

**NZART ID No: 152, Arm Type: Carbine, Date of Draft (V2) 19 August 2014, Compiled by Phil Cregeen**

**Pattern: Westley Richards Breech Loading Carbine, (Monkey Tail),**

Introduced into NZ Service: 1861, Withdrawn:1870s(?)

Makers: Westley Richards & Co., RSAF Enfield.

Details of Arm: (Enfield Pattern) Calibre: 0.450", 52 bore, Rifling: 8 grooves 1:20 in. twist, Barrel Length: 20.0in., OA Length: 35.9 in. (911 mm), iron furniture with saddle ring bar for cavalry or sling swivels for foot use. Action: Capping breech loader, Weight: 6 Lb 8.0 oz, (2.946 Kg)

Sights: Barleycorn on fixed block foresight, leaf back sight graduated to 800 yds., bed 100 to 400 yds.



20 inch Ordnance Board Cavalry Carbine with saddle ring bar on LHS



25 inch Colonial Carbine



**Typical markings –** Lock: date inside triangle & "Westley Richards & Co", Breech lever: "Westley Richards Patent" or after 1872 "Manufactured by Westley Richards", LHS of breech: Serial No and proof marks, Top of barrel: "Whitworth Patent" and caliber (.450/.483). Serial # 2746 above was manufactured in 1866/7.

After being Patented in March 1858 the chosen barrel length for the early Westley Richards Cavalry Carbines was dictated by fashion as 19", Overall length from 34.5", usually .450/483 but sometimes bored to .449, .4505 or .451. Very few of these were made after 1963.

The Westley Richards Breech Loading carbine was initially introduced into the British army for cavalry service by LOC# 291 dated 29 April 1861 to govern manufacture of 2,000 carbines. It fired a 400 grain bullet propelled by 55 grains of powder, wrapped in a buff paper cartridge with a lubricated felt wad at the base. However errors occurred

resulting in a number of different chamber lengths, leading to four different patterns (LOC# 500 19 Feb 1862). On 7 March 1866 LOC# 1219 approved a new pattern to govern manufacture of 20,000 carbines at RSAF Enfield, however only 19,000 were made. (There is an example on display at the New Zealand National Army Museum). The term Monkey Tail derives from the appearance of the breech lever.



25 inch Australian pattern



Post 1872, 25 inch South African pattern

Some 1000, Colonial Pattern 25inch carbines were supplied to Australia from 1861 to 63 as Cavalry carbines with saddle ring bar and front sling swivel attached to a half barrel band 7.5" behind the front band and also a sling eye in the butt. (One of these marked NZ is held in the Te Papa collection). Early Westley Richards carbines are marked "Westley Richards Patent" on the breech lever.

The majority of carbines found today are the post 1872 South Africa pattern, which made full use of the alternative muzzle loading capability, enhanced by a heavy duty rod. It was marked "Manufactured by Westley Richards" on the breech tail. The dated Triangle Trade Mark started from 1861 and lasted to 1885, thereafter being left vacant until production finally ceased in 1888.

All the carbines were designed and chambered for a 400 grain bullet with a 2 to 2.25 Dram charge, (54 plus grains). Initially the bullets were flat or hollow based cylindro-conoidal, but it was found that the penetration could be enhanced considerably by hardening the lead, provided that the body of the bullet was reduced to .447" with a rear skirt of .150" depth and .467/8" diameter - the bore-rider.



Breech (tail) open



NZ Issue mark on breech lever

#### New Zealand Service

A number of New Zealand provincial governments imported commercial versions of the WRBL carbine similar to the government pattern arm for their Police services from about 1861. A later import has been noted marked NZ with rack number 173, possibly when taken over by the colonial government from provincial governments. These may be in 19,20 and 25 inch barrel lengths with serial Nos in the 1 to 4000 range. Surviving examples are scarce.

As a guide to dating WR manufactured carbines, known Serial Numbers are:

Year	Serial No
1861	1145
1863	2035
1875	14890
1882	17920
1883	19015

#### Acknowledgements:

*John Osborne, Noel Taylor, Rob Betteridge, Terrence Seymour*

#### References:

*British Military Longarms 1715-1865 by D W Bailey*  
*List of Changes in British War Materials Vol I 1860-1886*  
<http://www.roaring-forties.co.uk/home/monkey-tail-history>