

WEBLEY ROYAL IRISH CONSTABULARY REVOLVERS (RIC'S) IN .500CAL

by Doug Cooper



Here's an octet of early four screw Webley Royal Irish Constabulary Revolvers (RIC's), all in .500cal. and all retailed by Liddle and Kaeding (L&K), San Francisco, California. Serial numbers run from 12000 to 15000 which would indicate they were all produced within one year, first to last, probably around 1873-74. All have the standard period Webley markings on the left frame and all have almost standard four screw dimensions... just slightly "beefier" to accommodate the larger .500 caliber. Hence, they're all five shot rather than six shot and have the Adams type extractor rod. Most of them show very little wear or use and probably spent most

of their lives in a sock drawer. One, however, was a working gun and obviously spent its life carried in a holster. It's the one at the 2 o'clock position.

The "LIDDLE & KAEDING" over "SAN FRANCISCO" retailer's markings are interesting and suggest that L&K received more than one shipment from Webley. Apparently the first few, with the lower serial numbers, arrived in San Francisco without retailer's marks and L&K marked them after arriving. These earlier retailer marks are all engraved, but markedly different in content, size, quality and placement. The later few are engraved also but exactly

alike in style and placement, probably by the same hand and probably in Birmingham. Only the very latest one (15109), is stamped with the familiar "LIDDLE & KAEDING" over "SAN FRANCISCO" seen by the dozens on later RIC's and Bulldogs.

One of the snub-nosed guns was apparently made that way in Birmingham. The other one, with the bobbed hammer spur, was obviously shortened in San Francisco. No doubt a request by the purchaser to help insure a faster, unimpeded draw. He then had it nickel plated to cover the amputations. It was blued originally. Two others of the octet appear to have been nickel plated "after market" in San Francisco. I guess at that time it was "cool" to have a nice shiny revolver. Even though open carrying was by then illegal.

LIDDLE & KAEDING was the only known U.S. importers of Webley RIC's, and they seem to have also been the largest retailer of RIC's in .500cal worldwide. Maybe it's because no other retailer wanted more than a couple of those big .500's, and Webley was

able to cleverly "dump" a lot of their stock of .500's on Liddle & Kaeding out in the Wild American West. Since Webley's records were destroyed in the mid 1890's we'll never know for sure how many of these big .500's were made. It's not logical however that Webley would tell his casting factory (not affiliated with Webley) to cast-up 500 or 1,000 frames, barrels and cylinders in .500cal in the hope that they would sell. It's more logical that he would order 75 or 100 and then wait to see how well they sold.

Today there are 21 publicly known RIC's in .500cal and there is no reason to doubt that there could be another 21 in sock drawers and "closet collections" still out there. At any rate, today's collectors thank both Webley and Liddle & Kaeding for their fortuitous marriage.

P.S. Has any member ever seen a holster & belt rig with .500cal loops? With more than 10 or 12 loops I suppose you'd need to wear suspenders.

