

## Shooting the SMLE No.1 Mk III

*Click on any of the images below to see a larger version of the image.*



I pick up most of my surplus rifles from income generated from after hours work. I usually come up with a paid job, every month, that brings in side income enough to pick up "a" something or two. I then name the new purchases

(rifles) after the job or person that paid me. I know this does not make a lot of sense, but it helps me keep track of how I purchased what and with what. This way I can explain to my wife how I have not ruined our budget for the month. This month was no exception, I was hired to test a new printer for a large printer manufacture by a company named "Opinions", so when I peered down the barrel of a SMLE No.1 Mk III and saw that it was in excellent shape, I could not pass it up. *If I do more than one job for a specific employer - then I have a complex numbering system that appends to the end of the name - just kidding - but there is always someone that would ask.*

The finish of Opinion's metal was arsenal refinished and the wood was new. I am a collector, but not a collector for resale value. I find myself extremely happy when I find a rifle in such good condition, even (*especially*) if it has had a complete arsenal overhaul. I found the barrel to be fairly new, if not completely new.



I had recently purchased another SMLE Mk III and it is definitely not in this good of condition. The finish is almost completely worn off and the barrel was in *fair to good* condition (*after a hell of a lot of cleaning!*). The only redeeming quality of my first SMLE was that the wood is beautiful (*as shown in **figure 11***). Out of all my rifles I don't have any Military rifle stocks that hold a candle to this one. The first rifle is rightly called "*I am going to get in trouble for this one*" as I purchased it out of the households regular budget and made the wife very unhappy.



The SMLE was very advanced in it's day, the early 1900s to late 1940s. Imagine a rifle being used in WW I with a detachable 10 round magazine not unlike that of modern battle rifles (*as shown in*

***figure 3***). Although the rifle was designed to use a

detachable magazine it also was designed to take a stripper clip and even single rounds.



The action on the No.1 is excellent and very fast. In most circles it is well established that the SMLE has the fastest cycling *bolt action style* action of all battle rifles, and I can see why this is true. The .303

British is a pretty stout cartridge, somewhere between the 30-40 Krag and the 30.06. I make this point because the bolt and the bolt's locking lugs are noticeably smaller in diameter or size than most bolt action rifles.



The sights on the No.1 are some of the most well protected that I have ever seen. Both the front and back sights have enormous "bunny" ears on either side as shown in **figures 5 and 13**.

Adjusting the sights are easily accomplished by sliding the elevation up and down the gradient. There is also a small micro adjustment on the rear sight that I have not seen on any other stock surplus military rifle, that I really like. You can adjust the rifle to a very granular level by turning the "*backsight, fine adjustment worm wheel*" one click, each click represents a change of only 5 yards!



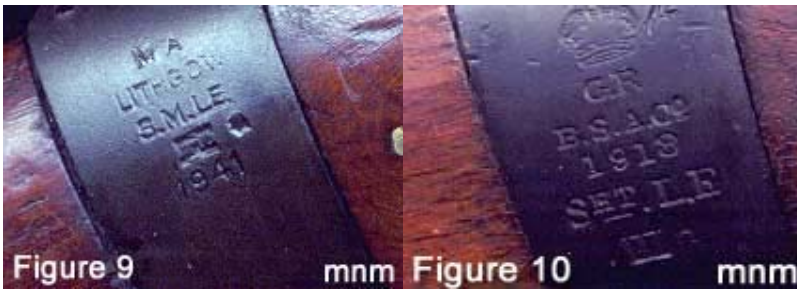
I also really like the look of the solid brass butt plate as shown in **figure 6**. All in All the No.1 is a very classy looking battle rifle.

I loaded my first 5 rounds into the reconditioned No. 1, after setting up my target. After correcting the elevation I started to shoot good groups. As you can see in **figure 7** both 5 round groups were "in the black" and pretty tight.



Next I loaded up the No.1 with the *fair to good* barrel (*not expecting much*). I was very surprised as I could not see very much difference in accuracy between the two rifles. Although the elevation was different to achieve the same

grouping, I found both rifles to be pretty darn accurate. I am looking forward to picking up some brass and experimenting with some loads. Maybe I will try one out at the Military Silhouette Matches, soon.



Looking at the "butt sockets" of both rifles in **figures 9 and 10** you will see when, where, and who manufactured the rifles. The older of the two rifles (*the one I had just purchased and*

*was reconditioned*) in **figure 10** displays the "Royal Cypher" (yes, correctly spelled), that it was manufactured in 1918 by the Birmingham Small Arms Company (BSAC). The rifle in **figure 9** shows that it was manufactured in Lithgow in 1941.

The safety and magazine release on the SMLE No.1 rifle are very unique.

Instead of a cocking piece style safety, there is a lever on the left rear of the receiver that can be actuated by pulling it to the rear and snapping/locking it down. If you find the safety can be moved while set, by moving the bolt handle - the screw retaining the safety lever is too loose and needs to be tightened.



The magazine release is inside of the trigger guard positioned to the front of the trigger. It can be quickly and easily depressed to drop the magazine by pressing up on the lever.



I have always admired the SMLE No.1s and 4s (*since I was a little kid and saw them both in all of the WWII war movies that I watched*).

To say I was really pleased to happen on two that perform this well is an understatement. I am now going to be keeping my eye out for "a" (or two) good No.4 to add to my collection and Surplusrifle.com's.

If you are interested in more information about the SMLE rifles, you can find two good publications that I will review later. The first is a book titled, **British Firearms - The Lee Enfield Number 1 Rifles**, by Alan M. Petrillo. The second book is an NRA publication titled, **British Enfield Rifles**. Both books are excellent sources of Historical facts and "How To" information.

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