

NZART ID No: 146, Arm Type: Rifle, Date of Draft (V1) 10/7/2012, Compiled by Phil Cregeen

Pattern: Ross M 1910 Mk III & MK IIIB, Introduced into NZ Service: 1916, Withdrawn: Post WWII

Makers: Ross Rifle Co, Quebec, Canada

Details of Arm:

Calibre: .303 British, Rifling: 4 groove 1:10 in LH Twist, Barrel Length: 30.5 in., OA Length: 50.5 in. Weight: 9 Lb 14 oz

Action: Straight pull bolt with 5 round fixed box magazine.

Sights: blade foresight with protector, aperture tangent back sight with windage adjustment, 400 yd fixed battle sight and long range sight, front of the slide graduated 1-12 and the side 0-9.

Bayonet: (NZART # 55) Pattern Ross Mk II Length OA 14.7 in (373mm), Blade 10.0 in (254mm), MRD 16.5 mm, Scabbard 11.2 in (284mm). Wooden grips secured by two screws, Brown leather scabbard with integral frog, steel locket and internal chape.

Markings: MK III: serial no and date plus code letters on RHS butt, MK IIIB: serial No on receiver ring prefix B,

NZ Issue marks.



Ross M 1910 Mk III manufactured 1915 Canadian issue

The Ross came about as a result of a desire by the Canadian Government to manufacture their own arms following the Boer War. Britain refused to allow the Lee Enfield to be made in Canada and so they turned to Sir Charles Ross, who offered his newly designed straight pull rifle as a suitable alternative and set up a factory in Quebec in 1902. The first military rifle Mk I commenced production in 1903 and then went through a number of improvements resulting in the Mk III in 1910.

The Ross Mk III is a straight- pull, bolt action rifle, with a charger loaded 5 round magazine, made in Quebec by the Ross Rifle Co. for the Canadian armed forces. It has a 30.5 in barrel in .303 British calibre, with four groove LH twist 1 turn in 10 in. The stock is one piece with a top hand-guard to the lower band. The rear sight incorporates an aperture with windage adjustment, a 400 yd open battle sight and a long range sight, the blade fore-sight is fitted with a hooped protector. The safety catch is a flip over type on the bolt and to the left of the receiver is a combined cut-off and bolt release change lever. The rifle weighs 9 lb 14 oz and has an overall length of 50.5 in



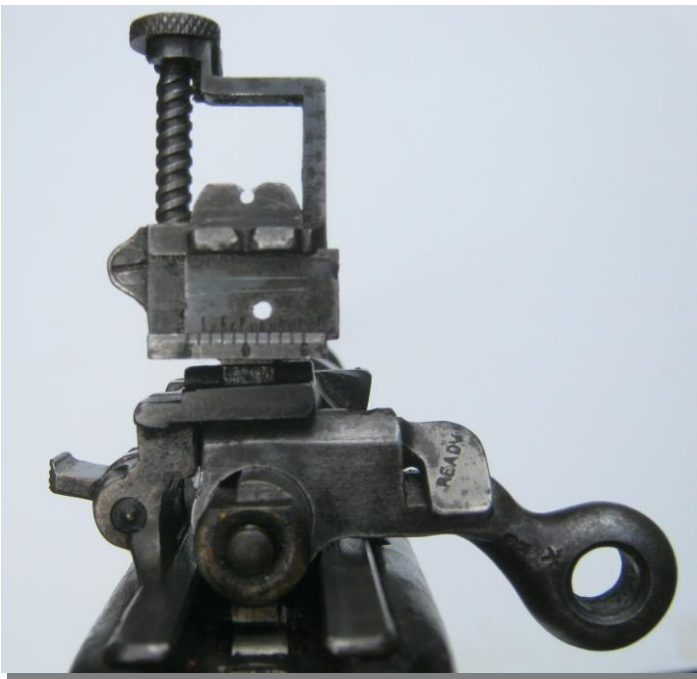
The Mk IIIB British contract (bottom) is similar but has different sights which are similar to the P 14.



Straight pull bolt withdrawn to the rear, note screw thread locking lugs

The rifle featured here was manufactured in 1915 by the Ross Rifle Company of Quebec (serial number and year stamped on the butt), it was completed sometime after August that year (from the letter E stamped on the barrel denoting chamber enlarged to accommodate the British manufactured Mk VII 303 cartridge). It was sent to the western front with the Canadian Expeditionary Force (butt stamped CEF over 18).

On the western front the Canadian troops experienced problems with the Ross, its complex bolt mechanism suffered in the mud of the trenches and it was prone to jamming, to such an extent that the soldiers lost confidence in their rifle and picked up SMLEs at any opportunity. Much of the jamming was later attributed to differences in head space between Canadian and British manufactured ammunition and also poor manufacturing tolerance of the chambers, which lead to the enlarged chambers mentioned above. Another problem of the Ross was that if the bolt was assembled incorrectly it would not lock and would blow back on firing, causing injury to the shooter. After three months of Canadian combat experience the C in C, Field Marshal Sir John French ordered the Canadians to exchange their Ross Rifles for SMLEs. However it was retained as a sniper rifle, as it was found to be more accurate than the Lee Enfield out to 600 yds.



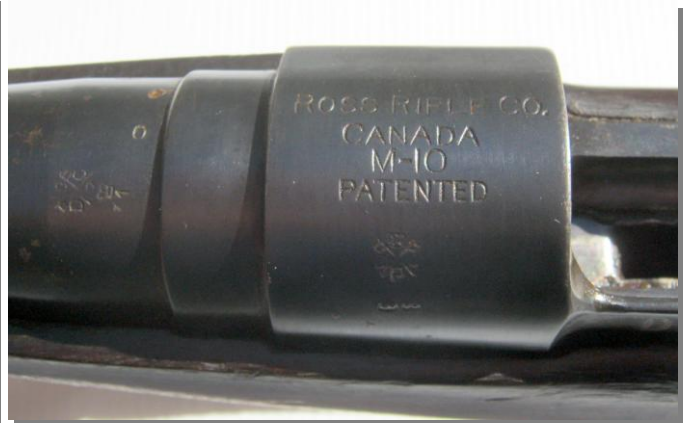
The Ross Mk IIIB was introduced in LOC 17690 dated 21 October 1915. Having ordered 100,000 Ross Rifles Mk IIIB from Canada to augment the British rifle production, but only actually receiving 66,590 before cancelling the order, Britain retained a further 95,000 of Mk III rifles in exchange for the SMLEs supplied to the CEF. The Ross rifles were used by the British to arm second line forces and some were supplied to the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, (this one marked RM on butt plate). A quantity of these rifles were supplied to the Chilean navy as ships equipment in 1920 when the Battle ship HMS Canada and 3 Faulkner class destroyers were sold to Chile, these rifles are marked with a DA prefix number.

cut off rear sight safety bolt handle

Marking:



Butt: Ross roundel III 912/1916 GW



Manufacturer & proof marks

New Zealand Service:

When NZ home based military arms supplies ran out in 1915-16 NZ land forces travelled to Europe unarmed, when they arrived they were issued with small arms and ammunition, B Company, Wellington Infantry Battalion were issued with .303" Ross M 1910 MKIII rifles & bayonets. One of them Private Alfred Hugh Dillon MM, served as a sniper. He was awarded the Military Medal (MM) for gallantry at Bon Avis Ridge over the period 29 September – 3 October 1918 while acting as Battalion Observer.

300 Ross Rifles were issued to the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy, which became the RNZN in 1941.

Ross rifles and bayonets were used by the Home Guard in WWII. They were sold as surplus in the 1970s.

To date no NZ marked Ross rifles have been observed, however a number of DA prefix ex-Chilean rifles were imported by the trade in the 1970s.

Acknowledgements: *Photo: Phil Cregeen , John Osborne & Terry Wilson*
References: *The Ross Rifle Story by R Phillips, F Dupuis & J Chadwick*