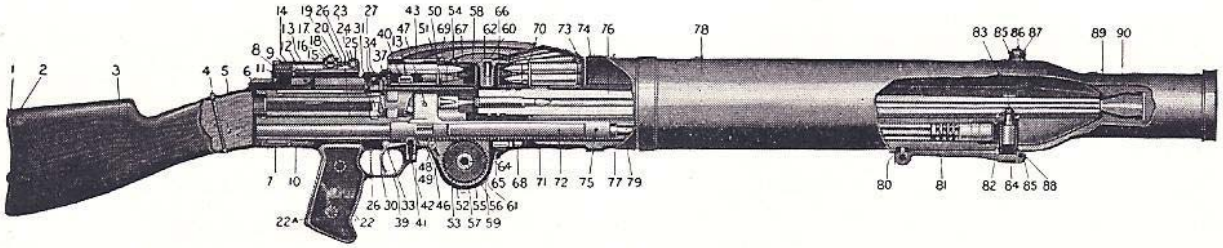
NZAR ID 195, ARM TYPE: Machine Gun. Draft date (V1) 16 March 2012, Compiled by John Osborne DTT PhD FSG,
Pattern: Lewis 303" LMG M1914. Introduced: Into NZ 1915. Withdrawn: c1960s

.303" Lewis Light Machine Guns m1914 served NZ forces well during WWI & WWII.

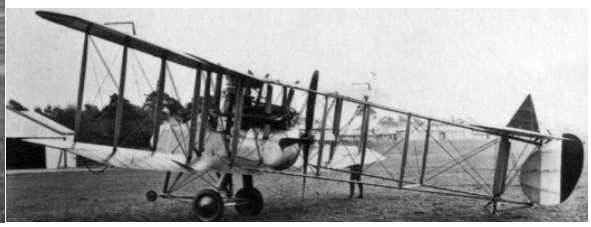
The Lewis Automatic Light Machine Gun was perfected by the British and widely used by the British including New Zealand forces. It was first used in 1915 and continued in service with a number of armed forces through to the end of the Korean War. Weighing only 12.7 kg (28 lb) which was around half the weight of other machine guns of the era, the Lewis became immediately popular amongst troops. It could be carried by a single soldier and was easy to load with its drum magazine. The .303" Lewis Gun was used by the New Zealand Mounted Rifles in Sinai and Palestine between July 1916 and March 1917 and also fitted in early British Mark IV tanks armoured cars and on motorcycles.. It was used by the Navy including the RN Air Service and by the Royal Flying Corps and from April 1918 when the RFC and RNAS merged by the Royal Air Force. Gas-operated and air-cooled the Lewis Gun used a 50 round (47 were loaded to avoid jams) (later 100 (97) for aircraft) circular drum magazine. By means of an adjustable clock-type recoil spring the gun's firing rate could be regulated, ranging from 500-600 rounds per minute although shorter bursts were more usual and with its adjustable sights and bipod support was effective to a range of 700m. When used in the air the Lewis' air cooling jacket and fins could be dispensed with, it then weighed just 9kg.

The Birmingham Small Arms BSA factory alone made 145,397 Lewis Guns during WWI.



LEWIS AUTOMATIC LIGHT MAGAZINE GUN

1, Butt plate; 2, butt plate screws; 3, butt; 4, butt tang screw; 5, butt tang; 6, feed cover latch; 7, butt latch, securing butt to receiver; 8, back sight bed spring; 9, back sight bed spring screw; 10, butt latch spring; 11, back sight bed; 12, feed cover latch pin; 13, feed cover; 14, back sight leaf; 15, back sight thumb piece; 16, back sight slide catch; 17, back sight fine adj. worm; 18, back sight fine adj. worm axis pin; 19, back sight slide catch spring; 20, back sight slide; 22, Firing hand grip; 22A, guard side rivets; 23, back sight axis pin washer; 24, back sight axis pin; 25, back sight axis washer fixing pin; 26, receiver; 27, magazine pawls spring; 30, trigger; 31, feed operating stud; 33, trigger pin; 34, feed operating arm; 37, bolt that closes breech and takes shock of discharge; 39, guard; 40, cartridge guide spring; 41, sear spring; 42, sear; 43, magazine pan; 46, gear stop; 47, striker fixing pin; 48, gear stop pin; 49, gear stop spring; 50, striker; 51, cartridge spacer; 52, gear operated by main spring; 53, main spring casing; 54 magazine top plate rivets; 55, main spring which closes breech and returns parts to firing position; 56, collet pin; 57, main spring collet; 58, magazine centre; 59, main spring rivets; 60, magazine latch spring; 61, gear casing; 62, magazine latch; 64, gear casing side piece; 65, gear case hinge pin; 66, feed operating arm latch; 67, magazine top plate; 68, receiver lock pin; 69, cartridge spacer rivets; 70, interior cartridge separators; 71, radiator casing rear, locking piece; 72, rack, actuated by piston and main spring; 73, Radiator casing rear, platform; 74, radiator casing rear; 75, piston connecting pin; 76, barrel; 77, gas cylinder; 78, radiator for cooling barrel; 79, piston operated by gases of exploding cartridge that ejects empty shell and resets firing pin; 80, regulator key stud; 81, gas regulator key; 82, gas chamber; 83, gas port; 84, gas regulator; 85, clamp ring; 86, fore sight; 87, clamp ring positioning screw; 88, clamp ring screw; 89, barrel mouth piece; 90, radiator casing front.



Left: RN sailors including NZers training with a Lewis gun 1915. Center and Right: Lewis Guns using 100 round magazines mounted in the front cockpit of the pusher Royal Aircraft Factory F.E.2d, a two-seater that was operated as a day and night bomber and fighter aircraft by the RFC, 1,939 all variants built 1914-1918. When used in the air the Lewis' air cooling jacket and fins could be dispensed with, it then weighed just 9kg. Royal Aircraft Factory F.E.2 entered service in May 1915 with No. 6 Squadron Royal Flying Corps RFC. The first squadron completely equipped with the F.E.2 being 20 Squadron, deploying to France on 23 January 1916. At this stage it served as a fighter/reconnaissance aircraft - eventually about two/thirds of the F.E.2s were built as fighters (816) and one third as bombers (395). The F.E.2b and F.E.2d variants remained in day operations well into 1917 while the "b" continued as a standard night bomber until August 1918. At its peak, the F.E.2b equipped 16 RFC squadrons in France and six Home Defence squadrons in England. Powered by a Beardmore 160 hp 6-cylinder inline piston engine. Maximum speed 80 knots (91.5 mph) Armament Guns: 1 or 2 x .303" Lewis gun for observer (one mounted in front and one firing back over the top wing) 1 or 2 x .303 in Lewis gun sometimes mounted for the pilot's use in the F.E.2d. Bombs: up to 517 lb (235 kg) of bombs. Several of these F.E.2d's were piloted / crewed by New Zealanders.

Left; Burnham Camp, Christchurch NZ 1917. Center; NZers at the front 1917 Right; March 1918 somewhere along the New Zealand Front.

Acknowledgements and special thanks to: www.thevintageaviator.co.nz www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewis_Gun www.nzhistory.net.nz www.firstworldwar.com www.armymuseum.co.nz www.navymuseum.mil.nz www.airforcemuseum.co.nz Osborne Arms Museum