

NZAR ID 69, Arm type SMG, Draft date (V1)6 July 2011, Compiled by Phil Cregeen

Pattern (Name) Lanchester Mk I*, Introduced into NZ Service 1941, Withdrawn 1972.

Makers: a. Sterling Engineering Co, Dagenham & Northampton, United Kingdom
 b. WW Greener
 c. Boss & Co

Calibre: 9 mm x 19 Parabellum, Length: 851 mm (33.5 in), Barrel length: 198 mm (7.80 in)

Weight: 4.38 Kg, (9.65 lb), Rifling: 6 grooves RH twist, Magazine: 50 rounds

Rate of fire: 600 rounds/min, Full Auto only, Open bolt

Sights: flip over 100/200, Bayonet: Pat '07, LOA 552 mm. Blade 432 mm, MRD 16.5 mm

At the time that the Lanchester 9mm Sub Machine Gun (Machine Carbine) was introduced into Royal Naval service in 1941, New Zealand ships were still part of the Royal Navy and thus would have been equipped to the same scale as RN Ships. RN Ships transferred to the RNZN after the war would have been equipped with Lanchesters as part of the ships equipment, examples are the Cruisers *Black Prince* (loaned in 1946) and *Royalist* (transferred in 1956).



RHS Lanchester MKI* with 50 Round Magazine and Pat. '07 Bayonet



LHS Lanchester MKI* with 50 Round Magazine and Pat. '07 Bayonet

When Britain went to war with Germany in 1939 she had no Sub Machine Guns in her armoury. To overcome this shortage 300,000 Thompsons were ordered from the USA, however due to losses to U boats in the Atlantic only a third of this order arrived. By 1940 things were getting desperate and it was decided that Britain must produce her own SMG. Early in that year two German MP 28s had been acquired and after evaluation these were deemed suitable to meet the nation's initial needs, since they were relatively easy to manufacture. The army's immediate needs for an SMG were met by the Thompsons, but the RAF and RN still had a requirement, so a decision was taken to manufacture 25,000 copies of the MP 28 in 9mm for each service.

In wartime every business capable of manufacturing was directed to undertake war work, likewise civilian workers were directed to specific tasks and places of employment where their skills could be best utilised. Thus it was that George Lanchester more properly an automobile engineer and George Patchett a gun designer found themselves working at the Sterling Engineering Company in Dagenham.

In October 1940 George Lanchester was given the task of overseeing the preparation of drawings and manufacture of prototype guns ready for firing tests, these trials were successfully completed by the end of November. The trial guns were marked "Sterling Automatic Carbine PG #" and could be fired on automatic or single rounds. The gun was designed to accept a 50 round straight magazine and the Pattern 1907 sword bayonet.

In June 1941 a contract was placed with Sterling for 50,000 Mk I guns and George Lanchester was placed in charge of production, giving his name to the new gun. Nearly all of the Lanchester production ended up going to the Royal Navy where it was used primarily for boarding and landing parties. Although Sterling assembled Lanchesters at two factories in Dagenham and Northampton, they subcontracted much of the manufacturing work. Two other firms also shared in Lanchester assembly: WW Greener and Boss & Co.

By January 1942 a number of relaxations had been permitted to assist manufacture and a new trigger assembly was tested that only allowed automatic fire. This resulted in the Lanchester being advanced to MK I* and most Mk Is were converted accordingly. While production of the Lanchester continued, the design team from RSAF Enfield were working on the development of a new SMG which eventually resulted in the STEN gun; consequently Lanchester production ceased in October 1943.

According to official records total Lanchester production was :

Sterling Dagenham (S109) & Northampton (M619)	64,580
Greener (M94)	16,990
Boss (S156)	3,900
Total	74,579

Sterling made Lanchesters are marked on the top of the magazine housing as follows:

Mk
Factory codes: S 109, M619,
Serial No _____ (A suffix indicates non interchangeable parts)
Code letters CF +No

LANCHESTER
MK I*
SA M619
63352
CF 73

The Lanchester remained in service with the Royal Navy until 1972 and was finally declared obsolete in 1979. They also served in Commonwealth navies (including RNZN) and foreign navies who bought ex RN ships in the 1950s and 60s. The author was trained in the use of the Lanchester as a young officer cadet in 1965.



Lanchester with 50 round magazine, Pat 07 bayonet, magazine loading tool and ammunition.



New Zealand sailors armed with Lanchester off Borneo in 1965

Reference: The Guns of Dagenham by Peter Laidler & David Howroyd. Collector Grade Publications.

Acknowledgements:

Photos: Phil Cregeen, John Carter,