

Two New Zealand Heritage Smith & Wesson Revolvers, by Dr John Osborne MG DTT PhD FSG



Images above compare the sizes of the .22" Model M and .455" New Century Triple Lock Military revolver.

Smith & Wesson First Model M, Hand Ejector, Caliber .22" Rim Fire Long, 3" Barrel, Nickel Finish, Bakelite Grips, Seven Chamber Cylinder, only 4575 were made between 1902 and 1906, also later known as the Lady Smith. The .22 long cartridge introduced in 1871 had a 29grain lead bullet and 5 grains of black powder, muzzle velocity of about 1100fps and quite effective at close range.

New Zealand Service: Used by a large business in Napier, NZ for protection of the company's property and monies on escort duty, particularly when large sums of cash were taken to deposit in the bank and on employee payday a large amount of cash was transported from the bank to the business where the accountant would then make up the pay packets in cash for each employee who had to collect and sign for their weekly pay. Later under the 1920 Arms Act the Police issued a "License to Carry a Pistol" to the company manager who could authorize any member of his staff to carry the pistol. Also later pursuant to regulation 74 of the Traffic Regulations 1956 the Police issued a permit to operate a motor vehicle in which a loaded pistol was carried. Most other makes of .22" and .32" caliber small revolvers were also used for this purpose, sold by local arms dealers.



Proof & British opposing arrows sale marks

.455 MKII – 22RF Long

S&W Trade Marks on frame and grips



S/N 5254 on 455 triple lock revolver



S&W Model M in it's cutaway belt holster



S/N 2034 on the 22 Model M



Barrel marks on the S&W 1st model M revolver



Barrel marks on the S&W .455" Triple Lock New Century Military Revolver

Specifications: In 1914 Britain contracted S&W to supply 5,000 New Century .455" (triple Lock) revolvers at a cost US\$21 each. Designated; **Pistol Smith & Wesson .455 with 6 1/2 inch barrel Mark 1**, it was introduced into British service on 5th July 1915 to supplement the standard-issue revolver which at the outbreak of WWI was the Webley Mk V adopted 9 December 1913. Between 1907 and 1915 Smith & Wesson, made a total 15,376 solid frame triple locks (all calibres) including the British order, Barrel: 6.5". Calibre: chambered for .455" MKI cordite (long) & MKII cordite (short). Length O/A: 11.5". Double Action, 6 chamber swing out cylinder hand eject. Grips: Square butt - two piece walnut. Fixed notch rear sight and oval blade foresight. Weight: 2lb 6oz unloaded. Cartridge: The solid drawn brass case Mark II .455 cartridge (image above) introduced in 1897 with a case length of .760", a 265 grain conical wax lubricated lead bullet, Muzzle velocity: 640ft/s Range 50yds. Rate of fire: 20-30 rounds per minute.

New Zealand Service: Commissioned officers and some NCO's in the NZ military were expected to purchase their own pistols - note; on images above private sale - two opposing arrows. In the trenches in 1915 concerns that dirt between the ejector rod and shroud caused the triple lock to malfunction making the revolver temporarily inoperable, so S&W changed to the MKII design removing the shroud and third lock, which also simplified manufacturing allowing a US\$2 price reduction. This S&W MKI New Century Revolver has a NZ provenance seeing service with its NZ Commissioned Officer owner in WWI and WWII.

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