## Lee-Enfield

**Short Magazine Lee-Enfield Mk III (SMLE Mk III, aka Rifle, No. 1 Mk III)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Bolt-action rifle</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place of origin</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Service history**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In service</th>
<th>1895-1926 (MLE)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1907–present (SMLE)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Used by</th>
<th>See Users</th>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wars</th>
<th>Second Boer War</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First World War</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Second World War</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Various Colonial conflicts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Irish War of Independence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Malayan Emergency</td>
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<td>Korean War</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Arab-Israeli War</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nepalese Civil War</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Afghanistan conflict</td>
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**Production history**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designer</th>
<th>James Paris Lee, RSAF Enfield</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Produced</td>
<td>1895-1907 (MLE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1907– (SMLE)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Number built       | 17,000,000+ [1]              |

| Variants           | Short, Magazine Lee Enfield Mk. I, Mk. I*, Mk.III, Mk. III*, Rifle No. 4 Mk. 1, Mk. 1* (produced by Savage and Long Branch), Mk. 1(T) Sniper Rifle, Mk. 2, Rifle No 5 Mk. 1 (Jungle Carbine) |

**Specifications**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cartridge</th>
<th>.303 Mk VII SAA Ball</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Bolt-action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muzzle velocity</td>
<td>744 m/s (2441 ft/s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effective range</td>
<td>550 yd (503 m) [2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum range</td>
<td>3000 yd (2743 m) [2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feed system</td>
<td>10-round magazine, loaded with 5-round charger clips</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[1] Source: [Smith & Wesson](https://www.smithandwesson.com/)

[2] Source: [Ballistics](https://ballistics.com/)

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**Image notes:**

- [Rifle, Short Magazine, Lee-Enfield, Mk. II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rifle,_Short_Magazine,_Lee-Enfield,_Mk._II)
- [Short Magazine Lee-Enfield No. 1 Mk. III](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Short_Magazine_Lee-Enfield_Mk_III)
### Sights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sights</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sliding ramp rear sights, Fixed-post front sights, “Dial” long-range volley sights; Telescopic sights on Sniper models.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The **Lee-Enfield** bolt-action, magazine-fed, repeating rifle was the main firearm used by the military forces of the British Empire and Commonwealth during the first half of the 20th century. It was the British Army's standard rifle from its official adoption in 1895 until 1957.

A redesign of the Lee-Metford which had been adopted by the British Army in 1888, the Lee-Enfield superseded the earlier Martini-Henry, Martini-Enfield, and Lee-Metford rifles. It featured a ten-round box magazine which was loaded with the .303 British cartridge manually from the top, either one round at a time or by means of five-round chargers. The Lee-Enfield was the standard issue weapon to rifle companies of the British Army and other Commonwealth nations in both the First and Second World Wars (these commonwealth nations included Canada, Australia, and South Africa, among others). Although officially replaced in the UK with the L1A1 SLR in 1957, it remained in widespread British service until the early 1960s and the 7.62 mm L42 sniper variant remained in service until the 1990s. As a standard-issue infantry rifle, it is still found in service in the armed forces of some Commonwealth nations, notably with the Indian Police, which makes it the longest-serving military bolt-action rifle still in official service. Total production of all Lee-Enfields is estimated at over 17 million rifles.

The Lee-Enfield takes its name from the designer of the rifle's bolt system — James Paris Lee, and the factory in which it was designed — the Royal Small Arms Factory in Enfield. In Australia, New Zealand, and Canada the rifle became known simply as the “303”. So closely was the weapon associated with the British Empire that in the film Breaker Morant, a group of prisoners is said to have been shot “under rule three-oh-three”.

### Design and history

The Lee-Enfield rifle was derived from the earlier Lee-Metford, a mechanically similar black powder rifle, which combined James Paris Lee's rear-locking bolt system with a barrel featuring rifling designed by William Ellis Metford. The Lee action cocked the striker on the closing stroke of the bolt, making the initial opening much faster and easier compared to the “cock on opening” of the Mauser design. The rear-mounted lugs place the operating handle much closer to the operator, over the trigger, making it quicker to operate than traditional designs like the Mauser. The rifle was also equipped with a detachable sheet-steel, 10-round, double-column magazine, a very modern development in its day. Originally, the concept of a detachable magazine was opposed in some British Army circles, as some feared that the private soldier might be likely to lose the magazine during field campaigns. Early models of the Lee-Metford and Lee-Enfield even used a short length of chain to secure the magazine to the rifle.

The fast-operating Lee bolt-action and large magazine capacity enabled a well-trained rifleman to perform the “Mad minute” firing 20 to 30 aimed rounds in 60 seconds, making the Lee-Enfield the fastest military bolt-action rifle of the day. The current world record for aimed bolt-action fire was set in 1914 by a musketry instructor in the British Army—Sergeant Instructor Snoxall—who placed 38 rounds into a 12 inch wide target at 300 yards (270 m) in one minute. Some straight-pull bolt-action rifles were thought faster, but lacked the simplicity, reliability, and generous magazine capacity of the Lee-Enfield. First World War accounts tell of British troops repelling German attackers who subsequently reported that they had encountered machine guns, when in fact it was simply a group of trained riflemen armed with SMLE Mk III rifles.
The Lee-Enfield was adapted to fire the .303 British service cartridge, a rimmed, high-powered rifle round. Experiments with smokeless powder in the existing Lee-Metford cartridge seemed at first to be a simple upgrade, but the greater heat and pressure generated by the new smokeless powder wore away the shallow, rounded, Metford rifling after approximately 6000 rounds. Replacing this with a new square-shaped rifling system designed at the Royal Small Arms Factory (RSAF) Enfield solved the problem, and the Lee-Enfield was born.

### Models/marks of Lee-Enfield Rifle and service periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model/Mark</th>
<th>In Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Magazine Lee-Enfield</td>
<td>1895–1926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charger Loading Lee-Enfield</td>
<td>1906–1926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Magazine Lee-Enfield Mk I</td>
<td>1904–1926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Magazine Lee-Enfield Mk II</td>
<td>1906–1927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Magazine Lee-Enfield Mk III/III*</td>
<td>1907–Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Magazine Lee-Enfield Mk V</td>
<td>1922–1924 (trials only; 20,000 produced)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rifle No. 1 Mk VI</td>
<td>1930–1933 (trials only; 1,025 produced)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rifle No. 4 Mk I</td>
<td>1941–Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rifle No. 4 Mk I*</td>
<td>1942–Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rifle No 5 Mk I &quot;Jungle Carbine&quot;</td>
<td>1944–Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rifle No. 4 Mk 2</td>
<td>1949–Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rifle 7.62mm 2A</td>
<td>1964–Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rifle 7.62mm 2A1</td>
<td>1965–Present</td>
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</table>

### Magazine Lee-Enfield

The Lee-Enfield rifle was introduced in November 1895 as the .303 calibre, Rifle, Magazine, Lee-Enfield, or MLE (sometimes spoken as "emily" instead of M, L, E). The next year a shorter version was introduced as the Lee-Enfield Cavalry Carbine Mk I, or LEC, with a 21.2 inch (538 mm) barrel as opposed to the 30.2 inch (767 mm) one in the "long" version. Both underwent a minor upgrade series in 1899, becoming the Mk I*. Many LECs (and LMCs in smaller numbers) were converted to special patterns, namely the New Zealand Carbine and the Royal Irish Constabulary Carbine, or NZ and RIC carbines, respectively. Some of the MLEs (and MLMs) were converted to load from chargers, and designated Charger Loading Lee-Enfields, or CLLEs.
Short Magazine Lee-Enfield Mk I

A shorter and lighter version of the original MLE—the famous Rifle, Short, Magazine, Lee-Enfield, or SMLE (sometimes spoken as "Smelly", rather than S, M, L, E)[7] —was introduced on 1 January 1904.[15] The barrel was now halfway in length between the original long rifle and the carbine, at 25.2 inches (640 mm).[15]

The SMLE's visual trademark was its blunt nose, with only the bayonet lug protruding a small fraction of an inch beyond the nosecap. The new rifle also incorporated a charger loading system,[16] another innovation borrowed from the Mauser rifle;[17] notably the charger system is different from the fixed "bridge" that would become the standard. The shorter length was controversial at the time: many Rifle Association members and gunsmiths were concerned that the shorter barrel would not be as accurate as the longer MLE barrels, that the recoil would be much greater, and the sighting radius would be too short.[18]

Short Magazine Lee-Enfield Mk III

The iconic Lee-Enfield rifle, the SMLE Mk III, was introduced on 26 January 1907,[7] along with a Pattern 1907 (P'07) Sword Bayonet and featured a simplified rear sight arrangement and a fixed, rather than a bolt-head-mounted sliding, charger guide. The design of the handguards and the magazine were also improved, and the chamber was adapted to fire the new Mk VII High Velocity spitzer .303 ammunition. Many early model rifles, of Magazine Lee Enfield (MLE), Magazine Lee Metford (MLM), and SMLE type, were upgraded to the Mk III standard. These are designated Mk IV Cond., with various asterisks denoting subtypes.[19]

During the First World War, the standard SMLE Mk III was found to be too complicated to manufacture (an SMLE Mk III rifle cost the British Government £3/15/-)[20], and demand was outstripping supply, so in late 1915 the Mk III* was introduced,[19] which incorporated several changes, the most prominent of which were the deletion of the magazine cut-off,[17] and the long range volley sights.[21] The windage adjustment capability of the rear sight was also dispensed with, and the cocking piece was changed from a round knob to a serrated slab.[21] Rifles with some or all of these features present are found, as the changes were implemented at different times in different factories and as stocks of existing parts were used.[22] The magazine cut-off was reinstated after the First World War ended,[21] and not entirely dispensed with until 1942.

The inability of the principal manufacturers (RSAF Enfield, Birmingham Small Arms, and London Small Arms) to meet military production demands led to the development of the "peddled scheme", which contracted out the production of whole rifles and rifle components to several shell companies.[23]

The SMLE Mk III* (redesignated Rifle No.1 Mk III* in 1926) saw extensive service throughout the Second World War as well, especially in the North African, Italian, Pacific and Burmese theatres in the hands of British and Commonwealth forces. Australia and India retained and manufactured the SMLE Mk III* as their standard-issue rifle during the conflict[24], and the rifle remained in Australian military service through the Korean War, until it was replaced by the L1A1 SLR in the late 1950s. The Lithgow Small Arms Factory finally ceased production of the SMLE Mk III* in 1953.[19]
**Pattern 1914/US M1917**

The Pattern 1914 Enfield and M1917 Enfield rifles are frequently assumed to be part of the Lee-Enfield family due to either the use of the word "Enfield" in connection with these rifles, their service history, their design at the Royal Small Arms Factory at Enfield Lock or, in the case of the P14, its calibre (.303). P14 and M1917 rifles are Mauser 98 derivatives and not based on the Lee action, and are therefore not part of the Lee-Enfield family of rifles.[25]

**Inter-War period**

In 1926 the British Army changed their nomenclature;[26] the SMLE became known as the Rifle No. 1 Mk III or III*,[26] with the original MLE and LEC becoming obsolete along with the earlier SMLE models. Many Mk III and III* rifles were converted to (.22 rimfire) calibre training rifles, and designated Rifle No. 2, of varying marks. (The Pattern 1914 became the Rifle No. 3.)[26]

The SMLE design was fairly expensive to manufacture because of the many forging and machining operations required. In the 1920s several experiments were carried out to help with these problems, reducing the number of complex parts. The SMLE Mk V (later Rifle No. 1 Mk V), used a new receiver-mounted aperture sighting system, which moved the rear sight from its former position on the barrel.[27] The increased gap resulted in an improved sighting radius, improving sighting accuracy, and the aperture improved speed of sighting (making it also known as a "battle sight"). The magazine cutoff was also reintroduced, and an additional band was added near the muzzle for additional strength during bayonet use.[27] Unfortunately, this design was found to be even more complicated and expensive to manufacture than the Mk III,[27] and so was not developed or issued beyond a trial production of this rifle numbered approximately 20,000 units,[27] produced between 1922 and 1924 at RSAF Enfield. The No. 1 Mk VI also introduced a heavier "floating barrel" that was independent of the forearm, allowing the barrel to expand and contract without contacting the forearm and changing the zero of the rifle. The receiver-mounted rear sights and magazine cutoff were also present,[28] and production numbered 1025 units, produced between 1930 and 1933.[29]

**Rifle No 4**

![Lee-Enfield No. 4 Mk 1*, manufactured by Longbranch.](image)

By the late 1930s the need for new rifles grew, and the Rifle, No. 4 Mk I was first issued in 1939 but not officially adopted until 1941.[30] The No. 4 action was similar to the Mk VI,[31] but lighter, stronger, and most importantly, easier to mass produce.[31] Unlike the SMLE, the No 4 Lee-Enfield barrel protruded from the end of the forestock. The No. 4 rifle was considerably heavier than the No. 1 Mk. III, largely due to its heavier barrel,[31] and a new bayonet was designed to go with the rifle: a spike bayonet,[31] which was essentially a steel rod with a sharp point, and was nicknamed "pigsticker" by soldiers. Towards the end of the Second World War, a bladed bayonet was developed, originally intended for use with the Sten gun—but sharing the same mount as the No. 4's spike bayonet—and subsequently the No. 7 and No. 9 blade bayonets were issued for use with the No. 4 rifle as well.[32]

During the course of the Second World War, the No. 4 rifle was further simplified for mass-production with the creation of the No. 4 Mk I* in 1942,[33] which saw the bolt release catch removed in favour of a more simplified notch on the bolt track of the rifle's receiver.[33] It was produced only in North America,[33] with Long Branch Arsenal in Canada and Savage-Stevens Firearms in the USA producing the No. 4 Mk I* rifle from their respective factories.[33] On the other hand, the No.4 Mk I rifle was primarily produced in the United Kingdom.[34]

In the years after the Second World War, the British produced the No. 4 Mk 2 (Arabic numerals replaced Roman numerals for official designations in 1944) rifle which saw the No. 4 rifle being refined and improved with the trigger being hung from the receiver and not from the trigger guard,[35] the No. 4 Mk 2 rifle being fitted with beech wood stocks and brass buttplates (during World War II, the British dispensed with brass buttplates for their No.4
rifles in favour of steel ones to reduce production costs and to speed up rifle production). With the introduction of the No. 4 Mk 2 rifle, the British refurbished all their existing stocks of No. 4 rifles and brought them up to the same standards as the No. 4 Mk 2.¹³⁶ No. 4 Mk 1 rifles so upgraded were re-designated as the No. 4 Mk I/2 rifle, whilst No. 4 Mk I* rifles that were brought up to Mk 2 standards were re-designated as the No. 4 Mk I/3 rifle.¹³³

**Rifle No 5 Mk I—The "Jungle Carbine"**

Later in the war the need for a shorter, lighter rifle led to the development of the Rifle, No. 5 Mk I (the "Jungle Carbine").³⁷ With a severely cut-down stock, a prominent flash hider, and a receiver machined to remove all unnecessary metal, the No. 5 was both shorter and 2 lb (0.9 kg) lighter. Despite a rubber butt-pad, the .303 round produced too much recoil for the No. 5 to be suitable for general issue. Production of the No. 5 Mk I ceased in 1947 due to an "inherent fault in the design",³⁸ often said to be a "wandering zero" and accuracy problems.³⁸ However, the No. 5 Mk I was popular with soldiers owing to its light weight, portability, and shorter overall length than a standard Lee-Enfield rifle.³⁹ The Jungle Carbine nickname was created as a marketing gimmick by US importers. The No. 5 was first issued to the British 6th Airborne Division and in use during their occupation of Denmark in 1945.

An Australian experimental version of Jungle Carbine, designated Rifle, No. 6, Mk I⁴⁰ was also developed, using an SMLE MK III* as a starting point (as opposed to the No. 4 Mk I used to develop the No. 5 Mk I Jungle Carbine). The No. 6 Mk I never entered full production, and examples today are extremely rare and valuable to collectors.³⁷

A "Shortened and Lightened" version of the SMLE Mk III* rifle was also trialled by the Australian military,⁴¹ and a very small number were manufactured at SAF Lithgow during the course of the Second World War.⁴¹

The term "Jungle Carbine" was popularised in the 1950s by the Santa Fe Arms Corporation, a U.S. importer of surplus rifles, used in the hopes of increasing sales of a rifle that had little U.S. market penetration. It was never an official military designation, but British and Commonwealth troops serving in the Burmese and Pacific theatres during World War Two were known to unofficially refer to the No. 5 Mk I as a "Jungle Carbine".³⁷ Both the No. 4 and No. 5 rifles served in Korea (as did the No.1 Mk III* SMLE—mostly with Australian troops).⁷
Lee-Enfield conversions

Sniper rifles

During both World Wars and the Korean War, a number of Lee-Enfield rifles were modified for use as sniper rifles. The Australian Army modified 1,612 Lithgow SMLE No1 Mk III* rifles by adding a heavy target barrel, cheek-piece, and a World War One era Pattern 1918 telescope, creating the SMLE No1 Mk III* (HT). (HT standing for “Heavy Barrel, Telescopic Sight),[7] which saw service in the Second World War, Korea, and Malaya and was used for Sniper Training through to the late 1970s.[43]

During the Second World War, standard No. 4 rifles, selected for their accuracy during factory tests, were modified by the addition of a wooden cheek-piece, and telescopic sight mounts designed to accept a No. 32 3.5x telescopic sight.[44] This particular sight progressed through three marks with the Mk 1 introduced in 1942, the Mk 2 in 1943 and finally the Mk 3 in 1944. Many Mk.3s and Mk.2/1s (Mk.2s Modified to Mk.3 standard) were later modified for use with the 7.62 mm NATO L42A1 Sniper Rifle. They were known by the designation Telescope Straight, Sighting L1A1.

Holland and Holland, the famous British sporting gun manufacturers, converted the majority of No 4 Mk I (T) sniper rifles, with the rest converted by BSA and, in Canada, Long Branch arsenal.[45] These rifles were extensively employed in various conflicts until the late 1960s, and when the British military switched over to the 7.62x51 NATO round in the 1950s, many of the No 4 Mk I (T) sniper rifles were converted to the new calibre and designated L42A1.[35] The L42A1 sniper rifle continued as the British Army's standard sniper weapon until the mid 1980s, being replaced by Accuracy International's L96.[46]

.22 training rifles

Numbers of SMLE rifles were converted to .22 calibre training rifles, in order to teach cadets and new recruits the various aspects of shooting, firearms safety, and marksmanship at a markedly reduced cost per round. Initially rifles were converted from obsolete Magazine Lee-Metford and Magazine Lee-Enfield rifles[47] but from the First World War onwards SMLE rifles were used instead. These were known as .22 Pattern 1914 Short Rifles during The First World War and Rifle, No 2 Mk IV from 1921 onwards.[48] They were generally single-shot affairs, although some were later modified with special adaptors to enable magazine loading.[49] No. 2 Mk IV rifles are externally identical to a .303 calibre SMLE Mk III* rifle, the only difference being the .22 calibre barrel, and bolthead and extractor which have been modified to fire .22 calibre rimfire cartridges.[50]

After the Second World War, the Rifle, No. 7, Rifle, No. 8 and Rifle, No. 9, all .22 rimfire trainers and/or target rifles based on the Lee action, were adopted or in use with Cadet units and target shooters throughout the Commonwealth.[51]
L59A1 Drill Rifle

The L59A1 was a conversion of the No4 Rifle (all Marks) to a Drill Purpose rifle that was incapable of being restored to a firing configuration. It was introduced in service in the 1970s.

The L59A1 arose from British government concerns over the vulnerability of school Combined Cadet Forces' stocks of small arms to theft by revolutionaries and terrorists, in particular the Irish Republican Army following raids on CCF armories in the 1950s and 1960s. L59A1 Drill Rifles were rendered incapable of being fired, and of being restored to a fireable form, by extensive modifications that included the welding of the barrel to the receiver, modifications to the receiver that removed the supporting structures for the bolt's locking lugs and blocking the installation of an unaltered bolt, the removal of the firing pin's tip, the blocking of the firing pin's hole in the bolt head and the removal of most of the bolt body's locking lugs. A plug was welded in place in the chamber, and a window was cut in the side of the barrel.

Production and manufacturers

Charlton Automatic Rifle

Small numbers of Lee-Enfield rifles were built as, or converted to, experimental semi-automatic loading systems, such as the British Howell and South African Reider and the best-known of which was the Charlton Automatic Rifle, designed by a New Zealander, Philip Charlton in 1941 to act as a substitute for the Bren and Lewis gun light machine guns which were in chronically short supply at the time.[52] [53] During the Second World War, the majority of New Zealand's land forces were deployed in North Africa. When Japan entered the war in 1941, New Zealand found itself lacking the light machine guns that would be required for local defence should Japan choose to invade, and so the New Zealand Government funded the development of self-loading conversions for the Lee-Enfield rifle. The end result was the Charlton Automatic Rifle (based on the obsolete MLE),[54] which was issued to Home Guard units in NZ from 1942. Over 1,500 conversions were made, including a handful by the Australian firm Electrolux using Lithgow SMLE Mk III* rifles.[55]

The two Charlton designs differed markedly in external appearance (amongst other things, the New Zealand Charlton had a forward pistol grip and bipod, whilst the Australian one did not), but shared the same operating mechanism.[56] Most of the Charlton Automatic Rifles were destroyed in a fire after the Second World War,[57] but a few examples survive in museums and private collections.

De Lisle Commando carbine

The Commando units of the British military requested a silenced rifle for eliminating sentries, guard dogs, and other clandestine operational uses during the Second World War. The resulting weapon, designed by W.G. De Lisle, was effectively an SMLE Mk III* receiver redesigned to take a .45 ACP cartridge and associated magazine, with the barrel shortened and replaced with an integral silencer.[20]

Conversion to 7.62x51mm NATO

During the 1960s, the British Government and the Ministry of Defence converted a number of Lee-Enfield No. 4 rifles to 7.62x51mm NATO as part of a program to retain the Lee-Enfield as a reserve weapon.[58] The Lee-Enfield No. 4 series rifles that were converted to 7.62 mm NATO were re-designated as the L8 series of rifles[59] with the rifles being refitted with 7.62 mm NATO barrels, new bolt faces and extractor claws, new rear sights and new 10-round 7.62 mm NATO magazines that were produced by RSAF Enfield and Sterling Armaments to replace the
The outward appearance of the L8 series rifles were no different from the original No. 4 rifles, except for the new barrel and magazine. The L8 series of rifles consisted of L8A1 rifles (converted No.4 Mk2 rifles), L8A2 rifles (converted No.4 Mk1/2 rifles), L8A3 rifles (converted No.4 Mk1/3 rifles), L8A4 rifles (converted No.4 Mk1 rifles), and L8A5 rifles (converted No.4 Mk1* rifles).

The results of the trials that were conducted on the L8 series rifles were mixed, and the British Government and the Ministry of Defence decided not to convert their existing stocks of Lee-Enfield No. 4 rifles to 7.62 mm NATO. Despite this, the British learned from the results of the L8 test program and used them in successfully converting their stocks of No. 4 (T) sniper rifles to 7.62 mm NATO which led to the creation of the L42A1 series sniper rifles.

**Ishapore 2A/2A1**

At some point just after the Sino-Indian War of 1962, the Ishapore Rifle Factory in India began producing a new type of rifle known as the Rifle 7.62 mm 2A, which was based on the SMLE Mk III* and was reworked to use the 7.62 mm NATO round. Externally the rifle is very similar to the classic Mk III*, with the exception of the magazine, which is more "square" than the SMLE magazine, and usually carries twelve rounds instead of ten, although a number of 2A1s have been noted with 10-round magazines.

Ishapore 2A/2A1 rifles are made with improved (EN) steel (to handle the increased pressures of the 7.62 mm NATO round) and the extractor is redesigned to cope with the rimless round. From 1965–1975 (when production is believed to have been discontinued), the sights were changed from 2000 m to 800 m, and the rifle re-designated Rifle 7.62 mm 2A1.

The Ishapore 2A and 2A1 rifles are often incorrectly described as "308 conversions"- The 2A/2A1 rifles are not conversions of .303 calibre SMLE Mk III* rifles; rather, they are newly manufactured firearms and are not technically chambered for commercial .308 Winchester ammunition. However, many 2A/2A1 owners shoot such ammunition in their rifles with no problems, although it should be noted that .308 Winchester cartridges may generate higher pressures than 7.62 mm NATO, even though the rounds are otherwise interchangeable.

**Production and manufacturers**

In total over 16 million Lee-Enfields had been produced in several factories on different continents when production in Britain shut down in 1956, at ROF (Royal Ordnance Factory) Fazakerley. Contributing to the total was the Rifle Factory Ishapore (RFI) at Ishapore in India, which continued to produce the SMLE in both .303 and 7.62 mm NATO until the 1980s, and is still manufacturing a sporting rifle based on the SMLE Mk III action, chambered for a .315 calibre cartridge, the Birmingham Small Arms Company factory at Shirley near Birmingham, and SAF Lithgow in Australia, who finally discontinued production of the SMLE Mk III* in 1950. During the First World War alone, 3.8 million SMLE rifles were produced in the UK by RSAF Enfield, BSA, and LSA alone.
From the late 1940s, legislation in New South Wales, Australia, heavily restricted .303 British calibre (and other "military calibre") rifles, so large numbers of SMLEs were converted to "wildcat" calibres such as .303/25, .303/22, .303/270 and the popular 7.7x54 round. SMLE .303/25 calibre sporterised SMLEs are very common in Australia today, although getting ammunition for them is very difficult and has been since the 1980s. The restrictions placed on "military calibre" rifles in New South Wales were lifted in 1975, and many people who had converted their Lee-Enfields to the "wildcat" rounds converted their rifles back to .303 British. Post-Second World War, SAF Lithgow converted a number of SMLE rifles to commercial sporting rifles- notably the .22 Hornet model- under the "Slazenger" brand.

RFI in India and SAF Lithgow in Australia both produced single-shot conversions of the SMLE chambered for a .410 shotgun shell. The .410 conversions made by Ishapore were generally used as riot shotguns for crowd control in India, and were originally chambered for a 2" British .410 brass shotshell, basically a blown out .303 British cartridge. As these cartridges have not been manufactured for decades, ammunition is available only through handloading. Many of these conversions have been reamed out to accept modern 2 1/2" and 3" .410 shotshells in the United States. As the pressure for even high velocity .410 ammunition are well below standard .303 British pressure ranges these conversions, when done by a competent gunsmith, are quite safe to shoot. The SAF Lithgow/Slazenger .410 shotguns were, however, chambered for commercial .410 shells, as they were primarily intended for civilian sale, with over 7,000 eventually being manufactured.

Numerous attempts were made to convert the various single-shot .410 shotgun models to a bolt-action repeating model by removing the wooden magazine plug and replacing it with a standard 10-round SMLE magazine. None of these is known to have been successful, though some owners have adapted 3-round magazines for Savage and Stevens shotguns to function in a converted SMLE shotgun.

**List of manufacturers**

The manufacturer’s names found on the MLE, CLLE, and SMLE Mk I—Mk III* rifles and variants are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marking</th>
<th>Manufacturer</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enfield</td>
<td>Royal Small Arms Factory Enfield</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sparkbrook</td>
<td>Royal Small Arms Factory Sparkbrook</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSA Co</td>
<td>Birmingham Small Arms Co. Ltd</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSA Co</td>
<td>London Small Arms Co. Ltd</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithgow</td>
<td>Lithgow Small Arms Factory</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRI</td>
<td>Ishapore Rifle Factory</td>
<td>British India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFI</td>
<td>Ishapore Rifle Factory</td>
<td>India (Post-Independence)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1: "SSA" and "NRF" markings are sometimes encountered on First World War-dated SMLE Mk III* rifles. These stand for "Standard Small Arms" and "National Rifle Factory", respectively. Rifles so marked were assembled using parts from various other manufacturers, as part of a scheme during the First World War to boost rifle production in the UK. Only SMLE Mk III* rifles are known to have been assembled under this program.
Note 2: GRI stands for "Georgius Rex, Imperator" (Latin for "King George, Emperor (of India)", denoting a rifle made during the British Raj. RFI stands for "Rifle Factory, Ishapore", denoting a rifle made after the Partition of India in 1947.

For the No. 4 Mk I, No. 4 Mk I* and No. 4 Mk 2 rifles:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marking</th>
<th>Manufacturer</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ROF (F)</td>
<td>Royal Ordnance Factory Fazakerley</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROF (M)</td>
<td>Royal Ordnance Factory Maltby</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Birmingham Small Arms Co. Ltd</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M47C</td>
<td>Birmingham Small Arms Factory (Shirley)</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longbranch</td>
<td>Longbranch Arsenal</td>
<td>Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US PROPERTY [S]</td>
<td>Savage Arms</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POF</td>
<td>Pakistan Ordnance Factories</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1: Second World War UK production rifles had manufacturer codes for security reasons. For example, BSA Shirley is denoted by M47C, ROF(M) is often simply stamped "M", and BSA is simply stamped "B".

Note 2: Savage-made Lee-Enfield No. 4 Mk I* rifles are all stamped "US PROPERTY". They were supplied to the UK under the Lend-Lease programme during the Second World War. No Savage Lee-Enfields were ever issued to the US military; the markings existed solely to maintain the pretence that American equipment was being lent to the UK rather than permanently sold to them.[75]

Australian International Arms No. 4 Mk IV

The Brisbane-based Australian International Arms also manufacture a modern reproduction of the No. 4 Mk II rifle, which they market as the AIA No. 4 Mk IV. The rifles are manufactured by parts outsourcing and are assembled and finished in Australia, chambered in 7.62x51mm NATO and feed from standard M14 magazines. The No. 4 Mk IV is designed with the modern shooter in mind, and has the ability to mount a telescopic sight without drilling and tapping the receiver.^[76] AIA also offers the AIA M10-A1 rifle, a Jungle Carbine-styled version chambered in 7.62x39mm Russian, which uses AK-47 magazines.[77] Late 2009 the supply of these firearms has been limited that some models are now unavailable in Australia( Oct 2009 the 7.62x39mm is unavailable ). Magazine supply/importation (M14 & AK 10 single stack mag) whilst perfectly legal within Australia, it has been spasmatically curtailed by Australian Federal Customs Gun politics in Australia. It is possible to obtain a 15 round (the maximum allowed by law) M14 magazine for the M10-B2 match rifles in particular, provided an import permit from the appropriate Licensing Services Division can be obtained in some States.[78].

Khyber Pass Copies

A number of British Service Rifles, predominantly the Martini-Henry and Martini-Enfield, but also the various Lee-Enfield rifles, have been produced by small manufacturers in the Khyber Pass region of the Pakistani/Afghani border.[79]

"Khyber Pass Copies", as they are known, tend to be copied exactly from a "master" rifle, which may itself be a Khyber Pass Copy, markings and all, which is why it's not uncommon to see Khyber Pass rifles with the "N" in "Enfield" reversed, amongst other things.[80]

The quality on such rifles varies from "as good as a factory-produced example" to "dangerously unsafe", tending towards the latter end of the scale. Khyber Pass Copy rifles cannot generally stand up to the pressures generated by modern commercial ammunition,[80] and are generally considered unsafe to fire under any circumstances.[7]

Khyber Pass Copies can be recognised by a number of factors, notably:
• Spelling errors in the markings; as noted the most common of which is a reversed "N" in "Enfield")
• V.R. (Victoria Regina) cyphers dated after 1901; Queen Victoria died in 1901, so any rifles made after 1901 should be stamped "E.R" (Edwardius Rex—King Edward VII or King Edward VIII) or "G.R" (Georgius Rex—King George V or King George VI).
• Generally inferior workmanship, including weak/soft metal, poorly finished wood, and badly struck markings.[80]

The Lee-Enfield in military/police use today

The Lee-Enfield family of rifles is the oldest bolt-action rifle design still in official service.[7] Lee-Enfield rifles are used by reserve forces and police forces in many Commonwealth countries, particularly Canada, where they are the main rifle issued to the Canadian Rangers, and India, where the Lee-Enfield is widely issued to reserve military units and police forces.[7] Indian police officers carrying SMLE Mk III* and Ishapore 2A1 rifles were a familiar sight throughout railway stations in India after the Bombay train bombings of 2006 and the November 2008 Mumbai attacks. They are also still seen in the hands of Pakistani and Bangladeshi second-line and police units. In the UK, the single-shot .22 calibre Rifle No. 8 is in regular use with UK Cadet Forces as a light target rifle.[81]

Photos from the recent civil war in Nepal showed that the government troops were being issued SMLE Mk III/III* rifles to fight the Maoist rebels, and that the Maoists were armed with SMLE rifles (amongst other weapons) as well.[82] Lee-Enfield rifles have also been seen in the hands of both the Naxalites and the Indian police in the ongoing Maoist insurgency in rural India.

The Lee-Enfield in civilian use

Lee-Enfields are very popular as hunting rifles and target shooting rifles. Many surplus Lee-Enfield rifles were sold in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa after the Second World War, and a fair number have been ‘sporterised’, having had the front furniture reduced or removed and a scope fitted so that they resemble a bolt-action sporting rifle. Top-notch accuracy is difficult to achieve with the Lee-Enfield design,[31] as it was intended to be a battle rifle and not a sharpshooter's weapon,[31] and thus the Enfield is nowadays overshadowed by derivatives of Paul Mauser's design as a target shooting arm. They did, however, continue to be used at Bisley up into the 1970s with some success, and continue to perform extremely well at Military Service Rifle Competitions throughout the world.[7]

Many people still hunt with as-issued Lee-Enfield rifles, with commercial .303 British ammunition proving especially effective on medium-sized game.[7] Soft-point .303 ammunition is widely available for hunting purposes,
though the Mark 7 military cartridge design often proves adequate because its tail-heavy design makes the bullet yaw violently and deform after hitting the target.\[^{83}\] [\(^{84}\)]

The Lee-Enfield rifle is a popular gun for historic rifle enthusiasts and those who find the 10-round magazine, loading by charger clips, and the rapid bolt-action useful for Practical Rifle events. Since formation in 1998, the organisations such as the Lee Enfield Rifle Association have greatly assisted in not just preserving rifles in shooting condition (many Lee-Enfields are being deactivated and sold as "wall-hangers" to collectors who do not hold a Firearms Licence in countries where they are required), but holding events and competitions wholly accurate in terms of the various courses of fire and targets of the period. Lee-Enfields are also popular with competitors in service rifle competitions in many British Commonwealth countries—notably Australia, which boasts a very active Military Service Rifle shooting community.\[^{7}\]

The extensive use of the Lee-Enfield rifle for service rifle shooting competitions in nations like Great Britain and Australia is also due to other factors like the gun laws of both Great Britain and Australia which strictly regulate, limit, and prohibit the private ownership of functioning ex-military and military-style semi-automatic centrefire rifles by nearly all licensed firearm owners in both Great Britain\[^{85}\] and Australia.\[^{86}\] (For more information see Gun politics in the United Kingdom and Gun politics in Australia.)

### Users

- **Australia\[^{87}\] [\(^{88}\)]**
- **Canada\[^{89}\] [\(^{88}\)]**
- **France (Foreign Legion, Free French Forces)\[^{90}\] [\(^{91}\)]**
- **India\[^{92}\]**
- **Italy (post-World War II Italian Army and Navy) [\(^{93}\)]**
- **Iraq\[^{94}\]**
- **Ireland\[^{95}\]**
- **Malaysia\[^{96}\]**
- **Nepal\[^{97}\]**
- **New Zealand\[^{98}\]**
- **Ottoman Empire\[^{99}\]**
- **Pakistan\[^{100}\]**
- **South Africa\[^{101}\]**
- **United Kingdom & Colonies\[^{102}\] [\(^{103}\)]**
- **United States (Used by units of the American Expeditionary Force attached to British and Australian units during the First World War)\[^{104}\] [\(^{105}\)]**

### See also

- Enfauser

### References

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• Wilson, Royce (September 2007). SMLE: The Short Magazine Lee-Enfield Mk III. Australian Shooter Magazine.

External links
• The Lee-Enfield [106]
• Enfield Rifle Research [107]
• Lee-Enfield Rifle Association [108]
• Lee-Enfield Training Rifles [109]
• The Lee-Metford [110]
• Demonstration of rapid aimed fire at Bisley [111]
• Demonstration of rapid fire - 10 aimed shots in 9 seconds [112]
• Rieder Automatic Rifle Attachment [113]
References

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[60] Skennerton (2007), p.256-259
[64] Skennerton (2007), p.370
[65] Skennerton (2004, 18), p.5
[70] Skennerton (2007), p.351
[71] Skennerton (2007), p.549
[75] Skennerton (2007), Chapter 15
[77] Skennerton (2007), p.553
[80] Skennerton (1993), p.334
[87] Skennerton (2007), p.345
[92] Skennerton (2007), Chapter 11
[95] Skennerton (2007), p.587
[96] Skennerton (2007)
[97] Skennerton (2007), Chapter 11
[100] Skennerton (2007), Chapter 11
[102] Skennerton (2007)
[106] http://enfieldrifles.profusehost.net/
[111] http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=7LmYQhEfuxM&NR=1
[112] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8x3IOZ4yX6Y&feature=related