

Pattern (name) Semple Tank, Introduced into NZ Service: 1940, Withdrawn 1942

Crew: 8 (6 gunners, driver, gears man) Battle Weight: 25 tonnes (25,000 Kg)

Length: 15 ft 2 in. Width: 8 ft 4 in. Height: 11 ft 2 in. Track width: 20 in.

Guns: Six .303 Bren LMGs ball mounted

Armour: 9/16 " Mild steel and 1/2" corrugated Manganese steel, Engine: International Harvester 6 cylinder diesel.

Max Speed: Road 6 mph, (13 km/hr). Range: 60-100 miles.(90-160 Km)



New Zealand Service

The Semple tank project was the idea of the Rt Hon. Robert Semple (1873-1955), Minister of Public Works and also National Service in 1941. He suggested that tank superstructures be constructed and fitted to Caterpillar tractors to help defend New Zealand from enemy invasion. The prototype was built on a Caterpillar D8 by the Public Works Department workshop in Christchurch and two further tanks were built at the New Zealand Railways workshop at Addington. Two of the tanks were attached to 11 Heavy Regiment, New Zealand Artillery for a defence parade through Christchurch. An example was also paraded in Wellington and Auckland. However, the tanks were only used by the army for training and experimentation as they were too slow, unstable and the armour proved ineffective. They were eventually reconverted to tractors.

Reference: *Armoured Fighting Vehicles of New Zealand 1939-59* by J Plowman & M Thomas