



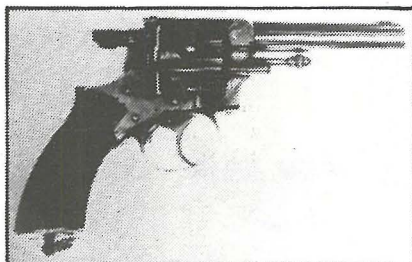
FIREARMS

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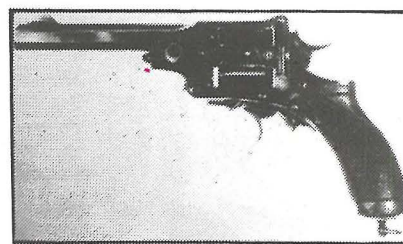
PART 2

In part one of this series we have commenced to give some details about the various Webley models and so far we have covered these models: The R.I.C. .450 Model 1872, The R.I.C. Metropolitan & County Police Model 1880, .430 James Hill Model 1880, R.I.C. No. 1 New Model 1883, and the Naval Service R.I.C. Model 1884.

However, part 2 of this series will continue to cover the Webley range.



A Webley .45 fitted with Silver and Fletcher hammer.



Webley-Pryse .455 (1877).



Webley .455 with shortened barrel.

calibres. Webleys also produced presentation versions of all the R.I.C. range of weapons. Most of these were engraved to a very high standard and cased in baize-lined boxes.

The Pryse Revolvers. In 1877, Webley began production of a new type of self-extracting revolver with a hinged frame. These revolvers incorporated the Pryse patents, which were lodged in November 1876. The features of the Pryse patent are worth examining in brief detail. The immediate difference is the hinged frame, though that was not part of Pryse's patent (Patent 4421. 15 November 1876), since it had been invented by Edward Wood in 1870. What Pryse did was to introduce two improvements to the original version. The first of these improvements was the Rebounding hammer. Pryse arranged that the main spring lifted the hammer up to half-cock when the trigger was released after firing. The hammer was then held in that position so that it was impossible for it to be knocked forward onto a cartridge. The advantage in such an arrangement is obvious, and it appears in all modern revolvers.

The other main improvements was the Cylinder Lock, which was a neat and practical innovation. Extra notches were cut in

the cylinder to engage with a special locking arm or stud. These notches could be at the front or rear of the cylinder, and the stud was held up into the cylinder notches by the trigger acting under the influence of its return spring. With the trigger in the forward position, the stud is firmly engaged and the cylinder is locked with a chamber in line with the barrel. On pulling the trigger, the stud is withdrawn, and further motion rotates the cylinder by the action of the pawl. When the next chamber is in line, another stud engages, holding the chamber steady, and the last part of the trigger movement acts on the sear and releases the hammer. It is a very safe and useful movement, and Webley was fortunate to secure the Pryse patents.

There were other minor features of the Pryse revolvers, but none so radical as the cylinder

Silver & Fletcher Patent 1883.

Silver and Fletcher patented a safety and ejector device for revolvers in the early 1880s, and this was later applied to a small number of Webley R.I.C. New Models, all apparently in .450 calibre. The device allowed the loaded weapon to be carried without the danger of firing by inadvertent jolting, and the mechanical ejector relieved the firer of the need to push the spent cases out by hand. The inventions were a little clumsy in appearance when fitted to the revolver, and were also an extra expense. They were not a commercial success, but those weapons which were sold with them fitted, were stamped on top of the barrel with the legend, 'Silver and Fletcher's Patent "THE EXPERT"'. The name of Webley is omitted.

Special Order R.I.C. Models.

Webleys were always to make revolvers to special order, and some of these were produced in varying barrel lengths, others had shoulder stocks which could be either clipped or screwed on to the butt. The usual barrel was 6 inches long for these carbine adaptations, in a variety of

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rotation and locking arrangements. One which is worth mentioning is the barrel catch, which was a double breech bolt through the top of the frame, opened by two fingers, one either side of the frame. These two bolts locked into the top strap running back from the barrel and securely held it.

The Pryse patents were also licenced to other gunmakers so that there is occasional confusion between apparently similar models produced under different maker's names. But the Webley models were probably the widest and largest range offered to the public. They were made in a range of calibres, .32, .38, .44, .450, .455 and .577, all of the same basic design and with barrel lengths varying from 3 to 5 11/16 inches. Many of the Webley Pryse models were also copied in Belgium, and a typical manufacturer was Auguste Francotte of Liege' who certainly sold his revolvers in England in competition with Webley.

● SIMILARITY

Since the various models were so similar, no attempt will be made to describe each one, and a list of the ones that have been positively identified is given below:

Webley Pryse - .320 6-shot 3 inch barrel.

Belgian Pryse - .320 6-shot 3 1/8 inch barrel.

Webley Pryse - .380 6-shot, various barrel lengths.

Belgian Pryse - .450 5-shot 3 1/16 inch barrel.

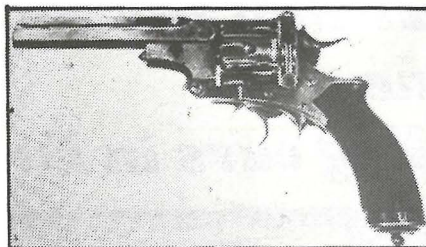
Webley Pryse - .450 6-shot 4 inch barrel.

Webley Pryse - .450 6-shot 5 1/2 inch barrel.

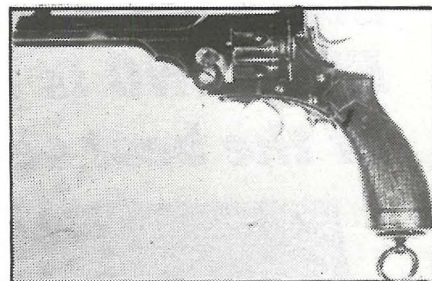
Webley Pryse - .455 6-shot 5 1/2 inch barrel.

Webley Pryse - .455 6-shot 5 1/16 inch barrel.

Webley-Wilkinsons-Pryse. At the same as the other Pryse models were being marketed, P. Webley & Son were also making a special line of Pryse revolvers for the London sword makers, Henry Wilkinson & Son, of 27, Pall Mall. Wilkinson reasoned that when an officer had a sword



Webley .455 Wilkinson-Pryse with Webley-Kaufmann cylinder release.



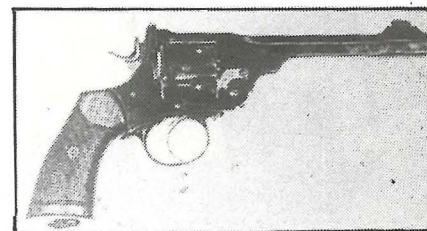
Webley-Wilkinson .455 (1892)

made for him in their workshops, it seemed sensible to make him a revolver also, and naturally it would have to be a Wilkinson revolver. In point of fact, these Wilkinson weapons were basically standard Webley models and differed only from the factory models in matters of refinement and finish.

The Wilkinson No. 1 Model was made in Belgium in .450 calibre. The two main differences apart from the place of manufacture and proof marking, are the cylinder stops which, in the Belgium gun, are in the rear position, and a slightly different cylinder release. The barrel is 6 1/2 inches long and has five rifling grooves. This model was introduced in 1878, a later model in 1880 was chambered for .455/.476 calibre, and had a fractionally shorter barrel of 5 3/8 inches length.

Later Wilkinson models were all made in England and are entirely of Webley manufacture with the top rib engraved 'Wilkinson & Son, Pall Mall, London'. On the left side of the barrel just in front of the cylinder, was stamped their monogram, a six-pointed star and the initials 'HW'. They also stamped their own serial number under the trigger guard, or more usually, on the bottom of the wooden butt on the left side. The sights were another Wilkinson refinement. These were of German silver, the fore-sight being a blade and the back-sight having a silver triangle let into the steel notch.

Having made a successful entry into the revolver market with the Pryse type, Wilkinson was not afraid to introduce improvements as technology advanced, and the first changes to the original



Webley-Wilkinson .455 (1911).

design came with the 1892 model. In this revolver the Pryse, influence declined and the overall impression is of pure Webley. The barrel latch is taken from the Webley and is operated to the one which Webley still use today, and this will be described with the Webley 1889 model. The Wilkinson standards still applied, and it can be safely said that the Wilkinson revolvers represent the best of the Webley output.

In 1905, another Wilkinson model was introduced, this time using the Webley Mark 6, .455 six-shot revolver as the pattern, and only differing in respect of the usual refinements demanded by the Wilkinson range. In this particular model, a small fillet was screwed behind the trigger guard to prevent the middle finger of the firing hand from being caught by the recoil, but there are no significant changes to the Webley original version. Indeed, the name of Webley is stamped on the right side of the frame, along with the Webley number.

In 1911 Wilkinson model was very little different from the previous one. Both models were now making little pretence to be anything more than carefully selected weapons from the normal Webley production; stamped all Wilkinson 1905 and 1911 models with their own serial number, and

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Wilkinson then stamped with his, or sometimes engraved it. The 1911 model only differs from the 1905 in having one fewer rifling groove, i.e. six instead of seven.

Wilkinson also sold target versions of his revolvers, the difference being, first, a longer barrel, second, a carefully finished trigger pull and a refined action, third, heavy checkering on the butt, butt straps and trigger. The sights are quite different, with a detachable foresight and a back-sight adjustable for lateral movements. The normal target barrel was 7½ inches long.

One other target adaption appeared in 1905, and while it was a Webley innovation, it was also

applied to Wilkinson revolvers and may well have been sold by them. This was the .22 adaptor. It was specifically for the target versions of the 1905 and 1911 models, and consisted of a .22 rimfire barrel and breech, which fitted into the frame in place of the cylinder, and was held by the cylinder cam. There was an extractor, and a separate back-sight which projected around the side of the frame and across the top strap. The entire conversion was made as a single item, which was quickly and easily inserted and removed.

It provided good practice for aiming and trigger operation, and also saved a considerable outlay in ammunition, though at the expense of some realism, and the fact that only single shots could be fired.