

British Army Small Arms Guide 2.0/2.2

by James Langham



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With thanks to all my friends on the Twilight 2000 Forum ([www.http://forum.juhlin.com](http://forum.juhlin.com)) for all the feedback and encouragement.

Version 2.2.2



Illustration 1: 22 SAS troopers zeroing weapons "somewhere in Germany" March 1997. Note the camouflage painted M16/M203 combination (for some reason this is in a desert colour - presumably it is a new issue in need of repainting – the fact they are being zeroed would support this). MoD

British Small Arms in World War Three



Illustration 2: Royal Marine of 45 Commando with L85A1 photographed during the landings to capture Harwich 2001 showing the A1 was still in front line service at this date. The Times

section level the L7A2 GPMG.

The initial SA80 (known as the L85) was quickly superseded by the L85A1 which added a guard rail around the magazine release catch to stop the accidental release of the magazine (a problem increased by the use of the excellent sling which allowed the weapon to be slung across the chest). By 1995 no original L85s or L86s were in service. It was issued with a SUSAT x4 scope with a post aiming mark for infantry and with an iron sight for other arms – both of which were



Illustration 3: L86A1 being used by a member of 1st Bn Scots Guards in Poland January 1998. Note the longer, heavier barrel, outrigger to protect it and bipod. Note the left hand being used to hold the rear pistol grip. Just visible is the butt strap for long range firing. Sky News Created for the Twilight 2000 RPG by James Langham

The SA80 Family

In the late 1980s the British Army's standard rifle was the SA80 series, consisting of the L85A1 rifle and L86A1 Light Support Weapon. The standard rifle was the L85A1 and each fire team of four was issued an L86A1 LSW to act as a squad automatic (although it was never particularly successful in this role as it only had the same thirty round magazine as the rifle). These replaced the L2A3 Sterling sub machinegun, L1A1 Self Loading Rifle (SLR) and at



Illustration 4: View through a SUSAT sight. The Independent

both of which were adjustable for three different eye reliefs (the two sights were quickly changeable with the use of a combination tool or flat head screwdriver). Troops operating in jungles frequently switched

to iron sights as these did not mist up. It was also issued to the RAF Regiment, Royal Navy and Royal Marines. In addition some were used by the Ministry of Defence Police and the Military Guard Service. By 2000, many infantry units were using iron sights as SUSAT manufacture could not keep

British Infantry Section Organisations

To mid/late 1980s

Rifle group
Corporal (Section commander) with L2A3 or L1A1
4 privates with L1A1 SLR
Gun group
Lance corporal (second in command) with L1A1 SLR
Private with L7A2 GPMG
Private with L1A1 SLR
occasionally in TA units the L4A4 Bren would replace the L7A2. Some TA units (especially HSF units) were still using this organisation and equipment at the start of the war. An occasional variation which was used in the Falklands unofficially and sometimes used later was to add a L4A4 to the section making it very similar to the fire team approach below.

Early 1990s

Charlie Fire Team
Corporal with L85
Private with L86 LSW
2 privates with L85
Delta Fire Team
Lance corporal with L85
Private with L86 LSW
2 privates with L85

Early war

As early 1990s but one or both LSWs could be replaced (or occasionally supplemented by FN Minimi or Minimi Para. One or two of the L85s could be replaced by L85s with UGL fitted.

L7A2 GPMGs

Some light role units, especially the Parachute Regiment and Royal Marines frequently replaced an LSW or sometimes a rifle with an L7A2 for extra firepower. This was done at the expense of the extra GPMG section in the platoon.

up with demand.

The L86A1 was the heavier version of the L85A1 with a heavier barrel, outrigger, bipod, rear pistol grip and a butt strap for help in longer range engagements. Despite this there was an 80% part commonality between the two versions. Used in the squad automatic role it suffered badly from the limitations of a 30 round magazine (whilst STANAG compatible using non-British magazines greatly increased the chance of stoppages). Used as a heavier rifle it was more effective but the light 5.56mm round limited engagement ranges for it to be truly effective in this role either.



Illustration 5: L98A1 being used by Air Training Corps cadets. Note the lack of a flash eliminator, iron sights (including a post foresight) and the large cocking handle extension. MoD

In addition to the L85 and L86, there was a special version issued to the cadet forces called the L98A1 which was an L85A1 with the gas parts removed (requiring the weapon to be manually cocked before each shot), a different cocking handle on an extension bar (requiring cocking with the right as opposed to left hand as on the L85/L86) and no flash eliminator (so no bayonet could be fitted). Interestingly it actually had a superior iron sight which was capable of being adjusted for 100-500m in 100m increments (the normal iron sight was fixed at 300m). It was intended that in wartime these would be withdrawn and converted to L85A1s. Cadets were issued with the L86A1 with SUSATs in low numbers to replace their Bren Guns. These were withdrawn in late 1995 to issue to the Army, although some L98A1s (and by then L98A2s – see below) were retained.

The Gulf War of 1991 showed the deficiencies of the SA80 in sandy and dusty conditions however. The SAS sergeant turned author Andy McNab commented that “in the SA80 the British Army bought a Rolls-Royce, albeit a prototype Rolls Royce.” The name itself also highlights the fact that SA80 stood for Small Arm for the 1980s, even though problems with the weapon resulted in the issue only late in the decade and many non-infantry units only received theirs in the early 1990s.



Illustration 7: SA80 family cleaning kit. This remained unchanged throughout production. SASC Museum

In late 1992 after the results of the study were published, it was decided to create an upgrade programme for the weapon. The preferred choice for the upgrade Heckler and Koch dropped out of the bidding process as they were now ramping up production of the G11 and G41 for the German Army. In a job creation scheme, the British Government bought up the now defunct Sterling Armaments Company and gave them the contract (this caused much resentment through the arms industry that the programme had not been reopened to competitive tender – Royal Ordnance in particular were very upset and took the case to court – this had not been resolved by the outbreak of war when Royal Ordnance were given a contract to produce further L85A2s).



Illustration 6: L85A1 fully stripped. SASC Museum

Sterling made a number of changes to the basic design, these included a new stronger firing pin, heavier recoil springs, a heavier magazine with redesigned lips (although still STANAG compatible), a better gas plug (that eliminated the chance of getting it seriously stuck in the weapon if it was removed at the wrong angle), a new cocking handle with a unique comma shape to better deflect ejected cases and a strengthened safety catch bar. The same upgrades were also made to the L86A1 (LSW) creating the L86A2. The cadet forces rifle, the L98A1 was also rebuilt with the same changes, converting it from a manually cocked weapon to a semi-automatic only weapon, the L98A2. The L98A2 was (other than the lack of a change lever) an L85A2 in all but name (the flash eliminator was added to allow the use of a blank firing attachment and the iron sights were changed to the normal SA80 series type). Conversions of all types from A1 to A2 standard had only just started as the Sino-Soviet War broke out although gradually the A1 type was supplemented and slowly overtaken by new production A2s. Attempts were also briefly made to sell the A2 abroad. These attempts had generated some interest (and small numbers of evaluation sales had been made) when the war started and all foreign production was curtailed.

"I used to hate the Stubbie (L22), it had loads of bits sticking out everywhere to catch yourself on. Then came the day we took a hit and went down, if I'd only had my pistol we would never have held off the Soviets until help arrived"

Lt Ron Smith (3Rgt Army Air Corps)

Quoted in "Twilight Wings" Aviation Publishers 2031



Illustration 9: L22A2 with the issued 20 round magazine SASC Museum

At the same time a weapon that had been on the drawing board since the late 1980s was adopted, the L22. This was a shortened version of the rifle with a vertical front grip and a redesigned SUSAT sight (with the post blade extending downwards instead of upwards). It was originally intended for issue to armoured crewmen but was soon also issued to helicopter crew as a survival weapon. This was usually issued with twenty round magazines as these protruded less and so snag in the vehicle (an essential feature of bail outs. They carried a few 30 round magazines for their survival but the fitted magazine was fired. Early versions were L85A1s, others were new builds using L85A2 parts. Some were converted as the L22A1 and L22A2 respectively.



Illustration 8: Visible behind this Chinook pilot is an L22A2, unusually it has a 30 round magazine fitted. MoD

Production was restarted on the simplified design as the front guard was replaced with a plastic version and the top cover was a metal version (these allowed the ability to mount the HG40). The magazines were looser, reducing the need for compensating for the reliability loss from manufacturing quality. Some were made with parts manufactured for the L85A2 and recovered from factory ruins, these were usually prized for the higher quality (these are good reliability). Sights were a simplistic fixed iron sight with no eye relief adjustment. Many were transferred to the police when the military reductions were implemented once BAOR was returned to the UK.

"The A3 really was a crap weapon. The build quality was poor and it lost accuracy above 300 metres. It was ever heavier than the A2 due to all the woodwork. At least it was better than the pistols we had to deal with all the ex squaddies with Kalashnikovs until then."

Sergeant Harry Ghent, Metropolitan Police

Policing the Ruins, Truncheon Books, 2021

All of these weapons were capable of being fitted with a .22 conversion kit made by Heckler and Koch. This used a barrel insert, new recoil rod and spring/bolt assembly and magazine (holding 20 .22 rounds). Interestingly these parts converted the L98A1 into a semi-automatic weapon (although a cocking handle was required as the L98A1 one did not fit).

SUSAT sights are \$100 extra and are (C/R) if purchased separately.

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
	L85A1	5	3D6	1-nil	3	30	2	7	55	Poor	\$500 (S/R)
Ammo	5.56	Wt	4	Mag	30 box	Notes	SUSAT adds 10m to range for all fire				

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
	L85A2	5	3D6	1-nil	4	30	2	6	55	Good	\$600 (S/R)
Ammo	5.56	Wt	4	Mag	30 box	Notes	SUSAT adds 10m to range for all fire				

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
	L85A3	5	3D6	1-nil	3	30	2	7	45	Average	\$500 (S/-)
Ammo	5.56	Wt	4	Mag	30 box	Notes	Rare examples are good reliability.				



Illustration 10: Gurkha soldier of 6th Queen Elizabeth's Gurkha Rifles training in Hong Kong prior to deployment to China. He is armed with an L85A1 as is obvious from the cocking handle. Hong Kong Times

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
	L98A1	BA*	3D6	1-nil	3	30	3	-	55	Poor**	\$300 (R/-)
Ammo	5.56	Wt	4	Mag	30 box	Notes	* May fire three shots per round treating the fire as unaimed and the target as one range further away ** Drops to abysmal if used in wet conditions SUSAT adds 10m to range for all fire at normal rates only				

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
	L98A2	SA	3D6	1-nil	3	30	2	-	55	Good	\$325 (S/-)
Ammo	5.56	Wt	4	Mag	30 box	Notes	SUSAT adds 10m to range for all fire				

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
	L22A1	5	3D6	1-nil	2	20/30	3	9	35	Poor	\$325 (R/-)
Ammo	5.56	Wt	3.25	Mag	20/30 box	Notes	SUSAT adds 10m to range for all fire				

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
	L22A2	5	3D6	1-nil	2	30	3	8	35	Good	\$375 (S/-)
Ammo	5.56	Wt	3.25	Mag	20/30 box	Notes	SUSAT adds 10m to range for all fire				

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
	L86A1 LSW	5	3D6	1-nil	5	30	3	7	55	Poor	\$700 (S/R)
	bipod	5	3D6	1-nil	5	30	1	5	70	Poor	
Ammo	5.56	Wt	4.5	Mag	30 box	Notes	SUSAT adds 10m to range for all fire				

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
	L86A2 LSW	5	3D6	1-nil	5	30	2	6	55	Good	\$800 (S/R)
	bipod	5	3D6	1-nil	5	30	1	4	70	Good	
Ammo	5.56	Wt	4.5	Mag	30 box	Notes	SUSAT adds 10m to range for all fire				

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L85/L98 with .22 kit		SA	1D6-1	Nil	3	20	1	-	20	Average	\$50 (R/-)
Ammo	0.22	Wt	0.2	Mag	20 box	Notes	SUSAT adds 10m to range for all fire Price and weight is kit only (weight is replacement parts)				

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L22 with .22 kit		SA	1D6-1	Nil	2	20	1	-	20	Average	\$50 (R/-)
Ammo	0.22	Wt	0.2	Mag	20 box	Notes	SUSAT adds 10m to range for all fire Price and weight is kit only (weight is replacement parts)				

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L86 with .22 kit		SA	1D6-1	Nil	5	20	1	-	20	Average	\$50 (R/-)
bipod		SA	1D6-1	Nil	5	20	1	-	25	Average	
Ammo	0.22	Wt	0.2	Mag	20 box	Notes	SUSAT adds 10m to range for all fire Price and weight is kit only (weight is replacement parts)				

Grenade Launchers



Illustration 11: Posed shot of two British infantry in Iran with L85s with HG40s MOD

ammunition as the M203. An improved version the HG40A1 was proposed with a pivoting chamber instead of a slide allowing the use of longer (although still not high velocity) rounds. HK were unable to proceed with this as they were too busy manufacturing weapons for the German Army to divert resources.

In 1994 the HG40 grenade launcher was issued after several years of trials. This weapon, based on the HK79 was intended to give the infantry a grenade launcher capability. Prior to this units had depended on the use of rifle grenades, limited numbers of M79 grenade launchers and for Marines, the Parachute Regiment and Special Forces the M203 mounted on M16s. Their issue was never anywhere near the scale that was intended as production could not meet demand. As a result the rifle grenade (a BTU design) remained on issue and further stocks of M203s were bought from the USA (many were the M203PI issue although they were never issued separately to the rifle and were still referred to as M203s in British service).

The HG40 is capable of firing the same

	ROF	Rld	Rng	Rnd	Damage	Pen	Reliability	Price
M79	1	1i	100	HE	C:3 B:12	Nil	Excellent	\$500 (C/S)
			100	HEDP	C:3 B:12	4C	Excellent	
			100	Smoke	C:1 B:4	Nil	Excellent	
			100	CS	C:1 B:4	Nil	Excellent	
			100	Illum	B:100	Nil	Excellent	
Wt	2	Ammo wt	0.3	IFR range	400	Notes		

	ROF	Rld	Rng	Rnd	Damage	Pen	Reliability	Price
M203	1	1i	100	HE	C:3 B:12	Nil	Excellent	\$500 (C/S)
			100	HEDP	C:3 B:12	4C	Excellent	
			100	Smoke	C:1 B:4	Nil	Excellent	
			100	CS	C:1 B:4	Nil	Excellent	
			100	Illum	B:100	Nil	Excellent	
Wt	1.4	Ammo wt	0.3	IFR range	400	Notes	PI version 2kg \$700 (S/R)	

	ROF	Rld	Rng	Rnd	Damage	Pen	Reliability	Price
HG40	1	1i	100	HE	C:3 B:12	Nil	Excellent	\$500 (S/R)
			100	HEDP	C:3 B:12	4C	Excellent	
			100	Smoke	C:1 B:4	Nil	Excellent	
			100	CS	C:1 B:4	Nil	Excellent	
			100	Illum	B:100	Nil	Excellent	
Wt	1.4	Ammo wt	0.3	IFR range	400	Notes		

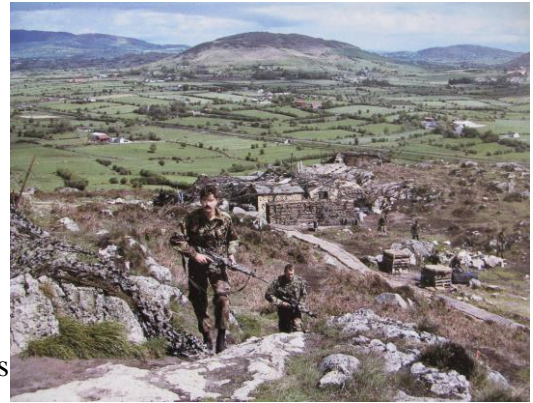
M16 family

Some units were issued the M16. The British Army had bought 10,000 in the early 1960s. These were a mix of M16 and M16A1s. They were issued to certain units within the Royal Marines (mainly the Brigade Reconnaissance Squadron – formerly part of the Mountain and Arctic Warfare Cadre), the Parachute Regiment's Patrols Group and Pathfinders, the SAS, SBS and they had been issued to troops undergoing jungle training prior to the L85's introduction. They had also been used as surrogate SA80s during large scale exercises such as Exercise Lionheart in the 1980s to simulate the SA80.



Illustration 12: Members of 12th Light Air Defence Rgt (Royal Artillery). These are obviously members of Minden Battery as these received M16s when they rebuilt and became an independent battery as an I Corps asset in mid 1998. Daily Mail

In 1993 a decision was taken to upgrade the M16s to M16A2s although they were no longer used for jungle warfare purposes. These were actually a mix of M16A2s from Colt and C7s from Canada (the M16A2s going to the Marines and SBS as they were ordered by the Royal Navy (which they are part of), with the C7s going to the Army). This changeover was never completed and units are often seen with a mix of weapons. In addition special forces were also ordered the M4 and C8 (distributed in the same way as the M16A2 and C7). These were to replace the M177/Car15s that had been used in small numbers previously.



*Illustration 13: Members of 22 SAS in Northern Ireland with M16s May 1999
Private collection of Lt Robin York*

								Recoil			
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
M16		5	3D6	1-nil	4	30	2	7	50	Average	\$400 (S/R)
Ammo	5.56	Wt	3.6	Mag	30 box	Notes					

								Recoil			
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
M16A1		5	3D6	1-nil	4	30	2	7	50	Good	\$450 (C/S)
Ammo	5.56	Wt	3.8	Mag	30 box	Notes					

								Recoil			
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
M16A2/C7		3	3D6	1-nil	3	30	2	5	55	Good	\$500 (V/C)
Ammo	5.56	Wt	3.8	Mag	30 box	Notes					

								Recoil			
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
M4/C8		3	3D6	1-nil	3	30	2	6	45	Good	\$500 (S/R)
Ammo	5.56	Wt	4	Mag	30 box	Notes					

								Recoil			
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
Car 15		5	3D6	1-nil	3	30	3	8	40	Average	\$500 (S/R)
Ammo	5.56	Wt	2.5	Mag	30 box	Notes		SUSAT adds 10m to range for all fire			

L1A1 SLR



Illustration 14: L1A1 SLR being carried by a member of E Coy (HSF) 5th/8th Bn Queens Regiment deployed in Liverpool Harbour seen here patrolling in the ferry port. June 1996 BBC

These SA80 series rifles were the main weapons available to British infantry at the start of the war (although a few units of TA had yet to change over and most HSF units had retained them until enough SA80s were available – this had the side benefit that most members did not need retraining). Once the war started it was quickly apparent that further stocks of weapons would be required. The L1A1 SLR and L2A3 Sterling were pulled from storage as were the M16/M16A1s.

The L1A1 Self Loading Rifle (almost always called the SLR by its users) was a version of the FN FAL that was capable only of semi-automatic fire. Popular with the troops it was a battle rifle firing the heavy 7.62mm round from a 20 round magazine (although a few troops acquired 30 round L4 magazines – these were however prone to stoppages as the L4 fed downward so used weaker springs in the magazine). Unlike the SA80 series this had the advantage it could be fired from either shoulder. Based on the imperial pattern of the FAL it could use the magazines from the metric FAL (although they had to be held on when the weapon was cocked or they would fall off!). FALs could not use L1A1 magazines due to a small dimple on the rear of the magazine. A x4 scope known as the SUIT (Sight Unit Infantry Trilux) was available (this was a predecessor of the SUSAT). This is \$100 (S/R).

“The older guys in the unit were really happy the day we were issued the SLRs (L1A1). They said that if you hit someone with one they went down and stayed down. They were right but I missed the great sling on the SA80”

Unknown soldier

The Great Rifle Scandal BBC Radio 4 June 2013

						Recoil					
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L1A1		SA	4D6	2-3-nil	5	20	4	-	65	Good	\$600 (S/R)
Ammo	7.62N	Wt	5	Mag	20 box	Notes	SUIT adds 10m for aimed shots L4 mags reduce reliability to poor				

“I’ve lost track of the number of times I’ve been told in history books that units were issued 7.62 or 5.56 weapons only. Up at the sharp end it was whatever was available. One week I got requests from one company for 5.56, 7.62 NATO, 7.62 NATO belted, 7.62mm green spot for the snipers, 7.62 Soviet and 9mm. As a quartermaster it made my life hell I can tell you.”

Captain Mike Ashley, 1st Bn Grenadier Guards

In an attempt to ease logistics, battalions were issued either 5.56mm rifles or 7.62mm rifles with the intention never being to mix them (things were not quite that simple however as 5.56mm units still had 7.62mm sniper rifles and GPMGs). An emergency order for 10,000 further M16A2s was made and a number of units were issued with these. This still did not meet demand.

No4 .303 Lee Enfield

Once the war started a number of No4 .303 Lee Enfield rifles were pulled from stores. These were issued to Army Cadet Force (ACF) officers (who were subject to call up) who were tasked with acting in a similar way to the HSF (although a number of the more capable ones were instead used as instructors in training depots).



Illustration 16: A patrol of Warwickshire ACF clear No4 rifles at the end of a patrol along the Welsh border to stop refugees. January 1997. Army Cadet Force Association

Ironically many of these were familiar with the No4 as it had only been withdrawn from the

ACF in the late 1980s/early 1990s. These rifles were occasionally complimented with .303 Bren Guns as section support weapons. Ammunition was in short supply as the .303 round had not been issued in numbers since the 1960s. By late 1998 some were occasionally seen in mainstream units, often in the role of a surrogate sniper rifle. Whilst never popular with users as they had such a limited firepower, they were liked for their reliability and stopping power. They were also a common weapon in Scotland and Wales where local militias were issued them for self defence. They were also one of the commonest weapons in civilian hands pre-war under the UK's very restrictive gun laws.



Illustration 15: Very unusual photograph showing members of an unknown unit equipped with No4 rifles being dropped by Puma helicopter in mid 1998. Note the older style steel helmets and 58 pattern webbing. MoD

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
No 4		BA	4D6	2-3-nil	5	2 x 5i	4	-	60	Excellent	\$300 (S/R)
Ammo	.303	Wt	5	Mag	10 box	Notes	Magazine is technically removable but spare magazines are very rare. It is fed from two five round stripper clips.				

AR18



Illustration 18: Trooper from 6th UDR on the outskirts of Londonderry January 1999. The L18A1 appears to have a non issue scope fitted. Note also the civilian parka. BBC

In an attempt to increase weapon availability, it was originally suggested that Sterling Armaments would produce L85A2s and L86A2s. This would however have taken time to set up the tools as only the upgraded items were ready to be produced. As an interim measure the director of Sterling suggested that the production

lines for the L2A3 and upgraded AR18 (the SAR87) that had been manufactured commercially until the company went bankrupt were reopened. The Ministry of Defence agreed immediately. The SAR87 was renamed the L18A1 rifle and put into full scale production. A modified AR18S was also put into low volume production with the same changes as the Carbine L19A1. These were basically AR18Ss that had been modified to take the STANAG magazine. It was also possible to swap the barrel, bolt and magazine and add a magazine housing adapter, to produce a 9mm submachine gun version of either (this was slightly modified from the original kit to take L2A3 magazines. These were known as the L18A2 and L19A2 respectively when fitted with the L172 conversion kit. Few of these were taken into service and most that were, were issued to Ministry of Defence Police. Numbers are however impossible to determine as the weapons could be converted into each other. Records of how many kits were bought were lost when the factory was destroyed. Many of the issued rifles went to home defence roled units (in some cases replacing the .303 No4 rifles that some had been issued during the rifle shortages) although there are instances of units being fully equipped with L18s (generally these were issued the L4A4 Bren as an LMG instead of L86s). A large number of these cases were the Ulster Defence Regiment (rather ironically as the original AR18 had been a popular weapon with the IRA in the 1970s). The 4th (County Fermanagh) 6th (County Tyrone), 8th (County Tyrone) and 10th (City of Belfast) Battalions are known to have used them as their primary rifle.

"I was always glad I was issued as L18 as I'm left handed and it was better for for me. A few of the guys had problems with the stock folding when they fired but we figured it was a better option than the SA80, at least it fired every time we pulled the trigger!"

Cpl Mary Collins (4 UDR)

Voices from the Irish War, Military Books 2031



Illustration 17: 10 Para private with L18A1 with unknown scope added. As 10 Para were never officially issued the L18 it can only be assumed that it was "acquired." Unknown date and location. Airborne Forces Museum

							Recoil				
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L18A1		5	3D6	1-nil	3	30	3	10	35	Average	\$400 (S/R)
	stock	5	3D6	1-nil	4	30	2	7	50	Average	
Ammo	5.56	Wt	3.6	Mag	30 box		Notes				

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L19A1		5	3D6	1-nil	2	30	3	12	30	Average	\$400 (R/-)
Stock		5	3D6	1-nil	3	30	2	8	40	Average	
Ammo	5.56	Wt	3.6	Mag	30 box	Notes					

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L18A2		5	1D8	Nil	3	30	1	5	20	Average	\$50 (R/-)
Stock		5	1D8	Nil	4	30	1	4	30	Average	
Ammo	9mmP	Wt	1	Mag	30 box	Notes					Weight and price is for conversion kit only

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L19A2		5	1D8	Nil	2	30	2	8	20	Average	\$50 (R/-)
Stock		5	1D8	Nil	3	30	1	5	25	Average	
Ammo	9mmP	Wt	0.75	Mag	30 box	Notes					Weight and price is for conversion kit only

L42A1 Sniper Rifle



Illustration 19: Familiarisation shoot with the L42A1 as part of sniper training. Still from the BBC documentary Sniper! (1997)

Up until the mid 1980s, the standard sniper rifle for the British Army was the L42A1, a development of the famous No4 Lee Enfield rifle converted to 7.62mmN calibre. Visual differences from a normal Lee Enfield are the wood fore-end is cut back (which also allows the barrel to be free floating i.e. not touching the fore-end reducing deviation from vibration), the magazine (converted to hold 7.62mm N)

is more angular and there is a cheek piece fitted. The Telescope, Straight Sighting, L1A1 telescopic sight was fitted (this was a modified version on the World War Two era No 32 sight). By the time of the Falklands War it was starting to show its age and in particular there were complaints that the sights tended to fog up. As a result the Army pressed ahead with a new sniper rifle in the mid 1980s although the L42A1 was still found in most TA units at the start of the war and many more were rushed back into service to meet demands.

Recoil

The longest recorded kill of the war by a British sniper was LCpl John Hall of 3 Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters in Poland in late 1997 when he achieved a first round kill at 1550m using an L96.



Illustration 20: An excellent study of the L118A1 and Royal Marine trainees in Ghillie suits from the same programme. RM Museum

	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L42A1	BA	4D6	2-3-nil	5	10i	4	-	70	Excellent	\$400 (R/R)
Ammo	7.62N	Wt	4.8	Mag	10 box	Notes	Scope adds 15m for aimed shots			

L96

The L42A1's replacement was the Accuracy International L96. This was another bolt action design in 7.62mmN (then the standard UK calibre). It also had a ten round magazine like its predecessor. It was however made of more modern materials and used the concept of an aluminium chassis that all other components were bolted onto. It also incorporates a bipod at the front and a monopod at the rear. This was issued to most regular and some TA units by the start of the war.

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L96		BA	4D6	2-3-nil	5	10	4	-	75	Excellent	\$450 (R/R)
Bipod		BA	4D6	2-3-nil	5	10	3	-	85	Excellent	
Ammo	7.62N	Wt	5	Mag	10 box	Notes	Scope adds 15m to range for aimed shots only				

L118A1

From the early 1990s there was also an upgraded version of the L96 (originally bought by the Swedish Army) called the AW or Arctic Warfare. This featured de-icing features allowing use as low as -40°C and featured enlarged pieces such as stock hole bolt, magazine release and trigger guard to allow use while wearing gloves. The new scope also offered a wider field of view. This was taken into service as the L118A1. Issue of this was not as wide as the L96 but most wartime production was the L118A1 not the L96. They were especially popular with the Royal Marines (always a proponent of sniping) for their use in Norway. A version in the .338 Magnum cartridge was under consideration for longer range sniping but this never came to fruition after the nuclear exchanges.

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L118A1		BA	4D6	2-3-nil	5	10	4	-	75	Excellent	\$475 (R/R)
Bipod		BA	4D6	2-3-nil	5	10	3	-	85	Excellent	
Ammo	7.62N	Wt	5	Mag	10 box	Notes	Scope adds 15m to range for aimed shots only				

L39A1 and L39A2



Illustration 21: L39A2 as issued - note the now redundant tunnel foresight as opposed to the blade foresight on the L42A1 and the presence of the original magazine. SASC Museum

As a wartime measure, the Army also issued the L39A1. This was very similar to the L42A1 (sharing the same base rifle) although as it was intended for competition shooting by Army units it did not have a telescopic sight (instead having better iron sights) and the original .303 magazine was left in place as

single shots only were required. When in 1996 extra sniper rifles were required these were converted by the addition of a telescopic sight (although the single shot only magazine was retained). These were issued to home service units as a stop-gap as the L39A2 (some also appear to have been sent to Ireland as they are recorded as being issued to some snipers in the UDR).

		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L39A1		BA	4D6	2-3-nil	5	1i	4	-	70	Excellent	\$300 (R/R)
Ammo	7.62N	Wt	4.8	Mag	1 integral	Notes					

		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L39A2		BA	4D6	2-3-nil	5	1i	4	-	70	Excellent	\$375 (R/R)
Ammo	7.62N	Wt	4.8	Mag	1 integral	Notes	Scope adds 15m for aimed shots				



L2A3 Sterling SMG

Illustration 22: L2A3 Sterling being fired by a member of the SASC - note the correct hand hold. Inexperienced users tend to hold the magazine increasing stoppages. MoD

"Much as I liked the SMG, there did feel something wrong about fighting World War Three with a weapon that my grand-dad had carried a prototype of at Arnhem. I just hoped that I wouldn't end up a POW like he did!"

Major Henry Shepherd, 10 Para

Airborne Voices Military Books 2026

Despite the fact that the SMG was officially not an issue weapon, the continued issue of the L1A1 SLR had resulted in the L2A3 Sterling still being in second-line and reserve issue. The Sterling had a long service history with the trials version (the Patchett SMG) being issued to some of the troops at Arnhem in 1944 although it was not accepted as a replacement for the Sten until 1951. Minor changes were made through its service life resulting in the final version the L2A3 which was the only version still in service by 1995. Firing from an open bolt, it had a curved 34 round magazine (although the straight, far less reliable 32 round Sten magazine could be used), it was far better made and reliable than its predecessor (reliability was increased in game terms by one level by only loading 32 rounds into the magazine). These weapons were widespread in 1995 and production was restarted by Royal Ordinance in December 1995 (an easy task as the factory had continued to manufacture spare parts after production had ceased). Some of the final home defence units were issued the L2A3 as their main weapon. By 2000 they were a common sight in the UK (although prior to this they were best known for their use in a modified form as the E11 Blaster Rifle in the Star Wars film series). Unusually for an SMG it had a bayonet mounting (using the same bayonet as the L1A1 SLR).

						Recoil				
ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price	



Illustration 23: L34A1 being used by a member of 27SAS at a firepower demo. MoD

“We had a really nice example of the Welrod Mk I and a Sten IIS (the silenced version) , right up until a hooligan from Hereford came and “borrowed” them. Doubt we will ever see them again...”

*Col (Rtd) Harold Deveraux
curator SASC museum in
conversation with the
author*

L2A3 Sterling	5	1D8	Nil	2	34	2	5	20	Good	\$350 (C/S)
stock	5	1D8	Nil	3	34	1	4	30		
Ammo	9mmP	Wt	3.5	Mag	34	Notes	Reliability decreases to average if using more than 32 rounds in a magazine			
					box					

Silenced SMGs

In 1966 a silenced version of the Sterling entered service as the L34A1. This was used only by special forces units. It was incapable of fitting a bayonet. The highly efficient silencer allowed the use of normal ammunition and was robust enough to retain the silenced function if fired on automatic for short bursts. A wooden hand guard was added as the suppressor heated up quickly.

During the early days of the war a number of Sten Mk IIS and VS that were held in museums were also issued. Here the silencer was less robust and would frequently require new baffles after 20D6 rounds (each round on automatic is treated as 3 rounds for the purposes of this). The Mark IIS was much more common than the Mark VS. The Mark VS was however the better made with a wood stock and pistol grip plus the same sight as the No4 rifle, while the cruder Mark IIS had no pistol grip and a metal tubular butt. The American Special Forces had been known to use a number of the Mark IIS in Vietnam and these were reissued for use in 1996. A very rare World War Two variant replaced the stock with a metal tubular pistol grip for concealment (this is bulk 3, range 15 and recoil 1/6).

						Recoil				
	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L34A1	5	1D6	Nil	3	34	1	4	15	Good	\$750 (R/-)
stock	5	1D6	Nil	4	34	1	3	25		
Ammo	9mmP	Wt	4.3	Mag	34	Notes	Reliability decreases to average if using more than 32 rounds in a magazine			
					box					

						Recoil				
	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
Sten MkIIS	5	1D6	Nil	4	32	1	5	18	Average	\$700 (R/-)
Ammo	9mmP	Wt	4.7	Mag	32	Notes				
					box					

						Recoil				
	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
Sten MkVS	5	1D6	Nil	4	32	1	4	20	Average	\$725 (-/-)
Ammo	9mmP	Wt	5	Mag	32	Notes				
					box					



Illustration 24: US DIA officer with Sten MkIIS believed to be operating on Grenada as part of a rescue team trying to recover General Cummings' daughter. DoD

Sterling 7.62

Interestingly Sterling also produced the Sterling 7.62. This was a version of the L2A3 in 7.62mmN! This also fired from an open bolt to reduce the risk of ammunition cooking off and was a heavier battle rifle intended as a wartime emergency measure only. It was capable of using both 20 round SLR and 30 round 7.62mm Bren magazines (although again the vertical feed caused many stoppages with the understrength springs). A bipod, fixed stock and night sight could be fitted. In 1996 Sterling submitted the design to

“There was an SAS guy, he had an L3A1 with a barrel that had been cut back to the hand guard and he had rigged a M203[PI] onto it. I would have hated to fire it but he could put down one hell of a lot of firepower”

Captain Ian Grant, 4RGJ quoted in “British Small Arms 1990-2020” Osprey 2022

the MoD. The MoD were unimpressed with the design regarding it as unsafe due to the high recoil and rejected it. In late 1996 however when it became apparent that there were not enough



Illustration 25: The Sterling 7.62 here fitted with a 30 round L4 magazine. The ancestry is obvious. SASC Museum collection

rifles for issue, the MoD placed an order for 6,000 rifles. These were issued to police, Home Service Force troops and from 1998 as surrogate SLRs as the L3A1 with fixed stock versions known as the L3A2. It is possible that more than 6,000 were manufactured but records are incomplete.

“Some of us were issued L3s, well that wasn't what we called them. There was no point trying to fire them on automatic, you could control a high pressure hose better. Semi auto was little better, the kick was massive”

Pte Ronald Hughes, 4LI quoted in “British Small Arms 1990-2020” Osprey 2022

In addition there was a heavy barrel version of the Sterling 7.62. This only had a fixed stock contoured to allow a better grip during sustained fire. A non-adjustable bipod was fixed to the front of the hand guard. Unusually the magazine well was rotated by 90 degrees (back to the same position as the L2A3) as the large 30 round magazine was too long to allow easy firing prone. This also allowed easier reloading. It was known in British service as the L121 Light Machine Gun

		Recoil										
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price	
L3A1		5	4D6	2-3-nil	4	20	6	13	45	Average	\$600 (S/R)	
Stock		5	4D6	2-3-nil	4	20	5	12	55			
Ammo	7.62N	Wt	4.5	Mag	20 box	Notes	L4 mags reduce reliability to poor					

		Recoil										
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price	
L3A2		5	4D6	2-3-nil	5	20	5	-	55	Average	\$575 (S/R)	
Ammo	7.62N	Wt	4.8	Mag	20 box	Notes	L4 mags reduce reliability to poor					

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L121		5	4D6	2-3-nil	5	20/30	4	12	60	Average	\$900 (S/R)
bipod		5	4D6	2-3-nil	5	20/30	2	8	70	Average	
Ammo	7.62N	Wt	6	Mag	20/30 box	Notes					

Sterling 5.56

There was also a Sterling 5.56 which was the Sterling 7.62 scaled down to accept the 5.56 SS109 round and STANAG magazines. These were less common than the L3 but at least 3000 were ordered in early 1997 and produced and issued as the L5A1 (folding stock) and L5A2 (fixed stock). A heavy barrel version had been suggested but this was not issued as the Minimi was regarded as superior.

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L5A1		5	3D6	1-nil	3	30	3	10	35	Average	\$400 (S/R)
stock		5	3D6	1-nil	4	30	2	7	50	Average	
Ammo	5.56	Wt	3.6	Mag	30 box	Notes					

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L5A2		5	3D6	1-nil	3	30	2	7	50	Average	\$400 (S/R)
Ammo	5.56	Wt	3.6	Mag	30 box	Notes					



Illustration 26: SF GPMG Team wearing Mk4 NBC suits and S10 respirators (which make unit identification impossible). The Sun

AK series weapons

The rifle that is most overlooked however in any study of British Army weapons in the years 1995 to 2020 is the Kalashnikov series. The first issue was in early 1997 when in what is sometimes called “The Great Rifle Shortage,” members of 300 (HSF) Transport Squadron, RLC (East Yorkshire) were issued captured AK74s in order to free up the L1A1 rifles they were issued for front line troops. Initially unpopular with their users they were soon accepted, especially when BG15s and BG25s were issued with them (although ammunition was usually in short supply). Further issues to the HSF continued although it would be a mistake to assume that their issue was universal. In the aftermath of the Pact 1998 Summer Offensive as front line units were rebuilt, a number of units were issued the AK74 (and often AKM-R) in lieu of British rifles. These usually were the service support elements initially but a number of units may have been issued them as the primary rifle. Many tank crews who found the L22 in short supply obtained folding stock AKs, in particular the AKSU for use in a dismounted role. In British service they were known as the L47 (AK47), L47A1 (AKS47), L47A2 (AKM), L47A3 (AKMS), L47A4 (AK74/AKMR), L47A5 (AKS74/AKMSR), L47A6 (AK74M) and L47A7 (AKSU).

When BAOR started to return to the UK, many of the AKs were brought back (unofficially large numbers were also smuggled back by returning squaddies and by 2010 the folding stock AK had become the armed robber's weapon of choice necessitating the issuing of large numbers of automatic weapons to the police). In the dark days of recovery they were often used to arm groups that were supplied by the English Government in their efforts to overthrow local warlords. The use of the AK series made ammunition resupply harder from local resources and the weapons therefore less likely to be turned against English troops. It has often been suggested that at least some of these were also used to covertly arm Dutch resistors although there has never been any firm evidence of this.



Illustration 28: CCTV security camera picture taken in 2022 showing the AK was still widespread in criminal circles at this date. Thames Valley Police for space reasons.

In addition to the rifle, the RPK and RPK74 appear to have been issued as surrogate LSWs in units equipped with the Kalashnikov. No trace of the use of other Soviet weapons (such as the PK or SVD) at anything other than a local scale has ever been found.

Statistics for all of these weapons can be found in the Warsaw Pact Small Arms Guide. They are not repeated here



Illustration 27: Soldier of 1st Bn Royal Highland Fusiliers being familiarised with a BG25 on the AK74 by a former Hungarian small arms instructor later a member of the 49th Armoured Brigade Training Wing. March 1999. Picture courtesy of Captain Charlie Zucchini (USAR) who was also a member of the team and is visible in the background

“The squaddies coming back from Germany must have ALL brought back an AK as a souvenir from the numbers we confiscated over the next few years. In one top raid after a tip off on a newly returned unit we found nearly 100 in containers welded underneath the bodies of their trucks. By the time we finished searching I wouldn't have been surprised to find a battlefield nuke!”

SSgt Nancy Aird, RMP quoted in “The Kalashnikov Vol 2 1995-2020” Osprey 2020



L9A1 Browning High Power

The standard British pistol throughout the later half of the twentieth century was the Browning High Power, known in British service as the L9A1 (indeed it is still the current pistol today in 2030 although it is finally being replaced). A single action automatic pistol it has a magazine containing 13 rounds which was very high for the date of introduction. In the late 1980s and early 1990s many were fitted with ambidextrous safety catches and grips of the

Illustration 29: Range day for RAMC medics June 1997 (The Mirror)

commercial Mark II although the designation remained unchanged. This was not complete by the start of the war and many pulled from storage retained the original parts. In 1995 an order for an extra 8,000 pistols was made to FN in Belgium. Many of these were completed from commercial parts and do not have the designation "Pistol Automatic L9A1" on the slide. They were issued primarily to officers and soldiers who's duty did not involve the need for a rifle (although the short length of the SA80 and the issue of large numbers of L2A3 Sterlings reduced this need). They were however popular as a back up weapon by front line troops who often tried to obtain one. They were also widely issued to police (including the MoD Police).



Illustration 30: Army training manual illustration of the correct two handed firing position for the L9A1 (MoD)

	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L9A1	SA	1D8	Nil	1	13	2	-	12	Good	\$150 (C/S)
Ammo	9mmP	Wt	1.1	Mag	13 box	Notes				

Other Pistols



Illustration 32: P226 (SASC Museum)

Despite the large order for L9A1s, there was a shortfall of pistols, as a result a number of orders for other pistols were made. The first of these was made in January 1996 when an order for 2,000 P226 pistols was placed with SiG-Sauer. These were issued to the Royal Navy and Royal Marines as the L105A1. Popular with their users a further order was made although this was never delivered. Numbers of the pistol

found their way into Army units as the war went on, especially as naval personnel were sent as replacements. They had also been issued to replace the L9A1 in special forces units although once the war started and pistols were in short supply



Illustration 31: L107A1 with issue survival knife from the aircrew escape kit. RAF Museum

they were used alongside each other.

In addition P228s were also ordered for the RAF as aircrew weapons. The smaller size of the P228 made it ideal for this. Popular with aircrews it gave a good balance between size and firepower. Some found their way into RAF Regiment units. Less common than the P226 these are now collectors items. These pistols were also issued to special forces where concealability was important. King Charles is alleged to have carried one when threat levels were high. In British service it is known as the L107A1.



Illustration 33: Walther PP and magazine carrier as issued to 14 Int from the Intelligence Corps Museum.

Also issued for use by undercover British soldiers was the Walther PP in .22LR as the L66A1 and in 7.65 as the L47A1. These were never in widespread issue but were popular with 14 Intelligence Company for the ease of concealment (usually with an L9A1 as a less concealable option). The Walther PPK of James Bond fame was not popular with the military and had been withdrawn from intelligence officers after one had a stoppage when there was an attempt to kidnap Princess Anne in the 1970s.

						Recoil					
	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price	
L105A1	SA	1D8	Nil	1	15	2	-	12	Good	\$165 (S/R)	

Ammo 9mmP Wt 0.9 Mag 15 box Notes

						Recoil					
	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price	
L107A1	SA	1D8	Nil	1	13	2	-	12	Good	\$160 (S/R)	

Ammo 9mmP Wt 0.8 Mag 13 box Notes

						Recoil					
	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price	
L66A1	SA	1D6-1	Nil	1	7	1	-	8	Good	\$125 (S/-)	

Ammo 0.22 Wt 0.6 Mag 7 box Notes

						Recoil					
	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price	
L47A1	SA	1D6	Nil	1	7	1	-	10	Good	\$135 (S/-)	

Ammo .380ACP Wt 0.6 Mag 7 box Notes

Silenced Pistols



Illustration 34: Welrod Mk I showing bolt closed and open (Imperial War Museum - pre-war photo)

In addition another pistol was issued but only to special forces. This was the Welrod Mk I in 9mm. A bolt action suppressed pistol firing from a six round magazine, it was incredibly quiet, with only a 73dB noise made on firing. There was also a Mk II in .32 ACP with an eight round magazine that had been dropped from British service after World War Two (interestingly the Mk II preceded the Mk I into service). For concealment the pistol grip (containing the magazine) could be removed. Originally developed for SOE (although they were also used by the American OSS) approximately 2,800 were believed to have been made. Many were dropped into Denmark where most museum models outside the UK came from. It continued in service in special forces

circles throughout the Cold War, Falklands, Gulf and in Northern Ireland (and probably with the US in Vietnam). At the outbreak of the war many of the museums holding the pistols received a visit from anonymous looking men with official letters requisitioning them. As a result no Welrod is currently held in the UK on public display.

"I got given a Welrod Mk III (L113A1) before I was landed in Sicily. It wasn't much to look at but it came in damn useful when I had to kill a Carabinieri in Palermo. It had an added benefit I hadn't thought of before I used it, there was no case ejected until you worked the bolt. Didn't matter too much there but it was useful to know."

Lt Agatha Gunn, RNR on secondment to Military Intelligence quoted in "Secret War" Circuit Publishing 2027

Even with the requisitioning of the Welrods and the use of silenced Browning L9A1s, there was a shortage of silenced pistols. As a result an order for 1500 specially designed silenced pistols was placed with Royal Ordnance. In an effort to increase secrecy, the work was carried out by a cover company, Janus Tubing Ltd based in Nottingham. Going back to the Welrod Mk II the material was changed to more modern versions such as polymers, the pistol grip and magazine were integrated into a two column design holding 12 rounds, the depression at the rear of the body was eliminated to ease production, the grip safety was removed (due to the complexity of integrating it with the magazine/grip and a manual safety was integrated into the bolt, allowing it to be rotated 180 degrees to safe the weapon. Issued as the L113A1 there was also an improved version (L113A2) with a small integrated laser sight under the barrel (some versions of these dispensed with the integral iron sights). Some were supplied to the CIA in late 1997 and some of these are believed to now be in US Special Forces and DIA service.



Illustration 35: Extremely rare photo of a Pistol L113A1 (private collection where the owner wishes to remain anonymous)

the complexity of integrating it with the magazine/grip and a manual safety was integrated into the bolt, allowing it to be rotated 180 degrees to safe the weapon. Issued as the L113A1 there was also an improved version (L113A2) with a small integrated laser sight under the barrel (some versions of these dispensed with the integral iron sights). Some were supplied to the CIA in late 1997 and some of these are believed to now be in US Special Forces and DIA service.

						Recoil					
	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price	
Welrod MkI	BA	1D6	Nil	1	6	1	-	10	Excellent	\$500 (R/-)	
Ammo	9mmP	Wt	1.2	Mag	6 box						Notes

						Recoil				
	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L112A1	BA	1D6	Nil	1	12	1	-	10	Excellent	\$525 (R/-)
Ammo	9mmP	Wt	1.2	Mag	12 box	Notes				
						Recoil				
	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L112A2	BA	1D6	Nil	1	12	1	-	15	Excellent	\$600 (R/-)
Ammo	9mmP	Wt	1.5	Mag	12 box	Notes				



Illustration 36: Troops of an unknown HSF Company preparing for FIBUA (Fighting in Built Up Area) training. They are wearing Mark 3 NBC suits over their uniforms. FIBUA is sometimes known unofficially in the British Army as FISH (Fighting in Some bugger's House). HSF Association

L108A1 and L110A1 Minimi

In the support role there was the previously mentioned L86A1/2. As troop numbers increased the production of these was not enough to keep pace and an urgent procurement was made for FN Minimis and Minimi Paras (although they had been used by the SAS since the



Illustration 38: L110A1 gunner from 4WFR photographed during Operation Trap Door when the battalion was attached to Army Group Cromwell. Note the scope on the L110A1. MoD

1980s). These entered service as the L108A1 and L110A1 respectively. These were used in lieu of the L86 in most cases but in some light roled units they were issued as a supplement (occasionally replacing the L7A2 GPMGs). Popular with their users for the ability to put down sustained fire, they were usually issued with 200 round disintegrating belt but had the option to use STANAG magazines in an emergency.



Illustration 37: A member of 42 Commando Royal Marines in Iran June 1999. Note the mix of temperate and desert kit on this L110A1 gunner typical of this period. MoD

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L108A1		10	3D6	1-nil	5	30/200	2	6	55	Good	\$900 (C/R)
	bipod	10	3D6	1-nil	5	30/200	1	4	70	Good	
Ammo	5.56	Wt	7	Mag	30/200 box	Notes					

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L110A1		10	3D6	1-nil	4	30/200	2	7	40	Good	\$900 (S/R)
	bipod	10	3D6	1-nil	4	30/200	1	5	55	Good	
Ammo	5.56	Wt	7	Mag	30/200 box	Notes					

L7A2 GPMG

Prior to the introduction of the LSW, the section had been primarily armed with a British version of the MAG58, the L7A2 (although it was usually known as the “gimpy” after its initials General Purpose Machine Gun). This despite the weight had been very popular for the firepower it provided. Used in the light role fired from a bipod, one was issued to every section where there was a gunner, an ammo carrier and the section 2IC to



Illustration 41: Often misidentified as an M240 this US Marine is actually using a British L7A2. USMC Museum

direct the fire. The weapon featured a quick change barrel and was belt feed from a disintegrating link belt. Common practice was to carry a short belt of about thirty rounds that was looped back over the top of the gun to keep it clear of dirt and mud.

Even after it was replaced as a section



Illustration 40: British "Gimpy" gunner of 1st Bn, 51st Highland Volunteers. This is an early production version with a brown wooden stock that was replaced by a synthetic plastic stock in later versions. Sky News

“The Gimpy was great for firepower, when we were test firing our new guns we used them to chop down trees, destroy cinder block walls and turn some wrecked cars into colanders. Beautiful guns they were..”

Cpl Tony Ryan, 1 Duke of Wellington's Regiment, quoted in “FN MAG and GPMG” Osprey 2017

weapon, the GPMG was still found in light role infantry platoons in a fire support section with three guns (although often this would be disbanded and



Illustration 39: 2 Royal Anglian GPMG in SF role team in action in Poland 1999. MoD

the guns distributed to each section).

The GPMG could also be used in the sustained fire role by the addition of a tripod (and usually the removal of the butt stock. Capable of putting down a highly effective amount of fire it could even be used for indirect fire (known as map predicted fire) by an experienced crew (although this skill was largely lost as the war went on). It was also the main weapon on pintel mounts and in a modified form as a co-axial weapon.

“We used to have our (GPMG) gunner with a short belt of about 30 rounds. If we came into contact he burned this in the direction of the enemy while we took cover. He would then reload with a full belt. Using that short belt reduced the chances of getting the rounds covered in shit that would jam the gun.”

Cpl Tony Ryan, 1 Duke of Wellington's Regiment, quoted in “FN MAG and GPMG” Osprey 2017

		Recoil									
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L7A2		10	4D6	2-3-nil	6	100B	1	7	65	Good	\$1500 (C/R)
bipod		10	4D6	2-3-nil	6	100B	1	4	90	Good	
tripod		10	4D6	2-3-nil	6	100B	1	2	125	Good	
Ammo	7.62N	Wt	12	Mag	100 belt	Notes					



Illustration 42: IWFR GPMG team in action in Belize. Note the iron sighted L85A2, common in jungle environments where the optics tended to mist up. MoD

L4A4 Bren



Illustration 43: Iranian L4A4 gunner on a gun truck. Unfortunately the exact unit is unknown. Note the improvised muzzle cover. Iranian Government

Prior to the introduction of the GPMG the British Army had used an updated version of the Bren Gun of World War Two vintage. This had been updated to use 7.62mmN ammo feeding from a new straighter magazine that replaced the iconic curved .303 magazine. Another recognition feature was the replacement of the conical flash hider with a more modern slotted version similar to the L1A1. Despite the long time since the

introduction of the L7A2, the L4A4 (the final version of the Bren) was still in service, mainly with TA

units (although in 1990 a number of regular units appear to have been reissued them in the Gulf to supplement the GPMG). Despite the high accuracy and reliability making it popular there was a large draw back to the L4, namely the limitations of the 30 round magazine (it could also use the SLR's 20 round magazine in an emergency) although the quick change barrel did allow prolonged firing. It could also be used only from the right shoulder as the sights were offset to the left of the weapon. It ejected downwards (this could result in a lap full of hot

brass when used on a pintel mount!). It could (although very rarely did) use the same tripod as the L7A2. It was regarded as a highly accurate weapon even on burst fire making it useful for ranged fire but weak at area fire due to this tight shot pattern.



Illustration 44: With GPMGs in short supply many rear area vehicles had their L7A2s replaced with L4A4 as here. The Independent



Illustration 45: RAF Regiment personnel with a drill purpose .303 Bren. MoD

Earlier versions of the Bren in .303 was still available in storage as they had only just been withdrawn from the Cadet Forces. Most were the Mark 2 with a significant number of Mark 1s modified for drill purpose use only (there was a lightened and shortened Mark 3 but this was no longer held in storage). As a result they were often reissued to units equipped with the No4 rifle. Ammunition for these was in short supply as no military ammunition had been manufactured in quantity since the 1960s and most issued

ammunition was civilian manufactured for sporting purposes.

						Recoil					
		ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L4A4		5	4D6	2-3-nil	6	30	1	4	65	Good	\$1200 (S/R)
bipod		5	4D6	2-3-nil	6	30	1	3	90	Good	
tripod		5	4D6	2-3-nil	6	30	1	2	125	Good	
Ammo	7.62N	Wt	12	Mag	30 box		Notes				

						Recoil				
	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
Bren Mk1/2	5	4D6	2-3-nil	6	30	1	4	65	Good	\$1200 (S/R)
bipod	5	4D6	2-3-nil	6	30	1	3	90	Good	
tripod	5	4D6	2-3-nil	6	30	1	2	125	Good	
Ammo	7.62N	Wt	12	Mag	30 box	Notes				



Illustration 46: BBC reconstruction of the Battle for Hill 184 showing members of 3 Para assaulting. Note the L4A4's slotted flash suppressor compared to the conical version of the .303 weapon. BBC

L2A1 M2HB

The Heaviest machine gun used by the British Army was the M2HB .50 cal heavy machine gun.



Illustration 47: 3 Para Land Rover WMIK with L111A1 MG in Iran, Spring 2000. Note the SUSAT sight, a common addition to the weapon. MoD

Most ground role M2s were put into storage after Korea until they were reissued in 1982 for the Falklands War where they were used in an air defence role. Known officially in UK service as the L2A1 it was almost always called the 50cal.. Ironically for such a heavy weapon it was mainly used in light role forces where it gave a useful anti-light vehicle firepower. Against infantry the intimidating effect of the heavy rounds often decided the firefight. British units were often very willing to trade with US units or scrounge for M2s so they often turned up in units who were not assigned them. A prime example of this is RAF Regiment squadrons who despite never being scaled for them almost invariably have a Land Rover (or more usually several) with one mounted in squadron photographs. Early in the war a number were upgraded to have a Manroy CQB system allowing rapid barrel changes without the need to adjust the head space. These were known as the L111A1.

	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Burst	Rng	Reliability	Price
L2A1/L111A1	5	8D6	2-2-3	8	105B	3	14	65	Good	\$1600 (C/S)
tripod	5	8D6	2-2-3	8	105B	2	7	150	Good	
Ammo	0.5	Wt	51.2	Mag	105 belt	Notes	Tripod weight 19.3			

Bayonets



Illustration 49: Bayonet training at the Sandhurst outstation of Frimley Park, May 1997. Cadet Training Centre Frimley Park Historical Trust

The British Army was a great believer in bayonet training, making it an integral part of basic training for all officers and other ranks and then continuing practice at unit level (at least among infantry units). While it was accepted that the use was not particularly likely in a high intensity battlefield it had been observed that the bayonet had been fixed (and used) in both the Falklands and Gulf Wars. It was also felt that the British tradition of closing with and defeating the enemy was encouraged by the training. Many countries in cutting back training during the war removed bayonet training from basic training (the US Army for example only included in in Advanced Infantry Training), the British however retained it throughout the war.

Two main bayonets were issued, the L1A1 bayonet that fitted the SLR and Sterling that was a simple bayonet and fighting knife. The second bayonet was the SA80 bayonet that fitted the L85 and L98A2 (it does not fit the L86, L98A1 or L22). This had an offset blade that made it difficult to use as a knife (-1 to skill). It did however incorporate in the metal scabbard a fitting that allowed the bayonet and scabbard together to form an excellent wire-cutter. Also incorporated into the scabbard was a bottle opener (designed to stop soldiers damaging magazine lips if they were used to open bottles) and a saw blade (that was difficult to get out of it's Swiss Army knife like slot without using the tip of the bayonet).

Those troops issued the AK series weapons were issued the standard Soviet bayonet (which also had the ability to combine the scabbard with the bayonet to create a wire cutter).

Troops using the M16 and M18 series were generally issued with a bayonet comparable with the M16 bayonet.

The L3 was incapable of fitting a bayonet as it had no fittings for one and the No4 was generally issued without one as the bayonets (which were not issued to the cadet forces) had been sold as surplus many years before.

"There is nothing like getting the command 'fix bayonets.' You know then that you are going to be performing the dirtiest fighting that exists, trying to slot some other poor bugger with a bit of sharpened metal. The click as it locks in place seems booming and everyone just looks their mates in the eye to silently wish them luck. You are so fired up the enemy frequently run, they know if it comes down to it there won't be many prisoners. Of course if they hold their nerve it won't be good for you either..."

LCpl Jack Butcher, Welsh Guards quoted in "They Don't Like it Up 'Em: The story of the bayonet" by Eric Jones Arms and Armour Press 2016



Illustration 48: The L3A1 bayonet for the SLR and Sterling. SASC Museum



Illustration 50: The SA80 bayonet, scabbard and webbing pouch (the scabbard fits inside this). SASC Museum

Special Forces Weapons



Illustration 51: This Royal Ulster Constabulary officer is carrying a HK33. It can only be assumed that this is an ex-special forces weapon as the HK33 was not bought by the RUC (ITN)

particular the K models. These were particularly popular with special forces for the compact firepower.

In addition many weapons were available to special forces (in small numbers) for familiarisation and special purposes. Often these were used on deniable operations with the serial numbers removed.

In addition to all of the standard weapons, a number of weapons were bought for special forces units. These included:

- HK33/53 – also used by Royal Military Police bodyguards
- MP5 – also used by the RMP and extensively used by civilian police (usually in semi-automatic versions). K models were also used. A number of suppressed MP5SDs were also issued to special forces only
- G3 series – in



Illustration 52: SBS troopers with HK53s photographed returning from rescuing a shot down RAF pilot in southern German, August 1997 (BBC)



Illustration 53: Another bayonet drill session at Frimley Park, note the unusual technique used necessitated by the short length of the SA80. Cadet Training Centre Frimley Park Historical Trust



British Army Small Arms Guide

