Revolvers weren't the only handguns produced by this veteran gunmaker.

BY PHILIP SCHREIER

The name "Webley & Scott" is an iconic imprint of the English arms trade in the 20th century. Best recognized for the six marks of its famous .455 service revolvers, its automatic pistols deserve a closer look, not only for their historic contribution to arms development but for their mechanical features and use by Empire troops around the globe.

The industrial revolution of the 19th century changed the world of material goods just as drastically as the American Revolution, and those that followed changed the political landscape of the world. Rapid advances in manufacturing technology created a domino effect that accelerated everything in its path. Interchangeable parts and assembly-line production made everything less expensive and economically feasible for most of the population. As firearms technology developed, guns with rapid rates of fire became desired by most of the world's major military powers. The military conflicts of the post-American Civil War era saw huge numbers of troops in the field armed with breechloading rifles and pistols. Yet one major obstacle remained: the use of black powder as a propellant in arms.

Black powder had been used as a propellant in firearms since their initial development in the 14th century. The major efforts in technology development following its introduction had mostly been in the field of finding more practical methods of ignition. From matchlock to percussion, the propellant always stayed the same and had the same consistent failing, which was fouling. Fouling is the slick, grimy residue left in a barrel that,
The Webley Automatic Service

A close-up view of the "N." brand Royal Navy contracts of the Model 1925.