

BAYONET - Canadian FAL (EX1 & EX2) troop trials By Derek Complin

In preparation for the harmonisation to NATO 7.62mm caliber among British & Commonwealth forces, Canada ordered 2,000 Fusil Automatique Legere (FAL) rifles from Fabrique Nationale (FN), Belgium in 1954 for troop trials and evaluation. The rifles were accompanied by a like number of bayonets.



The bayonets and scabbards were straight off the FN production line, and totally unmarked. Once delivered to Canada, numbering was applied to the pommel, matching them to the rifles. The method seems to have involved applying four digits by hand stamping or alternatively engraving by electric pencil, easier and less time consuming



From examples viewed, two styles of spring catch and pommel casting have been noted. Although no official documentation has been found, it would appear from photographic images reviewed in the FN archives that the original design of the catch was concave in nature, with a squared pommel casting.



Canadian FAL trials



At some stage in production, the design was modified to create a larger catch, with the pommel casting chamfered to facilitate operation. Whether this was a simple production improvement made by the FN factory or prompted by a request from Canada is unclear. If the latter, it suggests that the operation of the catch by a soldier gloved with cold weather gear proved problematic with the early version, and a larger catch made to overcome the issue.

An un-numbered example has been noted. Simply stamped EX1 on one side of the pommel, and with the Canadian ownership mark (^ inside C) on the other side. The condition of the bayonet is mint. It appears unissued, and is in all probability an example



retained for the record, perhaps sent over for initial evaluation before the order for 2,000 was placed. However again, no supporting documentation has been found to support this assumption. The other feature to note is the small size release catch



The initial committee members to study the adoption of the FAL comprised Canada and the United Kingdom, thus it is perhaps appropriate to note that the same two catch styles occur in the FAL bayonets delivered for UK trials.



The British designation for the bayonet was X2 E1, which was accordingly stamped into the bottom of the tang, between the grips. Those issued for trial were numbered to the rifle. Since there are two versions in the pommel catches of those issued for British trials, it could be concluded that the change in design was at the request of the committee as a whole.

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