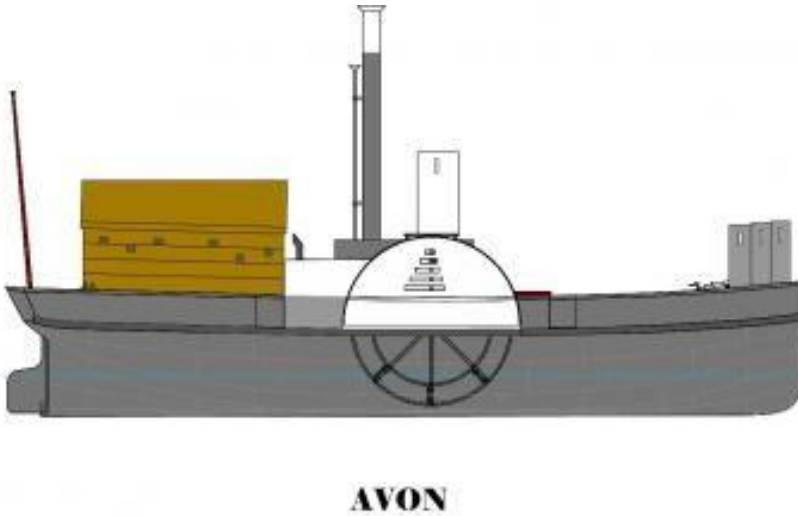


Pattern: *Avon*, Steam paddle wheel gunboat; Introduced in to NZ Service: 1863; Withdrawn: 1864
Builder: Barclay, Curle & Co, Glasgow 1859; Tonnage: 35; Dimensions: 63' x 15' x 2.5'
Hull: flat bottomed, iron plate. Machinery: twin Hp steam engines of 16 hp; Speed: 7.5 knots.
Armament: one 12 Pdr. BL Armstrong gun, one Congreve rocket launcher, steam pipe system around hull to repel boarders.



Avon as she appeared on the Waikato River in January 1864



Naval Armstrong gun

New Zealand Service

Avon started life in New Zealand as a passenger cargo steamer operating between Christchurch and the port of Littleton and was purchased by the colonial government in November 1862 for 1725 pounds. She was towed north by *HMS Harrier* and arrived at Manukau on 26 November. A civilian crew was provided under the command of Sub Lt Easter. Quarter inch iron plating was fitted around her bulwarks with loop holes for rifles and an anti boarding device consisting of a pipe around the hull at deck level that could spray scalding water from the boiler. A 12 Pdr Armstrong gun loaned from *HMS Harrier* was fitted in the bow together with a 12 Lb Congreve rocket launcher.

On 19 July 1863 *Avon* under tow by *HMS Eclipse* left the Manukau and entered the Waikato. Here she commenced survey work in the river and undertook reconnaissance of the Maori positions. On 6 August she was first engaged in action at Meremere, where she was fired upon by Maori and returned fire with her Armstrong gun and Congreve rockets and rifles. As the Waikato campaign developed *Avon* was employed in reconnaissance, shelling at Meremere and Rangiriri, transporting troops and stores. Following the fall of Rangiriri the campaign moved into the Waipa region and *Avon* was employed extensively on the Waipa river ferrying stores from Ngaruawahia to the front. On 8 February 1864 she struck an obstruction, started to sink and was beached. It took 5 weeks to salvage and repair her before she was ready to return to service. Following the fall of the Maori pa at Orakau the Naval Brigade retired taking their guns with them and the *Avon* continued under civilian management delivering stores. In June 1864 she was stripped of her boiler and engine and became a coal hulk at Port Waikato. After her sale in 1867 she was refitted as the paddle steamer *Clyde* until finally wrecked in 1886.

Acknowledgments: J Osborne FSG, N Taylor FSG
The Waikato River Gunboats by Grant Middlemiss