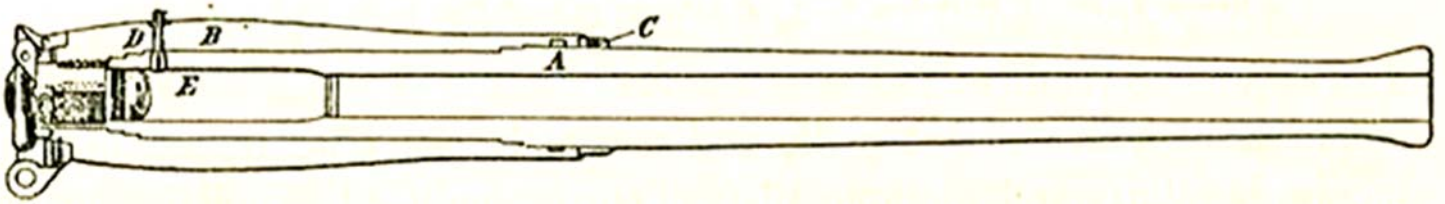


**NZAR ID 370 ARM TYPE: Artillery. Draft date (V2) 18 Nov 2014, Compiled by Dr John Osborne MG DTT PhD FSG, Pattern: 15 Pdr Breech Loading 7 cwt Field Gun. Caliber: 3". Introduced: 1901. Withdrawn from NZ use: After the Boer War**

**Specifications:** Maker: W. G. Armstrong of Elswick Ordnance Works, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 15 pounder Breech Loading 7 cwt field gun. 3" caliber. Barrel Length 84" Rack and pinion elevation adjustment minus 5 to plus 16 degrees. Rate of Fire 7 to 8 rounds per minute. Muzzle velocity 1590 feet per second. Maximum firing range about 5900 yards. This gun was a modified version of the previous BL 12 pounder 7 cwt gun of 1883. When smokeless propellant "cordite" started to replace black powder from 1889 it was proved that the 12 pounder was capable of firing a heavier shell of up to 15 pounds hence the change of designation to 15pdr. Carriage: Mk I, the recoil was controlled by drag-shoes, these were placed under the wheels and were connected by chains and cables to the wheel hubs and the trail. The Mk II carriage had the same drag-shoe system and also a hydraulic buffer, this only allowed a short recoil, and was not successful. The Mk III carriage introduced, a rudimentary recoil system, consisting of a "spade" beneath the trail which dug in when the gun recoiled, connected by a steel shaft to a spring in a cylinder on the trail. Mk I and II carriages fitted with these were known as Mk I\* and Mk II\*. On firing the whole gun and carriage jumped and moved backwards, the spring returned it to firing position and thus increased the rate of fire compared to the old model. From 1904 the BL 15 pounder was gradually superseded by the QF 18 pounder. A modified version of the 15pdr fitted with an over barrel recoil assembly, the 15pdr remained in limited use in World War I.

In 1895 some 12-pr 7cwt were converted to a 15-pr for use with the Royal Field Artillery. The new gun retained most of the main features of the 12-pr 7cwt, but a barrel elevating screw system was re-introduced.



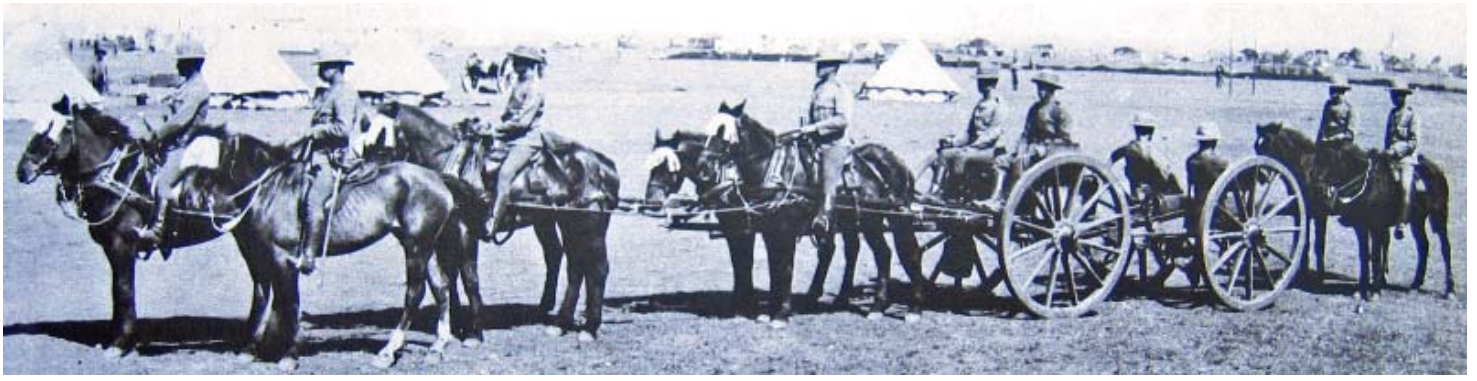
The barrel was of a fabricated steel construction, 7ft long, flared at the muzzle and consisted of an inner tube (A) over which a steel jacket (B) with hollowed out trunnions was shrunk on. The jacket was extended at the breech to house the breech screw. In front of the trunnions a hoop (C) was shrunk on which carried the fore-sight mounting brackets. Onto the breech end of the jacket a hood was screwed which gave protection to the breech fittings and carried the elevating bolt and tangent sights sockets. The barrel was fitted with a steel removable vent bolt (D), positioned vertically through the jacket. Rifling consisted of a poly-groove hook section with a width of 0.4 inches and a depth of 0.04 inches. All barrels made from 1887 onwards had 18 grooves of progressive rifling. The breech system consisted of a De Bange type interrupted screw breech with a steel mushroom obturation head (E) with asbestos pads and a cam lever. The breech screwed into the back of the steel jacket and was hinged on the right hand side of the gun.

**Ammunition:** Refer NZAR ID 255. While the BL 15pdr could fire a shell up to approximately 5900 yards, the early pattern No 56 time fuses could only be set for a maximum range of 4100 yards because the fuse only burned for 13 seconds. The shells were usually time-set to burst in the air above and in front of the enemy. The percussion fuse could be set to explode on contact, up to the maximum range, but shrapnel exploding on contact was of little use. This was rectified later by the No. 57 "blue fuse" which could be time set up to 5900 yards.



Left: MKI 15pdr barrel breech open, showing front and rear gunsight mounting blocks, breech vent, and trunnions  
Right: New Zealand gunners in action with their Breech Loading 15pdrs on MKI carriages, a two gun Battery in the Boer War c1901.





New Zealand 15pdr field gun team at Mafeking 1901, officer with sword & revolver, gunners normally armed with .303" carbines & Bayonets



Left: MKI carriage with drag shoes fitted - connected by chains and cables to the wheel axle hubs and the trail. Second: Hinged breech screw assembly. Third: top view of breech and screw, vent – for friction match ignition - vent sleeve removed. Fourth: Queen Victoria monogram engraved on barrel denoting British Crown / Government ownership. Right: Muzzle showing rifling and Barrel Serial Number



W Taylor New Zealand Mounted Rifleman c1900 at the Blockhouse on the Kopje overlooking the town of Brandfort. Courtesy Noel Taylor  
15pdr BL barrel mounted on a MKIII or MKI\* or MKII\* converted carriage. Note the "spade" beneath the trail which dug in when the gun recoiled, connected by a rod to a compression spring in the cylinder on the trail allowing the gun to recoil and then be returned to its original firing position.

**New Zealand use:** used by the two gun New Zealand Artillery Battery raised from the 4<sup>th</sup> contingent serving in the Boer war 1901. Officially known as the New Zealand Rhodesian Field Artillery. The guns and ammunition were obtained from the British for service in the Boer War. This was the first New Zealand Artillery Battery to serve overseas.

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<http://www.samilitaryhistory.org/vol025dh.html> <http://www.britishbattles.com/great-boer-war/colenso.htm> Handbook for the 15-pr B.L. Gun (Mark I) and Carriages Marks I\*, II\*, III and III\*, HM Stationery Office, London, 1903