

NZART ID No: 71, Arm Type: Rifle, Date of Draft (V1) 16/7/2012, Compiled by Phil Cregeen

Pattern: Remington Lee M 1885, Introduced into NZ Service: 1887, Withdrawn 1888

Makers: E Remington & Son, Ilion NY

Details of Arm:

Calibre: .43 in Spanish, Rifling: 5 grooves RH twist, Barrel Length: 32 0in., OA Length: 52.0 in. . Weight 8 Lb 8 oz,

Action: Bolt with 5 round detachable box magazine.

Sights: barleycorn foresight, leaf back sight 600 to 1200yds. bed 100 to 500yds.

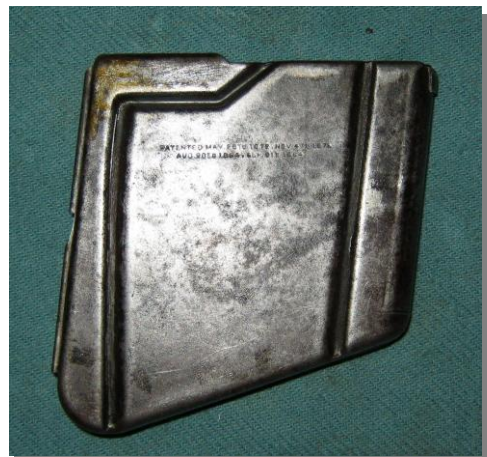
Ammunition: 0.43 Spanish 77 gr black powder and 395 gr projectile,

Bayonet: (NZART # 49) Remington Socket LOA20.6 in. (524 mm), Blade 18.0 in.(437 mm), Socket 2.6 in (67 mm), MRD 18.0 mm, No markings, Scabbard Pattern 1853 was used.

Markings: Makers name and serial No on left receiver wall, NZ Issue marks on breech N^Z/87.



Top: Remington Lee M 1885 Service Rifle, Bottom: M 1885 cut down to carbine



M 1885 Lee bolt action and detachable magazine, this version of magazine designed by L P Diss

The Remington Lee Service Rifle was based upon a design of James Paris Lee, a Scott who emigrated to Canada as a child and then moved to the USA. Lee entered into a relationship with E Remington & Sons to manufacture his rifles, the first military model being that of 1882. Improvements to the original design were undertaken by Lee and LP Diss resulting in the M 1885. Production of this rifle commenced in mid 1886, but by this time Remington was facing receivership and only about 5,500 rifles had been produced by April 1887 when production was halted. Of this batch of rifles 500 were sold to New Zealand and a further 300 to Britain for trials, these latter rifles leading to the Magazine Lee Metford, following further design improvements at RSAF Enfield.

New Zealand Service

Reacting to a threat of attack by Russia in 1887 the Minister of Defence J B Balance placed an order with Messrs E Remington & Sons for 500 repeating rifles plus a spare magazine and 400 rounds of ammunition for each and 100 bayonets. Remington passed the order on to the Lee Small Arms Co. who advised the New Zealand government that the rifles, taken from stock, were ready for shipping on 20 June 1887. The cost per rifle was 69 shillings and 8pence without bayonet 74shillings and 6 pence with bayonet. A subsequent order for a further 100,000 rounds of ammunition was also made.



When the rifles arrived in New Zealand they were stamped N^Z /87 as above.

100 rifles were sold to the Honorary Reserve Corp, 350 were loaned to the Rifle Association for 12 months with an option to purchase and 50 retained in Government stores of which 12 to 15 were reported sold by 25 November 1887. Very soon complaints were being received by the Defence Department about defects in the rifle and ammunition. Split and stuck cases were reported as well as blow outs at the breech, causing damage to the rifle. In January 1888 the Chairman of the Rifle Association was asked to provide a report on the rifles and by the end of that month the Honorary Reserve Corp was instructed to return their rifles. On 6 April 1888 the Lee Small Arms Co were informed that the rifles had been withdrawn from service due to unreliable ammunition. The company was asked to take the rifles back and four rifles and a quantity of ammunition was retuned and a refund was eventually negotiated.

Most of the rifles remained in store until July 1907 when 340 Remington Lee Rifles were sold with Snider and Martini Henry rifles and carbines to an English firm and shipped to England.

The remaining rifles appear to have been sold off locally, many were converted to "carbine" length, with either a 26 inch barrel of 21.5 inch barrel, and whether this work was undertaken by Army armourers or gunsmiths in the trade is not clear.

Two examples of NZ traders offering Remington Lee Rifles for sale early 1900s

New Zealand marked Remington Lee Rifles observed to date, July 2012, those listed as "Remington Lee" have been cut down to carbine length.

Arm	NZ Marked	Maker	Dated	Serial No
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		41244
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		41649
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		41661
Remington Lee Rifle	N^Z 87	Remington		41663
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		41704
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		41716
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		41717
Remington Lee Rifle	N^Z 87	Remington		41726
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		41763
Remington Lee Rifle	N^Z 87	Remington		41790
Remington Lee Rifle	N^Z 87	Remington		41803
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		41846
Remington Lee Rifle	N^Z 87	Remington		41927
Remington Lee Rifle	N^Z 87	Remington		41939
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		41985
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		42026
Remington Lee Rifle	N^Z 87	Remington		42058
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		42091
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		42113
Remington Lee Rifle	N^Z 87	Remington		42202
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		422xx
Remington Lee Rifle	N^Z 87	Remington		42327
Remington Lee Rifle	N^Z 87	Remington		42332
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		42397
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		42409
Remington Lee Rifle	N^Z 87	Remington		42428
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		42448
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		42461
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		42513
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		42544
Remington Lee Rifle	N^Z 87	Remington		42546
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		42578
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		42598
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		42640
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		43128
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		43178
Remington Lee Rifle	N^Z 87	Remington		43230
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		43325
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		43363
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		43787
Remington Lee	N^Z 87	Remington		44177



Top Pattern 1853 Socket Bayonet, Bottom: NZ issue Remington Lee Socket Bayonet



Comparison of ammunition: .577 Snider 1869, 577/450 Martini Henry 1885, .43 Spanish 1887, .303 British 1898

Acknowledgements and thanks to: J Osborne, T Sillars, P Glynn

Photos: J Osborne, P Cregeen

*References: The Remington Lee Rifle by E Myszkowski
Bayonets of the Remington Cartridge period by J L Janzen
NZAHAA "New Zealand Cavalcade of Antique Arms"-New Zealand leads Empire in Introduction of Lee
Enfield Rifle by MA Edsall*