

NZART ID: 62, Arm Type: Rifle, Date of Draft: (V2) 17 April 2012, Compiled by: Phil Cregeen

Pattern: Martini Henry Rifle Mk I, II, III, IV Introduced in to NZ Service: 1890, Withdrawn 1903

Maker: RSAF Enfield, Henry Rifle Barrel Company, London Small Arms Company, BSA & M Co.

Calibre: .450 in, Bore: 7 groove Henry RH twist 1 turn in 22 in., Barrel length: 33.2 in. OA Length: 49.2 in.

Type of Action: Martini-hinged block/under lever, single shot Weight: 8 lb 9 oz.

Magazine: None, Sights: rear sight bed to 400, leaf to 1,300 yds., foresight barleycorn on fixed block

Bayonet: Bushed Pat 1853 Socket, Bushed Pat 1873 Yataghan Sword, Pat 1876 Socket, Pat 1887 Sword Mk I to IV.

See NZAR ID 135 for more detail of the bayonets used with this rifle.



Following prize competitions and trials to select the best breech loading action and barrel combination, which resulted in the Martini action and the Henry barrel being adopted, production of the Martini Henry rifle commenced at RSAF Enfield in 1869, however the first pattern (Mk I, see NZAR ID 333) was sealed in June 1871. Early models included a safety catch on the RHS of the body but this was discontinued from 1874, other distinguishing features are the chequered butt plate and cross pin securing the fore-end and a bronze hinge pin for the breech block. As production continued improvements were made which resulted in the MK II being approved in April 1877 (See NZAR ID 334), this featured a smooth butt plate, deeper rear sight cap, no butt swivel, rounded edges to the rear of the trigger guard and a cupped cleaning rod. In August 1879 the Mk III (See NZAR ID 335) was approved, the main differences from previous marks being the method of attaching the fore-end by means of a hooked plate, a longer rear sight bed and a double hump knob form.

In the mid 1870s it was intended to adopt a reduced calibre rifle in .402 in. and this was designated the Enfield Martini. A large number of trials rifles were manufacture, but with the impending arrival of the .303 magazine rifle, the plan was abandoned. The large number of trials rifles were converted to Martini Henry and became the Mk IV which was approved in September 1887 (NZAR ID 336). Types A & B were conversions from trials rifles while Type C was new manufacture. The Mk IV differed from previous marks in having a lower butt socket, a stronger extractor, a longer lever and a ramped foresight.



Typical Marking



RHS of Butt



RHS of body



NZ Issue

The butt is stamped with a manufacturers roundel with mark (III) and class (1), The right side of the body is marked with a crown over VR over the makers name over the year of manufacture over a view mark over the mark designation over the class. New Zealand issue marks are stamped on the Knox form, SX =strengthened extractor.



Ammo: foil, drawn brass, dummy, projectile



Combination tool



Oil bottle & muzzle cover

New Zealand Service

The first recorded use of a Martini Henry was a Prize Rifle presented to Lt A Morrow in 1871 and there are newspaper accounts of members of the Volunteer Force using them in Prize Shoots from of 1872 onwards. These would have been a Martini Henry Mk I, however most likely bought as private purchase and therefore not considered as Issued. Royal Navy ships of the Australasian Station operating in New Zealand waters in this period also carried Martini Henry Mk I Rifles and landed them to compete in matches with local Volunteers.

I think it worthy of note that, on reference to Table 23, it will be seen that Humphries, of the Taranaki Militia, was only 2 points behind Mr. McKerrel, having fired the match with a Martini-Henry; and Kelly, Armed Constabulary, tied Humphries (after allowance of points) with a Medium Enfield rifle.

Table 23.

ALL COMERS Second Match.—Six Prizes, value £20.

Ranges, 500 and 600 yards. Number of shots, 5. Position, any. No trial shot. Targets, 6 x 6; centre, 4 feet; bull's eye, 2 feet. Large bore rifles to receive 2 points at 500 yards, and 3 at 600 yards.

Order of Merit.	Prize.	Name.	Corps.	Score.	Weapon.
1	£8	McKerrell	London Scottish Rifle Volunteers	38	Ingram.
2	5	Humphries	Representative	36	Martini-Henry.
3	3	Kelly	Representative	36*	Medium Enfield.
4	2	Churton	Representative	35	Ingram.
5	1	Key	Representative	35*	Medium Enfield.
6	1	Blatch	Representative	35*	Medium Enfield.

* Five points added to scores.
Number of Competitors, 49. Average, 22.14.

In 1877 Two Martini Henry Mk I rifles featured in the Prize Shoot.

ALL COMERS.—Open to all comers. Any weapon. Ranges, 200 and 500 yards. Highest possible score, 56 points. Winners: First prize, Murray, 52 points, Snider rifle (Government); second prize, Anderson, 51 points, Snider rifle (Government); third prize, Morrow, 50 points, Martini-Henry; fourth prize, Willcocks, 50 points, Snider; fifth prize, Mellsoy, 49 points, Martini-Henry; sixth prize, Armstrong, 49 points, Whitworth; seventh prize, Hill, 48 points, Snider; eighth prize, Cummins, 48 points, Melford; ninth prize, Kettle, 48 points, Hunter.

W. MOULE, Lieut.-Colonel,
Under Secretary Defence.

Wellington, 9th March, 1877.

In 1885 two MH Rifles (Mk III) and two Carbines each with Morris Tubes were ordered from Britain are recorded in a letter to Rear Admiral Stout entitled War Materials for New Zealand tabled before the House of Representatives.

2. Martini-Henry regulation rifles, latest pattern: Two rifles, with Morris tubes; two carbines, with Morris tubes; 400 rounds of ammunition, at 2s. 6d. per 100.

In his report to the Minister of Defence in 1886 the C in C, Sir G S Whitmore, eludes to the order of an unknown quantity of Martini Enfields, although it is assumed he means the Enfield Martini .402. It was reported in the press at this time that a sample of the Enfield Martini .402 had been received by the Defence Dept.

colony before spring to replace the unserviceable belts. The Martini-Enfields ordered by you, when issued to the best shots as an encouragement, and gradual mode of replacing the Snider, together with musketry instruction, will complete all that is wanting in the shooting, if only the

A total of 501 Martini Henry Rifles were ordered in 1889/90 plus 50 Morris Tubes. A Martini Henry Mk IV with short lever marked N^Z 90, has been viewed which indicates that these were the first Martini Henry issued in New Zealand. These rifles appear to have been issued on repayment to Volunteer units.



NZ Issued Martini Henry Mk IV No 471, short lever, showing 1890 issue marks and also Home Guard service in WW II

RETURN giving Details of Expenditure of £12,273, under the Item on Volunteer Vote, of Purchase of Arms and Ammunition, stating, in case of Stores ordered from England, the Dates on which Orders were forwarded, and the Dates on which Payments were made; and specifying what Stores were ordered for Issue on Payment to Volunteers, and the Amounts received.

Stores.	Number.	Expenditure. 1890-91.		Stores ordered from England.		To whom issued.	Recoveries.		Free Issue.		
				Date of Order.	Date of Payment.		Cash received, 1890-91.	Stoppages from Capitation, 1890-91.			
Snider ball-ammunition	1,719,010	£ 7,717	s. 1 d. 2	Volunteers	£ 354	s. 0 d. 0	£ 2,224	s. 13 d. 2	
Martini-Henry ammunition	125,000	497	0 1	27/2/89	13/6/90	"		83	15 0	275 0 0	
Morris-tube ammunition	100,000	104	7 6	30/12/89	13/6/90	"	1,888	13	5	11 4 0	10 16 0
Morris-tube ammunition	100,000	105	0 0	21/7/90	9/3/91	"					
Martini-Henry rifles	250	653	1 11	11/2/89	13/6/90	"	134	15	0
"	250	649	14 6	1/7/89	13/6/90	"					
"	1	4	6 7	29/5/90	19/3/91	"					
Morris tubes	50	54	10 10	30/9/89	2/9/90	Volunteers					

Newspapers of 1888 -90 report that the National Rifle Association were lobbying the government to purchase Martini Henry Rifles for Rifle Clubs and also the government providing rifles some Martini Henrys for international competitions. A number of Martini Henry rifle Clubs had been formed and the rifles were frequently being used by members of the Volunteer Force.

In 1892 the 57 members of the Honourable Reserve Corp were armed with Martini Henry and reported to be Excellent shots by Lt Col Hume NZM under Secretary of Defence. Also that year 8 Martini Henry Rifles were purchased by the government and 250,000 rounds of MH ball ammunition from Kynoch and another 29,800 rounds from CAC.

In 1893 Lt Col. FJ Fox recommended to the Minister of Defence the rearming of the NZ forces with the Martini Henry pending a decision on the new magazine rifle.

After a very careful consideration of the whole matter of rearmament, I have come to the conclusion that the Government cannot do better than arm its Forces with the Martini-Henry weapon. I am confident that that rifle is quite sufficiently good for our present defence purposes. The ranges which we now have will be generally suitable for target-practice with the Martini-Henry, whereas there are few, if any, ranges to be found in New Zealand which could be made into safe and good ranges for the Magazine rifle. The Magazine rifle may give an advantage to highly-trained men, but it is very questionable whether it could confer any advantage on men not so highly trained. Rather it is possible that the reverse might be the case. The Martini-Henry rifle is a good serviceable weapon, capable of standing a considerable amount of hard usage. The Magazine rifle is much more delicate, and would require very much more care. The expense of the latter is considerably greater than that of the former, and the difference in cost of ammunition is very great, being much in favour of the Martini-Henry.

Also in 1893 a batch of 200 MH arrived in August for the National Rifle Association.
NZ Rifle Assn meeting, March 1894, Christchurch.

"I regret to place on record that the 1893 meeting shows the smallest number of competitors the Assn has ever had since 1885. The cause of this is not hard to seek, and must without a shadow of doubt be laid down to the want of Martini rifles. Applications for over 150 rifles had been made from all parts of the Colony, and had these rifles only arrived on time for the meeting the entries would have been greatly added to, unfortunately the rifles did not come to hand, and the Assn suffered financially, someone was certainly to blame, as these rifles were ordered in March 1892, were expected by every steamer, and finally arrived in the Colony on August 1893, just 17 months from the order being sent.

Showing the demand that existed, I may now say that out of the shipment of 200 rifles that arrived in August not one at the present time remains in store, under these circumstances, and in justice to the Assn, I think the Government should give a grant equal to the loss sustained by the delay in obtaining the Martini rifles."



A Mk III Martini Henry with Pat 73 bushed sword bayonet from the 200 that arrive in 1893, these are not NZ marked but marked ^ S on Knox form
 1894 saw the ordering of 5,000 Martini Henry Rifles from Britain.

No. 14.

(No. 44.)
 MY LORD,—

Downing Street, 5th September, 1894.

I have the honour to transmit to you, for communication to your Government, with reference to your despatch, No. 13, of the 12th of May last, a copy of the undermentioned document, respecting the question of the supply to New Zealand of Martini-Henry rifles.

I have, &c.,
 R. M. MEADE,
 For the Secretary of State.

The Officer Administering the Government
 of New Zealand.

Date.	Description of Document.
29th August, 1894	War Office to Colonial Office.

Enclosure.

SIR,—

War Office, Pall Mall, S.W., 29th August, 1894.

With reference to your letter of the 26th June last, transmitting a copy of a despatch from the Governor of New Zealand with a memorandum from the Premier suggesting that the Government of the colony should be allowed to obtain, at a reasonable price, five thousand or more Martini-Henry rifles from this department, I am directed by the Secretary of State for War to acquaint you, for the information of the Marquis of Ripon, that the Martini-Henry rifle is still the arm of a considerable portion of the auxiliary forces, and that the number available for disposal is very limited, but that used serviceable arms could be supplied at three-quarter rates, or new (Mark IV.) could be supplied at full Vocabulary rates.

The Under-Secretary of State, Colonial Office.

I have, &c.,
 RALPH THOMPSON.

By July 1895 2,000 MH rifles had been received and the Infantry were in the process of being rearmed with the Martini Henry and by 1896 practically the whole force was so armed.

SMALL-ARMS.

The Force is now practically wholly armed with M.H. rifles and carbines. It is necessary that these weapons shall be frequently and closely inspected. The District Commanding Officers and myself rarely have any opportunity of seeing the small-arms except on parade in the evening in badly-lighted drill-halls, when it is practically impossible to make a thorough inspection. The regulations provide for an annual inspection of all arms by an armourer. It would be advisable to

In 1897 Martini Henry Rifles were issued to Cavalry troops and they became Mounted Rifles.

On my recommendation, orders have been issued to withdraw the carbines and issue Martini-Henry rifles to all the mounted corps. Their use in war will be that of a body of infantry soldiers capable of being transferred rapidly from one position to another, to act as infantry, and not as cavalry.

1898 saw the arrival of the first .303 Martini Enfield Rifles with Martini Henry and Snider still on issue.

ARMS.

The first instalment of the new rifles has arrived in the colony, and the second is on the way. I much regret that it was not decided when new rifles were procured, as recommended in my last report, to purchase the magazine arm. No doubt the .303" Martini-Enfield is very much in advance of the .45" Martini as regards range and shooting; but any force we will have to contend with will, in all probability, be armed with the most up-to-date weapons.

I also regret that the triangular bayonet should have been supplied. It is not suitable for this colony, and the short sword-bayonet as sent out with the carbines would have been much more useful.

Shortly we will have three different rifles in the hands of the Infantry Volunteers, the .303" Martini-Enfield, the .45" Martini-Henry, and the Snider. I sincerely hope that we may soon get a supply of the .303" rifle sufficient to end this state of affairs, and that by the end of next year there will be only one class of rifle in the hands of the troops.



Left: Kaitangata Rifles, (Dunedin) winning Team in the Ladies' Challenge Shield 1899 with their 577/.450 Martini Henry Rifles.

Right: Auckland Rifle Volunteers with their Martini Henry Rifles (and Lady Friends) after returning from the Hokianga Dog Tax War 1898

By 1899 sufficient Martini Enfield .303 Rifles had arrived to equip the North Island Volunteer Corp but the South Island were still armed with the Martini Henry, CAC were supplying the .303 ammunition needs of the colony. By 1902 the Martini Henrys on issue were being withdrawn and in many cases exchanged for Martini Enfield .303 Rifles. A Small Arms Return of 1903 showed a total of 4,709 Martini Henry Rifles held in Store.

In 1907 the Martini Henrys were considered obsolete and 4,500 were sold by tender and shipped to an English company on the *SS Mamari* along with 500 MH Carbines, 10,000 Sniders and 340 Remington Lees.

The following NZ marked Martini Henry Rifles and Carbines have been observed in NZ as of 18 April 2012. Note those marked ^S are believed to be the 1893 contract bought by the Defence Dept. and sold to the NRA.

NZ Marked					
Arm	Serial No	NZ Marked	Other marks	Maker	Dated
Martini Henry Carb ICI		^NZ 97/619		HRB Co	1896
Martini Henry Cav Carbine		^/NZ/95/87		Enfield	1888
Martini Henry Cav Carbine		^NZ 95/472		Enfield	1887
Martini Henry Cav Carbine		^NZ 95/262		Enfield	1887
Martini Henry Rifle Mk IV		N^Z/90/471	N^Z (BT), HG457,3 HG 1130	Enfield	1886
Martini Henry Rifle Mk III	136	^ S		HRB & Co	1893
Martini Henry rifle Mk III		^ S		HRB & Co	1893
Martini Henry Rifle Mk III		^/NZ/95/4385		LSA	2885
Martini Henry Rifle Mk III		^NZ 95/3285		LSA Co	1886
Martini Henry Rifle Mk III		^NZ/95/1652		BSA&M Co	1885
Martini Henry Rifle MK III		^NZ/95/1653		BSA&M Co	1888
Martini Henry Rifle Mk III		^S		BSA & M Co	1886
Martini Henry Rifle Mk III		^S		HRB & Co	1893
Martini Henry Rifle Mk III		^ S		HRB & Co	1893

Acknowledgements: Information and photos-John Osborne, Grant Sherrif, Phil Cregeen, Noel Taylor, Mike Andrews

References:

A Treatise on the British Military Martini by BA Templeton & ID Skennerton

Appendices of the Journal of the House of Representatives (AJHR) found online at

<http://atojs.natlib.govt.nz/>

Papers past <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz>