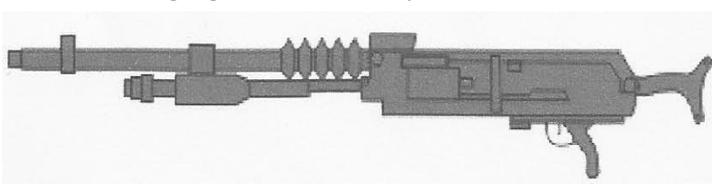


Pattern: Hotchkiss M1898 Machine Gun. Introduced: into NZ service Jan 1900. Withdrawn: June 1900.

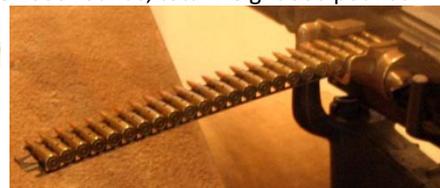
Specifications; Maker: W G Armstrong. Model: Hotchkiss M1898 gas operated machine gun caliber .303", barrel length 25" with 5 cooling fins. Ladder rear sight graduated to 2000 yards. Rate of fire 450 rounds per minute, accurate barrel life 1000 rounds, total weight 300 pounds.



M1898 Hotchkiss Machine Gun



Ammunition box with strip of 24 rounds clipped together



New Zealand .303" Hotchkiss Machine Gun Battery in the Boer War, three of the guns are mounted on shields and the fourth on a tripod. Also in the image are NZ Mounted Riflemen with .303" Martini Enfield carbines

In 1875 American born Benjamin Berkeley Hotchkiss had set up an arms factory near Paris, France and his quick firing (QF) artillery guns were approved for British, Russian and US naval service. By 1882 Hotchkiss had branches throughout Europe and was reputed to be one of the world's leading arms and artillery designers. After his death in 1885 his Hotchkiss Company developed a gas operated air cooled automatic machine gun based on a design by Captain Baron A. Odkolek von Augeza of Vienna, Austria. This machine gun was adopted by the French Army in 1897 and was also manufactured in England by W G Armstrong at his Elswick Company. By 1914 the Hotchkiss had developed into one of the best automatic machine gun designs in the world. It was used extensively in World War I, remaining in service until World War II. The Hotchkiss MG was gas operated and air cooled and was the first machine gun to incorporate a gas piston in a cylinder under the barrel. The gun had few parts making it simple and easy to take apart and maintain. The barrel was quick and easy to change; an operation performed with a special wrench after approximately every 1,000 rounds. The gun fired from an open bolt position, a design today used in most machine guns. The gun was fed by means of metal cartridge strip clips. The motion of the piston-actuated operating rod functioned the bolt mechanism and worked a sprocket feed mechanism which drew the clip through the action from left to right. After its last round had been fired the empty feed strip was ejected automatically, leaving the bolt open in the rearward position. When a new strip was fed into the gun it triggered the release forward of the bolt and firing resumed. Although reliable and easy to feed continuously with a three man team, the individual strips each held only 24 rounds of ammunition. The Hotchkiss had a rate of fire of approximately 450 rounds per minute and a maximum effective range of around 2000 yards. Firing was usually in successive bursts of 10 to 15 rounds and the gun could sustain continuous firing of about 120 aimed shots per minute. Being air cooled, the gun had a heavy thick walled chamber and five cooling rings which formed a readily recognizable feature. During long continuous firing the temperature of the barrel could rise to around 400°C. At this point the barrel would be dark red in color, but dissipated heat as fast as it was generated. Although the M1898 Hotchkiss Machine gun proved reliable in use, the most common complaint was its heavy 300 pound weight, too heavy a load for the riding horses of the NZ Mounted Rifles. The metal magazine strip was also considered by some as a design flaw. This problem was only corrected during World War I when a 249-cartridge belt was introduced. The same basic design, with some minor alterations, led to the well known M1914 Hotchkiss Machine Gun use by some NZ forces in WWI.

New Zealand Service. In December 1899 the New Zealand Government accepted as a gift from the W G Armstrong-Elswick Armament Company four of the latest pattern M1898 Hotchkiss .303 caliber machine guns complete with equipment and pack saddle, suitable for cavalry or mounted infantry, accompanied by an expert instructor. New Zealand agreed to provide the 40 horses and 30 men to make up the New Zealand Hotchkiss Machine Gun Battery, part of the 2nd Contingent which arrived in South Africa in January 1900. The NZ Hotchkiss Machine Gun Battery in the Boer War was disbanded in June 1900.

Acknowledgements and special thanks to Terrance Wilson. Stephanie Smith. Phil Cregeen. Noel Taylor.

ORANJE VRIJSTAAT ARTILLERIE CORPS O.V.S.A.C. Study No.22 Oct-Dec 2007

<http://atojs.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/atojs?a=d&d=AJHR1900-I.2.3.2.15&e=-----10--1-----0-->

<http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=TH18991221.2.19.6&srpos=15&e=-----10--1----2%22hotchkiss+detachment%22>