GRAND **CURTIUS**

WEAPONS DEPARTMENT
VISITOR'S BOOKLET

EN

CONTENTS

The Grand Curtius collections are rich and diverse, reflecting Liège's formidable historical and artistic past. Within the museum, the arms collection occupies a special place, entirely dedicated to one of Liège's most characteristic industries: the armoury. Initially integrated with the other collections in the main exhibition, this exceptional arsenal deserved to be given even greater prominence.

The reorganisation of the weapons department began in 2017 and will be completed in November 2023 with the inauguration of the section devoted to edged weapons, which will be housed on the 3rd floor of the Palais Curtius. This final stage completes the mediation and interpretation of the works on display, including the floors devoted to civil and military weapons. This mediation, which is essential, had to take into account the challenges posed by the conflicts of our history; it raises questions about the different ways of transmitting this memory and these values, while remaining within a heritage and historical framework.

We salute the work carried out by the entire museum team, under the dynamic and energetic leadership of the current curator, who has breathed new life into this presentation, with a resolute focus on public accessibility. This Essentiel, an essential mediation tool, will accompany visitors before, during and after their visit.

Mehmet AYDOGDU
Alderman for Culture
and Interculturality
of the City of Liège

SHORT **GLOSSARY**

Barrel part of the firearm made up of a tube used to fire projectiles.

Bore interior surface of the barrel.

Breech on muzzle-loading firearms, the breech is the reinforced part of the bottom of the barrel that contains the charge. On more modern firearms, the breech is placed behind the barrel to seal the mechanism against the gas produced during firing and to allow the projectile to be propelled towards the muzzle of the weapon.

Bullet a projectile fired by the firearm.

Butt part of a firearm, traditionally made of wood, used to grip it.

Calibre the diameter of the projectiles but also of the interior of the weapon's barrel.

Carbine a short firearm with spiral grooves on the barrel bore.

Cartridge a complete unit containing the bullet(s), propellant charge and primer.

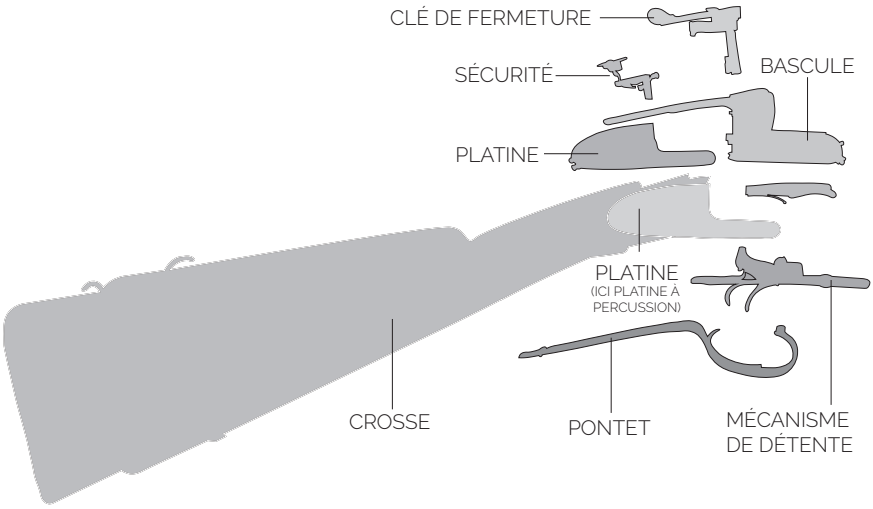
Chamber a combustion chamber at the rear of the barrel, into which the ammunition is inserted before being impacted to be propelled from the firearm.

Cock a mechanical part that ignites the primer powder in old firearms or that strikes the cartridge primer in more modern firearms (matchlock cock, wheellock cock, flintlock cock).

Cylinder this rotating cylindrical part houses the chambers of a revolver, which hold the bullets and are positioned successively at the rear of the barrel.

Firing mechanism the percussion mechanism of a firearm.

Flash pan a hollow part that receives the priming powder on matchlock, wheellock or flintlock weapons.



Forestock a wooden or plastic part placed under the barrel to make it easier to grip the weapon while protecting the shooter's hand from the heat of the barrel.

Muzzle the part of the weapon through which the projectile is expelled and the ammunition of old weapons is inserted.

Pistol a handgun in which the chamber is part of the barrel or aligned with it.

Primer the explosive material that ignites the weapon's propellant charge.

Priming power black powder rich in saltpetre used to set fire to the basin after percussion. Used until the advent of mercury fulminate.

Revolver handgun equipped with a system of chambers rotated in front of the barrel.

Rifle a firearm with a long barrel and a shoulder buttstock.

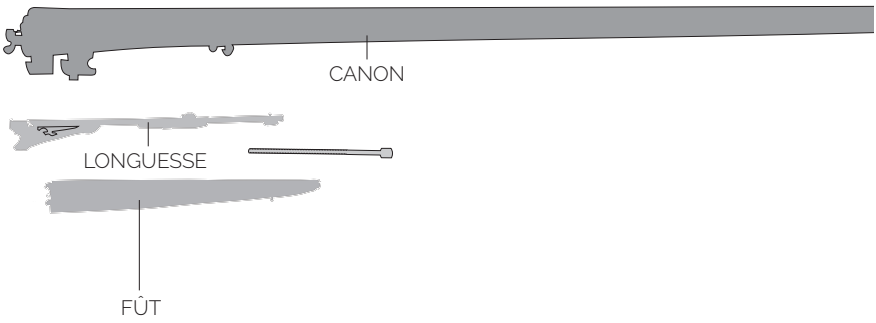
Rod a device used to push the projectile against the gunpowder through the muzzle of the weapon.

Sear an internal part of the weapon between the trigger and the cock. When pulled, the trigger causes the cock to rotate, which then strikes the primer.

Trigger part of the firing mechanism that is pressed by the shooter to trigger the shot.

Trigger guard metal buckle protecting the trigger tail from accidental pressure.

Wad a plant-based device that wedges the projectile against the explosive charge.



DEFINING THE TERMS

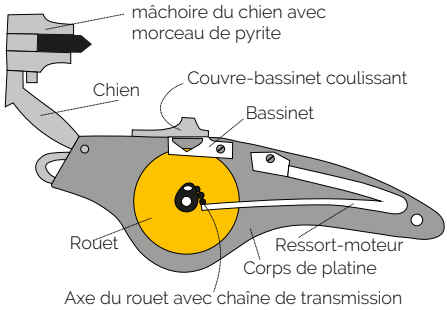
A firearm is an instrument used to propel one or more projectiles in a specific direction and over a specific distance, using the force generated by the expansion of gases produced by the explosion of a chemical substance. Over time, different ignition systems have been developed to achieve maximum efficiency, ease of use and safety with minimum inconvenience. As a result, handguns can be classified according to whether they are loaded via the muzzle (between 1400 and 1850) or via the breech (after 1850).

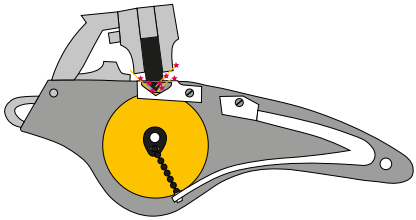
***Matchlock**

The first firearms, using gunpowder, were ignited by holding a lit wick in front of the flash hole connected to the combustion chamber. Matchlocks, the first mechanisms used in firearms for greater safety, were developed at the beginning of the 15th century and remained in use until around 1720, in conjunction with other firing systems. An "S" shaped part, the serpentine, is fixed to the lock, to which the lit match is in turn fixed. This mechanism, similar to a crossbow's, allows the shooter to rotate the coil in order to ignite the primer powder contained in the flash pan. The flash hole (a channel between the flash pan and the base of the barrel) enables the flame to reach and ignite the propellant charge.

***Wheellock**

This complex mechanism, whose invention is sometimes attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, appeared at the beginning of the 16th century and is similar to a clockwork mechanism. Its advantage is that it allows the shooter to carry a loaded weapon ready to fire, without having to also carry a lit fuse. On the lock, a toothed steel disc (the wheel) is driven by a spring and small chain in a rotary movement. The wheel rubs against iron pyrite held in the weapon's cock. The friction between the pyrite and the wheel generates a shower of sparks and causes the ignition of the primer powder.



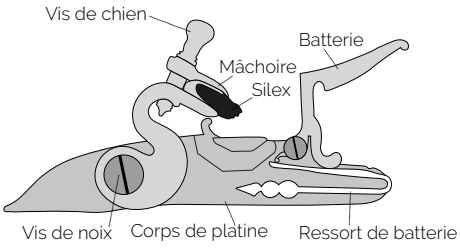


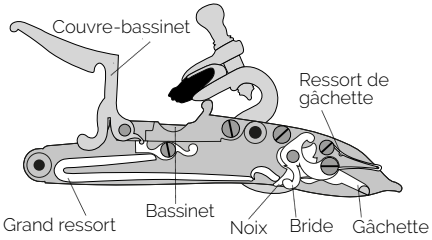
***Flintlock**

In the 16th century, simpler mechanisms based on the same principle as the lighter appeared. A piece of bevelled flint held by the hammer strikes a metal part (the frizzen) when the trigger is pulled. The impact generates a shower of sparks which fall into the flash pan, the hollow containing the primer powder. This system was more reliable than the match lock and more economical than the wheel lock. Consequently, it became the norm throughout Europe for more than two centuries.

***Percussion lock**

Progress in chemistry in the 18th century led to the discovery of mercury fulminate's and silver fulminate's explosive properties. As a result, at the very beginning of the 19th century, gunpowder used for firearms was replaced by fulminate. In mechanical terms, the cock was replaced by a hammer striking a nipple with the primer of the ammunition placed on top.



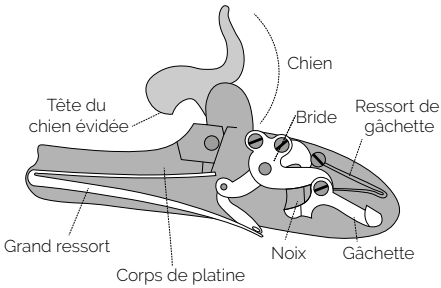


***Breech-loading**

Though invented a long time ago, the breech loading system could not become established until the problem of closing the chamber on the shooter's side had been resolved. Thanks to significant innovations, such as the expandable metal capped cartridge, this system was able to be developed in the second half of the 19th century. The widespread use of cartridges led to a proliferation of repeating weapons, such as the bolt-action system (with a sequence of closing, percussion, opening and ejection of the empty case) and the lever-action system (the manual action of the lever ejects a spent cartridge case and transfers ammunition from the magazine to the barrel).

***Semi-automatic and automatic weapons**

At the end of the 19th century, weapons were developed that were capable of firing a burst of bullets simply by holding down the trigger. This system, used by the military, uses the force of the recoil or draws on part of the powder's firing gases to rearm the system automatically. Semi-automatic weapons, which are also used by the military and sometimes for hunting, operate on the same principle, but require the shooter to release the trigger and pull it again between shots.



THE HISTORY OF THE **ARMS INDUSTRY IN LIÈGE**

Since the 16th century and still today, the expertise of Liège's gunsmiths is recognised worldwide. Although the manufacture and use of weapons are highly controversial today, arms and their production are one of the jewels in the crown of our regional economy. The principality of Liège was a strategic geographical location for the installation of the arms industry. The region had everything it needed in order to thrive: wood and coal for fuel, iron as a raw material and the Meuse River as well as its tributaries to produce hydraulic power. The arms industry developed in Liège in the 16th century. However, information about where and how the weapons and ammunition were made is scarce. In any case, the town first became famous for its artillery: cannons, cannonballs, gunpowder, etc. In 1492, the city acquired politically neutral status, making it easy to establish commercial contacts. It was thanks to river and road transport that production from Liège was exported to France, Holland and Germany.

Jean Wiricx, Portrait of Jean de Corte, Engraving, Antwerp, 1607 - Grand Curtius Collection © Ville de Liège

JAN DE CORTE ALIAS **JEAN CURTIUS**

Jan de Corte, who latinised his name to Jean Curtius, was born in Basse-Sauvenière in 1551. At the age of 23 years, he married Pétronille de Braaz, the daughter of a rich merchant, with whom he had two sons. The origin of the saying "As rich as a Curtius from Liège", an expression used until the end of the 18th century, is owed to Jean Curtius, who made his fortune thanks to the industry or arms and gunpowder, which he exported and sold to the Spanish crown, for whom he was the exclusive ammunition supplier. He was also a banker, mineral trader, collector and patron of the arts. In 1609, the truce in the "Dutch Revolt" brought an abrupt halt to the shipment of armaments despite the financial commitments made by Spain. In order to revive his business, in 1616, Curtius decided to travel to Spain to develop the weapons metalworking industry, which had been a speciality in Liège since the start of the 17th century. Previously, between 1595 and 1597, he had partly financed the development of the Quai de la Batte and Quai des Tanneurs quays, as well as buying the canonical house overlooking the quays to replace it with his residence and stores. These buildings were made up of a large house in the front, known colloquially as "the palace', where he received his customers, and a private residence in the rear. The complex was complemented by gardens, stables and outbuildings for the servants, etc. In the year before his death, his son sold "the palace" to Mont-de-Piété whilst the residence remained in the Curtius family until the 19th century. Following a long career in industry, Jean Curtius died on 13th July in 1628 in Liégarnes in Spain.

In the 17th century, Liège's arms production took off, thanks to the manufacture of small arms (to the detriment of artillery, the production of which declined in our region). The development of this industry was encouraged by European conflicts such as the 80 Years War (1568-1648) and the 30 Years War (1618-1648). Most of these weapons do not bear a hallmark and very few details have been preserved concerning their production before the mid-17th century. In Liège, there has never been a corporation of armourers. The craftsmen in this sector were divided, according to their speciality, into one of the sections of the 32 Honest Trades of Liège. This specialised workforce worked from home. The so-called "arms manufacturers" were in actual fact merchants who sought out orders and then entrusted them to local craftsmen, spread throughout the city's neighbourhoods. Gradually, regulations were introduced in an attempt to control production, which until then had been given a free reign. Consequently, from 1672, the authorities tried to introduce testing in order to guarantee product quality. However, this only became official and compulsory in 1810, under the reign of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821).

The arms industry in Liège suffered immensely during the troubled period of the French Revolution and then the Napoleonic era. The arms manufacturers in Liège lost their neutral status that had enabled them to trade with all nations. The arms industry came under the military control of the French Republic and then the Empire, under which it had to endure increasingly drastic restrictions both in terms of production and trade.
Jean Gosuin (1745-1808), a Liège arms manufacturer who contributed to the fall of the Ancien Régime, obtained the exclusive right to produce weapons in Liège in 1801. In practice, Gosuin ran a warehouse that received all the weapons made by the gunsmiths who still worked in the traditional manner, i.e., independently and form their homes, although they were subject to rigorous standards. Indeed, the French regime imposed many previously unheard-of manufacturing rules that shook up the sphere of the arms industry in Liège and prepared it to take on, in the then near future, new technology. Gradually, throughout the 19th century, the mechanisation of weapon parts changed the very structure of the profession; in the domain of civilian weapons, in 1886, Henri Pieper (1867-1952) founded the first company in Liège to mass-produce weapon parts by machine, applying this method imported from the United States for the first time in Europe. Between 1860 and 1890, the use of machines became generalised, making it possible to increase production and compete with new weapons manufacturing hubs such as the USA. Following Belgium's independence, the once again neutral country re-established contacts with all the potential markets. This was a tremendous success for Liège which was recognised in 1860 as the world's largest arms manufacturing city.

THE **PROOF HOUSE**

Having received complaints about the quality of weapons manufactured in the principality of Liège, Prince-Bishop Maximilien-Henri de Bavière (1621-1688) decreed on 10th May 1672, that testing for all gun barrels was compulsory. Such testing had to be carried out in public by a sworn tester and had to bear the mark of the city's symbol, the perron. This testing went on to be aligned with Napoleon's decree of 14th December 1810, which set out the procedure and operating methods of the proof house. Today, the Liège proof house is still operational and is more than ever compulsory for all types of firearms.

THE NATIONAL FACTORY OF **WEAPONS OF WAR**

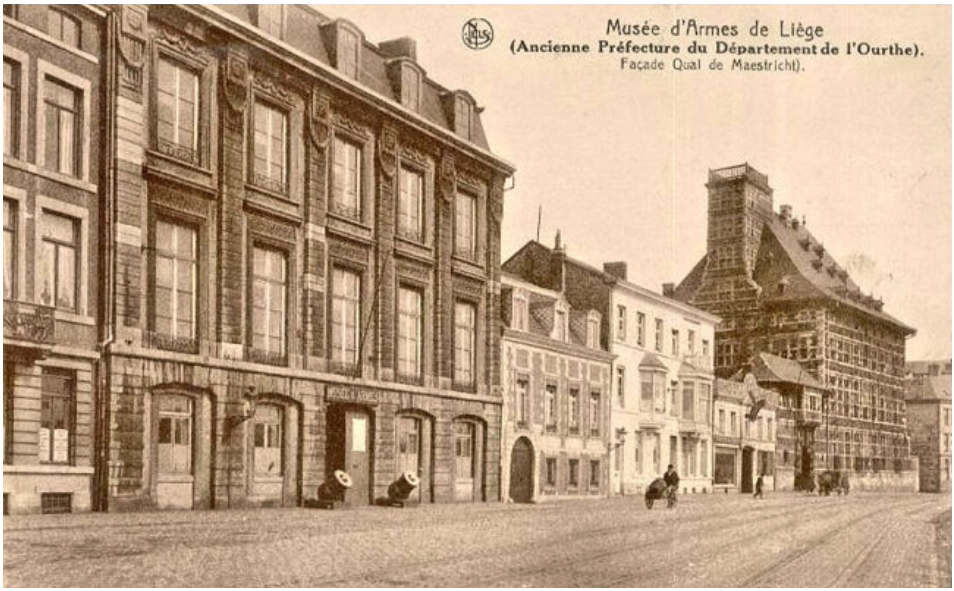
On 15th October 1888, a group of manufacturers from Liège set up the limited company "Les fabricants d'armes réunis", in order to win a contact to equip the Belgian army with Mauser-type repeating rifles. The company began its activities in 1889 under the name Fabrique Nationale d'Armes de Guerre (National Factory of Weapons of War). A factory, built in Herstal, played host to the many pieces of equipment required to honour this important order. In 1898, the National Factory entered into a partnership with John Moses Browning, a genius inventor who produced many designs, and became the world leader in automatic weapons, particularly pistols. During the Second World War, the National Factory was requisitioned by the German forces and did not resume its activities until the end of the conflict. In the present day, the National Factory in Herstal is still renowned throughout the whole world for the quality of the weapons it produces.

During the First World War, the German occupiers ordered the closure of the arms factories. During the inter-war period, the arms industry in Liège recovered as best it could, despite rising wages, difficulties in recruiting labour and increased competition. However, the economic crisis of 1929 plunged the arms industry into a dramatic situation. Although the sector found a new lease of life in 1935, thanks to the rearmament of European armies in the run-up to the Second World War, this conflict also left severe marks on the sector, which took several years to rebuild, giving way to increasingly standardised production. Since then, wars, changes in society, the legitimate rights of workers and existing benefits, as well as anti-militarist ideologies, have led to many upheavals in this domain. However, arms manufacturing in Liège is still to date one of the flagships of the Walloon economy.

The entrance to the Fabrique Nationale d'armes, rue Voie de Liège, Herstal, 1912

THE LIÈGE MUSEUMS' **WEAPONS COLLECTIONS**

The Weapons Museum, opened in 1885 on the initiative of Pierre-Joseph Lemille (1811-1882), a local arms manufacturer, and the city authorities, is one of the city's oldest museums. In the beginning, it was set up to bring together as many firearms as possible from the four corners of the earth, in order to demonstrate to the industry's professionals the best gunsmithing in the world. Over time and through countless acquisitions, the museum's collection has become one of the largest in the world in its field. In addition to civil or military firearms, it was gradually extended to include bladed weapons, defensive weapons, «second-rate» weapons, ammunition, medals and other insignia, etc. The museum, situated since September 2018 in the palace of Jean Curtius, displays approximately six hundred remarkable items that retrace the history of the arms industry from the 16th to 21st century, within its section devoted to civilian weapons. They bear witness to the craftsmanship of Liège's armourers, who still enjoy a great international reputation today.



HUNTING RIFLE WITH JUXTAPOSED BARRELS, ANSON AND DEELEY SYSTEM

In 1875, the British men William Anson (1840-1895) and John Deeley (1825-1913), both employed by the firm Westley-Richards, located in Birmingham, revolutionised the world of the arms industry by proposing an alternative to the traditional lock firing mechanisms, a simplified percussion mechanism with no external cocks, which universally became known as the Anson & Deeley system. Each of these two ingenious hammerless frizzens (i.e., without external cocks), which are armed by tilting the barrels (called break action), were made up of just five components, all of which were simple and robust: the cock (supporting the firing pin), the main V-shaped spring, the cocking lever, the sear and sear spring. When the weapon is opened, the spur on the forestock (front barrel) drives the cocking lever, which in turn rotates the cock. The cock then tilts and compresses the spring. Once break action has been carried out, the cock is held in place by the trigger and the weapon is ready to fire. Pressing the trigger tail allows the trigger itself to tilt on its axis and release the cock, which, driven by its own spring, strikes the cartridge's primer.

IN POPULAR CULTURE:

THE OLD GUN
BY ROBERT ENRICO, 1975.

The Old Gun is a drama film released in 1975, inspired by the massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane (on 10th June 1944) in which 643 inhabitants were murdered by a detachment of the 1st battalion of the Führer's 4th Panzergrenadier regiment. The film is set shortly after the Normandy landings. A surgeon from Montauban (Philippe Noiret) witnesses the killing of his wife and daughter by SS soldiers. He sinks into madness and eliminates the soldiers who have taken refuge in his castle. He uses an old shotgun, similar to the Anson & Deeley rifle, that his father used to use for hunting wild boar.

BROWNING B25 OVER-AND-UNDER SHOTGUN, ENGRAVED BY FÉLIX FUNKEN

In 1897, the National Factory of Weapons in Herstal sent its sales director to the USA to find out as much as he could about the new techniques used across the pond to manufacture bicycles. Whilst there, he met the great inventor and arms manufacturer John Moses Browning (1855-1926), renowned for his twenty technical patents sold on to the Winchester firm as well as for discovering the principle of gas recuperation which he used to make the first machine-gun prototypes developed for the Colt firm. During this meeting, Browning proposed that the National Factory take on the licence to manufacture the new 7.65 mm x 17 mm automatic pistol he had just developed. This agreement was the starting point of a fruitful industrial collaboration. Shortly before his death in 1926, Browning completed work on his final masterpiece: the B25 rifle, the first over-and-under shotgun in the history of hunting weapons, whose percussion mechanism was housed within the weapon itself. The technical concept of this weapon alone reflects the master's years of experience and practice. Browning, anticipating the needs of the hunters of his time, understood that they preferred a single-axis sighting plane and a single selective trigger. The weapon, manufactured in Belgium since 1931, is still a commercial success today.

FÉLIX **FUNKEN**

In the aftermath of the First World War, faced with many orders for aesthetically pleasing hunting weapons, the National Factory created a new department which it entrusted to Félix Funken (1888-1965), whose talents as a master engraver were already highly appreciated. It was an arms engraving workshop that was destined for exceptional growth, to the extent of employing almost 180 engravers by the end of the 1960s. Félix Funken made a major contribution to the reputation of hunting weapons made at the National Factory; furthermore, he greatly renewed the repertoire of patterns for engraving on arms. The items he crafted are marked by the predominance of classical English tastes (acanthus leaves and hunting scenes). In particular, he drew on the graphic repertoire of Art Deco. For the decoration of this B25, Funken was directly inspired by the architectural lines of the period. Produced for the "Water Exhibition" which took place in Liège in 1939, the master engraver decorated the butt of this hunting rifle with a series of lines that allude to the shockwaves of detonations on water.

IN POPULAR CULTURE: HUNTING FOR SPORT

From the Middle Ages onwards, hunting became a leisure activity reserved for the dominant classes. It gradually became more widespread among the population after the French Revolution, although it remained especially popular with the nobility and bourgeoisie. Since the end of the 20th century, the hunting world has emphasised the role of regulating animal populations, also advocating selective shooting to ensure the restorative management of animal populations. These hunting plans are said to help to revitalise populations. However, this position is still debated by opponents of hunting. Hunting is therefore a regulated activity that requires its enthusiasts to hold a licence. Since 1898, the National Factory of Weapons in Herstal has owned the Browning Arms Company. This American company produces a wide range of weapons, including rifles, shotguns and hunting equipment.

FLINTLOCK PISTOL WITH JUXTAPOSED BARRELS

Pistols appeared in the 16th century, initially equipped with a matchlock firing mechanism, then a wheellock system before a flintlock system. It was around 1610 that the French weapons manufacturer Marin le Bourgeois (1550 or 1560 – 1634), installed in the workshops of the Louvre under the patronage of Louis XIII, is said to have invented the classic flintlock mechanism or French flintlock, the ultimate form and development of the various flintlock mechanisms. In a rather perilous exercise, the propellant powder is loaded through the muzzle of the weapon using a powder flask, before use of gun wad. These weapons of imposing size have a handle that is often equipped with a heavy metal pommel, called a "pistol cap", which can be used as a mace after firing the pistol's single shot. However, quite rarely, some of these pistols are fitted with multiple barrels side by side. Each barrel hast its own flintlock, allowing several shots to be fired in succession.

IN POPULAR CULTURE:

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN
BY GORE VERBINSKI, 2003.

The five films of the "Pirates of the Caribbean" series depicts the heyday of piracy in this region. For two centuries (between 1520 and 1720 approximately), piracy was on the rise in the Caribbean, to the detriment of the Spanish colonial empire, which controlled the territory then known as "New Spain". The country's fleets, laden with a year's production of silver, were a prime target for these terrible adventurers. Pirates, buccaneers, filibusters and privateers armed themselves with flintlock pistols, which were relatively easy to handle, for boarding ships that were falling behind the others.

DERINGER POCKET PISTOL

The Deringer is a type of pocket pistol designed and developed by Henri Deringer (1786-1868), an American arms manufacture from Philadelphia, who gave his name to the gun and manufactured it between 1835 and 1868. The original Deringer percussion system pistols, are inscribed with the manufacturer's name and place of manufacture (Philadelphia). Indeed, a large number of copies were subsequently marketed under the same name by other manufacturers and the name was subsequently used interchangeably with any other pistol of this type. However, these manufacturers often spelt it incorrectly with a double "r" instead of a single one, hence the erroneous spelling widely used today (*Derringer). While Henri Deringer's model only allowed one shot to be fired before reloading, most subsequent models added a second chamber and a second barrel, so that the gun could be fired twice (double Deringer). It was with this type of weapon, an original model produced by Henri Deringer, that American president Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in 1865.

IN POPULAR CULTURE:
GANGS OF NEW-YORK
BY MARTIN SCORSESE, 2002.

Amsterdam Vallon, the son of a priest, witnesses the killing of his father in 1846 during a clash in New York, between a gang of Americans of English descent and a gang of Irish immigrants. On becoming an adult, he seeks to avenge his father's death. Rallying all the Irish in the district behind him, he confronts Bill the Butcher, his father's killer. The film is set in Manhattan's seedy Five Points district, where life is difficult and violent. Gangs rule the area and put the neighbourhood to the sword, armed in particular with the easy to hide Deringer pistols.

THE **SCOTTISH SYSTEM**

Around 1700, small pocket pistols appeared, referred to as "Scottish" because they were of British origin. Most feature one or more unscrewable barrels, allowing them to be loaded from the rear of the breech. Others look like them, but have a fixed, classic type barrel and are therefore muzzle-loaded. Originally made from flint, the mechanism of these pistols was developed following successive technical improvements. "Scottish system" pistols were manufactured, especially in Liège, until the beginning of the 20th century.

EXPRESS HUNTING RIFLE: THE SAFARI RIFLE

Originally, safaris (a term derived from the Swahili language) consisted of expeditions to explore African territories. However, from the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, colonists from all over Europe arrived in large numbers and took up a new "pastime": large-scale hunting expeditions for big game. As a result, the term "safari' underwent a shift in meaning... The colonists quickly created the first "reserves" to limit hunting for food by local populations and to attract Western hunting enthusiasts. Among Africa's wildlife, the lion, leopard, buffalo and above all the elephant and rhinoceros were prime targets and were nicknamed the "big five". Experience of hunting these impressive animals led to the manufacture of powerful weapons that fired large-calibre bullets, some of which produced a shock capable of stopping wild animals and pachyderms dead in their tracks. At this point in time, many double-barrelled hunting rifles, both break-action and centre fire, called "Express rifles", were made on the same principle as conventional double-barrelled shotguns, but mounted on sturdy reinforced top breaks and butts. Such rifles were designed to withstand the extreme conditions encountered in the savannah (severe heat, etc.) and had a barrel colour obtained by mottling, the result of a chemical operation producing steel that is soft on the inside and very hard on the outside.

IN POPULAR CULTURE:

JUMANJI
BY JOE JOHNSTON, 1995

Jumanji is a jungle adventure game that looks very much like a simple game of the goose, except that the message in each square becomes reality. Lions, rhinoceroses and other mischievous monkeys emerge from the game. The poacher Van Pelt, nicknamed the mad hunter and from the world of the game, wearing his colonial helmet and safari jacket, is armed with a large calibre safari rifle.

WINCHESTER 1866 "YELLOW BOY" LEVER ACTION RIFLE

In 1860, the engineer Benjamin Tyler Henry (1821-1898), who at the time was technical director of the Winchester firm, developed the Henry rifle, the first reliable and functional repeating firearm and the forerunner of all Winchester rifles. This repetition, which was manually actioned, was achieved by means of a trigger guard lever. The reserve of metal cartridges was contained in a tubular magazine under the barrel. Several years later, in 1864, a violent conflict broke out between Benjamin Tyler Henry and Oliver Winchester (1810-1834), leading to Henry definitively leaving the company. After the American Civil War, Oliver Winchester took control of the business and asked one of is best employees, Nelson King (date?), to enhance the Henry rifle to make it the first Winchester shotgun, resulting in the famous 1866 model, nicknamed "Yellow Boy" due to the use of gold bronze for the breech casing. The next rifle to be developed, the Winchester 1873, which also included a number of improvements, was christened "the gun that won the west". These weapons were a resounding success and became synonymous with the conquest of the American West.

IN POPULAR CULTURE: BUFFALO BILL

Born into a family with anti-slavery convictions, William Frederick Cody (1846 - 1917) led a life of adventure, taking part in the Indian wars and riding for Pony Express, the fast mail delivery service. Due to supplying bison to workers building the Kansas Pacific railway line, he was nicknamed "Buffalo Bill". He became a legend thanks to Ned Buntline's account of his adventures in the Dimes Novels, and his travelling theatre show recreating the atmosphere of the American West. As with the Winchester rifles, Buffalo Bill is still a mythical figure of the Wild West, providing inspiration to the cinematic genre of westerns.

WALTHER PPK SEMI-AUTOMATIC POCKET PISTOL

The Walther PP (Polizei Pistole) semi-automatic pistol, produced from 1929 onwards by the German firm Carl Walther, was quick to meet with resounding success. The key to its appeal lay in its compact size, its simple mechanism, directly activated by the recoil and the reliability of its innovative safety system, enabling it to be carried loaded in complete safety. This pistol was very popular with European police forces and was widely used by the German Army during the Second World War. In addition, from 1931, the Walther PPK model (Polizei Pistole Kurz) was produced, a more compact version with a light-alloy frame.

IN POPULAR CULTURE:

DR. NO

BY TERENCE YOUNG, 1962

James Bond, also known by his code name 007, a fictional character created by Ian Fleming (1908 – 1964) in 1953, is a secret agent for the Secret Intelligence Service, the United Kingdom's foreign intelligence service. It is in the film "Dr. No", released in 1962, that Major Boothroyd, in charge of technical equipment and especially weaponry, manages, at the urging of "M", to convince Bond to give up his Beretta, considered as a woman's pistol, in favour of a Walther PPK. This compact pistol had the undeniable advantage for James Bond of being easily carried discretely in a holster underneath a tuxedo jacket! The Walther PPK became an icon of the Bond films, and although it disappeared for several films, it made its return to accompany the famous spy on his adventures in "Quantum of Solace" and "Spectre".

COLT M1911 SEMI-AUTOMATIC PISTOL

The M1911 semi-automatic pistol, designed by John Moses Browning, is also called the "Automatic Colt Pistol (ACP)", as well as the "Colt 45", due to the unique calibre of the bullets that could be loaded into the original model (.45 ACP). This high-calibre, eight-shot weapon (seven cartridges in the magazine and one in the barrel chamber) produces a high level of recoil when fired. Nevertheless, in search of a robust, handy and reliable pistol, this model was swiftly adopted by the United States Armed Forces, which used it for 74 years, from 1911 to 1985, especially in both World Wars. This weapon is still today considered by many American gun users as the best semi-automatic pistol on the market, proving once again Browning's genius, if proof were needed. Furthermore, after being widely used in the Korean War and Vietnam War, the version modernised in 1926, the M1911A1, is still used by certain US army corps and organisations such as the FBI and SWAT teams.

IN POPULAR CULTURE:

PULP FICTION
BY QUENTIN TARANTINO, 1994

This gangster film directed by Quentin Tarantino in 1994, features three intertwined stories. The heroes, Vincent Vega and Jules Winnfield, are contract killers for Marsellus Wallace. Both armed with their chrome Colt 45s, they carry out a series of executions and engage in a number of offbeat conversations.

GLOCK 17 SEMI-AUTOMATIC PISTOL

Founded in 1963 by Gaston Glock, the Austrian firm Glock made its mark in the 1980s with the production of a series of semi-automatic pistols of a new kind, Glocks, which are today considered to be the most efficient and reliable handguns in the world. Glock has been particularly innovative, as shown by its pioneering use of polymers in the manufacture of one of its pistols, the Glock 17. Combined with ingenious ergonomics, the use of these synthetic thermoplastics made it possible to manufacture a weapon that is lighter, less susceptible to corrosion and recoils less abruptly thanks to the flexibility of the material. Equipped with a high-capacity magazine, Glock pistols are also fitted with an original safety system: a small lever on the trigger tail must be pressed to pull the trigger. As a result, even if the weapon can be used quickly, it cannot be fired accidentally until this lever is pressed. Glock pistols, which were a veritable technological revolution, have been and still are a phenomenal commercial success.

IN POPULAR CULTURE:
COUNTER STRIKE VIDEO GAME (VALVE, 2000)

The first version of the video game Counter Strike was released in 2000 and met with resounding success worldwide, remaining at the top of the charts of the most played shooting games on-line. The game consists of a confrontation between a team of terrorists and an anti-terrorist squad over several rounds. Players score points by accomplishing objectives and eliminating their opponents. Each player begins the game armed with a pistol and a knife. She, he or they can also purchase additional equipment. The weapons are divided into 3 categories: primary weapons, such as the pump-action shotgun, sub-machine gun, assault rifle or machine gun, secondary weapons, such as pistols, and weapons for hand-to-hand combat such as knives. The Glock is the terrorists' basic weapon. Though it is very accurate, it does little damage to enemies, however. Nevertheless, it remains one of the most popular weapons among gamers because it has a good firing rate.

"CHAUCHAT" CSRG AUTOMATIC RIFLE, 1927 BELGIAN MODEL

At the beginning of the First World War, the French army realised that it was not equipped with light automatic firearms, which had become essential for modern warfare. At the instigation of General Joffre, the Chauchat automatic rifle was introduced into the French army's artillery in 1916. This weapon was developed based on a prototype from 1911 designed by Colonel Jacques Louis Henri Chauchat (1832-1897), a graduate from France's prestigious Ecole Polytechnique, and Charles Sutter (1856-1922), a senior armorer. The Gladiator cycles factory in Pré-Saint-Gervais manufactured most of the orders.

The weapon worked with long barrel recoil, inspired by a system patented by John Browning in 1900 and used from 1903 on hunting rifles, which was air-cooled. This machine gun had a grip and butt made of wood as well as a semi-circular or rounded magazine containing 20 cartridges. This light and compact weapon was made in a hurry at low cost, but was of poor quality. Although it could fire 240 shots per minute with a range of 2,000 metres, this 8-mm calibre machine gun was not well-adapted to automatic fire and overheated quickly.

Between 1917 and 1918, the American army started to use it, following the Belgian army which adopted it in 1916. However, Belgian engineers developed improvements with the engineers from Gladiator. In particular, they adapted a magazine with 7.65-mm cartridges originally intended for Belgian Mausers. As a result, this machine gun used the same ammunition as the other rifles and machine guns used by the Belgian army, facilitating logistics. In the 1920s, the French State weapons manufacturer continued to make modifications to the French Chauchat, but this time taking the time to ingeniously rethink this light automatic weapon by consolidating the various parts that make up the weapon.

IN POPULAR CULTURE:

BATTLEFIELD 1 VIDEO GAME (DICE, 2002)

Battlefield is a shooting video game released in 2016. The game is set in the First World War and is inspired by historical events. The players use bolt-action rifles, machine guns and semi-automatic weapons typical of the First World War. In team play, the support troops are able to maintain heavy covering fire using this machine gun. A distinctive feature of the game is that the opening on the side of the magazine is on the opposite side to that in the original versions, which means that you can see how much ammunition is used in the game.

LEBEL 1886 BOLT-ACTION RIFLE, 1915 MODEL WITH GRENADE LAUNCHER

French colonel Nicolas Lebel (1838-1891) had a passion for infantry weaponry and became a member of the committee in charge of developing a new infantry rifle. He was responsible for designing the bullet for this future rifle.
This bullet had to contain a new smokeless powder to replace black gunpowder and enable high velocity and long ranges to be achieved. This 8-mm bullet was lined with an alloy of copper, zinc and nickel, which was adopted for this rifle, at the time called the Lebel 1886 model. The Lebel rifle was widely used by the French army from 1887 onwards, particularly before the First World War.
From 1915, the weapon was able to be fitted with a VB (named after its inventor Viven-Bessière) grenade launcher. This grenade launcher was connected to the muzzle of the rifle and fired 490-g cast iron grenades, loaded with 60 g of explosive, over a range of 170 m. Use of the VB grenade launcher damaged the weapon which could then only be used with its accessory. Each infantry section received two. The VB grenade launcher was used until 1990, especially by the gendarmerie law and order forces, in particular in law enforcement contexts, to fire tear gas grenades.

IN POPULAR CULTURE:
A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
BY JEAN-PIERRE JEUNET, 2004.

In the Franco-American film "A Very Long Engagement", adapted from the novel of the same name by Sebastien Japrisot, 5 French soldiers in the trenches in the Somme are accused of self-mutilation in order to escape from their duties. Sentenced to death by court martial, they are led into no man's land and left to their fates on this site between the two opposing lines. They appear to have died during the night of in the early hours of the morning during the French attack using Lebel 1915 rifles with bayonets. Among them is Manech, the fiancé of young Mathilde who refuses to believe he has died. Convinced of her intuition, she investigates to find out what really happened that day.

MAUSER 1893 "TURKISH" BOLT-ACTION RIFLE

In 1867, Wilhelm (1834-1882) and Paul Mauser (1838-1914) designed the first rotating bolt breech loading rifle for the Royal weapons factory in Oberndorf in Lower Saxony. The bolt-action mechanism is typical of the mobile breech on the barrel of this weapon, which is opened and closed manually using a steel grip. This grip is resistant to the high pressures exerted in the use of modern cartridges. After firing, rotating the grip from 60° to 90° opens the breech from front to back to eject the empty case, cock the firing pin and release a new cartridge from the magazine under the breech.

In October 1888, a group of manufacturers from Liège created the limited company "Les fabricants d'armes réunis", in order to win a contract to supply the Belgian army with 150,000 Mauser type repeating shotguns. The company began its business in 1889 under the name of the National Factory for Weapons of War and a plant was built in Herstal. Following their commercial success, the Mauser brothers' factory was purchased by the Loewe industrial holding, one of the largest arms manufacturing consortiums in the world, which temporarily took over the National Factory in Herstal from 1896 to 1918. During the First World War, the German occupiers ordered the weapons factory to be closed. As a result, on the Yser front, the Belgian soldiers were supplied with Turkish Mausers, captured by the British army on the Eastern Front. These weapons were ordered by the Ottoman government form the German firm Mauser in Oberndorf.

The weapon in the Grand Curtius, a model from 1889, features the usual Mauser factory markings but translated into the local language. The Turkish crescent features on many of the elements such as the breech casing, the barrel, the rear sight or also the cocking handle. Ironically, in a conflict that was truly global in every sense of the word, these Mauser rifles ended up firing on nationals of their country of origin after passing through Turkish, British and then Belgian hands. After the Great War, the National Factory was purchased by a group of Belgian banks, including Société Générale de Belgique, which is the majority shareholder.

IN POPULAR CULTURE:
ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT
BY EDWARD BERGER, 2022

The novel published in 1929 written by Erich Maria Remarque, "Im Western nichts Neues" (German for "All Quiet on the Western Front") was made into a film in 1930 (by Lewis Milestone) and in 2022 (Edward Berger). The story takes place in 1917 during the First World War. Paul Baümer, a young man aged 17 years joins the German army. On arrival at the Western Front, near to La Malmaison, during the Second Battle of Aisne, he discovers the horror of the trenches. He has to find many ways to survive and sometimes steals poultry and eggs from local farmers. On the morning of 11th November 1918, Paul is delighted and already has plans for his return to civilian life. Paul and his division are sent on a final offensive, minutes before the Armistice; stabbed with a bayonet by a French soldier, he dies on the front as in the distance the bugles herald the Armistice. The film features realistic scenes of offensives and bombardments, in particular with the Mauser and its trigger-guard lever mechanism.

MAUSER WAFFENFABRIK

In 1867, Wilhelm and Paul Mauser designed an initial shotgun loaded by a rotating breech mechanism for the Royal Weapons Factory in Oberndorf in Lower Saxony. Following the Franco-Prussian war in 1870, this model, the Gewehr 71, was adopted by the German army. Paul Mauser worked on repeating shotguns and developed an incredible variety of weapons including the Gewehr 93 model which met with global success several years before his masterpiece, the Gerwehr 98. This bolt-action system considerably increased the German firm's sales. Following this commercial success, the Mauser brother's factory was purchased by the Loewe industrial holding, one of the largest arms manufacturing consortiums in the world, which temporarily took over the National Factory in Herstal.

MAUSER TANKGEWEHR M1918
BOLT-ACTION ANTI-TANK RIFLE

On the battlefields of the Somme in 1916, the first armoured tanks in the British army made their appearance. The German army immediately looked for a way to thwart vehicles. Plans to make a Maxim machine gun using anti-tank ammunition were put in place. This project did not come to fruition and it was the Tangewehr M1918 that became the first anti-tank rifle in April 1918. This rifle was developed for the German army in the last months of the First World War and used the Mauser 1898 model (or Gewehr 98) bolt-action system. It was equipped with a pistol grip and rifle rest identical to the MG 08/15 machine gun, which was one of the first German light machine guns. The weapon used 13.25-mm bullets made of hardened steel, developed for aircraft and anti-tank ammunition. This bullet could pierce approximately 22 mm of armour at a distance of 100 m or 25 mm of steel at a distance of 250 m. Two or three men were required to operate the weapon. The first gunman carried a bag of 13 cartridges and the rifle. The others each carried two canvas bags containing 20 cartridges and the rifle rest. This anti-tank rifle was heavy and could only be used in a static position, making it unpopular among the troops. Due to the considerable recoil it produced, the soldiers improvised padding in their uniforms. The aim of these weapons was not to destroy the target but to cause damage to the equipment and losses among the tank's crew.

LÜGER P08 PARABELLUM SEMI-AUTOMATIC PISTOL

In 1898, German engineer Georg Luger (1849 – 1923) developed one of the first semi-automatic pistols using the Borchardt C-93 pistol as a basis. This pistol fired a cartridge each time the trigger was pulled. As long as cartridges were available, it reloaded automatically. The weapon was also called the Lüger Parabellum. This term comes from the Latin saying, "Si vis pacem, para bellum" (if you wish for peace, prepare for war). It was first manufactured by the Deutsch Waffen und Munitionen Fabrik and then by the Mauser factories and exported to the USA by Stoeger which filed the trademark Lüger. In 1904, le Lüger parabellum was adopted by the Kriegsmarine, then in 1908, this pistol became the standard model for the German army. The popularity of this semi-automatic weapon was due to its unique design, lower manufacturing costs, comfort of use, and the accuracy and reliability the weapon boasted for its time. This handgun was widely used during the First World War and the Second World War. Following the second of these conflicts, until 1955, in France the gendarmerie law and order forces as well as the army were equipped with the Lüger. Over time, the Lüger P08 proved to be less reliable than other subsequently developed models. It became a collector's item in the 1950s.

IN POPULAR CULTURE:
INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS
BY QUENTIN TARANTINO, 2009

The film 2009 Inglorious Basterds by Quentin Tarantino, released in 2009, is set in the Second World War. It follows the tale of Shosanna Dreyfus, a young jew seeking vengeance for the assassination of her family by the Nazis, as well as a commando of Allied soldiers of Jewish origin led by Lieutenant Aldo Raine. The members of this squadron are tasked with eliminating as many Nazis as possible. The Inglorious Basterds are fictional versions of soldiers who actually existed and equip themselves with the same weapons as German soldiers during an infiltration operation, where they imitate Nazi officers. Among the legendary weapons used, the Luger is unmissable, featuring in many scenes from the film.

SI VIS PACEM, PARA BELLUM
IF YOU WISH FOR PEACE, PREPARE FOR WAR

Vegetius (a Roman writer from the late 4th century who died in 450) is credited with coining this adage. It comes from one of his writings on the army and on military tactics (Epitoma Rei Militaris). In this work, Vegetius compiled not only Roman but Greek military knowledge. It seems, moreover, that he had read Greek and Latin authors on the subject. His writings are contemporary with the excesses of the late Roman army which led to the fall of the Western Empire in 476. Compiled at the request of one of the last Roman emperors, the aim was to describe the means of restoring the military situation through appropriate measures. He advocated small, well-trained, well-equipped and well-commanded armies.

FN P90 SUB-MACHINE GUN

The FN P90 is a sub-machine gun that has been manufactured since 1990 by the National Factory in Herstal. This innovative weapon, whose design breaks with the pattern of previous weapons, is the result of the following observation: within the armed forces and the police, certain units whose mission is not to engage in combat with light weapons are nevertheless equipped with them. These weapons can prove more cumbersome than useful. However, these units must be equipped with a firearm that is efficient over short distances, light and compact. To produce a compact firearm, the P90 is made from plastic polymer derivatives. The weapon also uses the "bullpup" configuration, with the trigger placed in front of the firing mechanism so as not to hinder the shooter's movements. The P90 can be used by right-handed and left-handed shooters without the need for modifications. It can be fired from the shoulder, hip or lying down... Its semi-transparent magazine has a capacity of 50 rounds (the standard is generally around 30 rounds). In the magazine placed above the weapon, the cartridges are arranged perpendicular to the axis of the barrel. This unusual design makes the weapon easier to handle. This new generation weapon uses light and high-performance ammunition. The theoretical firing rate is 900 shots per minute, with a shooting range of 200 m and a weight of 3 kg. Initially designed as a personal defence firearm, the P90 can be considered to be a compact assault rifle. Today, the P90 is used by the armed forces and police in more than 40 countries, including Austria, Brazil, Canada, France, the USA, etc.

IN POPULAR CULTURE:
THE HUNGER GAMES
BY GARY ROSS, 2012

The Hunger Games series of films (5 opuses released in 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2023) were inspired by Suzanne Collins' novel of the same name. The story begins in the ruins of what was once North America. Each year, the Capitol of the nation of Panem obliges each of its 12 districts to send a boy and a girl aged between 12 and 18 years to take part in the Hunger Games, which is a televised game show in which these young people are forced to fight to the death against each other. In this society, the military force called the pacifiers is in charge of maintaining order. They are at the frontline in case of riots or revolts. They apply the law with severity, wear white uniforms and are armed with the famous P90 (also in white in this instance).

SAMURAI ARMOUR, EDO PERIOD, 1700-1710

Japanese armour is made up of a kabutō (helmet) with frontal ornament, a manpō (a mask inspired by the Kamis from the Shinto religion) often adorned with a moustache to reinforce the intimidating character or the Samourai, a dō (breast plate), a Tekkō (gauntlets often adorned with the Kamon, i.e., the coat of arms of the clan to which the warrior belongs) and Kusazuri (Faulds) made of several parts enabling mobility and protecting the legs. Intermediate parts of armour protect the neck, shoulders, forearms, thighs and legs. With so many items of equipment, putting on armour was a long process for the Samurai. During the Edo period (1603 -1868), a period of relative peace, armour became a ceremonial garment that sought to express the utmost richness and sophistication. This set of armour belonged to a member of a family close to the Toyotomi clan. This clan from the Owari province (in the centre of Honshu Island) was founded in 1585 by Hideyoshi Toyotomi (1537 – 1598), a soldier of humble origins. After serving a minor lord, he moved on to serve Oda Nobumaga, an important Daimyo (a nobleman and local lord) during the Sengoku period (1477 – 1573), which was a troubled social, military and political time. Nobumaga rewarded Toyotomi for his valiant military career by making him also a daimyo. He was then adopted by a nobleman from the imperial court, and obtained permission from the emperor to found his own clan.

IN POPULAR CULTURE:

SAMOURAI HEROES VOL.3 ROAR OF DRAGON
MANGA / VIDEO GAME

Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes – Roar of Dragon, is a Shonen manga, i.e., a Japanese comic book intended for young boys. Written by Asagi Ohga in 2010, this manga has been adapted into a video game. The story is set in the Sengoku period, a time of war that preceded the Edo era. Hideyoshi Toyotomi, the conquering king, takes the place of the demon king at the head of the country. However, many lords also covet the throne. Series 3, which includes 3 volumes, is freely inspired by the heroes of Japanese history, including Hideyoshi Toyotomi, a Japanese peacemaker of humble origins, who gave rise to a great line of Samurai.

THE SAMURAI

The Samurai, Japan's aristocratic warriors, was one of the highest social classes of the Edo period. The followed the code of Bushido (the way of the warrior) made up of 7 virtues: integrity, bravery, compassion, politeness, honesty, loyalty and honour. They served the Daimyo and the Shoguns, gradually becoming warrior administrators who replaced the royal court's government.

THE EDO PERIOD

The Edo period began in 1600 when Tokugawa Leyasu (1543 -1616) came to power. Following on from Oda Nobunaga (1534 -1582), one of Japan's main unifying forces, he took charge of a military faction and established control over the country. Having become a Shogun, i.e., a grand general and the Emperor's prime minister, he developed the State of Edo (which is today Tokyo) and imposed a long period of domestic peace enabling economic growth. Lemitsu Tokugawa introduced Sakoku (the closing off of the country), which was a policy forbidding foreigners from entering and leaving the country and without authorisation for the Japanese, making it possible to control trade and assert Japan's place in Central Asia. In 1854, US Navy commodore Matthew Perry (1794 – 1858) forced the Shogun to sign a peace and friendship treaty during the Kanagawa convention, allowing westerners to enter the Japanese ports of Shimoda and Hakodate. In 1868, the last Shogun abdicated, enabling the restoration of the Empire.

LATE 16TH CENTURY CAVALRY ARMOUR

It was in the 14th century that armour made of articulated metal plates was developed, which was more resistant to powerful weapons but also very heavy (up to 25 kilos). From the Renaissance onwards, armour also became a richly decorated ceremonial tool, used in lavish ceremonies. However, combat armour remained sober, with smooth shapes in shiny, polished steel to deflect blows from swords. As firearms become more widespread, military strategies favoured groups of armed men, who were more efficient and less expensive than knights with expensive reinforced armour. However, cavalry units continued to wear armour. The mission of this heavy cavalry was to break through the enemy lines. These riders' armour was thick enough to withstand musket and pistol bullets. This armour has a breastplate with a convex central ridge. It is fitted with forearm and upper-arm barrels linked together by an extended coverage elbow-pad at the elbows and attached to the breastplate by a spaudler at the shoulders. From the 16th century, but especially in the 17th century, this cavalry armour was distinguished by the "lobster tail" thigh protections, made up of articulated segments making it easier to mount a horse.

IN POPULAR CULTURE:
ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE
BY SHEKHAR KAPUR, 2007

The film Elizabeth: The Golden Age, made in 2007 by Shehar Kapur, is the second part of a series devoted to Queen Elisabeth I of England. This second film focuses on her rivalry for the throne with her cousin Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, as well as her battles with King Philip II of Spain. In 1585, the reign of Elisabeth I is threatened by the catholic kingdom of Spain, an ally of Mary Stuart. The film depicts Elisabeth I as a warrior queen leading her troops into combat wearing heavy cavalry armour typical of the late 16th century.

CAROLINGIAN FRANKISH SWORD

It was during the Carolingian era that weaponry began to develop into the form it would possess during the feudal era. The Carolingian sword, deemed to be the best weapon of its time, was a long, flat double-edged bladed weapon (measuring up to 1 m in length), inspired by the Merovingian sword, with a triangular pommel on which there was a ring. It was made from iron, a metal that is malleable but not very strong, so blacksmiths incorporated carbon into the outer parts of the blade. Trade in these swords was strictly regulated and banned abroad, to avoid them ending up in the hands of Viking soldiers (who ended up copying the Carolingian sword). Although all free men in the kingdom of the Franks had to serve in the army, the sword, which was expensive to produce, was reserved for a certain elite, while the axe and spear were favoured by less well-off combatants. This was a step towards the professionalisation of men-at-arms. In the 11th and 12th centuries, it evolved into a knight's sword.

IN POPULAR CULTURE:
THE VIDEO GAME
ASSASSIN'S CREED VALHALLA (UBISOFT, 2020)

The video game Assassin's Creed Valhalla, released in 2020, takes place at the end of the 9th century during Viking raids in England. This game, designed to be historically accurate also incorporates elements of Norse mythology. In 885, Eivor, a Norse warrior, receives a visit from a Viking warrior planning a raid on Paris. He calls for the help of Eivor in capturing Frankish Emperor Charles the Fat, who was threatening England. He then goes on to conduct several battles on Frankish territory. Among the 42 weapons available in the game, the two-handed Carolingian sword provides excellent stability, a long reach and the ability to cause serious damage.

THE CAROLINGIANS

The Carolingians were a dynasty of Frankish kings. Their reign extended from the 8th century to the 10th century in Western Europe. The name is derived from Carolus, the Latin name of Charles Martel (circa 688 – 741), the forebear of this dynasty, and his grandson Charlemagne (742, 747 or 748 – 814), who was certainly the most illustrious representative of this dynasty. The lineage dates back to 630, with the wedding of Ansegisel (602 - 679) and Begge d'Andenne (615 – 693) which sealed the alliance of the Pippinids (the Frankish dynasty of Austrasia - the north-east of present-day France). Their son Pépin de Herstal (635 – 714) was the father of Charles Martel, who in turn was the father of Pépin le Bref (714 – 768), who became the first king of the Carolingian dynasty in 754. Charlemagne, the son of Pépin le Bref, enjoyed a reign marked not only by its longevity but also by his military conquests. Furthermore, surrounded by Christian scholars, he also developed a new idea of the State, inspired by the Roman Empire. From a cultural point of view, the reign of Charlemagne is renowned as a period of "Carolingian Renaissance": Latin was taught, the use of lower-case Caroline (a standardised and legible form of writing) was imposed and ancient materials were a source of inspiration and re-used in art. On the death of Louis the Pious, Charlemagne's son, Lothair, one of his three sons, attempted to take control of the entire empire, and declared war on his two brothers. The Treaty of Verdun in 843 divided the territory from east to west into three kingdoms: Charles II the Bald received West Francia, Lothair received Middle Francia, also known as Lotharingia (covering a territory stretching form present day Italy to Friesland) and Louis the German received East Francia (known as Germany).

HALBERD

The word 'halberd' comes from the German "Helmbarte" meaning an "axe with a shaft". It is a pole weapon, i.e., a bladed weapon made up of a blade or metallic tip fixed to a long handle called a shaft. The halberd blade has an axe-like shape and bec de corbin (old French for crow's beak) hammer head and spike. Very often, the other end is fitted with a metal heel for use as a blunt weapon. The weapon measures between 1 m 70 and 2 m and is held with both hands in hand-to-hand combat due to its weight. Although the oldest halberds date back to the metal ages, the first mentions of them can be traced back to Switzerland in the 14th century. The halberd is a versatile weapon used by infantrymen in close combat against both infantry and cavalry. This weapon was widely used by all European armies from the late Middle Ages to the Renaissance. It began to disappear from battlefields around the 17th century and was replaced by the bayonet rifle in the 18th century.

IN POPULAR CULTURE:

SUPER MARIO BROS MOVIE
BY AARON HORVATH ET MICHAEL JELENIC, 2023

This animated film features characters from Nintendo's Super Mario video games Brothers Mario and Luigi, who are plumbers, decide to set up their own business. While trying to solve a flooding problem in the streets of New York, they are sucked into a vortex by a mysterious green pipe. Separated from Luigi, Mario is propelled into a world of giant mushrooms. There he meets Toad and Princess Peach, whom he helps to fight against Koopas Bowser, who is trying to conquer the kingdom. In this animated film, Princess Peach is no longer the damsel in distress waiting to be rescued by Mario, but instead is depicted as a leader and action heroine. She leads a war council, takes Mario on an obstacle course and arms herself with a halberd.

INFO

+32 (0)4 221 68 17
infograndcurtius@liege.be
www.grandcurtius.be
Facebook : LeGrandCurtius

FÉDÉRATION WALLONIE-BRUXELLES

Liège

LIÈGE MUSÉES

Ed.Resp. Mehmet Aydogdu, Féronstrée 92, 4000 Liège - Impression CIN Ville de Liège - septembre 2023 - Photos © Ville de Liège, Grand Curtius