

After war was declared in August 1914, Great Britain faced severe shortages of all military equipment, including rifles. This led to enquiries in an effort to locate additional sources of firearms wherever they could be found.

During the First World War Japan, allied to the British, was looked to as a potential source for suitable rifles that could be supplied immediately from existing stocks.

From late 1914 some 150,000 Type 30 and Type 38 Arisaka rifles and carbines were purchased for service use by the British forces. The Type 30 was the early 6.5 Arisaka with sights regulated for the original round nose cartridge, while the Type 38, Pattern 1907, was an updated rifle modified for the new spitzer round, and remained the standard 6.5 m.m rifle used by the Japanese forces until 1945. British Government records for the purchase are unfortunately non-existent, and the exact number of Arisaka rifles and carbines actually purchased is also unknown, figures quoted vary from 130,000 to 150,000 in total.

The firearms were supplied by a Japanese private company named Taihei Kimiai, who acted as an arms broker for the Japanese Government. The company was still active up to World War two, but it and its records were destroyed during the war.

As the Arisaka Rifles and Carbines were issued from existing military stocks, each rifle was stamped with a "sale" mark by the inspecting arsenal. This mark consisted of the three stacked cannon ball logo of the Tokyo Artillery arsenal and was stamped into the center of the existing Imperial chrysanthemum which indicated the rifles were no longer Imperial property.

Along with the rifles and carbines Japan also supplied the appropriate bayonet, which in length and design was almost identical to the 1907 SMLE bayonet. Also supplied for each firearm was a complete set of Japanese leather equipment, i.e. belt, frog ammo pouches etc.

It is also interesting to note that the magazine depressor intended for the P14, was modified soon after it was introduced so the same depressor could be used in either the Arisaka or P14 magazine for drill purposes etc. Image: is a Type 38 (Pattern 1907) with dust cover on.



The Arisaka was officially noted in list of changes No. 17213 On 24th Feb 1915 as, Rifle Magazine .256 inch. Pattern 1900. Pattern 1907.

Arisaka rifles were issued to various Reservists and Territorial units based in England, and to the Royal Navy. Late in 1914 the Royal Navy were requested to hand in all their SMLE rifles for use at the front, to be replaced with the Arisaka, which became the standard issue rifle for the Marines etc.

During 1915, as increasing supplies of the SMLE became available, Arisaka rifles were gradually withdrawn from service. By the end of 1915 the Arisaka rifles supplied to the Royal Navy were replaced with surplus Ross .303 rifles. The Ross though a failure when used in trench conditions would have been quite suitable for service use if used in the less demanding environment of the Navy.

By early 1916, the British Government therefore had in store large numbers of Arisaka's surplus to requirements. Some of the Arisaka rifles were issued to irregular forces overseas, and a number were supplied to the Arab forces fighting under T.E. Lawrence in the Middle East.

The major recipient of these rifles was however Imperial Russia.

Russia, earlier in the war had already purchased large quantities of Arisaka rifles from Japan. In support of the Russian War effort, from 1916 onwards the British shipped around 120,000 Arisaka rifles, carbines and millions of rounds of ammunition to Imperial Russia, the succeeding 1917 Provisional Government, and later anti Bolshevik forces.

After the new Soviet Government gained power in the early 1920's the Arisaka rifles once again become surplus this time by the Russians. Some were passed onto Chinese interests, and it is reported that in 1925 the Japanese Government expressed concern to the British Government where Arisaka rifles supplied to the British in 1914 were turning up in China and being used against the Japanese themselves by the Chinese forces they were fighting.

The last reported issue of these rifles was in 1936 during the Spanish Civil war when Russia shipped quantities of Arisaka rifles along with ammunition to the Republican Forces.

It must be remembered that although Germany and Italy supported the Nationalist (Franco) side, Russia was a major player in supporting the Republican forces.

The 6.5 m/m Arisaka cartridge was known in British service as the “.256 inch Ball,” Mark 1 and Mark 11.

The Mark one was loaded with the updated 139 grain spitzer projectile, the Mark 11 was loaded with the earlier 160 grain round nose projectile. From 1916 huge quantities of .256 ammunition was manufactured by both Kynoch, and the Royal Laboratory at Woolwich, on order from the British Government for dispatch to Russia. Also various British manufacturers produced the appropriate Arisaka pattern charges, or stripper clips.

At the request of Russia, most of this ammunition was in the Mark 11 loading with the round nose projectile.

As the bulk of the British manufactured ammunition and charges were dispatched to Russia, existing examples of either are now very rare.

Reference, British Secondary Small Arms A.O. Edwards, Internet, British LOC etc.

Below is a copy of the Army List of Changes detailing the adoption of the Arisaka along with the necessary accoutrements. Right image; White Russian troops armed with the Arisaka

17213—Rifle, magazine, .256-inch—	24 Feb 1915
With cleaning rod.	
Pattern 1900.	L
Pattern 1907.	L
Carbine, magazine, .256-inch,	L
Pattern 1907.	
With cleaning rod.	
Sword-bayonet, .256-inch rifle.	L
And Carbine.	
Scabbard, sword-bayonet, .256-inch	L
rifle.	
Appurtenances.	
Jag, .256-inch rifle.	L
And Carbine.	
Implement, action, .256-inch rifle.	L
Screwdriver; and Carbine.	
Bottle, oil, .256-inch rifle.	L
With stopper; and Carbine.	
Protector, front sight, .256-inch rifle.	L
Protector, muzzle, .256-inch carbine,	
Pattern 1907.	L
Cleaner, breech, .256-inch rifle.	L
And Carbine.	
Depressor, platform, magazine,	
.256-inch rifle.	L
Drill purpose; and Carbine.	

Arms and appurtenances as described above have been introduced into the Service.

