

Papers of London Small Arms Co Ltd, small arms manufacturer

This document describes a collection of records held by RBS Archives, including details of their background; publications (if any) relating to them; summary of the contents of the collection; and information (where known) about related records held in other archives.

collection reference GM/2047/

background history

Originally founded as The London Armoury Co Ltd in 1856, this company was dissolved, reconstituted and incorporated as The London Small Arms Co Ltd in 1866. Like the Birmingham Small Arms Co formed in 1861 (better known today for the vehicle manufacture it commenced in the early twentieth century), it was established by a private consortium of gun-makers in order to compete more effectively with the proposed Royal Small Arms Factory at Enfield, opened in 1857, in the mechanised production of firearms with interchangeable parts for the British government. From 1867 onwards, the London and Birmingham companies maintained an agreement to fix wage levels and product prices, and share contracts for rifle production.

Unlike the Birmingham Company, however, the London Small Arms Co did not successfully diversify its production, and remained a small enterprise. Immediately prior to the First World War, it was producing just 250 rifles a week, compared to three times that number in Birmingham. At the same date, the Royal Small Arms Factory at Enfield was producing 1,000 new rifles and repairing a further 1,000 each week. Following the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, the British government asked both the London and Birmingham companies to step up production. By 1915, however, all the available land on the London Small Arms Co's factory site in Tower Hamlets was used, leaving no room for further expansion. The dissolution of the company was agreed in 1935.

London Small Arms Co was a customer of [Glyn, Mills, Currie & Co.](#)

our archive holdings

- directors' meeting minute books 1866-1920
 - ledgers 1867-1906
 - memorandum and articles of association 1866
 - papers re share transfer 1920
 - mortgage register 1891
 - site ground plan 1887
 - financial papers 1866-1918
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archives held elsewhere

- [The National Archives](#): Companies Registration Office's dissolved company file 1866-1935 (Ref: BT/31/30754/3249); papers re claim to the Ministry of Munitions for additional payment for supply of rifles under contract 1915 (Ref: MUN 5/190/1420/8).
- [Modern Records Centre, University Library, University of Warwick](#): Comparative production statistics for Birmingham Small Arms Co and London Small Arms Co, 1888-1914 (Ref: MSS. 19A/3/3/1,13,15); arrangement for diversion of rifle orders between Birmingham Small Arms Co and London Small Arms Co 1908 (Ref: MSS. 19A/7/LE/10).