

LEE-Enfield Carbine 1898

This Mk.I LEC is one of 2300 carbines purchased by the Canadian govt in 1896.

The Canadian contingents of troops that were sent to South Africa, although rode horses they were not cavalry, but were Mounted Rifles. They rode to the battle then dismounted and fought like infantry. They carried the MLE long rifle slung across their back.

The cavalry carbines that went to SA were with the Royal Canadian Field Artillery. In Feb of 1900, they sent three batteries of artillery C, D, and E, each with six 12 pounder guns. Each gun was pulled with a limber and on each limber racked were Lee Enfield cavalry carbines.

The Lee–Enfield rifle was introduced in November 1895 as the .303 calibre, Rifle, Magazine, Lee–Enfield, or more commonly 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 (540 mm) barrel as opposed to the 30.2-inch (770 mm) one in the "long" version. Both underwent a minor upgrade series in 1899 (the omission of the cleaning / clearing rod), becoming the Mk I*.



The brigade division of artillery in Canada's second contingent grouped together three batteries. Each battery consisted of three sections, each of two 12-pounder breech-loading guns. The 12-pounders, however, were out-ranged by the Boers' field guns. Despite this handicap, the Canadian gunners more than held their own during operations in South Africa.

The batteries were designated "C", "D", and "E", to signal the brigade division's link to the Permanent Force's "A" and "B" Batteries, Royal Canadian Field Artillery. There was, in fact, a core of permanent force artillery personnel in each battery. Additional members came from militia field batteries. "C" and "D" Batteries' militia gunners came from units in Ontario, and

also from Winnipeg; "E" Battery's came from units in Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia.

"D" and "E" Batteries arrived in Cape Town in February 1900 and participated in the suppression of the Boer rebellion in the Western Cape Colony. "C" Battery, on its arrival in March 1900, went north to Rhodesia to join the Rhodesian Field Force, which then moved south to the relief of besieged Mafeking. The three batteries then continued to operate separately; even sections within each battery often acted independently with different forces, in some cases being detached for months at a time. The brigade division was only reunited at the end of its tour of duty and return to Canada.

Although usually out of the limelight, the three batteries saw much action. A section of "D" Battery particularly distinguished itself at the battle of Leliefontein.