

FIREARMS

By

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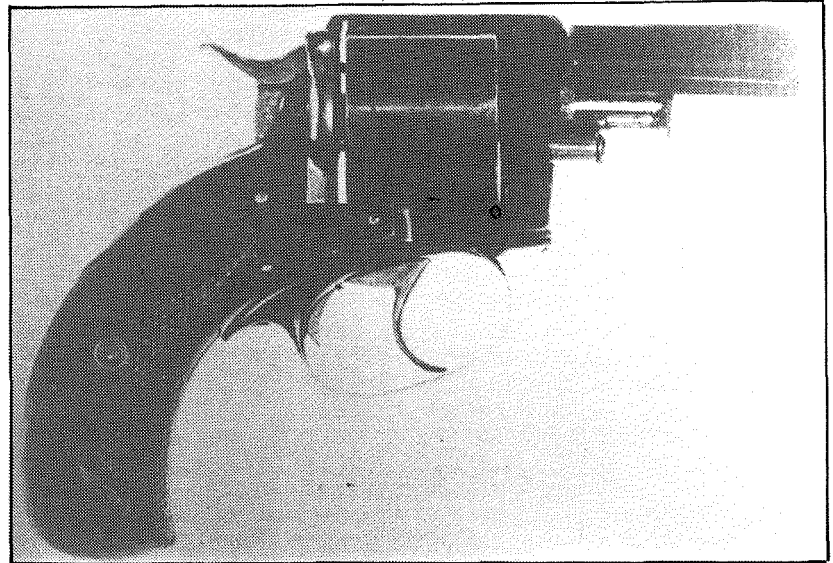
(BALLISTICS UNIT)

PART 3

□ AFTER part 2 of this series, I decided to put aside some of the Webley Models to shorten the Webley History, until it came to my knowledge, from quite a good number of readers and colleagues that they never imagined that so many different Webley Models were made.

Obviously now I have committed myself to fulfill the desire of these faithful readers and colleagues.

The BRITISH BULLDOG Double-Action Models. The 'Bulldog' models were one of Webley's more successful designs. The model was in production from 1878 until 1914, in a variety of types, all displaying the same general virtues of toughness and dependability. From the first, the 'Bulldog' was intended as a civilian pistol, although there seems no doubt that at least one of the mounted infantry regiments in South Africa were issued with it. As a rule, however,



Webley .45 No. 2 British Bulldog

the Bulldogs were only disposed of through retailers throughout the Empire and the rest of the world.

It was short-barrelled five-chambered revolver of large calibre, with a distinctive curved butt. It was copied and made in

several countries, both in rimfire and centrefire, and some manufacturers even made special ammunition for it.

FIRST MODELS 1878. The first model, in .442 centrefire was quickly followed by a .450 centrefire and .44 rimfire, all these three versions easily identifiable by the fact that their cylinders are smooth and not grooved. The only other "Bulldog" to have a smooth cylinder was a .320 model produced in 1880. This was a smaller version of the .450 model.

SECOND MODELS 1883. The 1883 model is generally known as the third model, the first two being the .442 and .450 of 1880. There were differences between the second and third models, the first was that the cylinder was grooved, thereby saving a little weight, and the second was the fact that the butt was longer. This last feature was probably welcomed by the majority of owners,



Webley .45 Tower Bulldog

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recurred on subsequent models, and became a recognition mark. The hinged load-ing-gate locked the hammer at half-cock when it was opened, and when the hammer was cocked it locked the gate shut. The hammer rebounded under the influence of the tail of the main spring, and the cylinder was securely locked by a positive stop at the moment of firing.

The stock was one piece of walnut, and there was a lanyard ring on the butt plate. All told, it was a thoroughly serviceable weapon of generous dimensions and considerable resistance to rough use and wear.

At the same time as the previously described revolver was being sold, Webleys produced another for the same potential market and called it 'Webley's New Model Army Express', which can be done little to help the possible customer. The new Model weighed 38 oz. and was modelled on the same lines as the original 'Express' that is, generously. The octagonal barrel was screwed into the frame and fitted with the same ejector-rod as the former version. The most noticeable difference between the two 'Express' revolvers is in the butt. In the new model, it is a curved bird's head rather like an enlarged version of that on the 'Bulldogs' and the 'Pug' and the stock is in two pieces held by a single screw. A lanyard ring of oval shape is fitted, to take a flat leather strap. These 'New Express' Models were chambered for the usual .450/.455, and also for the .476.

This type of revolver was issued to units of the South African Republic in the mid 1880's and a few were fitted with Silver & Fletcher safety hammers and extractors. Another type used in South Africa, and issued to the Cape Mounted Rifles was a single-action version of the original 'Express'. This single-action weapon was made specially for the Regiment, and the action was modified using parts from the 'New Express' revolvers. The calibre was .476 and this seems to be the only type of single-action revolver produced in the solid-frame series.

Webley .476
Webley-Kaufmann
Late Model C. 1880



An oddity in the Webley solid-frame range, and one which illustrates the firm's willingness to make to order, is a solitary example of a 12 inch barrelled model, fitted with a detachable stock. The revolver is quite out of the ordinary run of production, since it is chambered for the .44 Smith & Wesson cartridge, but it is interesting illustration of the gun-makers skill.

Double-Action Hinged Frame Models Webley-Kaufmann 1880.

Kaufmann was a talented weapons designer who became associated with Webley in 1878, and remained with them for three years. In that time, he introduced the first Webley top-break revolvers. There are certain features of these Kaufmann models which distinguish them from others which were in production with Webley at that time.

The first feature is, of course, the top-break and its locking arrangements (Patent 3313, 29th July 1881.). This is ingenious, though one might say that it is a trifle too complicated. In essence, it is a three-part transverse bolt which passes through two lugs on the top of the standing breech, and also through a tenon at the back of the top strap. This bolt is pushed to the left by a spring, and is caused to lock all three items. When the unlocking stud on the left of the frame is pushed in, it moves the bolt to the right. The bolt is actually in three sections, and the joints of these sections come opposite the gaps between the tenon and lugs. The top strap can then be moved and the weapon unlatched. On return, the bolt is pushed across again by the spring, and the tenon is once again locked home. Although widely used, this arrangement must have been vulnerable to dirt.

The lock mechanism was simplified, which made for reliable

and easy operation of the five main parts. Both ends of the main — spring were made to work, the fixed or standing end being used to return the trigger and pawl, and to rebound the hammer. The cylinder was positively locked by two separate methods, and there was a cam-operated ejectore which opened when the revolver was broken.

The first models were six-chambered double-action centre-fire revolvers, with barrels 5¾ inches long, curved birds' head butt in the express style, with lanyard rings for flat straps, and a general air of solidity and ruggedness, which the weight of 40 oz. certainly encourage. The calibre of this first model was .450 in.

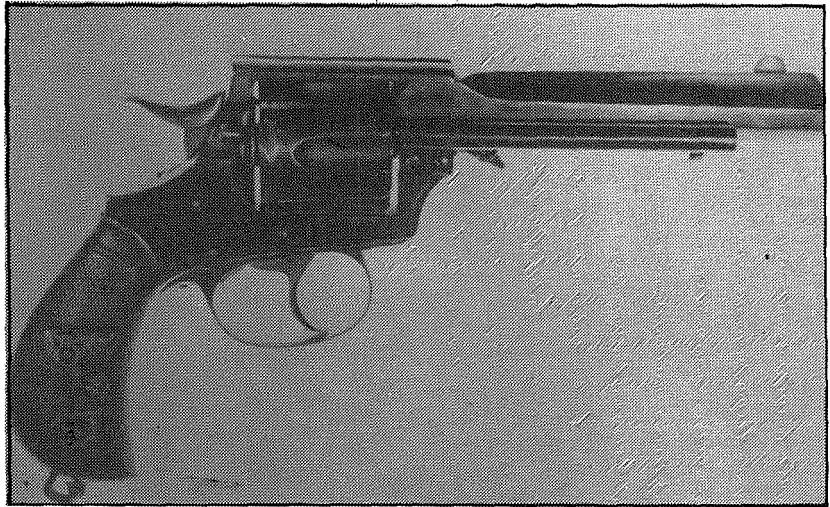
The first model was soon followed by a second, in which certain improvements were made. The first change was in the barrel latch. The thumb stud of the first model was replaced by a more usual pivoting lever operated by the right thumb. This acted upon the same three-part bolt through the action of sloping surfaces, and was much easier to use. Another change was in the cylinder lock, which was simplified. In some of the revolvers, there was a safety device which prevented the opening of the cylinder while the hammer was cocked. There were several patents relating to these Kaufmann revolvers, dated between 1878 and 1881, and Kaufmann marked the weapons with his initials 'M.K.' and a number. This was stamped on the right of the frame inside a triangle, and it forms an easy recognition mark for the Kaufmanns. The second model was in .455 calibre and some were made in .476. Although a popular type, the Kaufmanns were not made for long, but they form one more significant step in the refinement of the breech-loading revolver.

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since the kick from a revolver firing a bullet of more than 200 grains, as these did, requires a firm hold.

THE PUG. The 'Pug' probably appeared before, or at the same time, at the first 'Bulldogs'. It was a rimfire five-chambered pocket revolver with a snub barrel and a generally squat appearance which gave rise to its descriptive name. The calibre of this first model was .410, and the barrel was 2-3/8 inches long. It was gateloaded from the right-hand side, and the empty cases were ejected by using a short rod which was carried in the butt, retained by a screwed knob on its end. The 'Pug' has an attractive appearance, being more streamlined than the other 'Bulldog', and the hammer is quite distinctive in the way in which the comb is covered downwards following the line of the rear of the frame. The 'Pug' is a pure pocket pistol, and the frame is rounded and smoothed to prevent it catching in the clothing, but even so, there is a foresight on the barrel. It was also produced in .450 centrefire, and the difference between this and the rimfire model, apart from the cartridges is first, in the hammer. This has the more usual upturn to the comb and one might think that this would catch in the pocket, yet the second difference is that the foresight has been abandoned. Both 'Pugs' are of course, solid-frame revolvers with the small curved butt which characterizes the 'Bulldog' series.

.450 TOWER BULLDOG 1885. This variant of the 'Bulldog' series seem to have been produced in only quite small numbers. It is little different from the general design of 'Bulldog', though the frame is slightly more angular and is extended behind the hammer and above the stocks to give a better grip. The hammer comb has a pronounced upward curve to it, more than any other 'Bulldog' and sufficient, one might conjecture, to catch in the largest pocket. Despite this the recognition feature of this revolver and the source of its name, is the Model name stamped on the left



Webley .455 No. 5 with Orange Free State Markings

of the frame. There is the usual Webley trade mark and the words 'London Tower'. Above these words is a view of the Tower itself, stamped just forward of the cylinder. It seems that these 'Tower' models were sold with the name of the gunsmith prominently engraved on them, but few have survived.

These civilian revolvers can be roughly divided into two general categories, the first are the large holster revolvers which were bought by service officers, and the second were the smaller household protection or pocket models. Naturally, there was a variety of models to cover both categories, and the firm would always make to special order. However, the larger holster models were made in .320 and .442 calibre. Both were heavy, but comfortable to hold because they were well balanced and had a large stock. A flat spring on the left side of the frame holds the hammer at half-cock, but can be over-ridden by pulling the trigger. The barrels were octagonal, the cylinders plain, and the stocks fully chequered. An ejector rod was stowed in the butt, held in by a screwed knob as with the 'Bulldog'.

The pocket or household revolvers were made in .320, .360 and .380 centrefire calibres, and a few in .442 rimfire. Barrel lengths varied from 2 1/8 inch to 7 inches for a target version of a .360 model. They were chambered for five or six cartridges, generally

five for the pocket models. There are many of these revolvers remaining in both public and private collections, and they display a wide variety of special items which the owners requested. It must also be assumed that the various gunsmiths who sold these weapons were at pains to offer some special variant to attract sales. Thus there are special ejectors, special barrels, variations in the shape of the stock, and in some cases, variations in the shape of the stock, and in some cases, variations in the shape of the frame. However, all are basically the Webley solid-frame revolver directly derived from the R.I.C. original models.

□ THE ARMY EXPRESS MODELS 1878

The Army Express revolvers were heavy, powerful weapons designed solely for service use. They were contemporary with, or just after, the Colt Army Model, and it is not possible to say now if they were in any way influenced by the American Model. The 'Express' proper was preceded by a six-chambered .450/.455 centrefire model, which was an advance on anything produced by the firm up to that date. This series is generally known as the Army Express Revolver, and it was not in production for very long. The barrel was six inches long. On the right was a spring-loaded ejector rod operated by a flat half-round plate on its front, a feature which