



LAND MATTRESS

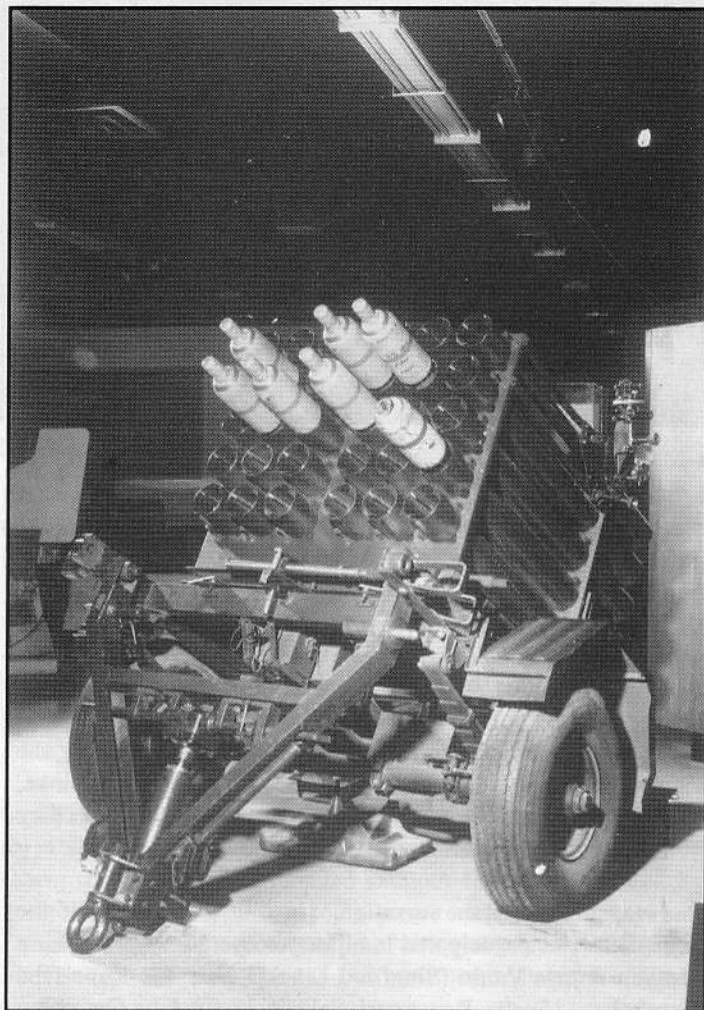
The Land Mattress, which was a multi-barrelled rocket launcher designed as a counter-mortar weapon and for use against infantry in lightly built-up defences, was initially developed by a British officer, Lt. Col. Michael Wardell. In spite of successful testing in 1944 the British War Office decided not to proceed with further development.

A Canadian artillery officer, Lt. Col. Eric Harris, who witnessed the testing, saw great possibilities for the rocket launcher. Following the test he met with Lt. Col. Wardell, and together, he and Wardell persuaded Canadian Army authorities to continue development of the rocket launcher as a counter-mortar weapon. Provisos in the authority to continue work were that the weapon should make maximum use of existing ammunition types and/or components and that the weapon's adoption should not interfere with the supply of other ammunition.

The rocket launcher consisted of 32 barrels or launching tubes and was mounted on a 20 cwt. trailer. The bore of each barrel was spiralled one complete turn to impart spin to the rocket and ensure stability in flight. Fins on the rear of the motor engaged with the spiral and provided the initial spin.

Operational development of this Canadian venture was completed at the Canadian School of Artillery in England in September 1944. Firing trials were carried out, training instructions developed and Range Tables showing the fall of shot performance of the weapon were also developed for operational use.

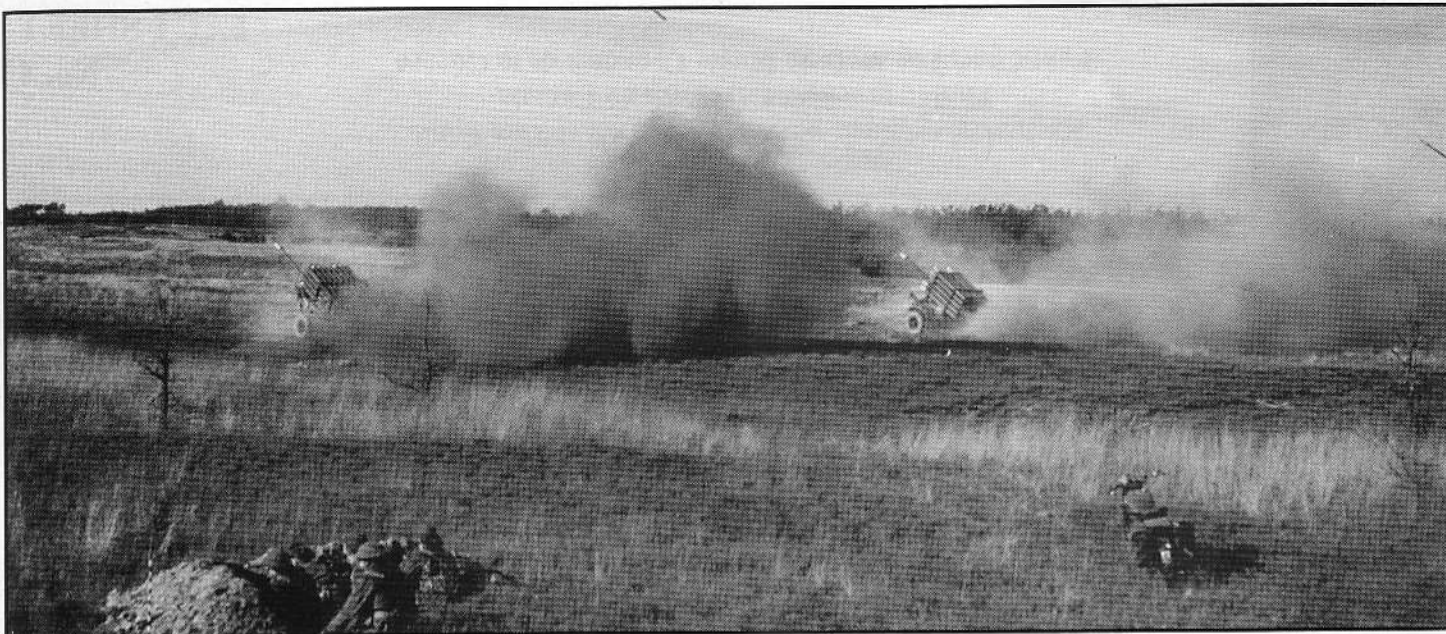
An instructional group known as the Land Mattress Cadre was formed in September 1944 and proceeded to France early in October. They trained the personnel of units selected by Headquarters, First Canadian Army, in the employment of the rocket. On



going into action, the Cadre also provided the key personnel to run the Battery Command Post (Fire Control Centre). This Cadre became known officially as the 1st Canadian Rocket Battery on February 8th 1945. The first of many light anti aircraft batteries to be trained was the 112 Bty. of the 6th L.A.A. (Light Anti-Aircraft) Regt. (Cdn) on October 26th 1944.

The Land Mattress was employed in battle for the first time on November 1st 1944 in the assault on Walcheren Island, firing from behind the seawall at Fort Frederik Hendrik near Breskens. The selected target, a massive concrete gun position, was beyond the capabilities of the rockets to neutralize but they had significant morale effect.

The rockets were next in action on November 6th through the 8th in support of the 1st Polish Armoured Division in eliminating a



A Land Mattress Battery in action. (PA 131255)

bridgehead on the south bank of the River Maas, where a total of seven targets were engaged with an expenditure of 2400 rockets.

The potential of this new weapon was quickly recognized. The effect of a concentrated battery salvo of 384 rockets with the lethal qualities of splintering and blast that the rockets possessed, landing on a target within 7 1/4 seconds was both devastating and demoralizing. At the launching site (Gun Position) the effect of firing a battery salvo was not inconsiderable. The gas generated by the motors in the firing of the rockets, produced a large cloud of smoke, dust and debris, and the rockets emitted a penetrating shriek as they left the launcher.

From November until the cessation of hostilities in May 1945 the Rocket Batteries participated in all major operations of the First Canadian Army: Venlo (Siegfried Line) 3 Dec. 44; Kapelsche Veer, 6 Jan. 45; the Roermond Salient 18-23 Jan; Operation Veritable (clearing of the enemy west of the Rhine River from Groesbeek to Wesel) 8-18 Feb. 45; Blockbuster I and II (continuation of Operation Veritable) 26 Feb.-8 March; Operation Plunder 26-29 March; Operation Destroyer (north from Nijmegen) 2 April; Arnhem 12-16 April; Bad Zwischenahn 25 April.

Following cessation of hostilities the Rocket Batteries were disbanded and never reformed.

The Land Mattress on display in the Canadian War Museum is the only one known to still be in existence.

TECHNICAL DATA

ROCKET Propellant Body (an R.A.F. Rocket Motor)
 Diameter 3 in. (7.62 cm)
 Weight 12 1/2 lbs. (5.67 kg)
 Warhead (an RN Warhead)
 Diameter 5 in. (12.7 cm)
 Weight 29 lbs. (13.1 kg)

LAUNCHER

32 Light Gauge Metal Tubes
 mounted on a 20 cwt. 2 wheeled trailer.



Loading the Land Mattress (PA 138421)

OPERATION

Rockets loaded manually
 Rockets fired electrically at 1/4 second intervals
 Range 4000-8000 yard (4-8 km), adjusted by
 small metal discs (called "spoilers")
 mounted on the rocket's nose.
 Reload time 10-12 minutes

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