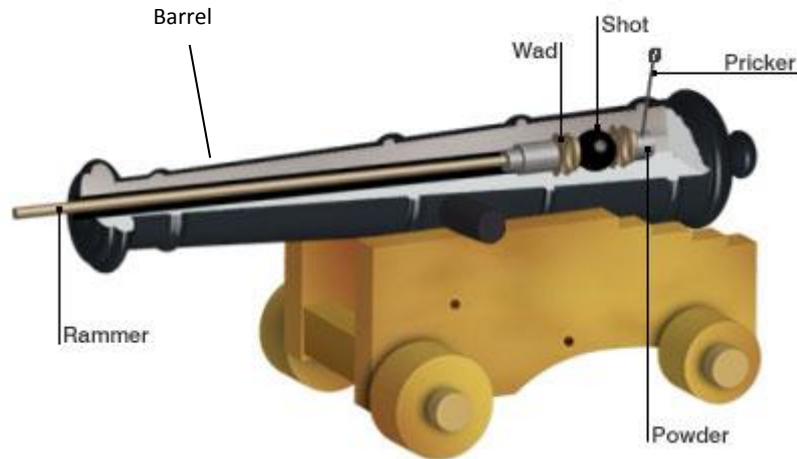


## Firing a Cannon.

### Parts of a cannon:



The size of a cannon is referred to in terms of the average weight of the ball it could fire. A cannon that shot a 3-pound ball was called a *3-pounder*, one that shot a 6-pound ball was called a *6-pounder*, and so on. Littlehampton Fort was equipped with three 68 pound (31kg) guns and two 32 pound (14.5kg) guns. The cannon balls were made of solid iron.

### To fire the gun:

The firing of a cannon involved a crew of four to five men

First of all the barrel of the gun was cleaned out with a sponge. The sponge was a piece of damp wool on the end of a pole. Its purpose was to put out any embers from a previous firing which might cause the next charge of gunpowder to go off too soon and also to remove any debris in the barrel which would prevent the cannon ball from shooting properly.

Next the gunpowder was put in the barrel. The right amount was already measured out and was wrapped in cartridge paper. Then wadding made of old cloth was put in, followed by the cannon ball and more wadding. The purpose of the wadding was to prevent the gunpowder and ball from falling out if the gun was moved. The gunpowder, ball and wadding were all rammed down the barrel of the gun with a long ramrod.

Then the gun would be pushed to the right location and angled to line up with the target. The gun was very heavy and had to be levered into position. A 68 pounder weighted about 5,080 kg.

Finally the cannon was fired. There was a small vent at the back of the cannon and a 'pricker' was inserted into this to prick a hole in the cartridge of gunpowder in the cannon. The pricker was a tube with a pointed end and it was filled with a small amount of gunpowder, called priming powder. Traditionally the priming powder was set alight using a rope match but by the time of Littlehampton Fort the priming powder was lit by making a spark with a small hammer hitting a cap on top of the pricker. The hammer was activated by the gunner pulling a rope called a lanyard.

The flame travelled down the vent and the gunpowder in the barrel exploded forcing the cannon ball to shoot out. When the cannon was fired it would jerk backwards so it needed to be held in place by ropes. The cannon ball would fly about 1.5 miles (2,300 m.).

### Gun Drill in the 1850s

Here is a diagram of a gunner working with a team of 6 men to fire a cannon. It was drawn in the 1850s.

