

The Terry Rifle in New Zealand Service

By Phil Cregeen



Many readers will be familiar with the Terry carbine used in New Zealand during the Land Wars of 1863 to 1872, most famously by the Forest Rangers. Recent research by the author has revealed that the Terry rifle also saw military service in New Zealand in the same period, as the following extract from the Southern Cross of 7 October 1863 describing the new gunboat *Pioneer* shows:

making frightful seas. Four howitzers were brought from Sydney, but the two placed in the cupolas only will be retained, the others being brought to Auckland. The additional arms on board are 24 Terry's breech-loading rifles, 24 Colt's improved revolvers, and 24 cutlasses. These will be supplied to the crew. The ammunition now on board is about 600 rounds of shot and shell, with proportionate quantity of ammunition for rifles. She has two 20-foot gigs,

Built in Australia, New Zealand's first purpose built gunboat *Pioneer* was fitted out with 24 Terry rifles, and 10,000 rounds of ammunition purchased in Australia for the use of the crew. *Pioneer* saw active service on the Waikato River in 1863 during the war, engaging the enemy at Meremere and Rangariri on a number of occasions. She was wrecked on the Manakau bar in December 1867, whether the Terry rifles were still onboard is not known.

Manufactured by Calisher & Terry until 1870 these were a bolt action, capping breech loading rifle. Designed and patented (# 843) by W. Terry in 1856, only the carbine version was adopted by the British Board of Ordnance although rifles were purchased by a number of colonies including Australia. They had all steel furniture, a plain one piece walnut stock fitted with sling swivels. A 33.5 in barrel Birmingham proofed with bayonet bar, secured to the stock with front band, central wedge & rear vertical breach screw. Also fitted with a 35.3 in two piece iron clearing rod with minor piece secured in a butt trap.

With a calibre of 30 bore (.54 in) 5 groove Enfield rifling, RH twist 1 in 36 in. Overall length of 50.5 in and a weight of 9 Lb 1 oz, they had an inverted V fore sight, V rear sight - ramp to 400 yards & flip up ladder to 1000 yards.

The ammunition comprised of a Nitrate treated combustible paper cartridge containing 70 grains of rifle grade black powder propellant, a solid lead 574 grain conical projectile and a wad of greased felt attached to the base, muzzle velocity about 950fps. The Bayonet was the Pat 1856 Sword bayonet with short lead to the mortise slot. The lock is marked "Calisher & Terry London" and barrel marked "Calisher & Terry Makers to H.M. War Department" and "Terry's Patent-30 Bore".

Terry Rifles were also offered for sale in New Zealand as shown by the advert below placed in the Daily Southern Cross of January 1863.

TO VOLUNTEERS AND OTHERS
INTERESTED IN THE DEFENCE OF
THE COLONY.

J. S. MACFARLANE & CO.

Will sell by auction, at their stores, Queen-street,
on the 27th instant, at 11 o'clock,

25 CALISHER AND TERRY'S BREACH-
LOADING CARBINES
25 ditto ditto ditto ditto Rifles
All of the regulation Enfield bore.

Also,
40 Boxes—each 500—Cartridges for the above

It is assumed that the rifles carried on *Pioneer* were Short rifles, as described, as this was the practice for naval service, however it should be noted that Long rifles were also manufactured and several examples presented as prizes in Nelson province have been noted.

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Papers Past-Southern Cross 7 October 1863
The Waikato River Gunboats by Grant Middlemiss
Australian Military Rifles & Bayonets by Ian Skennerton
Catalogue of the Enfield Pattern Room-British Rifles,
by H Woodend, HMSO*