

# Revolving rifle



The revolving rifle only ever found favour in one country – Australia. Robert Morgan investigates why

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**M**ost shooters and gun collectors tend to associate certain makes or types of guns with particular countries. Say Colt for instance, and the mind immediately conjures images of the Old West and America, even though a fair number were produced in London back in the day. Hammer shotguns and quality sidelock ejectors are always assumed to be English, even though nearly every country in the modern world produced them.

Pictured here is a very niche type of rifle which – while produced in large numbers in the United States of America, Britain and Europe – only really ever found favour in one country; Australia. Quite why Australia took the revolving rifle to its heart is not clear, but some sources say that over 70 per cent of the total production of both Colt and Adams revolving rifles went for export to the far south.

## Monster

The example shown here is a very rare example of a large calibre English-made percussion revolving rifle by Deane Adams & Deane of London. Usually found in calibres between approximately .38 and .45, this monster measures a cool .650 and fires a ball weighing in at around 1,000 grains. Its proposed use remains a bit of a mystery. Probably designed for use on dangerous or large soft-skinned game and possibly self-protection, it would be capable of despatching most animals in the 1850s when it was made.

One possible use might have bizarrely been kangaroos. Like the bison in America, kangaroos were a huge resource of meat for the early settlers and colonists in Australia, and given the vast numbers available at the time, a large five-shot repeating rifle would have been just the ticket.



## Niche rifle

A large calibre English-made percussion revolving rifle

## Dangers

So why didn't other countries accept the revolving rifle in the same way Australia did? The main reason was safety. Anyone who has witnessed a muzzle-loading revolver accidentally discharge more than one loaded chamber at once will immediately understand the potential dangers involved. A percussion revolver behaving in such a manner is one thing at arms-length, but place the cylinder near to your face and with your unfavoured hand possibly forwards of the chamber and you have a very unsavoury experience indeed. Adams and some European manufacturers

addressed this problem by advising users to adopt a reverse hand hold around the front of the trigger-guard, and even went as far as to equip their rifles with a special flat-fronted elongated guard for that purpose. Colt never addressed the problem at all, relying on good gun husbandry to prevent accidents. Maybe the Australians were made of sterner stuff, because it would appear that none of the inherent dangers seemed to bother them, but then I suppose living in a country where the majority of the flora and fauna is deadly, powder burns or losing a finger is a small price to pay in comparison to fire-power! **SG**