

NZAR ID A28 NZ Police Handguns chambered for .32" & 38" S & W, and .32"/ 7.65 Auto Cartridge in use 1903-1964?
by John Osborne AA DTT PhD FSG, 7 October 2011 - Request for information for inclusion in the NZ Arms Register



When New Zealand Police Commissioner Walter Dinnie (Formerly of Scotland Yard) took up his position in 1903 he introduced and popularised into NZ Police service (at least for officers and detectives), the .32" caliber revolver. Limited use of revolvers by NZ Police N.C.Os and Constables did not warrant the expenditure needed to replace the .450" calibre revolvers at that time. Many commissioned officers in the NZ Police purchased their own handguns mostly in .32" S&W but some in .38" S&W caliber. The well made top break double action American Harrington & Richardson (H&R) was excellent value for money and initially the most popular, produced from 1887? to 1941 made in several sizes from the Vest Pocket 5 chamber .32" to the large frame 6 chamber .44". The Colt Police Positive .32" Revolver with 2" and 4" barrels were also popular from about 1906. Some police officers preferred the semi automatic pistol and the Colt m1903 and the Browning m1910 were popular. Following the adoption by the previously unarmed London and Metropolitan Police of the m1913 Webley .32" semi automatic pistol both the New South Wales (3000 on issue by 1950) and New Zealand Police purchased small quantities. In February 1923 the New Zealand Police issued general instructions for handling the common types of 32" pistols. The "How to Shoot" section explains the techniques then in use. In 1964 the NZ Police adopted the .38" Smith & Wesson Victory model Ex the RNZAF for the Armed Offenders Squad.

The handguns shown above have provenance indicating they were used by members of the New Zealand Police but there is no absolute proof because there are no New Zealand Police issue marks on any of them, the NZ Police recorded and issued them by their serial numbers or were privately owned.

The handguns in the image above from lower left in a clockwise rotation. 1. H&R 6 chamber Double Action (DA) Self Ejecting (SE) 3.25" barrel .32" S&W long caliber, nickel plated. 2. H&R 5 chamber DA, SE, 3" barrel .32" S&W Short blued. 3. H&R 5 chamber DA, SE, 3" barrel .32" S&W Short, nickel plated. 4. H&R 6 chamber DA, SE, 4" barrel .38" S&W, hammerless, blued. 5. Colt Police Positive Detective Special m1905 DA, Hand Eject .32" Colt New Police caliber (same as the .32 S&W Long) Revolver with 2" barrel, walnut grips. 6. Colt Police Positive m1905 DA, Hand Eject .32" Colt New Police caliber (same as the .32 S&W Long) Revolver with 4" barrel, brown rubber composite grips. 7. Colt m1903 marked Automatic Colt / 32 rimless smokeless, 3.75" barrel, London proofed. 8. FN Browning m1910, 7.65mm (.32" automatic) caliber, 3.25" barrel. 9. Webley Semi Automatic m1913 MKI 3.5" barrel marked 7.65mm & 32 Automatic Pistol. 10. Webley Semi Automatic m1913 MKII 3.5" barrel marked 7.65mm & 32 Automatic Pistol.

I would appreciate images and details of any handguns owned / used by New Zealand Police for inclusion in the NZ Arms Register.

Please send any information to jcosborne@xtra.co.nz or post to PO Box 52, Kaitaia, 0441, New Zealand. Many thanks, John Osborne

New Zealand Police handguns - supplement to the NZ Arms Register, compiled by John Osborne



NZ Police Cadets being instructed in the use of .32" Colt m1903 semi automatic pistols 1957. Courtesy Dominion Newspaper