

# FIREARMS

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PART 4

## Webley-Green Models

This important line of revolvers was always known as 'W.G.' and they ran in a series from 1882 to 1896, with manufacture continuing beyond the last date. In general terms, they can be divided into three groups, and that is how they will be described here; EARLY MODELS, TARGET MODELS and ARMY MODELS. The contribution made by Edinson Green was the barrel fastening, which was a pivoted stirrup and is the type still used on modern revolvers. Although this has been an important feature of all Webleys since 1883, it does not seem as though Green got the recognition he deserves for inventing it.

## EARLY MODELS

### Webley-Green Model 1882

Webley-Green Model 1882. Known as the 'W.G.' series, these revolvers were very much the first actual Webley design of a break-action, simultaneous-ejection system. They contained elements of previous Webley production, as one might expect, and were in many ways a combination of all the better elements of the revolvers that Webleys had made up to that time. In general design, the 'W.G.' was much like the Kaufmann series, and it had the Kaufmann action, but the cylinder and its release was

•READERS of this series about FIREARMS are kindly asked to note that the article appearing on page 11 in the January/February 1987 issue of this magazine, was inadvertently misplaced with that of page 10.

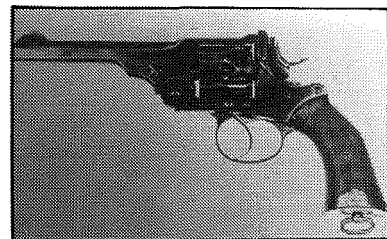
taken from Webley-Pryse, Wilkinson-Webley and Enfield. The birds' head but was retained, so was the flat lanyard loop, but the best recognition feature of the 'W.G.' is the cylinder fluting. This is angular in form, and much less attractive than the usual half-round shape. This first Model was chambered for the .455/.476 black powder rounds in a six-chambered cylinder, and a 6 inch barrel.

### Webley-Green Model 1885

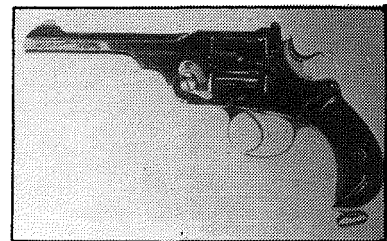
For 1885, the cylinder release was changed from the Pryse nut to a larger slotted nut that could be turned with a coin. The extractor was altered in small ways also, so that it became more of an original Webley design than an amalgam of others. The calibre and barrel were unchanged, so that the differences between this and the 1882 version are not immediately apparent.

### Webley-Green Model 1889

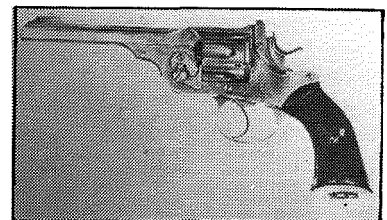
The 1889 model changed the shape of the butt from the bird's head, but left all other aspects of the revolver as they had been on the two previous versions. The change was brought about by cutting through the front and back straps and brazing on the revised shape. This new shape was a flared butt with a wide base. For these heavy revolvers, it is a much practical idea, and gives better control and grip. These revolvers were found to be very good target weapons, and some were made with 7½ inch barrels and improved sights. All the 1889 models were stamped on the left side of the barrel extension with the mark 'W.G.' Model 1889, whereas the other two models were only stamped 'Webley Patents', 1889 was the first year that the company stamped the date on its' revolvers.



*Webley .455 W.G. 1889.*



*Webley .455/476 W.G. Army Model 1894.*



*Webley .455/476 W.G. Army Model 1894 with Flared Butt.*

### Webley-Green Model 1892

For 1892, the calibre was reduced to .455 and the barrel standardized at 7½ inches; the flared butt was retained. Substantial changes were made to the action, the cartridge extractor and the cylinder release, the principles of which have been retained in Webley revolvers ever since. The cylinder release which was patented in 1891 allows for manual release of the cylinder when the revolver is open, but automatically looks it in place as it closes. The cam and lever for operating this system are screwed externally to the left side of the barrel lug and, with slight

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variations, have been a Webley recognition feature for the last eight years. A change in the shape and action of the pawl ensued that the hammer was now lifted up instead of being pushed, when the weapon was cocked by the trigger. These models were primarily for target shooting, and it was intended that the customer should fit whatever sights he needed; the standard version had a fixed foresight and a U back-sight with allowance for lateral adjustment.

## **Webley-Green Army Model 1892**

A fairly rare model was also introduced in 1892, which can be regarded as the first of the 'W.G.' Army series. In many ways, this 1892 model was the 1882 model brought up to date. It used the same 6 inch barrel in .476 calibre and the birds' head butt, together with fixed sights, but is incorporated the improved cylinder release and action of the target version of 1892.

## **Webley-Green Target Model 1893**

This model incorporated only one change from the previous year. It had a flat-faced hammer, and a small spring-loaded striker set in the standing breech. The precise reason for this change is not clear, and it did not survive for long. Another change was that this was to be the last year in which the year of manufacture was stamped on the weapon. Perhaps the various retailers had complained that the age of their stock was too easily identified, or there may have been other, more cogent reason; but whatever the reason, it further increases the difficulties of the present-day weapon researcher. This revolver was the last to be fitted with the angular cylinder grooves which are the identifying mark of the early years.

## **TARGET MODELS** **Webley-Green Target Model 1896**

From now on, the 'W.G.' Target revolvers were more or less fixed on the 1892/3 design, with only very minor variations. The outward difference between

these and the early series, lies in the cylinder fluting which is now rounded in section, though individual models carried other minor machining differences from time to time. The 1896 model was chambered for .455/.476 and had a conventional hammer.

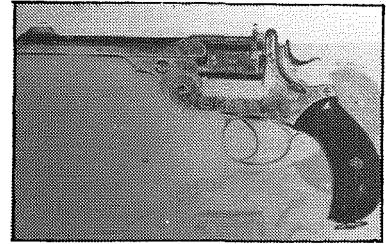
## **Other Webley-Green Target Models**

The production of target revolvers was a continuous process with Webley, and they were made to special order, usually using the existing model as a base for the design. It appears that the 1896 model was also made with a 9½ inch barrel, and certainly one revolver still exists which had a 4 inch barrel, yet it is engraved 'W.G. TARGET MODEL'. The calibre was usually .450/.455, as this was a calibre of ammunition in which some regularity was being achieved, and whose performance could be guaranteed to close limits.

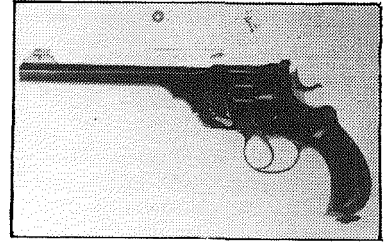
These target revolvers were nearly all sold in individual cases or boxes, and were ment to be treated with considerable care and respect. They had no holster guide, but all had a lanyard loop in the butt. In 1889, the standard TARGET Revolver sold for £9 os. od., exactly. Nickel plating cost an extra 8s. Od. The price would have been about 7 times the weekly wage of the highest skilled man in the factory, and it compares reasonable well to the proportionate increase in prices and wages today.

## **Army Models**

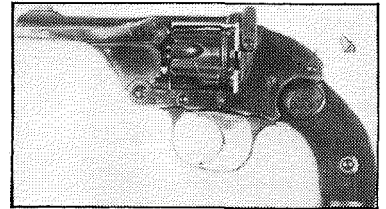
Army models were made at the same time as the target versions, and the two employed the same improvements and changes. We have already shown how the 1892 Army Model was very similar in its internal workings to the Target Revolver of the same year, despite its use of ten year old frames and butts. One main difference between target and army models lay in the use of a replaceable firing pin hole for the Military piece. This was achieved by a screwed bush with the firing hole drilled down the centre. All army models had six inch barrels and fixed sights, and were made in the three calibres, .450, .455



*Webley-Green .22 Conversion.*



*Webley .455 W.G. Target Model with a 7½" Barrel.*



*Webley .32 Pocket Hammerless with Safety Catch.*

and .476. They not only fired the commercial range of ammunition, but took the enfield cartridges also. The Webley .455 cartridge was excepted for service use in 1891, and the .476 Enfield round became obsolete on that date, although it continued in use for many years after. However, .455/.476 revolvers were stamped with these calibres on the left of the barrel that they could accept both types.

The three clearly identifiable Army models were produced in 1892, 1894 and 1896. The first two have already been described in general terms. The 1896 model continued the same pattern, though it was sold with a flared butt for most of the production, but was otherwise virtually unchanged from the others. The use of the different model numbers when there is so little change to justify it, makes for confusion when identifying a particular piece, but it was probably done in an attempt to help sales, in a fiercely competitive market, and it may have been related to some sort of batch production system.

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## **Miscellaneous Webley Models 1898 – 1914**

One difficulty with the firm of Webley is the extent of the range of their revolvers. Almost every year from 1870 to 1910, another model of a change to an existing model appeared on the market. Some were sold in quantity, some disappeared some after, but all contributed in one way or another to the refinement of design, and all were made to the same high standards associated with the name of the company.

## **Webley Pocket Revolvers Webley Pocket Hammerless Model 1898**

In 1898, Webley produced a small break-action six-chambered .320 pocket revolver with a concealed hammer. The barrel was 3 inches long, and the butt was steeply curved. It weighed 18 oz., which somewhat detracted from its maker's claim that it was ideal for the pocket, but within those fairly generous weight limits, it was a very well made and reliable weapon. Above the hammer shroud there was a small sliding safety catch, and the barrel was held by a simplified latch which incorporated a backsight notch.

## **Webley Pocket Hammer Model 1901**

The 1901 version of the W.P. (Webley Pocket) reverted to a more normal hammer and had an even simpler barrel latch. In this model, the latch had no thumb catch and was serrated on the top so that it could be pulled open with the thumb. This refinement was then introduced on the hammerless version also. Surprisingly these pistols continued to be sold until 1934, in both versions.

## **Double Barreled Under And Over Pistol 1890**

This pistol is an oddity in the Webley series, though the firm did not make a similar weapon in the 1870s in a variety of calibres. There is little evidence to show it was successful and its revival 20 years later is interesting. The pistol was made in .450 calibre with a pair of 3 inch barrels, machined from the solid and rotating in a clockwise direction on a central pin. The barrels were turned by hand and locked by a small spring loaded lug. The model is a great rarity and it must be assumed that it was not a commercial success.