

Coordinates: 33°48′57″S 150°13′57″E﻿ / ﻿33.81583°S 150.23250°E﻿ / -33.81583; 150.23250

The Lithgow Small Arms Factory, or Lithgow Arms, is an Australian small arms manufacturing factory located in the town of Lithgow, New South Wales. It was created by the Australian Government to ease reliance on the British for the supply of defence materials.

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History[edit]

Opened on 8 June 1912, the factory initially manufactured SMLE III rifles (and Pattern 1907 bayonets) for the Australian military during World War I.[1] During World War II, production expanded to include Vickers machine guns, Bren guns and, postwar, branched out into sporting goods (including civilian firearms and golf clubs), tools, sewing machines, (from the mid-1950s) the F1 submachine gun, L1A1 SLR, KAL1 general purpose infantry rifle prototypes and similar products.

The Lithgow Small Arms Factory was known to produce their single shot models 1A and 1B as well as their Model 12 repeater under the Slazenger brand during the 1960s.[1] The factory was first "corporatised" as Australian Defence Industries by the Hawke Government, then later sold in 2006. ADI Lithgow is now owned by Thales Australia and continues to manufacture the F88 Austeyr rifle and F89 Minimi currently used by the Australian military.[1]

As a separate entity, not owned or run by the current owners of the factory, the volunteer-run Lithgow Small Arms Factory Museum is located at the front of the disused section of site and has a large collection of military and civilian firearms manufactured at the factory and elsewhere.[2] In 2019, the museum was placed on the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register which lists influential collections and documents considered key to Australia's history.[3] The museum sees 9,000 annual visitors and is a big draw to the city of Lithgow.[4]

Products[edit]

Military[edit]

Alongside the weapons listed below, the factory also produced bayonets, components, barrels, and magazines as well as repairing, modifying, and rechambering weapons.[5] Short Magazine Lee Enfield, at least 640,000 produced with variants including Mk III and Mk IV from 1912 to 1945.[5][6]

Vickers machine gun, 12,500 Mk I, Mk V, and Mk XXI produced from 1929 to 1943.

Bren light machine gun, 17,500 produced from 1940 to 1945.

L1A1 Self Loading Rifle, 222,773 rifles produced from 1959 to 1986

L2A1, 9,557 produced

L1A1-F1, 460 produced

F1 submachine gun, 25,000 produced from 1962 to 1973

Austeyr F88, produced from 1988

Minimi F89, produced from 1989

Commercial[edit]

A broad variety of weapons complemented the factory's military production, but also civilian products such as aircraft parts, golf heads, and tractor components, amongst other things.[7]

Discontinued firearms:

Lithgow Model 1 .22 single-shot rifle produced from 1945

Lithgow Model 1A .22 single-shot rifle

Lithgow Model 1B .22 single-shot rifle

Lithgow Model 12 .22 bolt-action 5-shot repeater produced from 1947

Lithgow Model 12 .22 bolt-action 10-shot repeater (Bibby)

Lithgow Model 24 .22 Hornet cartridge produced from 1949

A single-shot bolt-action shotgun using the .410" cartridge (name unknown)

Current production firearms:

Lithgow LA101 CrossOver bolt-action rimfire rifle, available in .17 HMR, .22 LR and .22 WMR

Lithgow LA102 CrossOver bolt-action centerfire rifle, available in .223 Rem, .243 Win, 6.5mm Creedmoor and .308 Win

Lithgow LA105 Woomera bolt-action centerfire rifle, available in 6.5mm Creedmoor and .308 Win

Lithgow F90 Semi Auto/Automatic Military Grade Rifle, available in 5.56×45mm NATO[8]

Lithgow F90MBR Modular Bullpup Rifle, available in 5.56×45mm NATO

Notes and references[edit]