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## Arms Production

Detailed information on firearms that is of interest to the serious student of firearms history. The material is generally limited to arms that are no longer manufactured.

### Webley .455 Service Revolvers

When the British Government placed an order with P. Webley & Sons for 10,000 Mark I revolvers in July 1887, the search begun in 1880 for a powerful reliable Service revolver was ended. Models of the .455 Webley revolver were the official side-arms of the British Army until adoption of the .38 No. 2 Mark I revolver in 1932.

The Mark I and all subsequent models of the cal. .455 Webley were 6-shot, top-break, simultaneous-ejection revolvers of extremely sturdy construction. The revolvers were of double-action type, and had triangular guides in front of the cylinder, designed to permit easy entry of the revolver into the holster.

Identifying features of the Mark I in-

cluded a bird's-head grip with a distinct hump in the back strap, and a thin fragile-looking firing pin integral with the hammer. The axis pin for the cylinder was held to the barrel lug by a transverse screw.

During production of the Mark I, a change was made in the recoil shield. Initially forged as part of the frame, the shield was later inserted into a dovetail slot and retained by a screw. This change was not deemed sufficiently important to warrant a new Mark designation. However, all guns of the Mark I series with the separate shield were stamped Mark I\*.

In October 1894, the Mark I and Mark I\* revolvers were superseded by the Mark II. Improvements, supposedly for the convenience of the cavalry, were omission of the hump from the back strap, broadening of the hammer spur, and employment of a sturdier firing pin.

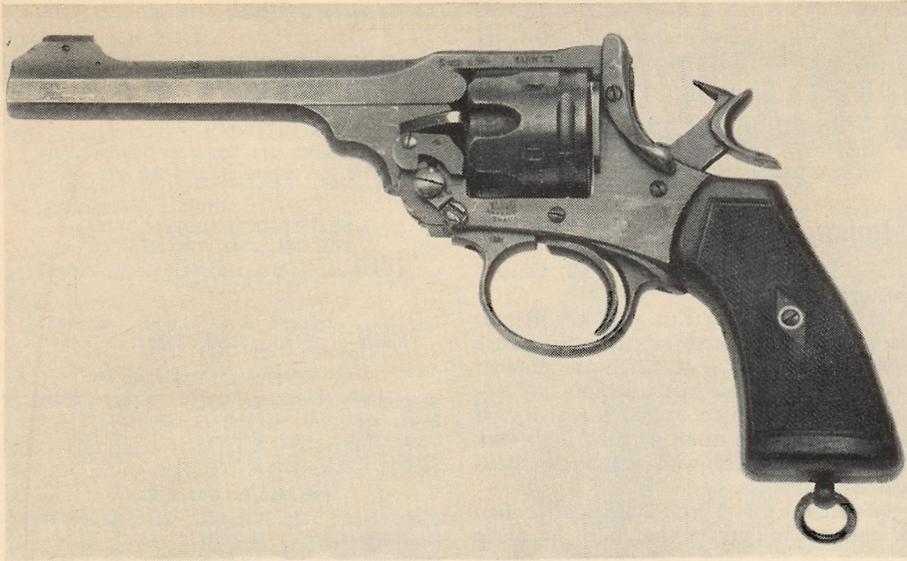
Three years later, in October 1897, the Mark III was adopted. It was basically the same as the Mark II except that the cylinder-retaining mechanism was completely altered. The cylinder axis pin became part of the barrel assembly and the cylinder



Mark I .455 revolver.



Mark III .455 revolver.



Mark VI .455 revolver.

was retained by a cam, lever, and screw. This mechanism was invented and patented at the Webley plant.

With the advent of the Boer War in 1899, the Mark IV was approved. It had a comparatively small hammer spur similar to that of the Mark I, but a sturdy firing pin like that of the Marks II and III. Also, this model was furnished with 3", 5", and 6" barrels in addition to the standard 4" barrel.

#### Modification of the Mark IV

The Mark V, adopted December 1913, was the same as the Mark IV except that its cylinder was .012" larger in diameter than those of previous models. This modification had the purpose of making the gun safer for use with smokeless powder. Barrels of this model were available in 4" and 6" lengths.

Adopted in May 1915, the Mark VI had a different grip shape than previous models. The grip had a hump similar to that of the Mark I, but with a more modern squaring-off at the bottom. This model usually had a dull finish rather than the military type blue of the earlier Marks. From 1921 on, this model was also manufactured at the Royal Small Arms Factory, Enfield Lock. Except for markings, these

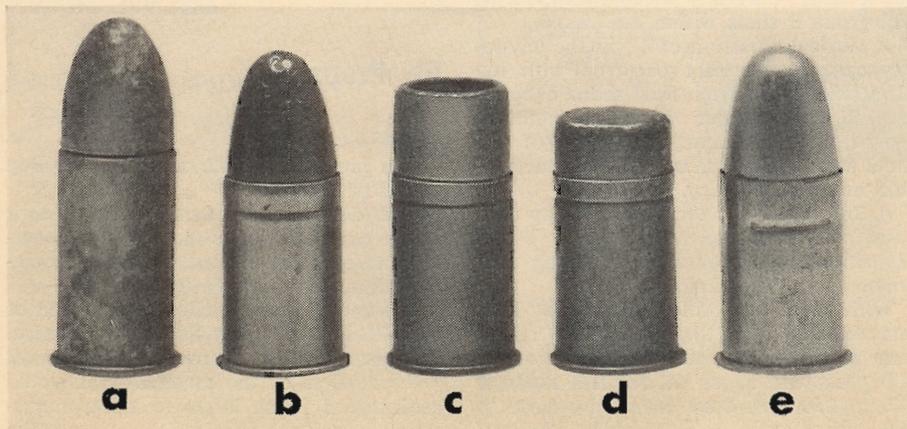
government-made specimens were almost identical with those produced by Webley.

Ball cartridges for use in these revolvers were designated Marks I through VI. The Mark I cal. .455 cartridge had a 7/8" long brass case and a Boxer primer. It was loaded with blackpowder, and its round-nose lead bullet weighed 265 grs.

In 1898, the Mark II .455 cartridge was adopted. Loaded with Cordite, it had a case 3/4" long. Its 265-gr. lead bullet had a conical ogive and round nose. A Berdan primer was used, and the case had 2 flash holes.

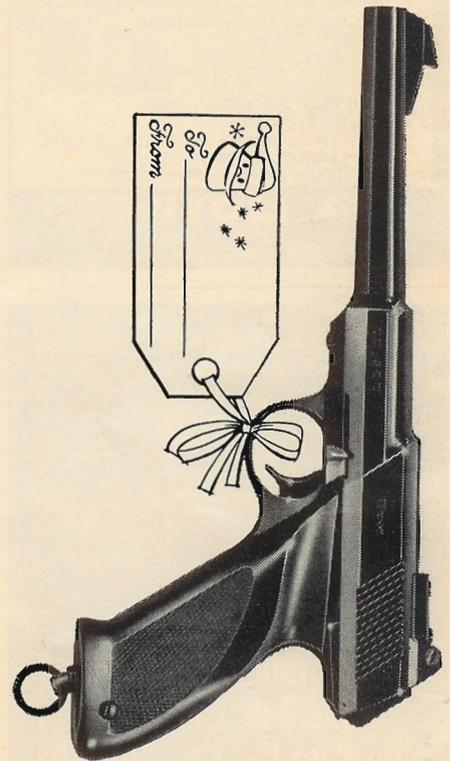
Subsequent Marks of the .455 cartridge had the same short case as the Mark II. The Mark III cartridge had the so-called 'man-stopper' bullet with a large cavity in its nose, and the Mark IV and Mark V had flat-nose wadcutter-style bullets. Except that the bullet of the Mark IV was lead-tin alloy and that of the Mark V was lead-antimony, these 2 cartridges were alike.

The Mark II cartridge became obsolete with the introduction of the Mark III, but it was re-introduced in 1900. It was dropped again when the Mark IV cartridge was adopted, but was restored to service in 1914. To comply with the Hague Convention, the Mark II was replaced in 1939 by the Mark VI which had a metal-jacketed bullet.—R. A. GUSSMAN and R. E. LADD



Cal. .455 ball cartridges: (a) Mk. I; (b) Mk. II; (c) Mk. III; (d) Mk. IV; (e) Mk. V.

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