

**Pattern: Colt Model 1855 British Carbine**, Introduced into NZ Service: 1864, Withdrawn 1860s?

Makers: Colt , Hartford USA and Colt London

**Details of Arm:**

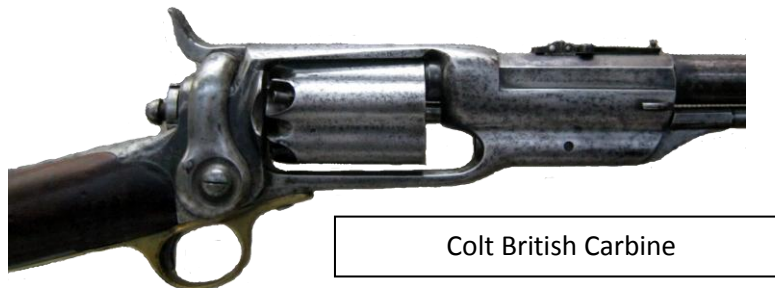
Calibre: 0.56 in, Barrel Length: 18 in. or 21 in. Action: 5 cylinder cap and ball revolver with external hammer



The most widely produced revolving rifle was the **Model 1855**. An estimated total of only 4,435 were manufactured in the Hartford factory c. 1856–1864.

The design of the Colt revolving rifle was essentially similar to revolver type pistols, with a rotating cylinder that held five or six rounds in a variety of calibres from .36 to .64 inches.

The Model 1855, which was the most widely produced revolving rifle, was available in .36, .44 and .56 calibre. Four barrel lengths were available: 15, 18, 21 and 24 inches. A six shot cylinder was used if the calibre was .36 or the .44. If the calibre was .56, a five-shot cylinder was used.



The revolving rifle used percussion caps, like revolving pistols of the time. A cartridge consisting of powder and a lead ball were loaded into the front of the chamber, and were then compressed with a plunger that was located beneath the barrel. Once the cylinder's chambers were loaded, percussion caps were placed over the vent nipples at the rear of the cylinder. The weapon was now ready to fire. In addition to being susceptible to chain fire problems, the revolving cylinder design also tended to spray lead splinters into the wrist and hand of the user. Revolving pistols did not suffer from this problem since the user kept both hands behind the cylinder while firing a pistol.

Some models could be fitted with sword style bayonets. In these rifles, the front sight would double as the bayonet lug. (1)

**New Zealand service**

In 1863 the Otago Armed Police ordered 32 Colt Revolving carbines from the London Agent and they arrived in May 1864 on the ship *Slodia*. 30 carbines were issued to the Mounted Goldfields Police and two were retained in Dunedin. These carbines have London proof marks a 21 inch barrel, no wood fore-end and brass trigger guards and butt plates, they are known as " British Carbines". Most lie in the 94xx serial number range. They were unpopular due to multi cylinder discharges with bullets or particles of lead being sprayed from the cylinder into the shooters hand/wrist and were soon withdrawn. (2)

The Colonial Government purchased an unknown quantity of Colt revolving (artillery type) carbines, probably in the 1860s. These have a wooden fore-end with a clearing rod, an 18 in barrel and sling swivels, the trigger guard and butt plate are of steel. They are stamped NZ with a single digit number on the butt tang. (2)

References: (1) [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colt\\_revolving\\_rifle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colt_revolving_rifle)

(2) Col. Colt Downunder by Hayden Hughes & Robin Rapley