

RIFLE .303inch S.M.L.E. Mks. III & III* also No.4 (all marks)

(ii) Mechanical Safety.

If the bolt is not correctly closed when the trigger is released, one of two things will happen, viz. either:

- (a) The Bolt will be forced into the closed position by the cocking piece going forwards,
- or
- (b) The action will go into *half-cock*.

The half-cock position is brought about as follows:

With the bolt so far from being closed that it will not respond as in (a) above, the stud on the cocking piece jams behind the stud which lies between the long & short cam grooves on the bolt. On releasing the trigger the sear rises, and on pushing down the bolt-lever (handle) the cocking piece is freed from interference with the stud on the bolt, flying forward under the influence of the striker spring until it is again held up, this time by the engagement of its half-bent with the sear. The half-bent being undercut, the trigger is locked; at the same time the stud on the cocking piece is now in the long cam groove in the bolt and lying immediately alongside the stud dividing the long and short grooves and therefore the bolt-lever cannot be rotated and the action opened.

To **remedy** when the bolt goes into ***half-cock***, pull back the cocking-piece by hand to full cock. No **other action is possible**.

(End of quote)

In a practical situation, when approaching a target in a silent “crawl” movement through scrub & underbrush, setting a loaded SMLE rifle at half-cock is the safest way to carry it. It is impossible for the rifle to be accidentally discharged other than through breakage of one or more components, but can be readied for shooting quickly and silently.

Relying on using the normal safety catch under the above conditions of action can result in the safety catch being snagged and disengaged, then either the rifle may be unexpectedly discharged, or the bolt handle lifted by the foliage, with the compressed striker spring forcing the bolt backwards, ejecting the live round with accompanying mechanical clatter, thus destroying the surprise element.

Readers are assured that both scenarios are not hypothetical, as both have been observed from a distance too close for comfort, at one time or another, by the writer as an active SMLE rifleman between 1936 and 1992 (Club shooter, AIF, CMF & Service Rifle Club)

R.A. Franklin Maj. (Rtd) RAEME.