

NZART ID: 74, Arm Type: Rifle, Date of Draft: (V1) 15 August 2012, Compiled by: Phil Cregeen
Pattern: 1856 Enfield(sword) Short Rifle (2 band Enfield) Introduced in to NZ Service:1858, Withdrawn 1880-85
Makers: Enfield; Tower; London Armoury Co; Private gun makers.
Calibre: .577 in, 25 bore, Bore: 3 groove uniform rifling RH twist 1turn in 78in.,
Barrel length: 33.0 in. OA Length: 49.0 in. Weight: 9 lb 0 oz. (4.0 kg)
Type of Action: percussion muzzle loader, single shot
Magazine: None, Sights: rear sight bed to 400, leaf to 1100 yds., foresight barleycorn on fixed block.
Bayonet: Pat 1856 Yataghan Sword bar on barrel (NZAR # 42)



Pattern 56: Introduced in 1856 as a shorter handier rifle with 33' barrel for the use of sergeants of line regiments and rifle corps, it was essentially very similar to the Pattern 53 Rifle, but having only two bands to secure the shorter barrel. Other differences were a bayonet bar on the barrel to secure the Pat 56 yataghan sword bayonet and the lower sling swivel positioned on the butt and iron as opposed to brass furniture. It also saw the introduction of the improved double freed tumbler for the lock assembly which was then applied to the later Pat 53 rifles. Over the production life of the Short Rifle it saw a number of improvements resulting in Pattern 58, 60, and 61 and many were later converted to Snider Breech Loader. It was also copied by private gun makers for the Volunteer movement.

New Zealand Service

It should be noted that New Zealand Arms returns do not differentiate between the different Patterns of Short Rifle and frequently refer to them as **Sword Rifle** as they take the Yataghan sword bayonet, however available evidence from contemporary photographs indicates that only the Pat 56 Short Rifle saw service in New Zealand. Provincial governments probably purchase short rifles from private gun makers to arm Volunteers; the example shown was made by Adams.

The Short Enfield Rifles most probably first saw service with the various British regiments that came to New Zealand in the late 1850s. The Enfield rifles seeing action in the 1860s campaigns in Taranaki and the Waikato.(4) The numbers of Imperial troops varied as hostilities with local Maori dictated and reached a peak of 10,000 men in the early 1860s. From 1865 a self reliant policy was adopted, where colonial forces took over the fighting role and Imperial forces were withdrawn by 1870.

However New Zealand Volunteers were also soon armed with the Short Enfield as reported in the Otago Witness of 29 January 1859 (4) A Volunteer Rifle Corps formed in Taranaki armed with a rifle "*shorter and lighter than the Enfield rifle.....its range being 1100 yds.*" the later is believed to refer to the sight graduations. On 13 Feb 1861 the Nelson Examiner reported (4) a new company of Volunteers being "armed with the short Enfield rifle"

Contemporary photographs put this rifle in the hands of Wanganui Militiaman, Maori Native Auxiliary, Soldiers of the British **68th (Durham) Light Infantry** ('The Faithful Durhams') at Fort Britomark, Auckland c1865, Sergeants armed with P1856 Enfield Short Rifles & Yataghan sword bayonets, Privates with 2nd pattern1853 Enfield long rifles.

In August 1869 a comprehensive return of arms and ammunition (no Snider Enfield's listed) was prepared for the Select Committee. The return showed the arms and ammunition on issue and in store in the Colony of New Zealand to the Armed Constabulary, Militia, Volunteers and Native Auxiliaries. This included **175 Short (sword) rifles.(3)**

By 1885 no Enfield Rifles of any type was listed in the return of Arms of the NZ Colonial Government.

Acknowledgements: Information and photos-John Osborne, Phil Cregeen,
References: (1)The Pattern 1853 Enfield Rifle by Peter Smithurst
(2).577 Pattern 1853 Rifle Musket & Snider-Enfield by I D Skennerton
(3)AJHR 1869 H 4a
(4) <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/>