

Care and Maintenance of Weapons

This paper is for anyone who owns or has been issued a weapon in Clan MacColin. As the holder of an issued pike the Chief asks that we as his soldiers look after and care for them in an orderly manner. We who own personal weapons must also make sure our weapons are in good condition. This is a safety issue as well as a matter of period behavior and personal pride.

In character, only officers and gentle folk would own fine weapons, the rest of us would draw from the Chiefs armory. There may be a few exceptions but as a Clan member, historically everything you own is the Chiefs, and to keep the weapons that defend your family and land in poor condition just isn't accurate or acceptable. Thankfully the care of these tools of war is quite simple and I will go over the basics with you.

First you will need the following:

- 1 Rags
- 2 A penetrating oil for metal (WD40 works well)
- 3 A coarse and a fine rasp for wood and a set for metal(half round and rat tail for hard to reach places)
- 4 Scotch Bright pads or steel wool
- 5 Wood oil, preferably linseed oil and turpentine (straight linseed will do in a pinch)
- 6 Sandpaper fine and coarse for rough and fine work
- 7 A small ball peen hammer and a flat hard working surface
- 8 A rust eraser, if you can find one.
- 9 Metal polish (Never Dull is my favorite)

Most of these things can be borrowed, but a truly prepared soldier will have most if not all of these at hand. Many of these items are cheap easily available at Home Depot or other hardware store. If you can find some period containers for the oils and polish you can do the filing and finish work in the camp during hours.

Metal

The metal of most weapons is on the business end, and is the most susceptible to abuse. This means blades, butt caps, hand guards, languets are all included in this classification. If it's made of metal, ferrous or non-ferrous, it must be dealt with in this fashion. Dings, burrs and scratches will occur in its use on the field and will need to be addressed. Most can be either filed or buffed out. Large burrs can be hammered back in, as it's always better to avoid removing metal if possible. Your edges should be inspected prior to taking the field and extreme cases of neglect will result in the disallowance of the use of the weapon that day, so avoid this by using your time on duty to clean and prep your weapon.

Loose rivets and sockets also pose a real safety issue if allowed on the field.

Sockets and rivets take a little more practice to deal with, if you are unsure take these problems to the Blacksmith area. Avoid touching the metal of a weapon with bare hands, high carbon steel will rust from the oils in your skin. To avoid rust after cleaning, spray or rub your metal parts down with oil and let it sit for a few minutes to allow penetration. Once the metal is cleaned and oiled it will rust less quickly and be faster to clean and easier to maintain. I do not recommend any chemical solvents to be used while the weapon is hafted. If the grip still attached chemicals may damage the organic components of the weapon.

Wood

The grip or shaft of the weapon is the most important and susceptible to decay from moisture or excessive heat. Wood reacts to its environment much like it did before it was transformed into a shaft or handle so we must spend more time caring for it. By applying linseed oil we are sealing the wood against weather and the saturation of the oil into the fiber will add density to it as well. Over time the wood will become glossy and slightly waxy to the touch (this will aid your grip). Turpentine will help the oil penetrate faster. The wood must be oiled more than once a year. Until it attains the glossy coat of hardened Linseed oil it must be done once a month, or as often as possible. Sunny Days are the best day for this as the sun will help speed up the drying process

Anytime the wood is cut or damaged it must be filed with a rasp, sanded and re-oiled. The exposure of fibers that have not been saturated by the linseed oil will make a weak spot that could, over time, weaken the overall tensile strength of the wood. Splinters are a concern here as well, as we allow customers to handle our weapons and they generally don't wear gloves, so have some concern for their safety and dress the shaft/ handle/grip of your weapon with this in mind. Keep all wood as smooth and free of splinters as possible. Sometimes the wood is too badly damaged to make it smooth again. In this case smooth it as best you can and have a care when handing this weapon to a customer. Lawsuits are ugly. Let's avoid them!

I hope this will help you on your way to a gleaming example of how a proud soldier displays the tools of his trade. If ever a question arises that this paper doesn't cover don't hesitate to ask for help from a veteran member, they are here to help you succeed in your endeavor and may have hints or tips that will help you even more. And remember, for those issued company pikes and pole arms if your weapon is in good condition you've done your job, if your pike is in excellent condition there are rewards to be had. Showing that you are willing to take the extra step makes all the difference in re-enacting and every little bit helps!