[**michaelsbagley**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/3724-michaelsbagley/)

* Smells Like Wet Sheep
* 
* 
* Moderator
* 2,548 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Columbus, Ohio
* Interests:Mostly into GAoP, but starting to develop more Buccaneer era stuff for re-enacting as well. Generally I do re-enact both piratical/nautical and other impressions from the period. I am focusing on more "common" impressions from the period (i.e. average sailor/pirate, rank and file Red Coat, early Colonial huntsman, etc.)

[Posted July 19, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=findComment&comment=275903) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=reportComment&comment=275903)

Sigh....

So I have been reading John Esquemeling's "The Buccaneers of America" (more like plodding through, my reading time recently has been extremely scant), and I have noticed a few instances of the Buccaneers using "fireballs" (or was it "fire balls"?).

Each time I've read that, I've had a little snicker from my remembering playing "Dungeons and Dragons" when I was younger (is that a 10 or 12 die fireball? ), then the little joke in my head stops, and I read on assuming that the fireball was some sort of term for a "molotov cocktail" type thing or perhaps a grenado or similar device.

Does anyone have any other references to the use of "Fireballs" within either the Buccaneer or Pirate eras? Better yet, does anyone have any reasonable evidence (or references to) of what exactly they were or may have been?

I'm just curious, and don't currently have the time to delve into it right yet...

Thanks in advance for any help. I've doen a quick search here on "Twill" and didn't find anything, if a thread currently exists, I will happliy even take a pointer to that thread.

[**Captain Jim**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2317-captain-jim/)

* Captain Jim for Captain!
* 
* 
* Member
* 2,254 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Off the coast of Tampa Bay (Unfortunately, inland from the coast)
* Interests:I'm 57, formerly a wildlife ecologist and biologist, now a stay-at-home dad. I grew up on the west coast of Florida, where Anna Maria Sound and Tampa Bay were my playground. My interests include, but are not limited to cannon, black powder arms, history, fishing the flats, sailing, fine wood working, flint gun building, hunting, good gun dogs. Above all, my wife and children.

[Posted July 19, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=findComment&comment=275926) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=reportComment&comment=275926)

Could these have been "hot shot" cannonballs? Since at least 1589 red-to-white hot cannon balls have been used to start fires/ignite powder on ships and in forts.

Basically the cannon would have been loaded in the normal way and then an "overwad" of wet material would have been rammed home, followed by the red-hot cannonball. A final wet wad (to keep the ball from rolling out) then fired immediately.

[**Patrick Hand**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1049-patrick-hand/)

* The sailor's sailor
* 
* 
* Moderator
* 6,100 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:TH' Mountains of Central California
* Interests:I like wierdness... Klingon, Pyrate..... and even..... gasp.... Renn Faires...... (Baseball and tractor pulls I'd have to think about.... could be wierd or Not,,,,)

[Posted July 19, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=findComment&comment=275948) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=reportComment&comment=275948)

There was a reference somewhere when we were takling about granades.....

From what I remember, they were a mixture of flamible stuff mixed together and formed into balls with a fuse sticking out.... It didn't sound like they would work very well tho......

Now I'll have to see if I can find the reference again........

[**michaelsbagley**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/3724-michaelsbagley/)

* Smells Like Wet Sheep
* 
* 
* Moderator
* 2,548 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Columbus, Ohio
* Interests:Mostly into GAoP, but starting to develop more Buccaneer era stuff for re-enacting as well. Generally I do re-enact both piratical/nautical and other impressions from the period. I am focusing on more "common" impressions from the period (i.e. average sailor/pirate, rank and file Red Coat, early Colonial huntsman, etc.)

[Posted July 19, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=findComment&comment=275949) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=reportComment&comment=275949)

 Captain Jim said:

Could these have been "hot shot" cannonballs? Since at least 1589 red-to-white hot cannon balls have been used to start fires/ignite powder on ships and in forts.

Basically the cannon would have been loaded in the normal way and then an "overwad" of wet material would have been rammed home, followed by the red-hot cannonball. A final wet wad (to keep the ball from rolling out) then fired immediately.

I wouldn't rule out "hot shot" base on what little I know.... But the context of the battle I most recently read this in, the buccaneers had been travelling overland, and \*probably wouldn't\* have been lugging artillery.

Patrick's suggestion of the goopey ball of flamible stuff sounds more like it might have been what was being used. as it would have been more portable....

Thanks to both of you for your suggestions though!

[**blackjohn**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1144-blackjohn/)

* Iron Age Hero Lost at Sea
* 
* 
* Member
* 3,745 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Columbia, Md
* Interests:Stuff... and junk.

[Posted July 19, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=findComment&comment=275977) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=reportComment&comment=275977)

 michaelsbagley said:

Each time I've read that, I've had a little snicker from my remembering playing "Dungeons and Dragons" when I was younger (is that a 10 or 12 die fireball?   )

I don't think my 11th level Ranger has access to fireball under the latest edition of the rules. Rangers got smurfed in v3.5 rules.



There are a wide range of incendiary devices available to the naval combatant of the era, some hand thrown, others launched by little artillery, etc.

[**Capn\_Enigma**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/139-capn_enigma/)

* Plunderer
* 
* 
* Member
* 432 posts

[Posted July 19, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=findComment&comment=276005) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=reportComment&comment=276005)

Alexander Exquemelin does not mention "red cannonballs", but, as Patrick suggested, the great- grandfather of the anti- personnel hand grenade, consisting of a metal sphere, a bottle or some other sort of container, filled with gunpowder. Add nails etc. ad lib.

This is the quote:

 Quote

... the buccaneers immediately swarmed up, furiously attacking the Spaniards with hand grenades and stink- pots...

[**callenish gunner**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1944-callenish-gunner/)

* Scourge o' the 7 Seas
* 
* 
* Member
* 2,138 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Pennsylvania mountains north of Clarion
* Interests:The Callenish gunner has just hoved into view looking for safe anchorage in these waters... purveyor of bladed and flintlock weaponry also leather accessories ..........painter of portraits and period scenes by avocation I'm getting my armoury business underway and will be doing as many festivals as I can ...right now along the east coast or great lakes

[Posted July 19, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=findComment&comment=276006) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=reportComment&comment=276006)

**and there are existing examples of flintlock grenade launchers from the period ....so the grenade theory has a lot of credence!!! found a link from a post awhile back from gentleman of fortune ...as i recall they weighed in just over a pound or so more than a good sized blunderbuss**

<http://www.gentlemenoffortune.com/handmortar.htm>

[**michaelsbagley**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/3724-michaelsbagley/)

* Smells Like Wet Sheep
* 
* 
* Moderator
* 2,548 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Columbus, Ohio
* Interests:Mostly into GAoP, but starting to develop more Buccaneer era stuff for re-enacting as well. Generally I do re-enact both piratical/nautical and other impressions from the period. I am focusing on more "common" impressions from the period (i.e. average sailor/pirate, rank and file Red Coat, early Colonial huntsman, etc.)

[Posted July 19, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=findComment&comment=276007) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=reportComment&comment=276007)

 Capn\_Enigma said:

Alexander Exquemelin does not mention "red cannonballs", but, as Patrick suggested, the great- grandfather of the anti- personnel hand grenade, consisting of a metal sphere, a bottle or some other sort of container, filled with gunpowder. Add nails etc. ad lib.

This is the quote:

 Quote

... the buccaneers immediately swarmed up, furiously attacking the Spaniards with hand grenades and stink- pots...

Thanks Enigma. That is the segment I am talking about.... But I hadn't even considered that the reference to "Fireballs" may have been a translators issue related to my edition of the book (which reads differently from your quote, similar, but not quite).

[**Patrick Hand**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1049-patrick-hand/)

* The sailor's sailor
* 
* 
* Moderator
* 6,100 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:TH' Mountains of Central California
* Interests:I like wierdness... Klingon, Pyrate..... and even..... gasp.... Renn Faires...... (Baseball and tractor pulls I'd have to think about.... could be wierd or Not,,,,)

[Posted July 19, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=findComment&comment=276016) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=reportComment&comment=276016)

Excerpts from ***The Sea-Gunner***

[A TABLE Of the Principal Matters contained in this Book.](http://www.shipbrook.net/jeff/seagunner/contents.html)

[How to make Hand-Granadoes to be Hove by Hand.](http://www.shipbrook.net/jeff/seagunner/chapter18.html)

[How to make Fire-Pots of Clay.......To make Stink-Balls.](http://www.shipbrook.net/jeff/seagunner/chapter19.html)

I almost remembered it right..... the mixture is put into a container.....

[**blackjohn**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1144-blackjohn/)

* Iron Age Hero Lost at Sea
* 
* 
* Member
* 3,745 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Columbia, Md
* Interests:Stuff... and junk.

[Posted July 19, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=findComment&comment=276029) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=reportComment&comment=276029)

I've always thought fire darts were rather cool. Maybe I should make one to fire from my blunderbuss?



[**John Maddox Roberts**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/334-john-maddox-roberts/)

* First Mate
* 
* 
* Member
* 272 posts

[Posted July 19, 2007](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=findComment&comment=276102) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=reportComment&comment=276102)

From what I've read, red-hot shot were never fired from ships, only from shore batteries firing on ships. You needed a furnace and it had to get really hot to heat a 4- to 32- pound iron shot glowing red. Keeping a ship from catching fire was hard enough without having a furnace like that aboard. I suppose the smith would have a forge, but it probably wasn't big enough to head heavy shot. There's a great description of a shore fort cooking up hot shot in one of the Hornblower novels, I forget which.

[**Mission**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1929-mission/)

* Goat Specialist
* 
* 
* Admin
* 5,081 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Monroe, MI
* Interests:Scholarly piracy, designing and creating haunted house rooms and props, movies, abstract thinking, abstruse thinking, obstructive thinking, ideating, random thinking, movies, cartoons, movies, movies scores, cycling, world peace and small furry dogs, movies, writing, drawing, personal skills training, gremlins and, of course, lest I forget, movies.

[Posted April 25, 2013](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=findComment&comment=413869) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=reportComment&comment=413869)

It's from after the time of the buccaneers, but a fire ball none-the-less.

"[Dec 26, 1710] Then we fell a-stern in our Birth along side, where the Enemy threw a Fire-ball out of one of her Tops, which lighting upon our Quarter-deck, blew up a Chest of Arms and Cartouch Boxes all loaded, and several Cartridges of Powder in the Steerage, by which mean Mr. *Vanbrugh*, our Agent, and a *Dutchman* were very much burnt; it might have done more Damage, had it not been quench'd as soon as possible." (Woodes Rogers, A Cruising Voyage Round the World, p. 161)

[**Fox**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1019-fox/)

* Old Twillian
* 
* 
* Moderator
* 2,564 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Beautiful lush Devon, England
* Interests:Nautical history of the 16-18th centuries and living history based thereon.

Shooting pirates.

[Posted April 25, 2013](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=findComment&comment=413870) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=reportComment&comment=413870)

By coincidence, I had my attention drawn to this book today, which has a whole chapter on fireballs:

<http://www.oxbowbooks.com/oxbow/a-glorious-empire.html>

[**PoD**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/10743-pod/)

* Pyrate Captain
* 
* 
* Member
* 696 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Warrington UK
* Interests:Pirates, graphic novels, computer art, Listening to music, Going to gigs, Beer and Wine drinking, historical research, Period weaponry and Leatherwork

[Posted April 26, 2013](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=findComment&comment=413883) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=reportComment&comment=413883)

Good find. Just bought a copy.

[**Mission**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1929-mission/)

* Goat Specialist
* 
* 
* Admin
* 5,081 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Monroe, MI
* Interests:Scholarly piracy, designing and creating haunted house rooms and props, movies, abstract thinking, abstruse thinking, obstructive thinking, ideating, random thinking, movies, cartoons, movies, movies scores, cycling, world peace and small furry dogs, movies, writing, drawing, personal skills training, gremlins and, of course, lest I forget, movies.

[Posted April 26, 2013](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=findComment&comment=413886) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/11279-fireballs/&do=reportComment&comment=413886)

Hey, are there any period quotes of interest specifically about fireballs burning people in that book? I'd order it, but by the time I got it, it would be too late for my article (on burns, obviously) and most of the rest of it doesn't look interesting to me.