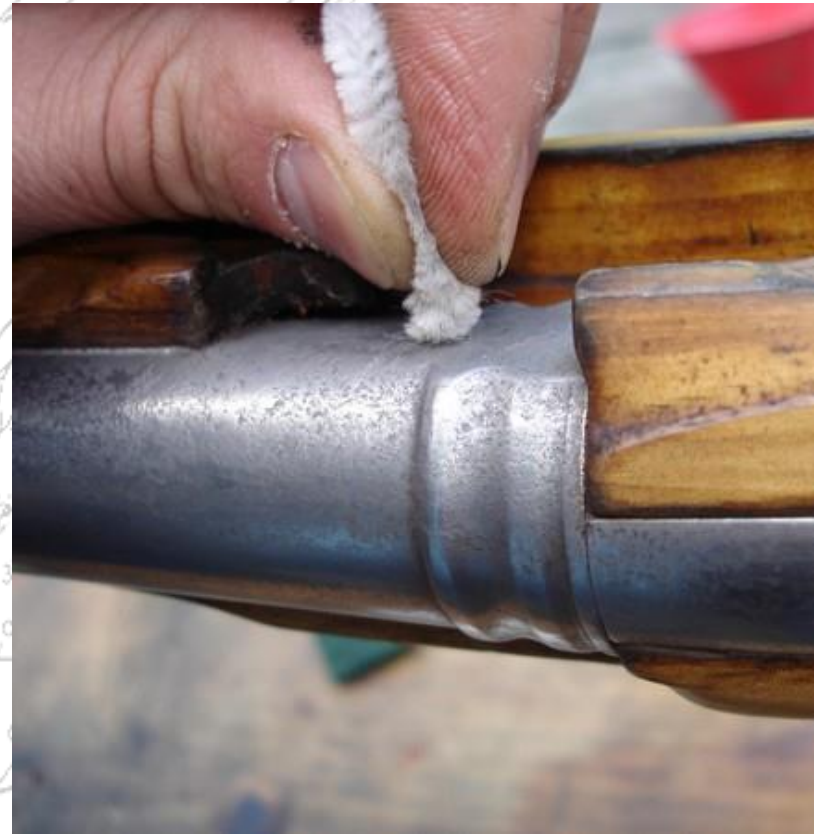
Remove the Lock

- Support the lock with one hand.
- Remove the two screws securing the lock to the stock.
- Separate the lock from the stock and immediately screw the lock screws back into the lock so you don't lose them!
- Set the parts aside for cleaning.



Clean the barrel (Inside First)

- Take a 3” length of pipe cleaner, fold it over on itself and twist.
- Use that to block the touch hole. Other items have been suggested so long as they won’t break and block your touch hole.
- It’s also been suggested that for field cleanings you use only your finger to block the touch hole to prevent accidental problems that take you out for the weekend!



Clean the barrel (cont.)

- Pour cleaning solvent of choice down the barrel. Although not listed earlier, a small funnel may be useful.
- Company favorites include:
 - Water / hot water (better)
 - Peroxide (warning – the chemical reaction makes lots of heat!)



I used hot water this time. Notice I'm using a rag like a pot holder. Be careful not to get burned. The barrel will get HOT!

Clean the barrel (cont.)

- If using peroxide, let sit for a few minutes then dump.
- If using water, cover the muzzle, and swish the water back and forth a few times then dump and repeat.



Clean the barrel (cont.)

- Scrub the barrel using a worm with a greenie patch or some other sort of abrasive.
- Rinse after scrubbing.
- Repeat until barrel runoff is clear.
- It's been suggested to try this with the barrel full of water, but is messier.



Clean the barrel (cont.)

- Pointing the musket touch hole down and away, remove the pipe cleaner blocking the touch hole and let the barrel drain out through the touch hole for a bit to flush it out.
- Pour the rest out the barrel.
- When you remove your pipe cleaner, the touch hole will continue to ooze leftover liquid. This tends to run into the space where the lock sits. It should be wiped with a rag to prevent it from corroding the wood.



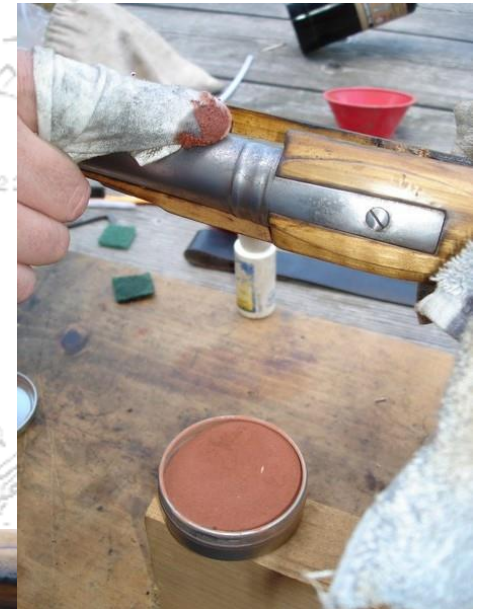
Clean the barrel (cont.)

- Use ½ paper towels folded once and wrapped around the ramrod to remove loose debris.
- Repeat rinse and dry until paper towels come out clean.
- Once clean and dry, use a last patch to lightly oil the barrel
- Others suggest that instead of paper towels, and perhaps less likely to end up stuck down the barrel, use flour sack towels from Wal-Mart. \$5 for a pack of 5, which is enough for the year.



Clean the barrel Exterior and Stock

- Use your cleaning agent of choice to clean the barrel and stock.
- Some company favorites are:
 - Oil and brick dust
 - Water and a greenie followed by coat of oil
 - Mother's Polish



Clean the barrel (cont.)

- Clean and polish the barrel and stock brass.
- Wipe metal surfaces with an oil cloth ward off the inevitable rust.
- Clean the powder and soot off the sling.



Clean all the parts

- Clean all the parts and make them shine!
- I blew it in the picture, but keep the lock screws in the lock to avoid losing them.



Reassembly

- Use a 3” piece of pipe cleaner bent a little at the bottom to apply a coat of oil to all metal parts as you reassemble.
- A rag works great too!



Reassembly (cont.)

- After lubricating (oil all of the inner springs and workings), reinstall the lock plate and secure with two screws and brass form.
- Don't over tighten the screws!



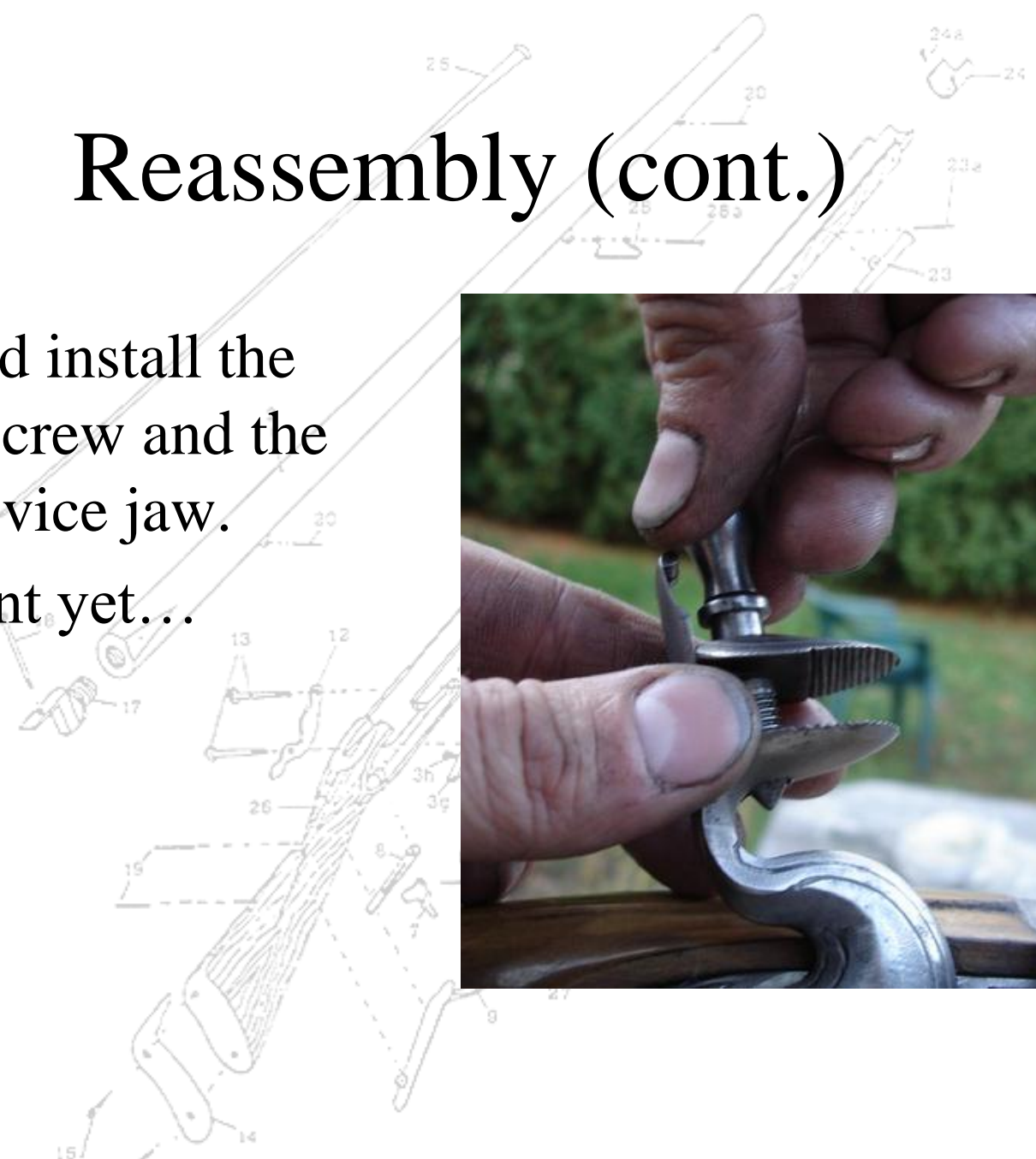
Reassembly (cont.)

- Oil the backside of the cock and install with tumbler screw.
- Don't over tighten!



Reassembly (cont.)

- Oil and install the cock screw and the upper vice jaw.
- No flint yet...



Reassembly (cont.)

- Oil and install the frizzen, and flash guard and frizzen pivot screw.
- Don't over tighten frizzen screw, but make sure it's tight enough so that the flash guard does not move.



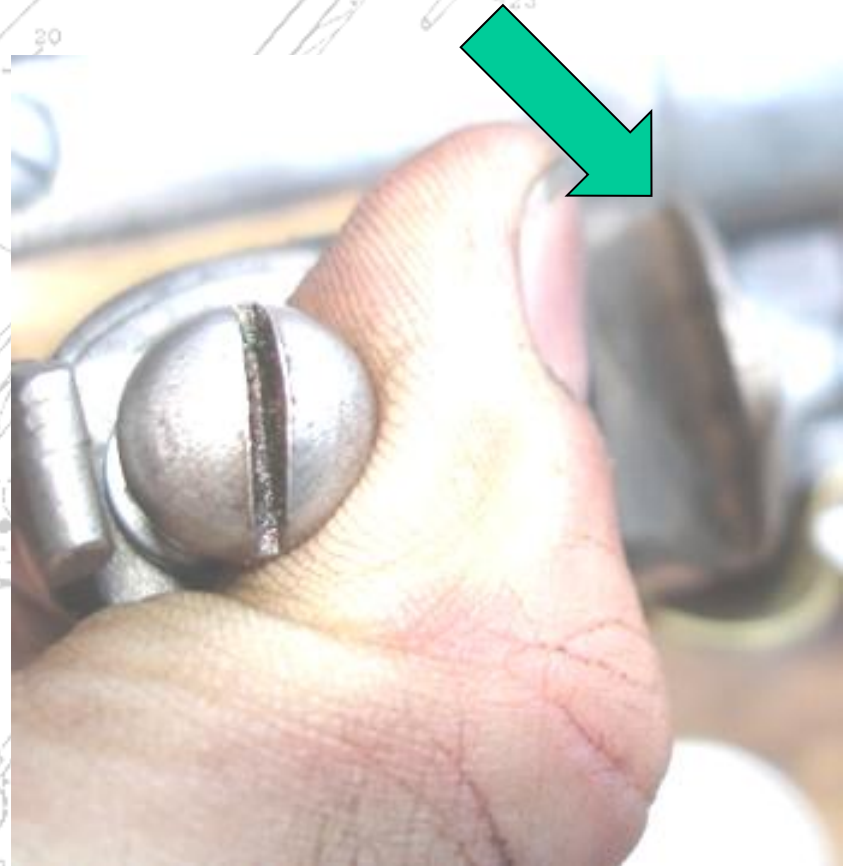
Reassembly (cont.)

- Oil the back and inside of the frizzen spring.
- Use the clamp to compress the frizzen spring.
- Install the frizzen spring and secure with frizzen spring screw.
- Remove the clamp.
- Oil the outside of the frizzen spring, especially where it makes contact with the frizzen.



Reassembly (cont.)

- Add a flint to the cock and screw finger tight.
- Shut the pan.
- Carefully manipulate the cock so that the flint eases up against the frizzen.
- Adjust the angle of the flint until it strikes the frizzen with the most surface area.
- Tighten the vice screw to tighten the flint in place.



Reassembly (cont.)

- Re attach the sling and sling swivels.
- Clean and oil the ramrod and return.
- Check for spark.
- Store the musket with the hammer all the way forward and the pan open.
- Clean, polish and lightly oil the bayonet.



Ready to Represent the Crown!

64th Regiment Light Infantry Company



Thoughts on this procedure...

- I think it is better suited for a "home clean" article rather than a "field clean" article. In the field, you want to disassemble the musket as little as possible to minimize the chances of losing any parts. The screws are especially hard to find, and yeah, you could put them on a rag or something to see them, and then some dufus walks by, kicks your rag, and that ends your weekend (I've seen this happen!) Plus, we are soldiers. If your musket is in thirty pieces on the ground and the enemy decides now is a good time to attack your camp, it will take you twenty minutes to get it all back together again (also have seen this happen, those sneaky bastards.) Ergo, you're dead.
- To that end... look for another future installment for how to do an authentic field cleaning!