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A simple yet complete exposition of the above weapons by acknowledged authorities on the subject. The text is profusely illustrated with photographs, line drawings, and diagrams.

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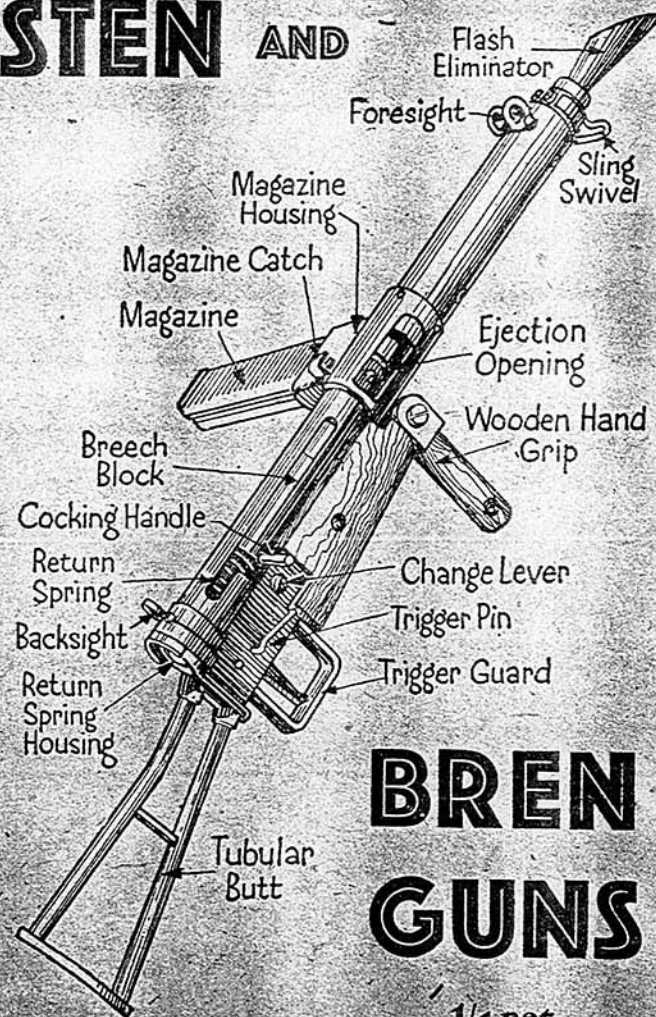
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An authoritative and concise account of these two important weapons. Fully illustrated with line drawings.

KNOW YOUR WEAPONS: No 5

STEN AND



BREN GUNS

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NICHOLSON & WATSON



THE BREN

HERE is a weapon with a reputation for a high degree of accuracy. Its name in full is the .303 Bren Light Automatic Machine Gun.

One or two of the more obvious reasons for its accuracy can be seen from the diagram opposite. In the Butt Group, for example, you will notice the Butt Handle, which is responsible for maintaining a firm hold on the gun, the Butt Plate Buffer Spring and the Piston Buffer Spring, both of which are concerned with minimising recoil.

Another feature which limits error is the general mechanical design, by which practically all the motion is through the length of the gun. In the Lewis, you recall, there is a lateral oscillation with every round fired. In the Bren, the movement is directly backward and forward. The combination of aperture backsight and blade foresight, too, tends to reduce error in aiming.

The experience of a civilian friend who assisted in the Dunkirk evacuation will amplify the point about the Bren's reputation.

Instructed to take his boat to be fitted with a gun, he was asked by Chief Petty Officer issuing weapons what sort he wanted.

"How about a Bren?" my friend asked. "Handy little tools, aren't they?"

"Had he ever fired one?" "No," my friend answered. Then: "Take my advice, chum," replied the C.P.O., "and fix yourself up with a Lewis. Brens are too bl— accurate. With a Lewis you get plenty of spray, and that, plus the motion of your cockle-shell, should get you out of trouble."

Such is the double-edged compliment paid to the Bren.

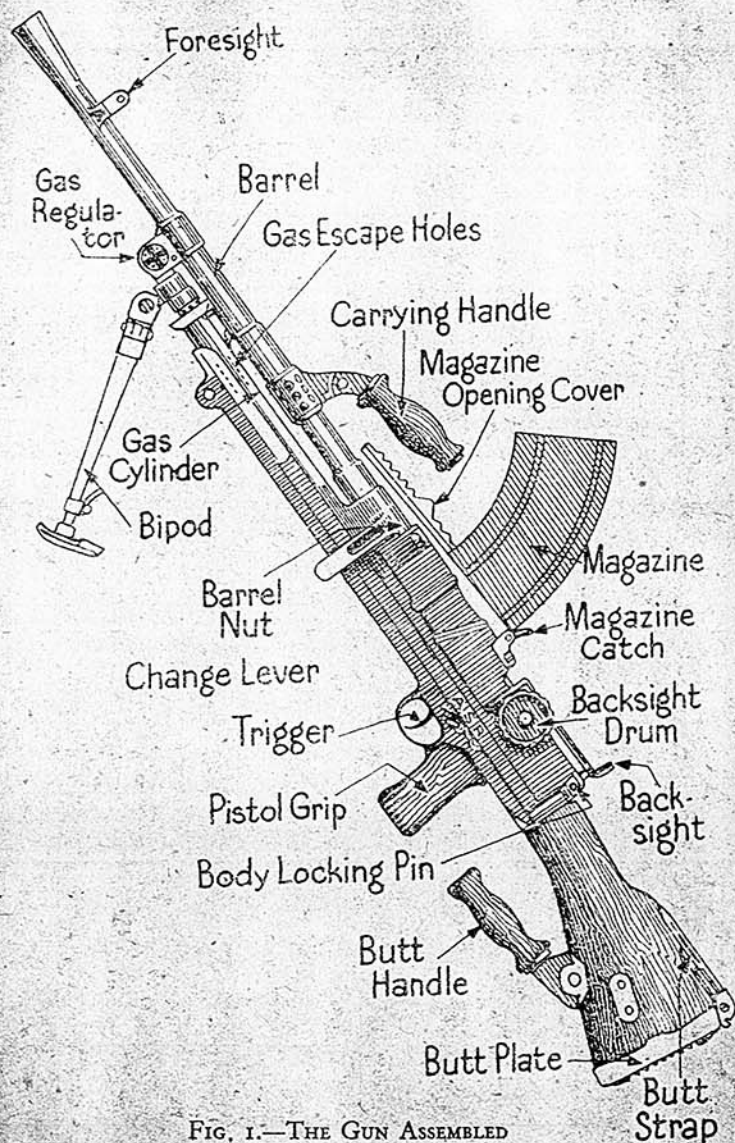


FIG. 1.—THE GUN ASSEMBLED

Fortunately—or unfortunately—my friend did not have occasion to aim at a Nazi plane.

It is said that when a burst is fired at oncoming troops, all the rounds go through one man, making practically one hole. This may not be so true as the Dunkirk story, but it is a fact that on the range a burst produces as good a group as when single shots are fired.

Correct holding is so important that enough stress cannot be laid on it, even at this stage. The butt handle enables the gun to be tucked into the shoulder and held there in a rock-firm

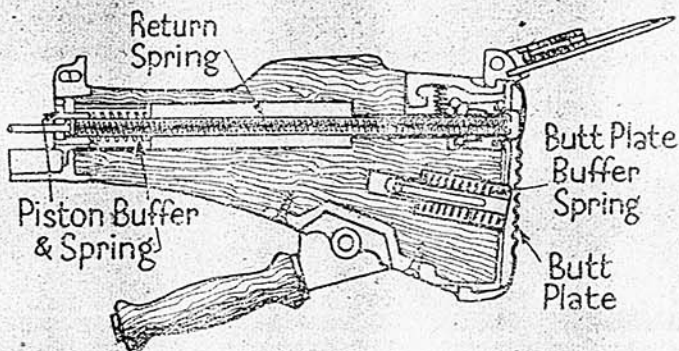


FIG. 2.—THE BUTT

position. True, in the latest models it has been dispensed with, and the firer grasps the carrying handle while the right hand improves the firm hold with the aid of the pistol grip. Another attachment which has been abandoned is the Butt Strap, a flat, hinged device which used to rest over the firer's shoulder.

The Butt Plate covers the rear end of the Butt Plate Buffer Spring and the Piston Return Spring, the latter being encircled at the forward end by the Piston Buffer Spring. These two buffers minimise recoil, reducing the firer's likelihood of straying from the original point of aim.

A further feature, as you will see from Diagram No. 1, is that there is a bipod—giving a more positive aim than when the firer has to hold his weapon to the target.

GENERAL FACTS

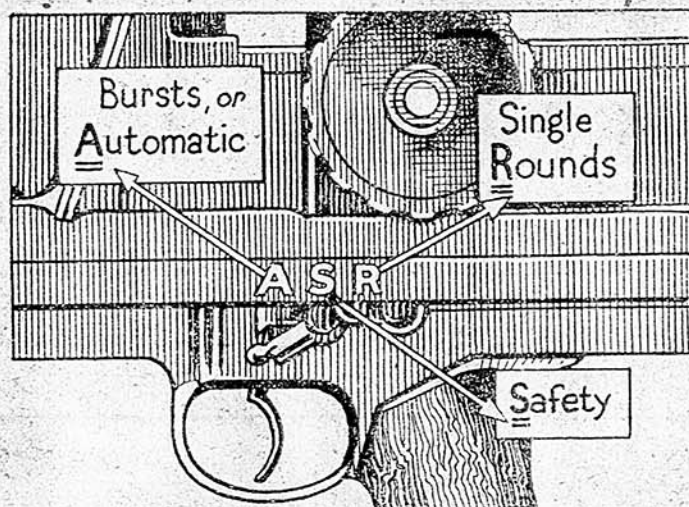
So far, a few reasons for its accuracy are all that have been dealt with. We need to know some facts about the gun's working and its capabilities.

It is gas-operated, air-cooled, fed with .303 ammunition from a box magazine with a capacity for 30 rounds, weighs 23 lbs., measures 45½ inches, ejects empties through an aperture on the underside of the body immediately in front of the trigger, has a range of over a mile, with a minimum rate of fire of 550 rounds per minute. . . .

(Whew! Let's pause for breath before the next wave of details.)

Normal rate of automatic fire is in bursts of four or five rounds, using one magazine per minute. Rapid fire, resorted to only in emergencies, consumes the contents of four magazines per minute. It is a capable gunner who can fire *effectively* at this rate, and conditions have to be pretty desperate for him to try observing, aiming and firing short bursts, changing magazines, so that he uses 120 rounds. When this rate of fire is used, the barrel will be changed after ten magazines have been emptied, otherwise it may get so hot that it starts playing tricks.

The cocking handle is on the right side and is always returned to its forward position and folded against the body after it has been used. Single shots are fired until the need to conceal the presence of an automatic weapon no longer exists, and the variation from firing single rounds to automatic firing is controlled by a change lever which rests in one of three positions: forward, central, or to the rear. These positions are lettered respectively A for automatic; S for safety; and R for single rounds or rifle fire.



THE CHANGE LEVER

Protruding to the left of the muzzle, the foresight, viewed from the rear of the gun, looks like this:



FIG. 3.—THE FORESIGHT

The backsight is mounted also on the left of the body. It is not possible to fix the sights above the barrel as in a rifle, because the line of sight would be broken by the magazine. Backsight adjustment is made by varying the backsight drum, a knob which is found on the left of the backsight. This alters

the elevation in 50 yard clicks, and the figures showing through a window between the knob and the backsight indicate the range. Minimum, 200 yards; maximum, 2,000 yards. Therefore, when firing at night and requiring 500 yards range, the firer twists the drum so that it is at minimum, then counts six clicks as he turns it up again.

Any questions?

Yes. What is meant by "gas-operated"?

As soon as the striker has fired the detonator at the base of the cartridge, which in turn explodes the main charge, gases are created which push the round along the barrel. All this energy is behind the base of the round until it has travelled about two-thirds of the barrel. Part of the gases then find an alternative source of escape through the gas vent into the gas regulator and on to the piston head. Thus, the gases have two jobs to do: firstly, to expel the bullet, and secondly, when the round has almost left the barrel, to push the piston back so that the action is re-cocked.

Here, in diagram form, is what happens:

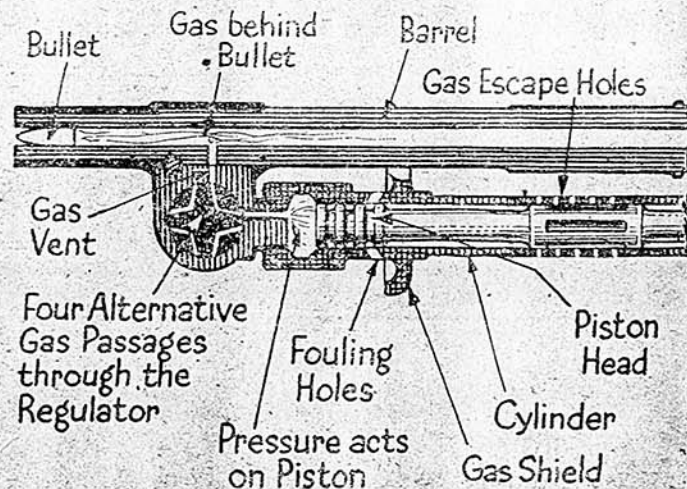


FIG. 4.—GAS OPERATING BULLET AND PISTON

Technical details become irksome, so we will learn a bit of magazine-filling, returning to the other features when we are refreshed.

MAGAZINE FILLING

THE arc-shaped magazine contains a zigzag spring which presses each round successively into the breech when its time comes. It was said earlier that the magazine has space for 30 rounds, but as a precaution against straining the spring during training it is recommended that only 28 or 29 rounds be inserted. Hand-filling should take not longer than 40 seconds, and that time can be improved upon by one who is really adept.

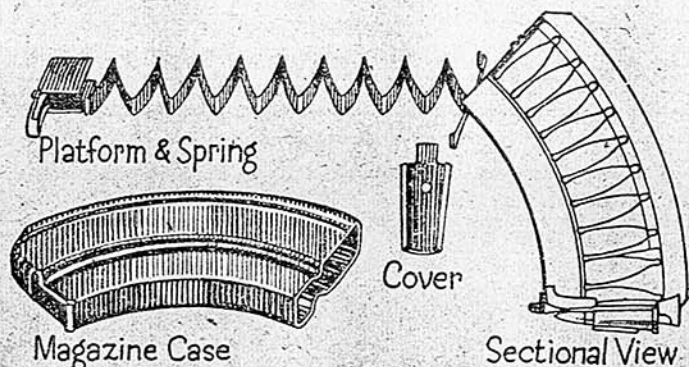


FIG. 5.—THE MAGAZINE STRIPPED AND (RIGHT) A SECTIONAL VIEW

One thing is vital. Never allow the rim of the round nearest the opening to get behind the one above it. They should emerge like this:

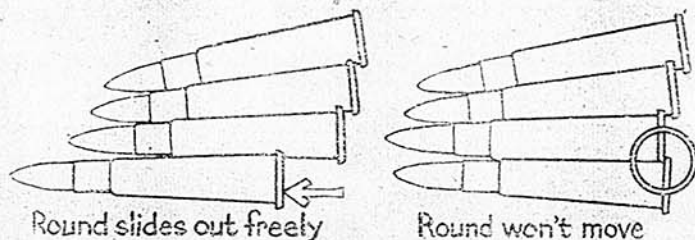


FIG. 6.—RIGHT AND WRONG

and if the rim of the cartridge about to be inserted into the breech catches behind the one above it, a stoppage will occur.

To fill by hand, grip the magazine with the second, third and fourth fingers of the left hand wrapped round the longest edge. Take a clip of cartridges with the right hand. Still gripping the magazine, hold the clip by the first finger and thumb of the left hand and slide out the cartridges. Drop the clip and rest the furthestmost end of the magazine, mouth upwards, on the thigh or something solid.

Place the first round on the magazine platform with the nose pointing towards you, and push down with the left thumb, making the cap end touch the further side of the magazine. The next round is placed on top in such a way that when the thumb presses it down, the rim comes in front of the rim of the first cartridge.

Continue until the magazine is full, and if you have counted out the rounds before you started there is no fear of straining the spring.

The magazine is emptied by pressing the nose of a round behind the top cartridge and pushing forward, repeating the action until all have been removed.

Press each
Round in
with the
Thumb

Right Hand
feeds in a Clip
of Rounds

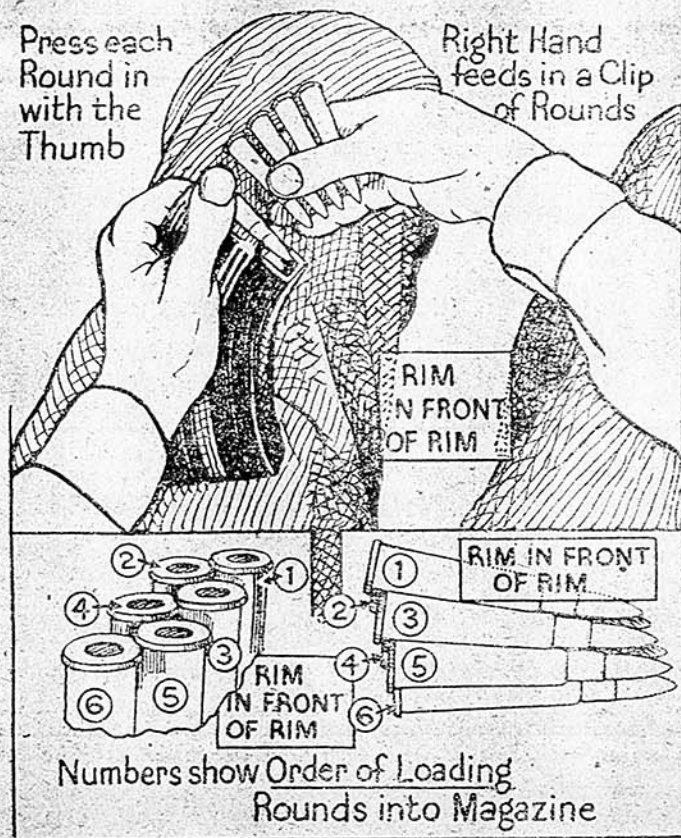


FIG. 7.—MAGAZINE FILLING

AUTOMATIC FILLING

AN automatic filler reduces the filling time to 20 seconds, it is claimed. The box container has five compartments, which need to be filled carefully by hand. After eighteen rounds have been put into position in these compartments, less care is required, and provided the cartridges are the right way up, they can be thrown into the box.

The magazine is clipped to the filler, the handle is opened fully, the 18 rounds placed in the channels, the "hopper" filled up, then the handle closed and opened six times.

LOADING AND UNLOADING

BEFORE placing the magazine on the gun, examine this picture of a firer in position.

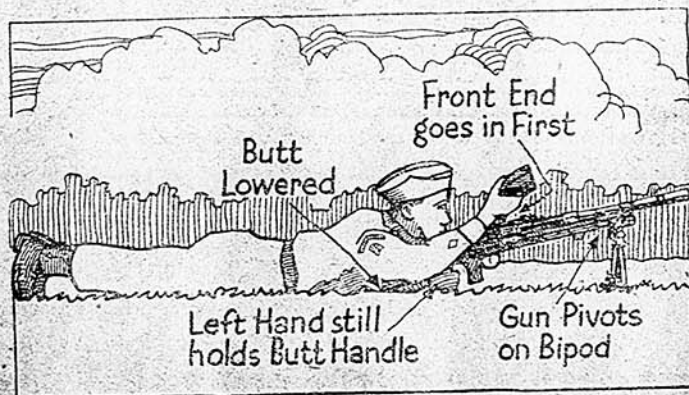


FIG. 8.—FITTING MAGAZINE

His heels are together and he takes up a line directly behind the gun, reducing his size as a frontal target. When fixing the magazine, he rests the butt on the ground.

To fix the magazine, slide forward the magazine opening cover, pick up the full magazine with the right hand and verify that the visible cartridges have been correctly inserted, engage the lip at the front end of the magazine opening and tilt backward until the magazine clip engages, pull back the cocking handle, restore to its forward position, and finally shift the change lever to "S."

Unloading is done in seven motions. 1. Press magazine catch with the palm of the right hand and remove the magazine. 2. Put change lever to "A." 3. Press trigger. 4. Cock gun. 5. Press trigger again. 6. Close magazine opening cover. 7. Close ejection opening cover. The gun is now reported clear.

When using dummy cartridges, it is essential to see that the gun has been cleared properly, because if the ejection opening cover is closed with a round still in the breech, the next loading will cause damage to the ejection opening cover.

After you have loaded and unloaded once or twice, carry out a test of loading in six seconds. After a few attempts you will do the whole job in one sweeping motion, and if you're particularly smart you may have a second to spare. The sequence is: Open mag. opening cover, pick up and examine mag., fix in opening front lip first, pull back cocking handle, restore forward, shift change lever to "S."

STRIPPING

About the mechanism we can learn much when the gun is in pieces, so let's get right on and strip it. Here is the sequence:

- Cock gun, press trigger;
- Body locking pin;
- Butt to rear;
- Piston group;
- Butt group;
- Barrel and locking nut;
- Body group and bipod.

A good tip in stripping is to lay out the bits and pieces in the order in which they are removed, for it helps to fix the sequence in mind during training and simplifies the task when it has to be done at night.

Right, carry on stripping.

Hold it; you've forgotten to pull back the cocking handle and press the trigger. And that cocking handle must be restored to its forward position—not left to the rear. That's better.

The nose of a round will shift most movable parts too stiff for the fingers.

The body locking pin, immediately below the backsight aperture (it's indicated in Fig. 9) is pushed as far to the right as it will go. Press on the left side, then grip the collar protruding on the right. When it is almost wholly out, it sticks. Don't try to pull any more. It is made so that it comes out far enough for the butt group to be removed and then stops in position so that it won't get lost or hidden.

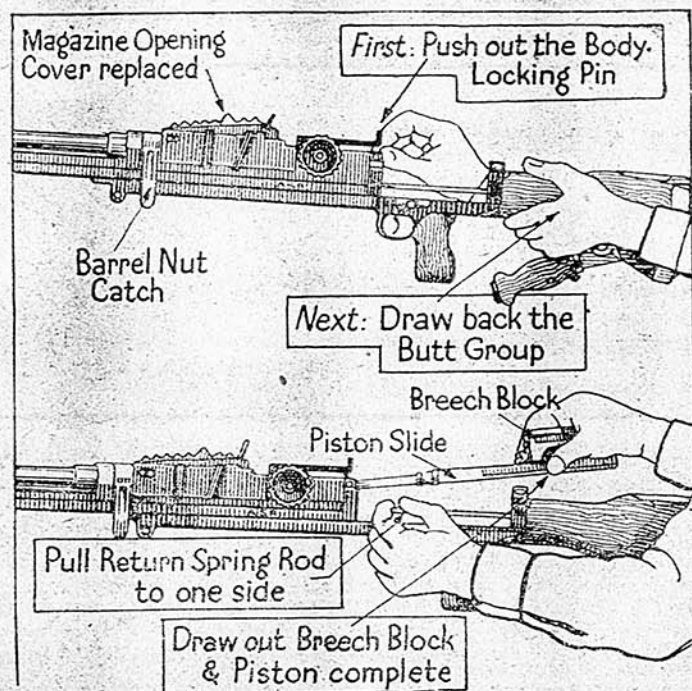


FIG. 9.—STRIPPING

The butt is now slid back to give access to the piston group, the rear end of which may be protruding. If it is not, jerk the cocking handle backward; if that still fails to bring it into view, feel through the ejector opening in front of the trigger group and work it to the rear.

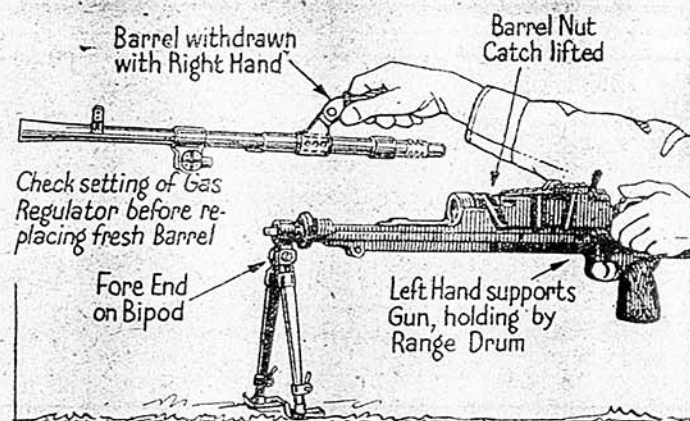


FIG. 10.—REMOVING BARREL

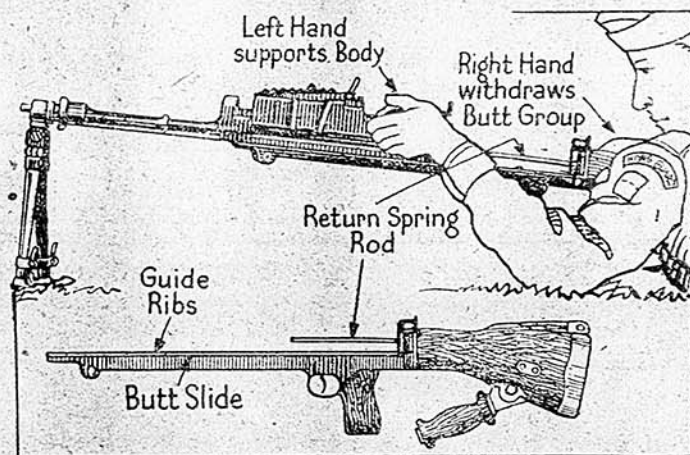


FIG. 11.—THE BUTT REMOVED

Hold the piston return spring rod to the left and draw out the piston group. Take off the breech block from the piston post and start laying out the parts from right to left. Next,

press the barrel nut catch so as to lift the barrel nut to its full extent. The butt now comes away. Hold the body by the backsight drum while removing.

With the barrel nut up, the barrel group is removed. The barrel nut is held by a retainer plunger immediately in front of the magazine opening cover, and if you slide this cover forward a fraction to hold down the retainer plunger, the barrel nut will lift out. Twist the body to the left while holding the bipod and it comes away.

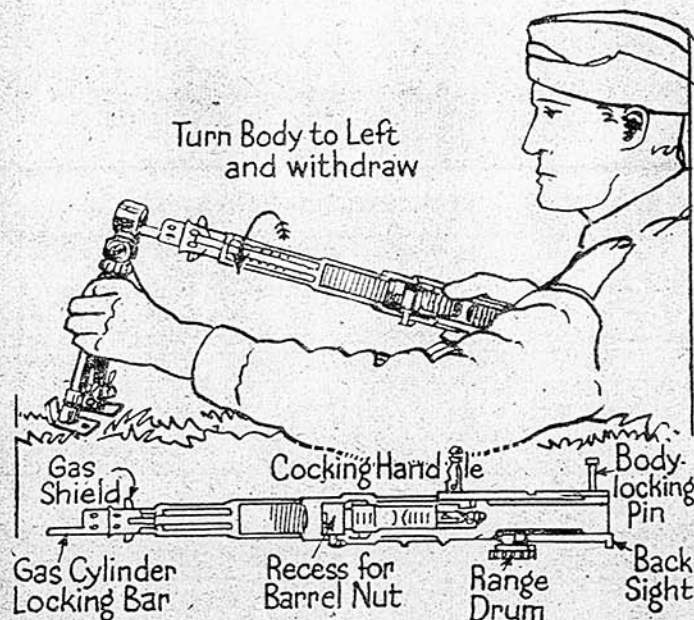


FIG. 12.—TWISTING BODY OUT OF BIPOD

On the ground you should now have in this order: bipod, body, barrel nut, barrel, butt, piston, breech block.

We will examine them one by one, learning their duties and a few names.

THE BIPOD

THE collar into which the fore end of the body fits is called the sleeve. The legs, which each have a shoe, fold forward or backward when the bipod is in position and are held apart by a spring. Above this spring you see the bipod swivel on the pin which runs through the bracket. Each leg is telescopic, held in whatever position it is adjusted to by a spring catch. The legs will pull out easily, but cannot slip back unless the catch is pressed.

THE BODY

THAT thin strip of metal protruding from the end of the body is called the gas cylinder locking bar—an imposing name enough for such a modest-looking thing—and it fits into a recess in the gas block. The slots behind this are the fouling holes; then comes the gas shield—that's the hollow ring affair and it disperses the gases as they emerge from the fouling holes. (Number 2 in the gun team has reason to be thankful for this attachment. It saves him from a puff of gas every time a round is fired.) The gas cylinder is the channel along which the piston moves. It has a number of small openings called the gas escape holes, a little way behind the gas shield.

Then comes the recess for the barrel nut, the barrel nut retainer plunger, the magazine opening cover and the magazine catch. Below the magazine catch you can see the ejector; it first appears to be part of the magazine catch, but if you shift the magazine catch pin and lift off the magazine catch you will find it possible—though not advisable—to separate the ejector from the catch. They should be dissembled only on exceptional occasions. The working of the ejector will be explained when we deal with the breech clock.

To the left and behind the magazine catch comes the back-sight drum which varies the elevation of the aperture backsight in 50-yard clicks and indicates the range by figures visible through the backsight drum window. When one figure occu-

pics the centre of the window, the range is 100 times that number of yards; two figures showing means that the range is 100 times the lower number plus 50 yards.

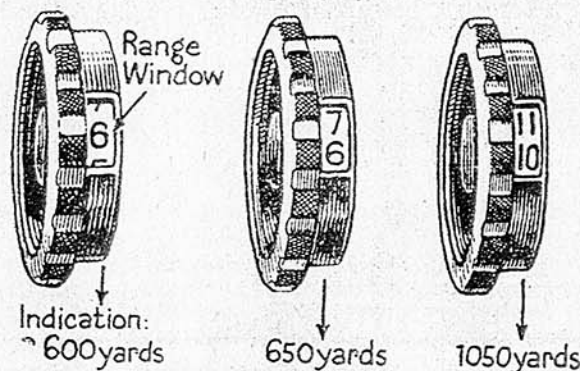


FIG. 13.—SIGHT SETTING

THE BARREL NUT

This is shaped like the left half of a pair of lorgnettes. In the "eyepiece" are the barrel locking threads; low on the right-hand side is the safety lug; and to the handle of the lorgnette is attached the barrel nut catch.

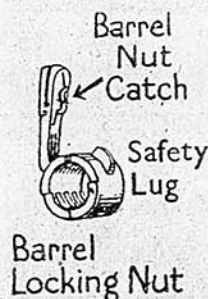


FIG. 14.—THE BARREL NUT

THE BARREL

THE muzzle end of the barrel is slightly conical, designed thus to eliminate flash and assisted in this purpose by a number of holes a few inches from the end. Next comes the foresight.

One-third of the length of the barrel from the flash eliminator is the gas block, details of which will be given separately. The projecting piece a little way from the gas block slides into a tapered recess in the body. Now the carrying handle. The sleeve holding it round the barrel grips with a slight tension, enabling the handle to slip from the upright position to one along the left side of the body; it occupies the latter position during firing except in difficult firing positions. Another feature is that there is a pin between the grip and the sleeve round the barrel. Normally, the handle points to the rear, but when it is swung by means of this pin so that it is at right angles to the barrel, a lip protrudes. By pulling on the handle and then swinging down, the lip may be engaged in a slot on the framework of the body.

At the rear end of the barrel are interrupted locking threads coinciding with those on the barrel nut, which engage or disengage according to the position of the barrel nut. The extreme end is cut away top and bottom. Upper clearance is for the feed piece and lower one is for the extractor.

GAS REGULATOR

DIAGONAL channels are cut across the face of the gas regulator to receive the gas cylinder locking bar. A retainer pin on the opposite side of the regulator holds it in position. Push this

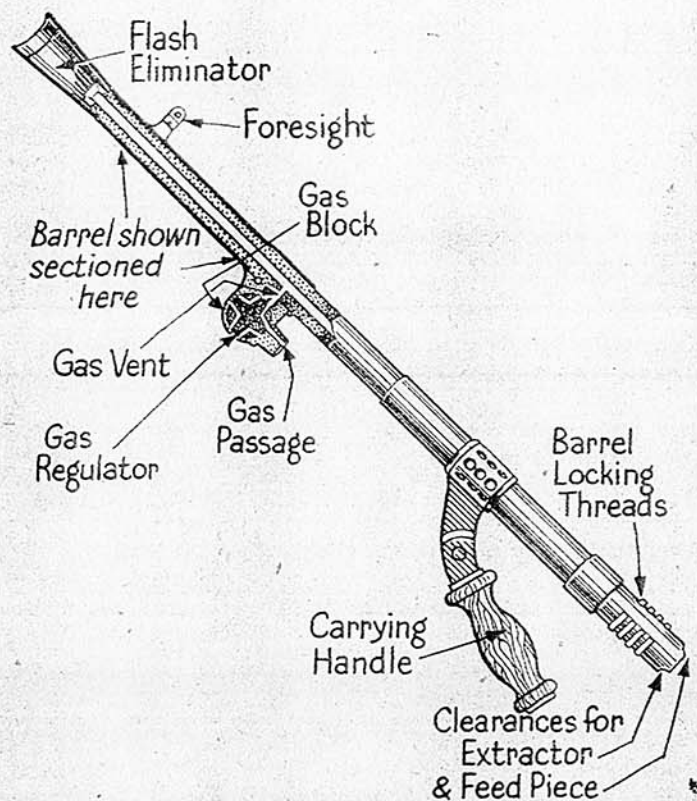


FIG. 15.—THE BARREL IN DETAIL

pin until neither end protrudes, and the regulator can be removed. Eight holes are now visible. These are the gas ports, and by pushing a wisp of grass through, you can follow their passage. They are varied in size, and marks on the channelised side coincide with the width of each port.

When the firer requires to adjust the regulator to the smallest port, he twists it round until the smallest hole is nearest the zero mark which will be found at the north-east corner, as it were, of the housing. Minimum amount of gas consistent with absence of gas stoppage is the ideal for efficiency, yet an alternative is wanted in case the port becomes blocked. Experiment will show whether the gun you are issued with works better on No. 2 or No. 3 hole.

THE BUTT

TURN the butt so that the pistol grip is pointing upwards. This gives you a view of the ejection opening cover; it slides open automatically when going through the movements for loading, but will be closed by hand as part of the unloading action.

At the butt end of the return spring rod is the piston buffer. Place the butt plate (that's the part which you hold against your shoulder when firing) on the ground and with each thumb press down on this buffer. You can only just shift it, can't you? It is this platform against which the rear of the piston strikes after the return spring rod has been fully compressed. There is only slight compression behind the piston return spring, which is contained in the butt, but the piston buffer spring which encircles the return spring is very powerful.

Under the return spring rod you will notice the sear, and below the sear is the change lever. Shift the change lever from "A" to "S" once or twice. Notice anything? That's right. The sear drops when adjusted for automatic fire. Thus

when the piston rod moves back while the trigger is pressed, the bent can't find the sear and the piston goes forward again. With single shots, the bent is engaged by the trigger mechanism, and the piston is held to the rear.

During your experiment with the piston buffer, did you see how the butt plate compressed? The reason is that behind the butt plate there is another buffer spring which assists in reducing recoil. This can be seen by lifting the catch at the top side of the butt and removing the butt plate. If you wish, you can remove the piston return spring by pressing the cap covering it and giving a slight twist, but there's no purpose in doing so; it is just an ordinary spring, and there is not much chance of breakage during firing.

THE PISTON

THE piston head is flat, and behind it are three more rings which help to form a barrier for the gases which may have slipped past the head. The circular rod and the main part are loosely connected—"flexible joint" is the correct term—absorbing thereby some of the shock when the piston is thrust backward. The opening just behind the flexible joint is the ejection slot.

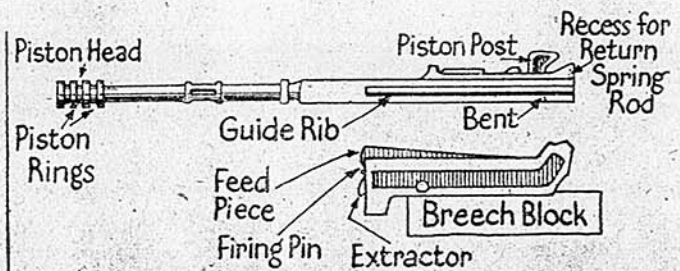


FIG. 16.—PISTON AND BREECH BLOCK

That upright object with its point directed backward is the piston post, and inside the body of the piston is the piston post spring. On the underside, opposite the piston post, there is a nick. He's the bent, and at times cuddles the sear. A shallow circular hole at the extreme end of the piston is the return spring rod recess. In front of the piston post is a raised piece, on each side of which are two cut-away portions to engage the lugs of the

BREECH BLOCK

WHEN you were stripping, you found you had to slide the breech block to the rear before it could be lifted from the piston post, due to the lugs. Between these lugs is the extractor, held in position by the extractor stay and spring. Open the extractor stay, taking care it doesn't jump out of your hand. This releases the extractor claw.

During firing action the striker or firing pin is thrust forward by the piston post, the tip emerging at the face of the breech block. The striker can be removed by pressing the retaining pin on the left side, which is designed in similar fashion to the body locking pin, i.e., it will not pull out completely. When removing the striker, the precaution of covering the rear opening with the hand is adopted, otherwise the striker may spring out and get lost.

Notice the shape of the striker. Unlike that of a rifle, it is oblong at the striking end, and cartridges which have been fired by a Bren can always be detected because of this. The body of the striker has a groove to receive the retaining pin and this groove must be in position correctly when re-assembling.

The two ribs on the top form the feed piece. The slot between is called the ejector way, and the ejector, which is under the magazine catch on the body, runs along this slot.

As the breech block moves forward, one of the ribs on the feed piece gets behind a round and thrusts it into the chamber where the extractor clips on to the base of the cartridge; the piston post strikes the rear of the striker, which in its turn fires the cap. Gases caused by the discharge of the main explosive thrust the round forward and part of them push the piston to the rear. The piston post then drags the breech block backward and the whole of the piston mechanism plus the empty cartridge held in the extractor claw move backward together. When nearing the end of their journey, the ejector, sliding along the ejector way, contacts the base of the cartridge and flips it out of the extractor and down through the ejection opening.

Looking into the magazine, it will be seen that the rounds are held in zigzag style. One rib of the feed piece thrusts a round into the chamber from the magazine and on the next forward movement the other rib is responsible for the feed. When the magazine is empty, two projections on the magazine platform emerge and resist the forward action of the breech block.

REASSEMBLING

You will have little difficulty in reassembling the Bren, for there are no interchangeable parts, and things can't be put back upside down. The retaining pins, too, are not lying about loose, because they can't be taken right out.

It is merely a matter of reversing the stripping process, so, having removed the bipod from the body last, you now attach the body to the bipod. Here you come upon the first foolproof

device. Try putting the legs on back to front. They just don't fit. Hold the legs on the ground and the body sideways, give a half twist, and it's done.

Job number two is the barrel nut. Hold down the barrel nut retainer plunger by pushing the magazine opening cover slightly forward and drop the barrel nut into position. Slide the magazine cover away from the plunger, open the barrel nut, replace the barrel, and close the barrel nut. The tapered recess above the gas cylinder fits round a projection on the underside of the barrel. By resting the barrel loosely a few inches in front of its eventual position you will bring this projection into relation with the recess as well as lining up the gas regulator with the gas cylinder locking bar. At least, that is what will happen if the gas regulator has been put back properly.

Guide ribs on the butt group have to fit into their relative recesses on the body. Hold the body clear of the ground and draw the butt backward with the ribs touching the lower rear end of the body. As your hands get wider apart, the ribs will click over the recesses and you now push forward. Before being able to secure the butt you will have to open the barrel nut again. After doing this, push the butt forward, close the barrel nut and draw the butt to the rear again to leave enough space for the insertion of the piston group.

Fit the breech block over the piston post, engaging the lugs in the cut-away portion and insert the assembly in the body while holding the return spring rod aside. Push the butt forward and restore the body locking pin. Any difficulty in getting the body locking pin into position is probably due to the piston return spring holding the butt slightly backward, throwing the slot out of alignment. Press on the butt a little and the body locking pin will go in.

Finally, cock the gun, restore the cocking handle forward, and press the trigger.

Nothing in it, was there? You didn't have to use any undue force anywhere. If ever you feel like overcoming any apparent reluctance with a persuasive bang, restrain the impulse and strip until you find the cause.

What's that? Nothing happens when you press the trigger?

No wonder. The barrel nut has become shifted at some time, and, being open, the safety lug (have a look at diagram No. 14 to see what I mean) has come into play. Unless the barrel nut is pressed down as far as it will go, so that the catch engages on the rib on the body, the safety lug gets in the way of the piston head.

Still nothing doing? Of course not. You've got the change lever on "S."

FIRING

I'm sure you're itching to fire the Bren, so we will go to the butts and see how we do.

On our way there, examine this picture of a firer in the aim

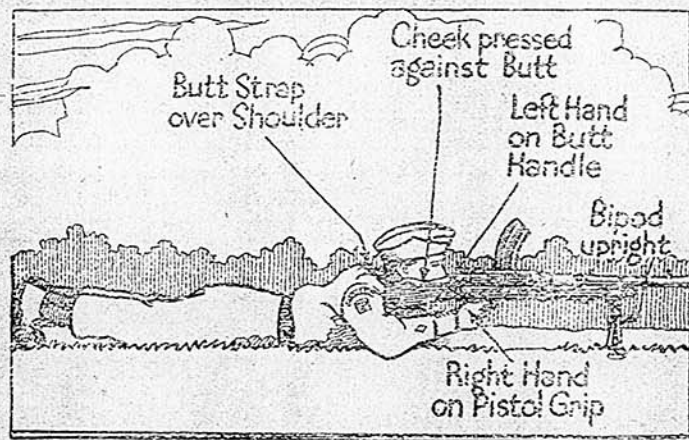


FIG. 17.—THE AIM POSITION

position and see if you can reproduce it when your turn comes to fire.

A routine inspection is carried out before firing, usually when the gun is in the barracks. No harm will be done by running over it now, even if we are on the range. This is the order of inspection: Foresight, gas regulator, bipod, barrel nut catch, backsight drum and backsight, mechanism working freely, top rounds correctly placed in magazine, carrying handle to left.

On being ordered, "Load," open magazine opening cover, inspect top rounds in magazine, fix magazine, cock gun and restore cocking handle forward, **KEEP YOUR FINGERS OFF THE TRIGGER**, and put the change lever to "S."

Machine-gun sighting is different in one respect from rifle fire. Instead of aiming at the lowest central portion of the target, the tip of the blade foresight should be brought up into the centre of the target.

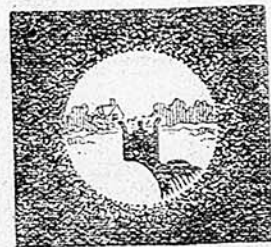


FIG. 18.—ON THE TARGET

Your eye will be about $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 inches behind the backsight when you fire, and by reducing or increasing the distance between your elbows, you will vary the elevation of the gun.

Now adjust the change lever to single rounds and, when you get the order, aim and fire one round.

Firing single shots, the trigger needs to be squeezed for each shot because the mechanism provides that until you take your finger off, the piston will be held in the backward position. All ready?

There's the order to fire.

H'mm. The chap in the butts has signalled an "inner" at one o'clock. What was wrong, I wonder? Must be the human element; we can't blame the gun.

No wonder. The backsight is adjusted for 600 yards. So much for the routine inspection! Alter it to 200.

One o'clock on the target seems to suggest an aiming fault, unless it was due to trigger release. You must remedy that with the next round.

Did you notice that only one trigger pressure was necessary? This is a fairly old model, but on the later types, the trigger has two pressures.

Now, in your own time, aim and fire four rounds. Go on. That was much better. Four bulls.

Shift the change lever from single rounds to automatic and, when instructed, fire two bursts of five rounds each, remembering to restore the change lever to safety when you have finished. You'll soon learn to gauge how long the trigger has to be held for five rounds. Some instructors tell you to think the words "One hundred and one" moderately slowly as a guide.

"At your targets. . . . Two bursts of five rounds. . . . Fire."

Good. He's signalled two bulls.

That's all the firing we'll do to-day. WHAT THE !!! You have not put the change lever to "S." There are still some rounds in that magazine.

Unload in the same way as you were taught earlier: remove magazine, cock the gun, put change lever to "A," squeeze trigger, re-cock, squeeze trigger again, close magazine opening cover and ejection opening cover, then report the gun clear.

STOPPAGES

ONE certain way of causing a stoppage—and who's the nincompoop of a saboteur who dare do this after having been warned so often?—is to arrange the rounds in the magazine so that the rim of the one about to be fed into the chamber gets

stuck behind the cartridge above it. You already know this, but there's justification for repeating it here.

Filling the magazine badly creates a condition similar to the stoppage caused by an empty magazine. (You remember the projections on the magazine platform which hold against the feed piece.) Other than badly filled or empty magazines, little trouble should be experienced.

On all occasions when a stoppage occurs, an immediate action will be employed. 1. Pull back cocking handle. 2. Remove magazine. 3. Press trigger. 4. Replace magazine. 5. Cock and fire.

Only a complete ninny will replace an empty magazine or one which is seen to have been badly filled. When handling a magazine, take a quick glance at the lower rounds, and if they are not correctly placed, chuck the magazine out. In action, a magazine which has been half emptied will not be replaced while there are full ones about.

Immediate action is designed to remedy trifling stoppages. In addition to empty or badly filled magazines—which will be overcome by immediate action, other stoppages may be due to misfire, faulty ejection, hard extraction, insufficient gas, mechanism faulty or broken, separated cartridge case. All except the last three conditions should be cleared by immediate action. If I.A. fails to clear a jammed round or empty case, remove the trouble and load and fire.

Insufficient gas is shown when the gun fires a few rounds and stops. If this condition persists after immediate action, pull back the cocking handle, remove magazine, press trigger, cock gun, disconnect barrel and shift the gas regulator to the next largest hole. Replace barrel and magazine, and fire.

Should the tip of the firing pin break, a misfire will occur. I.A. does not clear. Inspection of the parts as they are stripped soon shows where the fault lies. The striker on the Bren is of sturdy construction and you are not likely often to come across this breakage. In fact, the gun may continue with a broken striker, provided the fracture occurs away from the point, because the broken piece cannot slip through the face of the breech block.

A separated case—an even rarer incident—will be removed

by using the clearing plug, which is part of the equipment kept in the spare parts wallet. Insert the clearing plug into the chamber, press trigger, cock gun, remove clearing plug and offending piece of cartridge case, and carry on. That may seem the wrong way round to you, but remember the gun is already cocked, and after pressing the trigger it is necessary to re-cock before firing.

CLEANING

THE Bren gunner is responsible for the condition of his weapon; it must be ready for immediate use at all times. If he gets into the habit of cleaning it daily, even when it has not been fired, he will not go far wrong.

He should also check over the contents of the spare parts wallet frequently. The chances are that a "friendly" Bren gunner from another platoon will do a bit of borrowing. It would be inexcusable if you wanted a vital spare part during action and only then discovered that it was missing.

Clean both barrels daily, using a piece of dry 4 by 2 and the cleaning rod. Insert from the breech end, then oil the barrel slightly with a different piece of flannelette. Oil where there is friction, but clear away the oil from the gas-affected parts. The first round or two will remove oil from the barrel.

During lulls in firing it is a good plan to twist the body round in the collar of the bipod so that some of the deposits chip off. This is after the gun has been fired for a spell. And while doing this, a spot of oil here and there will not be amiss. If you've time, of course.

Having changed barrels, the hot one can be cooled by ducking it in water, but the fellow who does it will hold it away from himself or else get a cloud of steam in his face.

After firing, all solid foulings are removed by soaking in oil for a while and then wiping away. Don't scrape at the parts affected by the carbonisation unless it is impossible to clear them by other means, because this may injure the metal.

Boiling water is best for cleaning the barrel. Poured through, it removes metallic deposits on the inner surface. Re-heating causes the pores of the metal to open again and release the tiny pieces of metal, which are then washed away by some more boiling water.

A tripod convertible into an A.A. mounting was supplied with each gun originally, but our troops have been quite successful against aircraft by lying on their backs and firing. Some have fired the Bren from the hip, using it as a Tommy, which is no mean achievement. It pays tribute both to the weapon and the men who use it.

Well, I hope you enjoy mastering the Bren. You will learn much more as you handle it, and if you get bored in barracks, organise a blindfold competition among one or two pals. See who can strip and assemble the gun in the shortest time. It's good fun, particularly when a joker mixes up some parts from the Tommy gun—or spares from a tank workshop.