

## NZAR ID A31 World War 1 Handguns chambered for .455 used by New Zealand Forces with WWI Provenance

by John Osborne AA DTT PhD FSG, 2 October 2011 - Request for information for inclusion in the NZ Arms Register



My understanding is that during World War One 1914 – 1918 most commissioned officers in New Zealand Army Service were expected to purchase their own handguns and the revolvers must have been able to safely chamber and fire the .455" MKII rimmed cartridge. Colt was contracted to supply 60,000 New Service .455" m1898 revolvers, Smith & Wesson also supplied 5,000 MKI New Century .455" revolvers and 55,000 MKII New Century .455" revolvers to supplement the British Webley made handguns. During WWI New Zealand Volunteers joined the British Royal Navy, and the Royal Flying Corps / Royal Air Force and were issued with either the Webley m1913 MKV .455" Revolver or the Webley Self-Loading .455" MKI N Pistol about 7,000 made, or the special contract Colt 1911 Automatic Pistol .455" about 17,500 for the Royal Navy and about 10,000 made for the RFC / RAF.

Some NZ commissioned officers procured their handguns in New Zealand whilst others procured handguns from the British stores or Outfitters in the UK.

The types of handguns shown above are known to have been used by NZ commissioned officers serving in WWI. Some have no ordnance marks and were sold privately others are ordnance marked but have the two opposing broad arrows >< sold mark denoting private purchase out of store.

The handguns in the image above from lower left in a clockwise rotation 1. Webley Green WG Army Model m1887/94 S/N 155XX private sale; 2. Webley m1887 MKI S/N 284XX ordnance marked; 3. Webley m1894 MKII S/N 487XX ordnance marked; 4. Webley m1897 MKIII S/N 41XX private sale wooden grips; 5. Webley m1899 MK IV S/N 1085XX ordnance marked; 6. Webley Fosbery automatic revolver m1900 S/N 86X private sale. 7. Webley m1913 MKV S/N 1307XX ordnance marked sold out of service; 8. Colt New Service .455" m1898 S/N 1232XX ordnance marked – during WWI 60,000 were purchased by British & Commonwealth Forces; 9. Smith & Wesson New Century .455" m1908 MKI S/N 458X ordnance marked sold out of service – during WWI 5,000 were purchased by British & Commonwealth Forces; 10. Smith & Wesson New Century .455" m1908 MKII S/N 446XX private sale – during WWI 55,000 MKII were purchased by British & Commonwealth Forces; 11. Webley Self-Loading .455" MKI N Pistol m1913 S/N 148X ordnance marked. 12. Colt 1911 Automatic Pistol .455" S/N W1020XX private sale; 13. Webley m1915 MKVI S/N 3807XX ordnance marked sold out of service;

I would appreciate images and details of any handguns used by New Zealand forces in WWI to add to this list and for inclusion in the NZ Arms Register.

Please send any information or comments to [josborne@xtra.co.nz](mailto:josborne@xtra.co.nz) or post to PO Box 52, Kaitaia, 0441, New Zealand. Many thanks, John Osborne



**WWI handguns with NZ provenance - supplement to the NZ Arms Register, compiled by John Osborne**

Below: two photos of NZ issued WW1 revolvers. The S&W Mk II Hand Ejector at left was carried by a staff officer of the NZ Division in France and appears to be unfired. The Mk VI Webley at right was carried by Lt Deans of the Canterbury Mounted Rifles and has seen considerable service. Both revolvers carry normal military acceptance marks, do not have sold out of service stamps, and have no NZ markings. In both cases these revolvers have excellent provenance to WW1 from the families. Courtesy, Rod Woods.



The images below are of a 1903 Colt automatic pistol that was presented to a young Dunedin 2nd Lieutenant by friends when he left Dunedin in September 1916 with the 8th Reinforcements. It has been engraved with his name. On his return to NZ 2 years later he placed the pistol back in its original box where it has remained to this day. The box has been marked with the serial number of the pistol, 1682XX. Probably purchased from A&W McCarthy, Dunedin who until 1921 imported all their Colts direct from the States. This Colt has no London address or proofing, from the serial number it was made in 1914. The wear on the pistols finish indicates what would have been carried in pocket or pack for the two years away in service. Courtesy, Grant Sherriff FSG.



Below' some photos from of a N^Z Marked WWI Webley MK VI S/N 3837XX, courtesy' Shawn Conaghan and Phil Cregeen.



Another Smith & Wesson .455 Service revolver S/N 338XX was carried by a Lieutenant in the NZ Engineers who left NZ in March 1916 with the 10th reinforcements, returning after the war. He has carved the base of the grips with NZE for NZ Engineers and PM, his initials. Other than holster wear to the bluing the revolver appears to be in an almost unfired condition. Courtesy, Grant Sherriff FSG.

