

THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE

By 1944, the Canadian infantryman had to be knowledgeable about a number of weapons and weapon systems.



Rifle No. 4. Shorter, stronger and easier to manufacture, the Rifle No. 4 was introduced in the Commonwealth armies in 1941-1943 to replace the SMLE No. 3 rifle of First World War vintage. In Canada, the Smallarms Ltd. Factory, located on the grounds of the Long Branch rifle ranges, just west of Toronto, produced the Rifle No. 4 by the hundreds of thousands. The new rifle came with a spike bayonet, commonly called the “pig sticker” by the infantry. (From Brian Reid, *Named by the Enemy: The History of the Royal Winnipeg Rifle*, by permission)

(Right) Sten machine carbine. Designed in 1940 to replace the heavier and more expensive Thompson sub-machine gun in Commonwealth service, the 9 mm Sten was largely manufactured out of stamped components and was thus easy to produce. It was introduced into service in late 1941 and by 1945 was the standard section leader’s weapon in the Commonwealth armies. The Sten had a cyclic rate of 500 rounds per minute but also had a deserved reputation for misfiring and jamming. The photo shows a soldier loading magazines for his Sten. (LAC, PA-163401)



(Below) The immortal Bren gun. The Bren derived from an original Czech weapon manufactured before 1938 and became the standard light machine gun of the Commonwealth forces during the war. Weighing 22 lb, it had a cyclic rate of about 500 rounds per minute and an effective range of about 600 yards. Each infantry rifle company deployed nine Bren guns and they were the mainstay of both offensive and defensive tactics. An infantry battalion was authorized 63 Brens but spare ones were often acquired, one way or another, as they were a very useful weapon. (LAC, PA-131432)



(Above) Projector, Infantry, Anti-Tank (PIAT). A spring-loaded, hollow-charge weapon, the PIAT was surprisingly effective although its major drawback was that a man had to stand to reload it. A PIAT round could penetrate the armour of most German tanks at close range and was feared by German tank crews. An infantry battalion was issued 23 of these weapons. (LAC, PA-189919)

(Top right) 2-inch (50 mm) mortar. Introduced in 1939, each rifle company deployed 9 of these weapons, which were useful to fire grenades, smoke rounds and illuminating flares. A very portable little weapon, the 2-inch mortar weighed only 10 lb, had an effective range of 500 yards and could fire up to 8 rounds per minute. An infantry battalion was authorized 26 of these weapons. (LAC, PA-137654)

(Right) 3-inch (81 mm) mortar. The larger 3-inch mortar was used by the infantry battalion Mortar Platoon, which deployed six of these weapons. Larger, heavier and less mobile than its 2-inch brother, the 3-inch gave a battalion commander a means by which to carry out immediate bombardment of an objective. The 3-inch mortar weighed 112 lb and had an effective range of 2,800 yards. (LAC, PA-197534)

