

Violent Trajectories

A Cultural History of the Enfield Rifle in the British Empire

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A Thesis Submitted to Victoria University of Wellington in Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in History

Victoria University of Wellington

2017

To my family, for their love and intelligence, and of course, to Olivia.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the material, cultural, and political significance of the Enfield rifle in the British Empire from c. 1850 to 1870. Unravelling the weapon's links with imperial ideology and violence, it argues that the Enfield helped to produce discourses of race, gender, and civilisation during this era. Furthermore, it contends that these discourses shaped the ways in which Britons viewed the Enfield and influenced how they saw themselves. The rifle is best known for its well-chronicled role in the 1857 Indian Rebellion, where it was central to British narratives of the conflict. While acknowledging the Indian context, this thesis aims to draw the Enfield deeper into debates about British imperial culture, comparing the rifle's physical and discursive influence across a range of imperial spaces.

The Enfield rifle was one of the most important weapons of the nineteenth century. The product of a revolution in rifle technology, it amazed the British public and military with its accuracy and range. The weapon's invention prompted the introduction of large scale factory production techniques in Britain. It also stimulated a massive rethinking of military tactics and was a central component of the militarisation of British society during the 1850s and 1860s. The Enfield then had extensive use in conflicts including the Crimean War, the Indian Rebellion, the New Zealand Wars, and the American Civil War. It also found a home in the burgeoning Volunteer Movement in Britain and New Zealand.

Through its use in these arenas, the Enfield had a considerable physical impact on the British Empire, but it had even greater discursive significance. During the 1850s and 1860s, discussions about the Enfield's invention, production, and usage promoted ideas of rationality, modern science, and individualism. After the 1857 Indian Rebellion, the rifle came to epitomise British technological might and racial 'superiority' in the minds of Victorians. The Volunteer Force, established in 1859, embraced the Enfield as its weapon of choice and conceived of it as a weapon that embodied the Force's values of skill, education and respectability. In the New Zealand Wars however, the rifle failed to bring the decisive victories many settlers expected, and they began to disparage the weapon as a result. Nevertheless, the Enfield was still deeply implicated in the contested process of colonisation in New Zealand. Ultimately, the Enfield's role in these events transformed the weapon into a deeply raced and gendered object.

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Acknowledgements

There are many people who helped to guide this thesis. First of all, I am deeply indebted to my supervisor Charlotte Macdonald, whose guidance and incisive feedback has been invaluable. Many thanks also to Michael Fitzgerald for his wealth of knowledge on firearms. I am exceedingly grateful to Rebecca Lenihan, Catherine Abou-Nemeh, Katie Cooper, Adrienne Thompson, Olivia Benton-Guy, and my classmates for their perceptive comments on various drafts and also to my sisters for a last-minute proof read. Finally, thank you to my fellow master's students whose company, humour and discussion helped immeasurably.

Glossary

Breech-loader: a firearm loaded from a breech at the base of the barrel.

Brown Bess: a musket used by the British military for much of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Calisher and Terry Carbine: a breech-loading rifle invented in 1855, used by some colonial forces in New Zealand during the 1860s.

Enfield Rifle: a muzzle-loading rifle invented in 1853, standard issue in the British military until 1866, though it remained in use for several years afterwards and was also used by colonial forces.

Muzzle-loader: a firearm loaded from the muzzle of the barrel.

Rifling: spiral grooves along the inside of a barrel that cause a bullet to spin, making it faster and more accurate.

Snider Rifle: invented in 1866, it was created by converting the muzzle-loading Enfield rifle into a breech-loader. Also known as the Snider-Enfield rifle.

Spencer Rifle: a repeating weapon invented in the United States in 1860. Te Kooti famously acquired a Spencer rifle in the late 1860s.

Whitworth Rifle: a highly accurate rifle invented by British industrialist Josiah Whitworth during the 1850s. Being much more expensive than other weapons, it was never standard-issue in the military.

Abbreviations

AJHR	Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives
ATL	Alexander Turnbull Library
EIC	East India Company
NRA	National Rifle Association

Introduction

The Indian Rebellion of 1857 was an event of catastrophic proportions in the collective Victorian imagination. Breaking out in May that year, it created enormous outrage across the British Empire and its repercussions echoed around the world. While the event had complex causes, almost all Britons saw it as a mutiny, grounded in the superstitious rejection of a new weapon which the British East India Company had tried to introduce to its Indian soldiers: the Enfield rifle.

One of those caught up in the Rebellion was a former Cantabrian settler in Murree, a hill station in what is now Pakistan. Writing pseudonymously as “Pahari”, he penned an account of the conflict for the *Lyttelton Times* that reveals something of how Britons thought about the Enfield and its role in their Empire. The author began with the outbreak of the “mutiny”, emphasising the Enfield’s role and lamenting stories of attacks on British women and children. He then described the rifle’s shocking power in the hands of British soldiers in defeating the rebels. “Pahari” went on to compare the state of India to that of New Zealand, predicting an outbreak of fighting between Māori and settlers in the colony. Yet he was confident that the Enfield rifle would resolve any conflict in Britain’s favour, just as it had in India, writing

The Maori has never heard the rush of the conical bullet past his ear, nor seen this eccentric missile turning a summersault through his comrade’s body.... Nothing has so cowed the natives in our late Indian wars, as what Col. Hay, at Hythe, calls the Enfield rifle of 1853.¹

In actual fact, the author was soon proved wrong and the Enfield did not prove to be decisive in the wars that raged in New Zealand during the 1860s. Nevertheless, his confidence in the rifle, particularly as a weapon of choice against colonised peoples is arresting. It also strikes at some deeper questions about the nature of the British Empire at this time: what were the connections between military technology, imperial ideology and violence? How was this nexus produced and reproduced in different contexts, and in different ways? And how did firearms and discourses of race, gender, and civilisation coproduce one another in this era? These are the questions this thesis aims to address.

¹ ‘English and Foreign’, *Lyttelton Times*, 22 December 1858, 4.

*

Firearms were ubiquitous both in the material culture and political discourse of the British Empire. With practical applications in hunting and defence, they were pervasive everyday items possessed by vast numbers of civilians, as well as being the tools of a soldier's trade. But guns also had the potential to become powerful social and political symbols. During the mid-nineteenth century, no weapon can claim to be more significant, either materially or symbolically, than the Enfield rifle.

What made the rifle so noteworthy? Firstly, it was a major improvement on its predecessor, the Brown Bess, and its capabilities fostered tactical innovations that changed military practice considerably. Furthermore, the Enfield was manufactured by revolutionary new production techniques that amazed the British public and press. But most notably, the rifle was at the centre of a series of tumultuous conflicts and social movements that shook the British Empire during the 1850s and 1860s. These were the Crimean War, the Indian Rebellion, the Volunteer Movement, and the New Zealand Wars. Narratives about the rifle's use in these events helped to shape British attitudes to empire, race, gender, and civilisation during the mid-nineteenth century.

Materially, the Enfield was an important technological development. It revolutionised combat with significantly improved accuracy and range, which could reach over 1,000 yards. The capabilities offered by the Enfield and other modern rifles made conventional Napoleonic-era tactics of massed infantry firing volleys at close range impractical and even suicidal. Realising this, the British established a School of Musketry at Hythe, in Kent, to educate soldiers in the use of the new weapon and its tactics. A new weapon also required a new mode of production. Inspired by American manufacturing methods, the British revamped their factory at Enfield near London so that it could mass-produce thousands of identical weapons per week. Each of these institutions received extensive press coverage which portrayed them as the height of modernity.

The Enfield was then distributed throughout the British Empire in the hands of soldiers. Its first test was the Crimean War, where it proved its effectiveness, but had a limited impact on the British public's imagination of the War. It was in India that the rifle truly gained its reputation. One of the catalysts to the 1857 "Mutiny" was a claim that the Enfield's cartridges were greased with tallow from pigs and cows, offensive to both Muslims and Hindus. In actual fact, other causes were far more significant, but the cartridge grease narrative was a potent and often

repeated explanation. The Rebellion profoundly shocked and scandalised Britain. Narratives of isolated European women and children being attacked by rapacious Indian rebels were particularly disturbing for British audiences and transformed the Rebellion into an attack on British values of domesticity and chivalry.² Such narratives prompted vituperative cries for revenge.³ The rifle in the hands of British soldiers was one of the central instruments of inflicting this revenge and defeating the Rebellion. As a result, it became an emblem of British power that was closely tied to ideologies of racial ‘superiority’.

The Enfield also had a place in the wider context of civilian gun use and gun culture in nineteenth-century Britain. In 1859, the British Government created the Volunteer Force, a part-time army mostly composed of rifle corps. Fearing French invasion, hundreds of thousands of British men joined up to learn how to drill and shoot. Their weapon of choice was the Enfield and the rifle’s capabilities helped to shape volunteer ideology. Using the weapon over a long range required a marksman to estimate distances accurately and calculate a bullet’s trajectory while accounting for drag and wind direction. The volunteers claimed that their middle class background and education equipped them to do so better than regular soldiers, who tended to be working class in origins. In their writings on, and use of the Enfield, the Volunteer Movement helped to engraft discourses of skill, education, and rational masculinity onto the rifle.

Like the projectile it fired, the Enfield rifle’s trajectory in social and political discourse rose and fell. Having been used successfully by imperial forces around the globe, the rifle came to New Zealand. In New Zealand however, the Enfield’s semi-mythical power was undone. At the start of the wars of the 1860s, the settler press lauded the weapon, believing it would bring swift and easy victory over their less well armed Māori opponents. Yet Māori pā defences and guerrilla tactics proved to be highly effective against it. Settlers soon turned against the Enfield, blaming the rifle for their failures in the wars. The gun then found a new home in the hands of the government’s Māori allies, who received thousands of Enfields in return for their service.

The Indian Rebellion and the New Zealand Wars, alongside contemporary struggles in the Cape Colony and the Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica, were part of a wave of conflicts between imperial forces and colonised peoples that erupted across the British Empire during

² Lydia Murdoch, “‘Suppressed Grief’: Mourning the Death of British Children and the Memory of the 1857 Indian Rebellion”, *The Journal of British Studies* 51 (2012): 369.

³ Gregory Vargo, “‘Outworks of the Citadel of Corruption’: The Chartist Press Reports the Empire”, *Victorian Studies* 54 (2012): 241.

1850s and 1860s. In this period, British attitudes towards non-European peoples increasingly came to be drawn in harsh terms of entrenched racial difference and hierarchy.⁴ While some in Britain and its colonies were sympathetic to non-European causes, the vast majority saw violent resistance as a fundamental challenge to British cultural and racial ‘superiority’. Being one of the most powerful tools used by the British military to defeat resistance to colonisation in this era, the Enfield inevitably became an emblem of British civilisation, power and modernity. But the Enfield’s innate features were also important. British commentators eagerly praised the weapon’s revolutionary capacities and claimed them as physical evidence of racial ‘superiority’ over the empire’s non-European foes. Thus, the weapon became both instrumentally and symbolically embedded in British imperial power.

Historiography

This thesis lies at the intersection of several strands of historiography. Few historians have taken the Enfield rifle itself as their direct subject.⁵ But works on the military, material culture, and gender are highly relevant to the thesis, as are histories of the British Empire in general. The following section provides a brief overview of how the thesis is situated within these strands of historical analysis.

Traditionally, histories of military hardware have prioritised technical analysis. They have focussed on the “nuts-and-bolts”: the weapons’ inner workings, accoutrements and the ways in which they were used.⁶ The works of Ian Skennerton, who systematically parsed the components of the Enfield and Snider rifles, are a prime example.⁷ In the New Zealand context, John Osborne and Phil Cregeen have produced short accounts of several types of firearms used in the New Zealand Wars, including the Enfield.⁸ Osborne has also written a thorough account

⁴ Elizabeth Elbourne, *Blood Ground: Colonialism, Missions, and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799-1853* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002); Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth Century South Africa and Britain* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

⁵ Some exceptions include P. G. Smithurst, *The Pattern 1853 Enfield Rifle* (Oxford: Osprey, 2011); C. H. Roads, *The British Soldier’s Firearm, 1850-1864* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1964); Ian Skennerton, *.577 Pattern 1853 Rifle Musket & Snider-Enfield: Parts Identification Lists, Patt. ’53 & Snider Notes, Exploded Parts Drawings, Armourers Instructions, Accessories & Fittings* (Labrador: I. D. Skennerton, 2005).

⁶ Barton Hacker, ‘Military Institutions, Weapons, and Social Change: Toward a New History of Military Technology’, *Technology and Culture* 35 (1994): 769.

⁷ Ian Skennerton, *A Treatise on the Snider: The British Soldiers’ Firearm 1866-c.1880, Development, Manufacture and Issue of the Snider Rifles and Carbines from 1862-Post 1900* (Margate: I. D. Skennerton, 1978); Skennerton, *.577 Pattern 1853 Rifle Musket & Snider-Enfield*.

⁸ Published on the website <http://www.armsregister.com/>

of the carbines used by armed forces from 1840 to 1990.⁹ Tim Ryan analysed the role of the Enfield in the Taranaki Wars, noting its effectiveness or lack thereof.¹⁰ This approach has often stopped short of analysing the broader cultural meanings of weapons production and use.

Since the mid-twentieth century, some historians have begun to reflect on the social and political significance of weapons. In his work on British rifles from 1850 to 1864, C. H. Roads focused on technological aspects, but also considered how weapons influenced British society and the Empire during this period.¹¹ De Witt Bailey and Douglas Nie examined the social and economic context of firearms production in Birmingham during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, emphasising that weapons are social objects “first and foremost”.¹² A recent iteration of this approach can be found in Peter Smithurst’s *The Pattern 1853 Enfield Rifle*, which gave a broad technical overview of the weapon’s development and analysed its impact on contemporary events.¹³

The 1980s and 1990s saw the development of a “new history of military technology”, which “allowed historians to reclaim a broader range of human experience than the older political-military history could encompass, to open new areas of study within, as well as outside, the Western tradition”.¹⁴ This approach has involved situating military technologies in their social, cultural, and political contexts. Daniel Headrick noted, it “aims at understanding the causes, the development, and the consequences of technological phenomena” and interrogates the ways in which technology and society shape one another.¹⁵ His work *Tools of Empire* explored how innovations such as steam ships, modern rifles, and new medicines facilitated European imperialism through the nineteenth century and considered how such innovations influenced imperial ideologies.¹⁶ Some historians have argued that Headrick overemphasised technology and that his model of imperial expansion is flawed.¹⁷ Nevertheless, his approach remains

⁹ John Osborne, *Carbines and Police in New Zealand, 1840-1990* (Te Awanga: South Pacific Armoury New Zealand, 1990).

¹⁰ Tim Ryan, ‘The Maori Warrior and British Soldier’, in *Contested Ground Te Whenua I Tohea: The Taranaki Wars 1860-1881*, ed. Kelvin Day (Wellington: Huia, 2010), 105–23.

¹¹ Roads, *The British Soldier’s Firearm, 1850-1864*, 21.

¹² De Witt Bailey and Douglas A. Nie, *English Gunmakers: The Birmingham and Provincial Gun Trade in the 18th and 19th Century* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1978), 7.

¹³ Smithurst, *The Pattern 1853 Enfield Rifle*.

¹⁴ Hacker, ‘Toward a New History of Military Technology’, 768.

¹⁵ Daniel Headrick, *Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 4.

¹⁶ Headrick, *Tools of Empire*.

¹⁷ William Kelleher Storey, *Guns, Race, and Power in Colonial South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), xi; James Belich, *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict* (Auckland: Penguin, 1986), 293–94.

influential and authors such as Michael Adas have further interrogated technology's influence on ideology.¹⁸ Other works such as Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* analysed how military technology has shaped the broad scheme of human history, while Robert O'Connell's *Of Arms and Men* investigated the social significance of weapons and how they have changed across time and cultures.¹⁹

In the twenty-first century, some historians of military technology have begun to pay greater attention to issues of race and gender. Mary Procida, for instance, examined British women's proficiency with guns in colonial India, analysing how their gun ownership and use fitted into imperial discourses of femininity and Britishness.²⁰ More relevant to this thesis is William Kelleher Storey's *Guns, Race and Power in Colonial South Africa*. In it, Storey utilised the analytical framework of "coproduction", which acknowledges that "nature, objects, states, and societies are not separate categories that influence each other but are ideas and contingencies that evolve interdependently" to explore the development of a "gun culture" and its social and political consequences in South Africa.²¹ Ultimately, he argued this gun culture contributed to the formalisation of racial hierarchies and was a crucial component in the colonisation and disenfranchisement of Africans. Storey's approach has provided a helpful model for this thesis.

Histories of India and New Zealand as well as of the military and the Volunteer Force provide troves of information for this research. General works on the British Army in the nineteenth century by Hew Strachan, Edward Spiers, and Richard Holmes provide useful background and context.²² Prominent historians of the 1857 Indian Rebellion and Britain's response to it include Rudrangshu Mukherjee, Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, and Christopher Herbert.²³ Ian Beckett and John Crawford are the most relevant historians of the Volunteer Movement in Britain and New

¹⁸ Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

¹⁹ Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997); Robert O'Connell, *Of Arms and Men: A History of War, Weapons, and Aggression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 4.

²⁰ Mary A. Procida, 'Good Sports and Right Sorts: Guns, Gender, and Imperialism in British India', *Journal of British Studies* 40 (2001): 454–88.

²¹ Storey, *Guns, Race, and Power*, 12–13.

²² Hew Strachan, *Wellington's Legacy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984); Edward M. Spiers, *The Army and Society, 1815-1914* (London: Longman, 1980); Edward M. Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army, 1868-1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992); Richard Holmes, *Redcoat. The British Soldier in the Age of Horse and Musket* (London: HarperCollins, 2001).

²³ Rudrangshu Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt, 1857-1858: A Study of Popular Resistance* (London: Anthem, 2002); Rudrangshu Mukherjee, *Spectre of Violence: The 1857 Kanpur Massacres* (New Delhi: Viking, 1998); Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India* (Himayatnagar: Orient Longman, 2004); Christopher Herbert, *War of No Pity: The Indian Mutiny and Victorian Trauma* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

Zealand respectively.²⁴ In the context of the New Zealand Wars, historians ranging from James Cowan, to Keith Sinclair, James Belich, and more recently Vincent O'Malley have analysed the course of these conflicts.²⁵

Military history provides useful context and analysis on the topic, yet has sometimes been too limited in its approach. As Heather Streets pointed out, it has “primarily been concerned to demonstrate the importance of military structures, tactics and strategy – particularly during wartime – for the maintenance, increase or loss of national power”.²⁶ In doing so, it has tended to ignore wider social and political issues.²⁷ Consequently, this thesis attempts to draw military history into wider debates about the British Empire.

The historiography of material objects offers another rich avenue of analysis. As Jan Todd noted, technology is inherently a “social product” and must be examined in relation to its social contexts.²⁸ According to Annabel Cooper, Lachy Paterson and Angela Wanhalla,

Attending to objects and their stories enriches our understanding of the material circumstances of colonial life, of how Māori, settlers and sojourners lived and related to each other and the natural environment, shedding light on beliefs and social structures, institutions and cultural practices.²⁹

Yet this analytical framework has seldom been applied to the study of firearms. The edited volume *The Lives of Colonial Objects* documented fifty objects from New Zealand in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, yet only one, a cannon, was a military weapon. It is impossible for any volume of such a scope to be comprehensive, but considering the importance of firearms in the colonial era, and their ubiquity in modern museum collections, it

²⁴ Ian Beckett, *Riflemen Form: A Study of the Rifle Volunteer Movement, 1859-1908* (Aldershot: Ogilby Trusts, 1982); John Crawford, ‘The Volunteer Force and Its Place in Colonial Society’, in *After The Treaty: The Settler State, Race Relations & the Exercise of Power in Colonial New Zealand*, ed. Brad Patterson, Richard Hill, and Kathryn Patterson (Wellington: Steele Roberts Publishers, 2016), 149–77.

²⁵ James Cowan, *The New Zealand Wars: A History of the Maori Campaigns and the Pioneering Period*, Reprint of edition first published 1922-23 (Wellington: Government Printer, 1983); Keith Sinclair, *The Origins of the Maori Wars* (Wellington: New Zealand University Press, 1957); Belich, *The New Zealand Wars*; Kelvin Day, ed., *Contested Ground. Te Whenua I Tohea. The Taranaki Wars 1860-1881* (Wellington: Huia, 2010); Atholl Anderson, Judith Binney, and Aroha Harris, *Tangata Whenua: A History* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2015); Vincent O'Malley, *The Great War for New Zealand: Waikato 1800-2000* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2016).

²⁶ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 4.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Jan Todd, *Colonial Technology: Science and the Transfer of Innovation to Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 12.

²⁹ Annabel Cooper, Lachy Paterson, and Angela Wanhalla, eds., *The Lives of Colonial Objects* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2015), 13.

is a conspicuous absence. Several other historians have explored material history in the New Zealand context, yet few have considered guns and gun culture. Nevertheless, guns had deep social and political importance in New Zealand, and the study of them has the potential to reveal a great deal about colonial society.

Weapons are highly gendered objects. Consequently, the historiography of nineteenth-century masculinity adds a useful perspective to this research. Masculinity is well examined in the histories of New Zealand and the wider British world, though it has received less attention than might be expected in the context of the military. John Tosh was an early proponent of the approach, however, he emphasised domestic rather than martial masculinity, arguing that the importance of military service and proficiency with firearms declined over the nineteenth century in British discourse.³⁰ Graham Dawson, Erica Wald, and others have since applied gender analysis to the British imperial military and their work provides a useful comparison for the New Zealand context.³¹

While masculinity in nineteenth-century New Zealand has received historical scrutiny, the historiography has not generally addressed its more martial forms. The likes of Miles Fairburn, Jock Phillips, Duncan Mackay, and others have tended to focus on Pākehā settler men, characterising them with reference to the environment, work, and drinking, as embodied in the cultural narrative of the “man alone”, in John Mulgan’s 1939 novel of the same title.³² While this trope may aptly describe a segment of society in nineteenth-century New Zealand, it is less useful for considering gender discourse in relation to the military and the wars of the 1860s.

Guns were a central component in settler masculinity. According to Angela Woollacott, the central tenets of colonial Australian masculinity were shaped by British notions of “manly independence, self-control, and reason”. But the context of the frontier added values of “physical strength and endurance, horse riding, shooting, and hunting skills, and, in a quieter register, included the use of extreme violence towards Aboriginal people”.³³ Guns were

³⁰ John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family and Empire* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2005), 65.

³¹ Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes, British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); Erica Wald, *Vice in the Barracks: Medicine, the Military and the Making of Colonial India, 1780-1868* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

³² Miles Fairburn, *The Ideal Society and Its Enemies: The Foundations of Modern New Zealand Society, 1850-1900* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1989); Jock Phillips, *A Man’s Country?: The Image of the Pakeha Male: A History*, Rev. ed. (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1996); Duncan Mackay, *Frontier New Zealand: The Search for Eldorado, (1800-1920)* (Auckland: HarperCollins Publishers N.Z., 1992); John Mulgan, *Man Alone* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1990).

³³ Angela Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies: Self-Government and Imperial Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 152.

materially fundamental to such violence and consequently garnered symbolic significance as well.

While drawing on each of these historiographies, this thesis takes the ‘new’ imperial history as its overarching framework. This approach emphasises the need to consider culture, ideology, gender, and race in studies of empire.³⁴ As Streets noted, ‘new’ imperial histories have often ignored military history, tending to “write British military history off as a hopeless backwater, uninformed by theoretical considerations of race, gender or relations of power”.³⁵ Therefore the thesis aims to integrate the two approaches, using Streets’ book *Martial Races*, as a model.

Other historians have theorised more broadly about the links between technology, ideology and violence in colonial societies. Lawrence Berg argued that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries “violence was directly linked to rationality through the development of military science”.³⁶ While Berg’s focus was not specifically on the development of rifles, his argument is highly relevant. Bureaucracy, rationality and military science were united in the production, dissemination, and use of the Enfield rifle. Consequently, it was not only an object that physically enforced imperialism, but it also became an emblem for a certain code of hegemonic masculinity.

*

Primary sources on the Enfield rifle present difficulties both in terms of their ubiquity and their scarcity. Being sturdy tools, many firearms have survived into the twenty-first century and they are well represented in museum and private collections. Yet beyond the fact of their commonness, the objects themselves contain few clues of how their owners used them or thought about them. They are only one component in the puzzle of a nineteenth-century gun culture.

Official government documents offer another avenue. At times, firearms found their way into parliamentary debates in Britain and New Zealand. Legislation controlling arms and ammunition, lists of arms confiscated from Māori fighting against the Crown, and records of

³⁴ For a broader discussion of the approach, see Philippa Levine, ‘Introduction: Why Gender and Empire?’, in *Gender and Empire*, ed. Philippa Levine (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1–13; Linda Colley, ‘What Is Imperial History Now?’, in *What Is History Now?*, ed. David Cannadine (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 132–47; Streets, *Martial Races*.

³⁵ Streets, *Martial Races*, 5.

³⁶ Lawrence D. Berg, ‘A (White) Man of His Times? Sir George Grey and the Narration of Hegemonic Masculinity in Victorian New Zealand’, in *Masculinities in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, ed. Robin Law, Hugh Campbell, and John Dolan (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1999), 74.

arms given to Māori fighting on its behalf are also useful sources. However, beyond providing hard numbers, these sources can only hint at broader questions.

The personal records of colonists and soldiers occasionally provide insight into questions about guns and gun culture. Through diaries, lists of arms owned, and other records, the role of guns in the lives of nineteenth-century New Zealanders can be pieced together. Yet the ubiquity and everyday nature of these objects mean that diarists seldom comment on them in any detail.³⁷ Images of all varieties present a personal record of an entirely different sort.³⁸ Nineteenth-century portraits and photographs often represent their subjects bearing arms and these images reveal some of the significance guns had to their owners as well as offering a window into the performance of martial masculinity during this era.

While each of these sources provide useful avenues of research, by far the largest mine of evidence lies in the printed words of books, pamphlets and newspapers.³⁹ Innovations in military technology during the mid-nineteenth century were major news and as such, received considerable attention from the press. Newspapers also wrote extensively about the Enfield's use in wars and in the Volunteer Movement. The numerous books, pamphlets, and public lectures on the topic of the rifle also attest to popular interest. Of course, such sources cannot indicate how different readers received the texts. Nevertheless, they reveal some of the social and political discourses surrounding the rifle.

The thesis considers the British press, but emphasises that of New Zealand, which was deeply interested in the progress and use of the Enfield. While often simply reprinting the reports of British press, many New Zealand papers wrote their own commentary on events. Such evidence allows for analysis of the texts in of themselves, but also invites scrutiny of how the texts travelled around the globe and had different implications in different contexts. They indicate

³⁷ Kathryn M. Hunter and Kirstie Ross, *Holding On to Home: New Zealand Stories and Objects of the First World War* (Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2014), 50–51. Hunter and Ross note this in the context of the First World War, suggesting that soldiers wanted to avoid discussing the grisly details of war but the observation is equally true of war diaries in the 1860s.

³⁸ For a discussion of photography in colonial New Zealand, see Angela Wanhalla and Wolf, eds., *Early New Zealand Photography: Images and Essays* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2011).

³⁹ For works discussing the press and print culture in New Zealand and the British Empire at large, see Simon James Potter, ed., *Newspapers and Empire in Ireland and Britain: Reporting the British Empire, C. 1857-1921* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2004); John Peck, *War, the Army and Victorian Literature* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1998); Lachy Paterson, *Colonial Discourses: Niupepa Māori, 1855-1863* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2006); Penelope Griffith et al., eds., *Book & Print in New Zealand: A Guide to Print Culture in Aotearoa* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1997); Tony Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand's Colonial Past* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2012).

the salience of the Enfield in the New Zealand settler consciousness and hint at New Zealand's connections to the rest of the British world.

During the 1850s, the British press went through a period of growth that facilitated much wider dissemination of information and ideas. In 1853 and 1855, the British Government abolished the advertisement and stamp taxes, making newspapers much cheaper to produce and engendering a boom in print culture.⁴⁰ The much-expanded press played a vital role in constructing meaning in imperial discourse, especially in relation to the major conflicts referred to above. As John M. MacKenzie put it, these conflicts “were often as important for what both contemporaries and participants imagined had happened as for anything remotely resembling reality”.⁴¹ Thus, this thesis aims to integrate all of the sources above into its analysis, but focusses most heavily on the press and other public texts.

Chapter Outline

Chapter one considers the development of rifle technology through the 1840s and 1850s, culminating in the invention of the Enfield. It then discusses the production, dissemination, and training methods applied to the weapon through examining the press and other printed material. It argues that narratives about the Enfield highlighted ideas of rationality, modern science, and individualism, closely linking the weapon to discourses of race, gender, and civilisation. Furthermore, it suggests that these concepts strongly influenced both the ways in which contemporaries viewed the weapon and the ways in which they viewed themselves.

Chapter two investigates the use of the Enfield rifle in a series of conflicts and movements during the 1850s and 1860s: the Crimean War, the Indian Rebellion, the Volunteer Movement in Britain, and the American Civil War. The rifle played a significant part in each of these events, and came to be central to British narratives of the Indian Rebellion and the Volunteer Movement in particular. During the Indian Rebellion, the rifle came to epitomise British racial ‘superiority’ and technological might in the minds of Victorians. The Volunteer Force, and the movement it engendered, embraced the Enfield as its weapon of choice, and the writings of Volunteer proponents posited the rifle as an emblem of British gender and race ideology. Each

⁴⁰ Streets, *Martial Races*, 36.

⁴¹ John M. MacKenzie, ‘General Editor’s Introduction’, in *Guardians of Empire: The Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers c.1700-1964*, ed. David Killingray and David Omissi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), vii.

of these events added a new layer of meaning to the weapon, resulting in an object that was deeply raced and gendered.

Chapter three investigates the role of the Enfield rifle in New Zealand during the wars of the 1860s. It notes that the Enfield came to the colony with expectations that it would bring quick and easy victory over Māori ‘rebels’, but that the realities of warfare soon proved otherwise, causing many to become disillusioned with the weapon. Nevertheless, the Enfield found extensive usage in the country, and was soon absorbed into its gun culture. The chapter argues that the history of the Enfield in New Zealand confirmed some existing narratives about the weapon but complicated others, leaving the rifle with a multifaceted and contradictory legacy.

Chapter One

Men Making Guns, Guns Making Men: The Invention and Ideology of the Enfield Rifle

*“The Enfield rifle is likely to become not only a household word, but almost a household weapon”.*¹

When Scottish ethnologist and colonial administrator John Crawfurd addressed the Ethnological Society of London in 1866, he posed a question that European thinkers had long been pondering: what is it that differentiates cultures and societies around the globe? Some posited religion, culture, and environment as answers, but Crawfurd was certain that it all came down to one factor: race. Where was the proof? According to Crawfurd, racial ‘ability’ was evident in the technology each society produced, and most of all, in military science and practice. As Crawfurd put it, “of all subjects the art of war is that which proclaims the loudest the incomparable superiority, both physical and intellectual, of the European over the Asiatic races”.²

Crawfurd set out his beliefs on the nature of human civilisation in a series of papers to the Ethnological Society of London during the 1860s. Arguing for the superiority of Europeans over all others, he relied heavily on military science to make his case. Regarding Africa, Crawfurd disdained indigenous technology, commenting that all their firearms originated in Europe.³ On Asia, Crawfurd acknowledged the existence of ancient civilisations, but claimed that they were inherently regressive. He then vaunted Britain’s rule in India, particularly from the 1757 Battle of Plassey, noting

Since that battle our means of carrying on war have vastly increased, for we have invented the steam engine, steam navigation, and the electric telegraph, while compared to our present cannon the artillery of Clive were but popguns. What have the nations of Asia done in the century which has elapsed? They have increased in

¹ ‘The Enfield Rifle’, *Daily Southern Cross*, 8 May 1860, 4. From *The Times*, 1 February 1860.

² John Crawfurd, ‘On the Physical and Mental Characteristics of the European and Asiatic Races of Man’, *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London* 5 (1867): 69.

³ John Crawfurd, ‘On the Physical and Mental Characteristics of the Negro’, *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London* 4 (1866): 215–16.

numbers, but in all else stood stock still, and are nearly the same now as they were in the sixteenth century.⁴

The recent Indian Rebellion of 1857 was further evidence of Indian ‘failures’. He wrote,

The Hindus and Persians have imitated the tactics and organisation of the armies of Europe to little purpose. Forty thousand Sepoys, disciplined by ourselves, but deprived of the European officers who alone gave them spirit, cohesion, and confidence, got by chance possession of a well-provided and fortified arsenal; but Delhi was besieged, stormed, and captured by a European force which did not exceed one-eighth part the number of the mutineer garrison.⁵

In actual fact, this was not the case: two thirds of the ‘British’ troops who stormed Delhi were Indian soldiers who had not rebelled.⁶ Nevertheless, Crawford’s assertion shows how central military technology and its use was to his conception of civilisation. Crawford was not without his critics. Indian intellectual Dadabhai Naoroji, for instance, gave a scathing response paper to the Ethnological Society refuting Crawford’s claims. He pointed out that

To compare a hand armed with an Armstrong gun with an unarmed one, and thence to draw the conclusion of the superior strength and warlike spirit of the former may be complacent, but does not appear to me to be fair.⁷

Yet most Britons did not heed Naoroji’s fair point. Indeed, as historian Michael Adas pointed out, Europeans regularly used their superior military technology as evidence of racial ‘superiority’ during the nineteenth century.⁸ Daniel Headrick went as far as to suggest that military technology itself contributed to the development of racist imperial ideology.⁹

The debate between Crawford and Naoroji and its wider discursive context beg a number of questions. What technological innovation had taken place from 1757 to 1857 and why did it matter to Crawford? Why did military technology gain currency as a measure of civilisation in

⁴ Crawford, ‘On the Physical and Mental Characteristics of the European and Asiatic Races of Man’, 70.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Spiers, *The Army and Society*, 134. As Spiers noted, British writers regularly failed to acknowledge that the majority of Indian soldiers did not rebel.

⁷ Dadabhai Naoroji, ‘Observations on Mr. John Crawford’s Paper on the European and Asiatic Races’, *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London* 5 (1867): 146.

⁸ Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, 175. Adas also discusses Crawford and his writing in brief.

⁹ Headrick, *Tools of Empire*, 209.

the mid-nineteenth century? How did the invention of military technology and the promotion of political ideology coproduce one another during this era?

To answer these questions, this chapter examines development of the Enfield rifle during the early 1850s. First detailing the context of the weapon's invention, the chapter then explores its impact in two spaces: the Royal Small Arms Factory at Enfield, where the rifle was produced, and the School of Musketry at Hythe, where British soldiers and volunteers were trained how to use it. Finally, the chapter places the Enfield in the wider context of British firearms discourse in the mid-nineteenth century. The British public was deeply interested in these institutions, and the press, as well as other commentators, wrote about them extensively. Their narratives about the Enfield in these spaces strongly emphasised ideas of rationality, modern science, and individualism. Such narratives helped to produce a weapon that was deeply implicated in the ideologies of modernity and racial 'superiority' and powerfully influenced the ways in which contemporaries viewed both the weapon and themselves.

*

The 1850s were a tumultuous time for the British military. Long years of relative peace after the Napoleonic Wars gave way to a series of crises in the form of the Crimean War, the Indian Rebellion, and the recurring threat of French invasion, for which Britain was dangerously ill-prepared. The ongoing need to maintain control over expanding imperial possessions also stretched the military's capabilities to their limits. On top of this, the Duke of Wellington, who had held sway over the military for most of the century, died in 1852, leaving the military in a state of flux. In fact, it was the Duke's conservative leadership that was in some way responsible for Britain's stagnation, as he had rejected almost all attempts at change and innovation.¹⁰ Perhaps most symptomatic of this state of affairs was the dangerously outdated stock of weapons, which still included the famous Brown Bess (see figure one).

In use from 1703, the Brown Bess was one of the most pervasive weapons of the eighteenth century.¹¹ But despite being standard British issue for 150 years, the musket was notoriously inaccurate, slow to reload, and received few improvements through its history.¹² Furthermore, its effective range was only sixty yards.¹³ Contemporary observers calculated that at the battle

¹⁰ Wellington was conservative when it came to military innovation, but the extent of stagnation under his leadership is not clear cut. For a discussion of military reform through this period, see Strachan, *Wellington's Legacy*.

¹¹ O'Connell, *Of Arms and Men*, 158.

¹² Headrick, *Tools of Empire*, 85.

¹³ O'Connell, *Of Arms and Men*, 158.

of Salamanca in 1812, 437 rounds had been fired for each enemy combatant killed or wounded. In a more extreme case, during an 1851 skirmish in the Cape Colony, British soldiers fired over 80,000 rounds and only killed or injured 25, at an average of 3,200 rounds per combatant.¹⁴ The military was not entirely armed with the Brown Bess: in 1800, the army had established a rifle corps.¹⁵ However, most of the army retained the Brown Bess as rifles tended to be impractically slow to reload.¹⁶



Figure 1. Flintlock musket, circa 1800, London, by Tower Armouries. Gift of the Wellington City Council, 1929. CC BY-NC-ND licence. Te Papa (DM000109).

Rifles had existed for centuries, but tended to be unreliable. They would not work if the muzzle was either too loose or tight and the rifling grooves made it difficult to push the cartridge down the barrel. They were traditionally the preserve of hunters and specialist skirmishers.¹⁷ However, the 1830s and 1840s saw a revolution in rifle technology. In France, a series of technological innovations through the 1840s culminated in Claude-Etienne Minié's invention of the Minié bullet. The bullet had a hollow base that expanded when fired, allowing it to be much narrower than the circumference of the barrel which it had to be rammed down, making

¹⁴ Smithurst, *The Pattern 1853 Enfield Rifle*, 9–10.

¹⁵ Holmes, *Redcoat*, 43.

¹⁶ Headrick, *Tools of Empire*, 87.

¹⁷ Smithurst, *The Pattern 1853 Enfield Rifle*, 6.

loading much easier and faster. Following the invention of the bullet came a rifle bearing the same name, which was adopted by the French military in 1848, a significant development in light of the revolution which the French military suppressed in that year.¹⁸ In the 1840s, Prussia introduced the breech-loading Dreyse needle-gun; a powerful rifle, its significance was not fully appreciated for another quarter of a century until Prussia's wars in the 1860s and 1870s.¹⁹ These new rifles threatened to change the balance of power in Europe.

In this light, the British military establishment's conservatism became increasingly untenable.²⁰ In 1851, Henry William Paget, the Master-General of Ordnance and Marquess of Anglesey, ordered the army to begin replacing the Brown Bess with Minié rifles.²¹ Due to the number of weapons required, the Minié never got close to replacing the army's entire stock, though the rifle was used in several conflicts during the 1850s, including the Crimean War.²² However, the Minié had serious flaws and regularly misfired; it was clearly not a long-term solution.²³ In 1852, Paget's replacement, Viscount Hardinge, commissioned five Birmingham gun makers to come up with an improved design through a series of trials and experiments.²⁴ The Enfield rifle (see figure two) was the result of a combination of these. The rifle was revolutionary for its range and accuracy. It was recorded to be accurate at up to 1,200 yards, though in practice its effective range was around 500.²⁵ Nevertheless, this was still an astronomical improvement on the Brown Bess.



Figure 2. Enfield Pattern 1856 Rifle Musket., circa 1860, England, maker unknown. Gift of Kenneth Huffam, date unknown. CC BY-NC-ND licence. Te Papa (DM000376).

¹⁸ Headrick, *Tools of Empire*, 88.

¹⁹ O'Connell, *Of Arms and Men*, 192.

²⁰ Smithurst, *The Pattern 1853 Enfield Rifle*, 9.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Headrick, *Tools of Empire*, 88.

The development of the Enfield and other similar rifles had momentous consequences though many of these were not immediately realised. Firstly, they had considerable tactical implications. As Robert O'Connell pointed out, "the ability to shoot faster, more accurately, and with increasingly devastating effects...would alter the entire cast of warfare" by making traditional formations and drills impractical.²⁶ The rifle also inflicted much worse injuries than smoothbore muskets. As John Keegan related,

[The Minié bullet, used in the Enfield and other rifles] was a conical lump of lead the size of a man's upper thumb joint and weighing two ounces. It penetrated the human body with ease, producing a comparatively benign injury unless it hit a blood vessel, but it frequently hit bone which it tended to shatter, often a cause of amputation.²⁷

This increased efficiency made subsequent conflicts such as the American Civil War significantly deadlier to combatants.²⁸

Secondly, the introduction of the Enfield had social implications. Rifles and riflemen had long been associated with higher social standards and niceties than those of rank and file soldiers.²⁹ When Enfields were introduced wholesale into the British Army, they helped to contribute to the slowly improving reputation of regular soldiers. Most importantly though, the Enfield brought with it a much greater level of attention to the application of scientific principles to war. The development of two institutions epitomised this trend: the Royal Small Arms Factory at Enfield and the School of Musketry at Hythe.

Men Making Guns: The Royal Small Arms Factory at Enfield

"600 distinct machines, all going together on their own allotted tasks, with a tremulous rapidity and ease that seem to swallow up the work like magic".³⁰

The invention of a new powerful weapon was one thing, but resupplying the entire British military with it would prove to be another challenge entirely. Initially, the military was content to resupply itself bit by bit. But faced with long delays from private contractors and then the major increase in demand for weapons during the Crimean War, Britain was forced to look for

²⁶ O'Connell, *Of Arms and Men*, 190.

²⁷ John Keegan, *The American Civil War* (London: Vintage Books, 2010), 314–15.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 336.

²⁹ See for instance Holmes, *Redcoat*, 43–44.

³⁰ 'The Enfield Rifle', *Daily Southern Cross*, 8 May 1860, 4.

other solutions. It turned to the United States, where manufacturers had developed a new system for mass producing weapons with interchangeable parts. Applying these techniques, Britain embarked on an immense expansion of its Royal Small Arms Factory at Enfield, for which the rifle itself was named. The press reported on the new factory with a profound sense of wonder at the scale and level of precision involved, and their reportage shaped British perceptions about their nation's power and modernity.

Traditionally, the military sourced its muskets both from government factories and from private contractors.³¹ Birmingham was the main centre of private production and had been since the seventeenth-century.³² During the Napoleonic Wars though, private manufacturers could not produce enough weapons to satisfy the military's demand. In 1806, the British government established a new small arms factory at Lewisham in southeast London, which was moved to Enfield, northeast London, in 1818 as Enfield was more suitable for steam power.³³ The new factory supplemented the army's supply, though it continued to use private contractors as well. Following the development of revolutionary new rifles however, private contractors proved to be unreliable. In 1851 the government had ordered 28,000 Minié rifles from Birmingham contractors, but they were not delivered until November 1853.³⁴

Part of the supply problem was the traditional mode of production used by both government and private factories. This was the ordnance system, whereby each component was manufactured in a subcontracted workshop according to a pattern (a master part to replicate from). This system created a great deal of variability in each weapon and meant that repair was time consuming.³⁵ In contrast in the United States, manual labour was more limited and costly than in Europe, so during the first half of the nineteenth century, Americans developed a more efficient mode of production that used machines rather than manual labour.³⁶ Known as the American system of manufacture, it could generate weapons with interchangeable parts.³⁷ Interchangeability was an immensely important development as it made repair and maintenance of weapons much cheaper and more efficient.

³¹ Emrys Chew, *Arming the Periphery: The Arms Trade in the Indian Ocean during the Age of Global Empire* (Houndmills; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 64.

³² Bailey and Nie, *English Gunmakers*, 15.

³³ David Williams, *The Birmingham Gun Trade* (Stroud: The History Press, 2004), 84.

³⁴ *Report from the Select Committee on Small Arms*, House of Commons, GB Parliamentary Papers, 1854, iv.

³⁵ Williams, *The Birmingham Gun Trade*, 22.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 67–70.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

Despite American innovations, British weapons manufacturers had lagged behind their American counterparts until the 1850s. In 1851, American arms manufacturer Samuel Colt exhibited his guns in Britain at the Great Exhibition, amazing audiences with the interchangeability of his weapons' parts.³⁸ Faced with supply failures and impressed by what they knew of American arms production, the British Government sought a better way of sourcing its weapons. In 1853 and 1854, it sent two expeditions consisting of various military and industrial figures to the United States in order to investigate their system of production, including the National Armoury at Springfield and several private producers.³⁹

The first expedition reported to the Select Committee on Small Arms, whose 1854 report comprehensively analysed the state of military arms production in Britain. The report estimated that resupplying the entire military would require the production of just under one million modern rifles.⁴⁰ On top of this, 30,000 rifles per year would be needed to replace those lost, damaged, and destroyed.⁴¹ The report recommended the establishment of a factory that could produce 500 rifled-muskets per day, with machinery that was "the best which the present state of science can imitate or invent".⁴² Initially, the government planned on moderate American-inspired additions to the existing factory at Enfield, but the outbreak of the Crimean War generated a vast increase in demand for small arms and as a result, Enfield was renovated on a much larger scale.⁴³ By 1858, the factory had acquired American machinery and could produce 2,000 Enfield rifles a week, each with interchangeable parts.⁴⁴ With a tolerance of only 0.001 inches, the factory was at the forefront of precision production and the techniques pioneered in the small arms industry were quickly transplanted to other sectors, prompting a huge growth in mass manufacturing in Britain.⁴⁵ As Ian Skennerton put it, the Enfield name then became "synonymous with production excellence for a century and a half".⁴⁶

The revamped Enfield factory received considerable attention from the press in both Britain and New Zealand. In May 1860, *The Times* published a lengthy article on the factory which was reprinted in New Zealand by the *Daily Southern Cross* later that year.⁴⁷ Beginning with an

³⁸ O'Connell, *Of Arms and Men*, 192.

³⁹ Chew, *Arming the Periphery*, 68–69; Williams, *The Birmingham Gun Trade*, 77.

⁴⁰ *Report from the Select Committee on Small Arms*, iv.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, iv–xxii.

⁴³ Chew, *Arming the Periphery*, 69.

⁴⁴ Williams, *The Birmingham Gun Trade*, 91.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁴⁶ Skennerton, *.577 Pattern 1853 Rifle Musket & Snider-Enfield*, 7.

⁴⁷ 'The Enfield Rifle', *Daily Southern Cross*, 8 May 1860, 4.

account of the factory's expansion, the article went on to describe the extent of its capabilities with astonishment. The author related the "thousand men and boys" operating "no less than 600 distinct machines, all going together...with tremendous rapidity and ease that seem to swallow up the work like magic".⁴⁸ The author went on to suggest that "it would be difficult to name any factory in the kingdom, not even excepting our largest cotton mills, which at the first glance presents such a bewildering scene of active, never-ceasing industry".⁴⁹ The article then described in detail the production process of the barrel, noting that the boring process was accurate to "within some two or three thousandths of an inch", and that "the barrel undergoes no less than sixty-six distinct processes" before being tested with a double charge, which under 1% failed.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the "least detectable flaw" leads to a piece being rejected and the workman responsible being immediately fined three shillings.⁵¹ In total, the factory produced "some 2,000 weapons made weekly, the gauge of all is accurate to a half-hair breadth", with each rifle undergoing more than 700 processes.⁵² Given the rifle's effectiveness and the factory's efficiency, the author posited that "the Enfield rifle is likely to become not only a household word, but almost a household weapon".⁵³

The article demonstrates the extent of public attention devoted to the factory and its application of modern scientific principles to mass producing weapons. It is always difficult to measure the interest and engagement of the wider public in any item in the press. Nevertheless, the length (being over 2,500 words) and detail of reporting in the piece suggests that there was an audience for extensive discussion of the Enfield and its production.

Later in the same year, other New Zealand papers published a similar article sourced from the Australian press.⁵⁴ While closely echoing the original, they also added several new details which are worth noting. Describing Enfield factory as "quite a modern institution", the article noted that each rifle took forty-five shillings to produce and that with further investment the factory could more than double its production; consequently, "there will be no difficulty in supplying all the volunteers in Great Britain with rifles". The article also reported that Major-General Hay, commander at Hythe, had recently recommended the Enfield as a weapon to be

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ 'The Enfield Rifle', *Lyttelton Times*, 2 June 1860, 2; 'The Enfield Rifle', *Taranaki Herald*, 16 June 1860, 4. From the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Sydney Empire* respectively.

used in defence of New South Wales, in response to an application from the colony. While accepting that others such as the Whitworth rifle were of higher quality, Hay pointed out that these were considerably more expensive and that the Enfield would be much easier to source given the factory's high production.⁵⁵

In New Zealand, the settler press was also impressed by seeing the Enfield in the hands of imperial troops stationed in the colony. In 1859, the *Hawkes Bay Herald* described a local detachment of troops practicing with their new rifles, noting "the power of this weapon appears to be very great".⁵⁶ The paper also commented on the rifle's machine production and interchangeability of parts, noting the benefits that it conferred. Notably, in the same issue the paper also commented that "at Poverty Bay the runanga is as rabid as ever".⁵⁷ With rising tensions between Māori and settlers, descriptions of a powerful new weapon carried weighty undertones, especially when juxtaposed with vitriolic statements against Māori.

As the decade progressed and the capabilities of the Enfield factory increased, the topic continued to find its way into the colonial press. In 1861, the *Hawkes Bay Herald* printed a much briefer account of the factory taken from *Mechanics' Magazine*. It noted that there were now more men and machines at the factory and also emphasised the interchangeability of the weapon's parts.⁵⁸ The extent of press coverage of the Enfield and its factory is testament to the public interest it generated and to the far reaching consequences of the production techniques used to create it. Ultimately, the coverage helped to foster a sense of national pride based on technological prowess among Britons.

Commentators outside of the press also wrote about the Enfield rifle and factory. One of the most prominent of these was Hans Busk. A lawyer by profession, Busk was a rifle enthusiast and promoter of the Volunteer Movement. He lectured extensively in Britain and penned a book entitled *The Rifle and How to Use It*, which outlined his views on different rifles and the Volunteer Force. The book proved to be immensely popular, and was reprinted several times over the next few years. It exemplified many of the central themes associated with the Enfield more generally: masculinity, rationality, education, skill, and patriotism. In the words of Busk

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ 'Local Intelligence', *Hawkes Bay Herald*, 5 February 1859, 2.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ 'Hawkes Bay Herald', *Hawkes Bay Herald*, 17 December 1861, 3.

himself, the book was an appeal “to the manly spirit, to chivalry, [and] to the patriotic feeling” of Britain.⁵⁹

While writing extensively about a wide range of weapons available at the time, Busk devoted a large portion of his work to the Enfield. Stating “in many respects it is a beautiful weapon, especially if contrasted with its predecessor [the Brown Bess]”, Busk went on to describe the weapon’s production process in great detail, emphasising the number and precision of the machines that made it.⁶⁰ However, he was well aware of the rifle’s technical shortcomings, noting that “its greatest defects are the weakness of the barrel, and the shortness and excessive straightness of the stock”.⁶¹ Nevertheless, Busk ultimately approved the weapon, noting that “in cool hands [it] is capable of great achievements” and stating that “it would seem that the pains bestowed in the selection of this arm have not been expended in vain”.⁶² Overall, contemporary commentators on the Enfield rifle and factory were deeply impressed with the weapon and its production, viewing it as the height of modernity.

The expansion of Enfield factory was part of the broader process of industrialisation in Britain. Involving steam, rail, and the mechanisation of production across all sectors, industrialisation was “the most fundamental transformation of human life” and it permeated all aspects of British society during the nineteenth century.⁶³ Modernisation and precision filtered down through every facet of arms production at Enfield. According to John Edwards, during the Select Committee’s research and in the subsequent expansion of the factory, “careful consideration was also given to the development of accounting practices capable of establishing the ‘real true cost’ of production”.⁶⁴ Edwards argued that this process contributed to the modernisation of accounting practices in Victorian Britain.⁶⁵

The implications of mass produced weapons were immense. It was now possible for states to rearm themselves completely with powerful new weapons over a relatively short period, whereas previously it would have taken decades to do so.⁶⁶ However, just as the tactical implications of rifles were not immediately apparent, nor were the strategic implications of

⁵⁹ Hans Busk, *The Rifle and How to Use It*, Eighth edition (London: Routledge, Warne, and Routledge, 1861).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 71–73.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 79–83.

⁶³ E. J. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: An Economic History of Britain since 1750* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968), 1.

⁶⁴ John Edwards, ‘Accounting for Fair Competition between Private and Public Sector Armaments Manufacturers in Victorian Britain’, *Abacus* 51 (2015): 432.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 412.

⁶⁶ O’Connell, *Of Arms and Men*, 193.

mass production. The American Civil War offered some glimpse of the future of conflict, but the consequences of fully industrialised warfare were not totally realised until the First World War.

There were also major consequences for the global arms trade as mass production techniques facilitated a vast expansion in the market.⁶⁷ As the United States, Britain, and other European countries increasingly began to rely on state-owned arsenals, private makers began exporting more enthusiastically to Asia and Africa.⁶⁸ Millions of new arms were sold around the world; in the late 1860s and early 1870s, the Ottoman Empire alone bought 200,000 surplus Enfield rifles from the United States.⁶⁹ The result was a world increasingly armed with high-powered modern weapons.

Guns Making Men: The School of Musketry at Hythe

*“Our new gun requires a new man”.*⁷⁰

From the point of the Enfield’s invention, the British military establishment was aware that the new rifle would require new military thinking. In 1853, Viscount Hardinge established the School of Musketry at Hythe to train soldiers to use the rifle effectively.⁷¹ But the School sought to do more than just that. It attempted to reshape soldiers into rational, precise, scientific individuals. Opening in 1854, Hythe trained small groups of officers so that they could pass on their knowledge to their regiments.⁷² Later, Volunteers were also allowed to attend. Just as had been the case with the Enfield factory, the press reported on Hythe with deep interest. As the training centred on the new Enfield rifle and its capabilities, coverage of Hythe served to extol the rifle’s power. Furthermore, the coverage helped to forge a potent link between the rifle and discourses of rational masculinity.

The most thorough description of the School of Musketry’s training programme and its ideology came from Colonel E. C. Wilford, the second commandant and chief instructor at Hythe. Between 1857 and 1859, he delivered a series of lectures outlining his philosophy of shaping soldiers into new men through educating them in the use of the rifle. The first two

⁶⁷ Jonathan A Grant, *Rulers, Guns, and Money: The Global Arms Trade in the Age of Imperialism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 15.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 22.

⁷⁰ Colonel E. C. Wilford, *Three Lectures Upon the Rifle*, second edition (London; Hythe: Marlborough & Co.; W. S. Paine, 1860), 17.

⁷¹ Smithurst, *The Pattern 1853 Enfield Rifle*, 50.

⁷² Ibid.

lectures addressed the United Service Institution, while the third was given to the Volunteers at Hythe. In 1860, the lectures were combined and published as a pamphlet. As all of the lectures essentially addressed the same topic, this section examines the pamphlet as a whole.

Wilford began by decrying the failures and inadequacies of the Brown Bess, especially insofar as it left British soldiers vulnerable to non-European opponents. With the Brown Bess, argued Wilford, “the British soldier found himself almost powerless against *half-clad savages* or *semi-civilised enemies* [emphasis original]”.⁷³ Wilford did not specify conflicts where this had been the case, but the 1845-1846 Northern War in New Zealand and ongoing conflicts with indigenous peoples in the Cape Colony were obvious examples of conflicts where the British military had been frustrated by “savage” enemies. He went on to suggest that previous victories had been won in spite of the Brown Bess rather than because of it, noting a series of experiments undertaken at Chatham in 1846 which demonstrated the futility of the weapon beyond 100 yards.⁷⁴ Wilford then went on to exalt the virtues of modern rifles, noting a similar experiment at Hythe that demonstrated the Enfield’s overwhelming superiority over the Brown Bess.⁷⁵

Next, Wilford discussed the rifle revolution and its influence on the military. Wilford saw the development of modern rifles as such a profound shift that it required a complete rethinking of military practice and education. As he put it, “our new gun requires a new man”.⁷⁶ This new man would be scientific, rational and deadly. He would also be a vastly different character to the British soldier of ages past. How did Hythe go about creating such men?

Wilford set out the programme of education as follows:

We deliver lectures on theoretical subjects, illustrate them by diagrams and by models, and thus endeavour to elicit thought. We catechise on these topics, and by these means we essay to make the soldier an intelligent shot.⁷⁷

Scientific education was central to the curriculum. As Wilford put it,

Each soldier is made to comprehend the laws which influence the bullet in its flight, and how to apply this knowledge in practice. He is led to think, and his moral

⁷³ Wilford, *Three Lectures Upon the Rifle*, 2.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 12–13.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

character is found to be improved and elevated thereby. He becomes conscious of his increased efficiency and value; he is raised from a mere machine.⁷⁸

Rational masculinity formed the central tenet of his educational doctrine. Wilford noted, “In the first place, I must inform you, we do not address our pupils as soldiers, but as *men* [emphasis original]”.⁷⁹ As Wilford put it,

We teach first by theory, because a soldier is a being with a mind, and by theory we give him the *reasons* for everything he may afterwards be called upon to perform in practice. I believe it to have been a lamentable error, that hitherto, in giving such an amount of instruction as was attempted, we addressed our men as soldiers, instead of appealing to them as beings with *reflecting minds* [emphasis original].⁸⁰

He posited the subjection of the body to the mind through the acquisition of skill as the triumph of rationalism. Where a soldier missed his target, it was because “the finger did not obey the mind – it is his property, but it is not subdued, it is not broken in”.⁸¹ Thus rational domination of the mind over the body was the ultimate aim of this training.

This training programme represented a stark shift from earlier attitudes to educating soldiers. In the past, the military had emphasised obedience above all, as muskets were most effective when fired in volleys, which required soldiers to have absolute mechanical discipline in battle. However, the Enfield, with its long range and much improved accuracy, facilitated a new way of fighting. The weapon not only required soldiers who could fire with precision, it called for soldiers who could act intelligently on individual initiative. Such rhetoric helped to improve public perceptions of soldiers and the military. It also marked the Enfield as an object that embodied the virtues of rational masculinity and even suggested that it had the power to be a force for moral and scientific improvement in its users.

It is difficult to measure how influential or widespread Wilford’s writing was in Britain, let alone what impact it had in New Zealand. Nevertheless, it is clear that there was enough of an audience for Wilford’s ideas to merit the publication of his lectures. In New Zealand, there are

⁷⁸ Ibid., 18.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 30.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 31.

⁸¹ Ibid., 34.

numerous instances of papers printing extracts of his lectures and other references to his work.⁸² These articles suggest that Wilford and his ideas had some prominence in the colony.

The British press also took an interest in Hythe, praising the institution's efforts to improve the efficiency of soldiers. Such was the extent of the School's influence that in 1858, *The Times* declared "our soldiers have learnt to shoot". Where previously the Brown Bess "might as well have been made of wood", given its notorious inaccuracy, soldiers were now educated at Hythe, where

The students were taught to measure distances by the eye, to adjust the elevation of their weapon according to distance, to allow for certain sources of error, and, finally, to carry their acquirements away with them in a condition to be imparted to others.⁸³

This system "elevated "musketry" to the rank of a science", with the effect of vastly improving soldiers' effectiveness. Furthermore, "the range of the new weapon is so great, and the precision of firing so terrible, that neither man nor horse can stand against it". To its emphasis on modern science, the article added that the Enfield was a "return to ancient custom" in its parallels with the longbow of medieval England.⁸⁴

The press also reported on shooting exercises conducted at Hythe. The *Nelson Examiner* detailed an "experiment" in shooting practice where soldiers at the school engaged in a mock battle shooting at wooden frames in the shape of artillery from 600 and 800 yards, with "an accuracy perfectly wonderful" that left them "riddled" with bullets. As the report noted,

The experiment clearly proved that in the hands of well-skilled soldiers – men who, having been taught the principles of rifle shooting theoretically and practically, have obtained a perfect confidence in their weapon – the Enfield rifle must prove more than a match for any field-guns of the present day.⁸⁵

⁸² 'Brown-Bess and the Rifle', *Hawkes Bay Herald*, 12 May 1860, 4; 'Rifle Shooting at Hythe', *Taranaki Herald*, 7 January 1860, sec. Supplement, 2; 'Colonial Defences', *Daily Southern Cross*, 26 October 1858, 4; 'The Volunteer Drill at Hythe', *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 15 May 1861, 3; 'Mortality from Shot in Battle', *New Zealand Herald*, 20 July 1864, 4. Many of these articles were extracts from a range of British and Australian newspapers including the *Liverpool Albion*, *London Review*, and *Sydney Morning Herald*. Many were reprinted in multiple New Zealand newspapers.

⁸³ 'There Is One Kind of Education, We Are Happy to', *The Times*, 18 August 1858, 6.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ 'Miscellanea', *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 1 November 1856, 3. From *The Times*, May 16 1856.

Modern analysts doubt that mid nineteenth-century rifles were genuinely a match for the artillery of the day.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the article demonstrates the enthusiasm of the press for the Enfield's practical capabilities, as well as their awareness of the need for skilled soldiers who can be trained in both the theory and practice of shooting.

Hans Busk was also eager to praise the School of Musketry at Hythe. Like the press, he recounted shooting "experiments" which claimed to demonstrate the efficacy of the Enfield against artillery from various distances.⁸⁷ He also put it that "nothing can be devised better [for becoming a good shot] than the course of instruction pursued at the Hythe School of Musketry".⁸⁸

As Howard Bailes pointed out, Hythe became "a centre for imaginative innovations in training, much to the amusement of military conservatives".⁸⁹ But despite disdain from some parties, the School had a lasting influence. Following the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, the British military began to emphasise tactics "based on individual initiative and delegation of authority", as "modern weaponry entailed intelligent rather than mechanical training and the exercise of appropriate responsibility at every level".⁹⁰ The process of individualising military tactics was begun with the introduction of the Enfield and the innovations at Hythe.

Hythe represented a marked departure from the older generation's approach. As Edward Spiers remarked,

[The Duke of Wellington] had placed little value upon studying the science of war and the acquisition of professional qualifications. A quick eye, personal courage, and the qualities of an English gentleman had been all-sufficient [for officers].⁹¹

Ultimately, like the factory and the rifle itself, Hythe helped to produce the Enfield's discourses of precision, rationality, and modernity. As documented by Wilford, the training programme at Hythe attempted to inculcate scientific reason in its students and transform them into rational, masculine soldiers. The school also emphasised conducting experiments in firing to inform

⁸⁶ Keegan, *The American Civil War*, 340.

⁸⁷ Busk, *The Rifle and How to Use It*, 81–83.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁸⁹ Howard Bailes, 'Technology and Tactics in the British Army, 1866-1900', in *Men, Machines and War*, ed. Ronald Haycock and Keith Neilson (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1988), 42.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁹¹ Spiers, *The Army and Society*, 151.

tactics and training. The British press reported on these activities with impressed awe, and their writing helped to promote the institution and the rifle as the epitome of the modern effort.

Competitors and Successors

For all of its social and political importance, the Enfield was only one weapon that existed alongside an array of contemporaries. It was also a weapon that eventually became as outdated as the Brown Bess and was inevitably replaced. Other types of rifles manufactured in Britain and elsewhere in Europe were deeply significant in and of themselves. Therefore, it is also necessary to consider the Enfield's competitors and successors. Being deeply interested in rifle technology more generally at this time, the press in Britain and New Zealand regularly commented on other types of rifles in use, often comparing them directly with the Enfield. Rifles like the Whitworth, Baker, Calisher and Terry, Prussian Needle Gun and the Enfield's eventual successor the Snider, were all important in their own right, though due to considerations of space, this thesis does not analyse them in any depth.

The Enfield was largely unchallenged in the 1850s, but as the subsequent decade progressed, confidence in the weapon's power decreased. In 1864, an article from London's *Saturday Review* published in the *Otago Daily Times* captured some of the debates and questions about military technology at this time. While acknowledging the power of current British military technology, the article noted fears that Britain's neighbours were surpassing it.⁹² In particular, British military thinkers were perturbed by the success of the Prussian Army and its breech-loading "needle-gun" (see figure three). Many attributed the Prussians' success in the numerous wars they fought during the 1860s to the weapon.⁹³ However, military conservatives opposed hasty innovation. The article noted that numerous "military men" believed that "our soldiers, if armed with such a weapon [a breech-loader], would be tempted to throw away their ammunition so recklessly as to reserve nothing for the very point of crisis of an action". Such a situation "would be a good deal counterbalanced if the British soldier could not be brought to a more intelligent state of discipline", a comment which shows that for all the rhetoric about rifles requiring more intelligent soldiers, there were many who still disparaged the men of the frontline.⁹⁴

⁹² 'Military Weapons', *Otago Daily Times*, 23 August 1864, 6. From the *Saturday Review*.

⁹³ 'The Needle-Gun', *New Zealand Herald*, 25 September 1866, 5.

⁹⁴ 'Military Weapons', *Otago Daily Times*, 23 August 1864, 6.

Other commentators were quick to disparage the needle-gun. The *Press*, reprinting from the *Pall Mall Gazette* wrote

A clumsier, ruder weapon could scarcely be contrived...the want of finish apparent in every part – in the un-browned barrel, in the rough stock, in the ugly fittings, in the want of balance and handiness of the whole – is very striking to an eye educated by the beautiful workmanship of our English gun factories.⁹⁵



Figure 3. Single shot bolt action rifle, "needle gun", 1858, Berlin, by Royal Prussian Arsenal. Gift of the Defence Department, 1940. CC BY-NC-ND licence. Te Papa (DM000194).

Nevertheless, the eventual introduction of a breech-loader was inevitable. After an American named Jacob Snider invented a system of converting the Enfield rifle into breech-loaders, Britain took up the system. In 1866 the military announced that it would convert its stock of Enfields into Snider rifles, sometimes known as Snider-Enfields.⁹⁶ The conversion was predicted to cost only four shillings per rifle, far cheaper than manufacturing a stock of new weapons.⁹⁷

The initial reaction in New Zealand was enthusiasm. The *Daily Southern Cross*, reporting on a detachment of the 18th Royal Irish regiment on its way to Wellington with the Snider, declared that "the new weapon is a most destructive one, and a vast improvement on the Enfield".⁹⁸ However, as the rifle became more widely introduced into New Zealand, there were some who grumbled that they preferred the old Enfield, claiming it was more accurate.⁹⁹

Many of the narratives attached to the Enfield also came to be associated with other weapons during this era. Together, the weapons generated a body of texts that posited rifles as emblems of civilisation, modernity and independence. In 1857 the *Nelson Examiner* published an article from the *Friend of India* on the Jacob rifle which had been invented during the 1850s. Having described the weapon, the article went on to a discussion of the broader meaning of rifle

⁹⁵ 'The Prussian "Needlegun"', *Press*, 28 September 1866, 3.

⁹⁶ Headrick, *Tools of Empire*, 98.

⁹⁷ 'Breechloaders for the English Army', *Nelson Evening Mail*, 5 November 1866, 2.

⁹⁸ 'Military Items', *Daily Southern Cross*, 14 March 1868, 3.

⁹⁹ See for instance 'Snider Rifles', *New Zealand Herald*, 25 October 1875, 3; 'Rifle Test. - Enfields V. Sniders', *Auckland Star*, 11 November 1875, 2.

technology. The article claimed that the system of having a standing army had been transplanted to Britain from “despotic countries” and it did not allow soldiers freedom of individual action.¹⁰⁰ However, this state of affairs was changed by the development of rifles. The article argued that

The adoption of such weapons as we have described must place it for ever out of the power of superior number to overwhelm compact bands of intelligent marksmen, each man of whom is trained to skirmish or to fight in line with equal effect.... It is thus that every man who improves the art of killing becomes a benefactor to his species. He gives to superior civilisation the control of the balance of war.¹⁰¹

Other reports emphasised the success of rifles in battles of the past. In 1858 the Colony of Victoria appointed a commission to investigate how best to defend itself. In reporting on the commission, the Melbourne *Daily Argus* drew on the 1812 Battle of New Orleans, where Americans “armed with the deadly rifle” defeated British regulars.¹⁰² These articles are two examples of many that posited rifles, in the hands of skilled men, as a force for civilisation and independence. While not necessarily tied to the Enfield or any other weapon of the period, these texts demonstrate the currency of such narratives.

*

The invention of the Enfield rifle, the transplantation of American production techniques, and the establishment of scientific approaches to training soldiers all had important consequences for the British military and for the Empire at large. These developments were part of the nineteenth-century process whereby, in the words of R. W. Connell, “violence became a speciality”. This “bureaucratically rationalized violence as a social technique” facilitated a massive expansion in European colonisation throughout the world during the second half of the century.¹⁰³

As European arms increased in sophistication through the second half of the nineteenth century, European empires expanded territorially with increasing aggression. They were able to conquer

¹⁰⁰ ‘Colonel Jacob’s Rifle’, *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 25 March 1857, 4. From the *Friend of India*, 9 October 1856.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² ‘Defences of Victoria’, *Daily Southern Cross*, 19 October 1858, 3. From the *Daily Argus*, 2 September 1858.

¹⁰³ R. W. Connell, ‘The Big Picture: Masculinities in Recent World History’, *Theory and Society* 22 (1993): 609.

large portions of Africa and Asia that had previously been inaccessible, often winning enormously one-sided battles. The epitome of these was the Battle of Omdurman in 1898 where British forces killed 11,000 Sudanese while losing only forty soldiers themselves.¹⁰⁴ This imbalance in technology had immense political and ideological consequences and contributed to the growth of racism in Europe. According to Daniel Headrick,

The era of the new imperialism was also the age in which racism reached its zenith. Europeans, once respectful of some non-Western peoples – especially the Chinese – began to confuse levels of technology with levels of culture in general, and finally with biological capacity. Easy conquests had warped the judgement of even the scientific elites.¹⁰⁵

Of course, the development of military technology was only one contributor to European racial ideology. As historians such as Catherine Hall have discussed, the entrenchment of racial hierarchy was a deeply complex process, embedded in the development of new codes of knowledge that reified discourses of racial difference.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, examining the history of the Enfield offers useful insights into this process and provides a way of integrating cultural and technological approaches to the question of imperial ideology. It also demonstrates that ideologies tied to military technology were inherently unstable, requiring consistently successful performances from weapons. After the invention of the Enfield, it was not long before the weapon would be used in imperial wars where the weapon and its associated ideologies would be tested.

¹⁰⁴ Headrick, *Tools of Empire*, 115–18.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 209.

¹⁰⁶ Hall, *Civilizing Subjects*.

Chapter Two

“The King of Weapons”: The Enfield at War¹

The high point of the Enfield’s trajectory was its use in the Crimean War, the Indian Rebellion, the British Volunteer Movement, and the American Civil War. As a weapon and as an idea, the rifle played a pivotal part in each of these events and it was central to contemporary British narratives of the Indian Rebellion and the Volunteer Movement. During the Indian Rebellion, the rifle came to epitomise British ‘superiority’ and technological might as well as Indian ‘inferiority’ and superstition in the minds of Victorians. The Volunteer Force embraced the Enfield as its weapon of choice, and the movement’s rhetoric positioned the rifle as the weapon of skilled, educated, middle class men. Newspapers reported heavily on each of these events, often emphasising the role of the Enfield in them, and their coverage added layers of gender and race discourse to the weapon. As all of these events have their own extensive historiographies, this chapter focuses on the Enfield’s material and discursive role within them.

The Crimean War

The Crimean War was the Enfield’s first real test. Battle experience quickly revealed the rifle to be as precise and deadly as was promised, but it also exposed significant technical flaws. Ultimately though, the weapon in the hands of victorious British soldiers became one of the prevailing popular images of the war. While this reputation was made on the battlefield, it was the British press, and W. H. Russell in particular, who popularised narratives of the rifle. The war was a major international news event, receiving extensive coverage, and the press were eager to discuss the new weapons and their impact on the battlefield. Press reportage gave the British public an image of a powerful modern weapon that had brought Britain victory. This section discusses press commentary on the Enfield during the war as well as considering the wider social and political consequences of this coverage.

The Crimean War originated out of escalating tensions between the rising Russian Empire and the declining Ottoman Empire. In 1853, Russia invaded the Balkans and defeated the Ottoman

¹ W. H. Russell, *Complete History of the Russian War, from Its Commencement to Its Close* (Toronto: Bostwick & Barnard, 1856), 86. Russell applied the phrase to what he called the Minié rifle, though as noted in the text, journalists of the Crimean War often used Minié and Enfield interchangeably.

fleet at Sinop on Turkey's northern coast. Wary of growing Russian power, France and Britain intervened on the side of the Ottomans in 1854 and Sardinia joined them in the following year. Together, they invaded the Crimean Peninsula, where a protracted and bloody struggle continued until Russia's eventual surrender in 1856.²

Unsurprisingly, given the recent innovations in military technology, rifles played a large part in the conflict. In fact, it was the first major conflict characterised by extensive usage of them; though where the British and French possessed modern rifles, smoothbores still predominated in the Russian military.³ Modern rifles were not universal on the British side either as the military had not procured nearly enough Enfields to rearm all soldiers with the weapon. Consequently, they also used the Minié and Brown Bess.⁴ With such an array of weapons before them, many press commentators were less than precise in their reportage, and often failed to distinguish between the Enfield and the Minié or used them interchangeably.⁵ Accordingly, this section refers to both rifles.

Much of the reportage on the Enfield was incidental, with the press making only brief comments about the weapon. In December 1854 for example, the *Illustrated London News* proclaimed "never was the superiority of skill and science in war so plainly demonstrated as it has been in the use of the Minié rifle".⁶ *The Times* was more restrained, writing that the Enfield was "nearly a perfect weapon [emphasis original]", acknowledging the rifle still had some technical defects.⁷ Others provided more comprehensive discussions about the weapon. The *Lyttelton Times* published an account from the conflict, which commented "I tried the new Enfield rifle.... They carry beautifully while clean, for about twenty rounds, but then they begin to lead, and do not carry so well". It went on to report that one marksman even managed to fire at Russians more than 900 yards away, which "shows what the rifles will do when properly laid on". However, the report also pointed out that most troops did not know how to operate the sights properly and emphasised that technical flaws were a hindrance to the weapon's usefulness.⁸

² For recent works on the conflict, see Orlando Figes, *The Crimean War: A History* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010); Andrew C. Rath, *The Crimean War in Imperial Context, 1854-1856* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2015).

³ Smithurst, *The Pattern 1853 Enfield Rifle*, 24.

⁴ Ibid.; Holmes, *Redcoat*, 12.

⁵ Smithurst, *The Pattern 1853 Enfield Rifle*, 24.

⁶ Quoted in Ibid., 33.

⁷ 'The British Expedition', *The Times*, 22 December 1855, 7.

⁸ 'Memoranda of the War', *Lyttelton Times*, 20 October 1855, 5.

The new rifles were especially conspicuous in reports relating to the battles of Balaclava and Inkerman in late 1854. The Battle of Balaclava is most well remembered for the charge of the Light Brigade, immortalised by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, but it included another well-known instance where the 93rd Regiment (Highlanders), armed with modern rifles, repulsed a Russian cavalry charge. W. H. Russell famously described the Highlanders as a “thin red streak tipped with a line of steel”.⁹ The encounter demonstrated that infantry armed with rifles could defeat cavalry, even if they were spread out in a thin line rather than formed into a square, which was the conventional but arduous infantry tactic for coping with enemy cavalry. Such a reversal was a triumph of new technology over orthodox military tactics. The moment was celebrated in an 1881 Robert Gibb painting entitled *The Thin Red Line* in reference to Russell’s description (see figure four). The painting turned the event and Russell’s phrase into a mythical moment in the British military canon and popular culture, showing how images of new rifles in the Crimean War continued to resonate long after the conflict finished.



Figure 4. Robert Gibb, *The Thin Red Line*, 1881, National War Museum, Edinburgh.

At the battle of Inkerman in November 1854, British and French troops were vastly outnumbered, but with the help of their new weaponry were able to hold their ground. Once again, Russell described the event to the British public, emphasising the new weapons’ potency in battle. He wrote

The Minié is the king of weapons – Inkerman proved it. The regiments of the 4th Division and the Marines, armed with the old and much-belauded Brown Bess,

⁹ Quoted in Smithurst, *The Pattern 1853 Enfield Rifle*, 28.

could do nothing with their thin line of fire against the massive multitudes of the Muscovite infantry; but the volleys of the Minié rifle cleft them like the hand of the destroying angel, and they fell like leaves in autumn before them.¹⁰

Russell's emphasis on the new weapon's capacity to win battles and its superiority to the Brown Bess helped to establish a powerful reputation for modern rifles. His picture also had lasting potency as British papers continued to quote his description.¹¹

The Crimean War had significant ramifications for weapons production, the military, and British society at large. As discussed in the previous chapter, the conflict generated a major increase in demand for firearms, forcing the British Government to expand its plans for the Enfield factory.¹² The war was also a "watershed moment" in the relationship between the military and the British public, as press coverage of the army in action praised the courage of soldiers while often disparaging the perceived callousness and incompetence of their generals, resulting in an improvement in public perceptions of the common soldier.¹³ In particular, images of courageous British troops triumphing in battle with their new Enfields linked the rifle to popular ideas of the military and served to make the rifle an emblem of British power and modernity. Ultimately, the Enfield was part of, but not critical to British narratives about Crimea. Nevertheless, its use in the war did a great deal to put the weapon in the British collective consciousness.

The Indian Rebellion

It was the Indian Rebellion of 1857 that truly cemented the Enfield's status as an emblem of British power. The rifle was central to the outbreak of the conflict and it played a crucial part during the fighting. As a result, it garnered enormous social and political significance in British culture. This section explores the role of the Enfield in the Rebellion through the medium of the New Zealand press. While considering accounts that dealt directly with the weapon, the section also examines how the Enfield fitted into broader narratives of violence, gender, and race. It emphasises the fighting in Awadh, as it was there that some of the most contentious events of the Rebellion took place and there that the Enfield was most prominent in British accounts. The section argues that British narratives of 1857 positioned the rifle as a symbol of

¹⁰ Russell, *Complete History of the Russian War*, 86–87.

¹¹ See for instance 'There Is One Kind of Education, We Are Happy to', *The Times*, 18 August 1858, 6.

¹² Edwards, 'Accounting for Fair Competition between Private and Public Sector Armaments Manufacturers in Victorian Britain', 412.

¹³ Spiers, *The Army and Society*, 97–102.

civilisation and modernity and served to vindicate Britain's rule in the subcontinent. Furthermore, it posits that the Rebellion transformed the Enfield into a deeply raced object.

British power in India stretched back to the seventeenth century when the East India Company (EIC) first began establishing trading posts around the subcontinent's coast. Substantive territorial power came in 1757 when Robert Clive defeated Nawab Siraj ud-Daulah at the Battle of Plassey, granting the EIC rule over Bengal. From there, the EIC expanded over much of the rest of India, with increasing support from the British Government. In order to defend its growing territory, the company recruited a large army from the local population, training and arming it in line with European practice. These soldiers were known as sepoys, a term which now carries contentious political connotations. As a result, this chapter uses the term sepoy when referring to nineteenth-century sources, but avoids it otherwise.¹⁴

Unsurprisingly, EIC rule in India was unpopular and faced regular challenges. The biggest of these was the 1857 Rebellion, which began when EIC soldiers mutinied at Meerut, a garrison town northeast of Delhi. A large segment of the population quickly joined the soldiers, turning the conflict into a wholesale uprising. The Rebellion remained largely confined to the Gangetic plain and did not spread to other parts of British India. With the help of reinforcements from Britain, the military began a campaign of reconquest. By the end of 1858, Britain had brutally crushed all resistance, but the British Government was no longer content to leave the EIC in charge and took complete control.

The Rebellion was caused by a profound hostility to British power that was provoked to greater heights when the EIC introduced a range of unpopular policies in the 1840s and 1850s. Measures such as the 1848 Doctrine of Lapse, which facilitated the annexation of Indian states, and the 1856 General Enlistment Order, which enabled the deployment of Indian regiments outside the subcontinent, were deeply despised.¹⁵ The annexation of Awadh generated particular bitterness given that most of the EIC's Bengal Army were from that region.¹⁶ Increasing British missionary activity also caused resentment.¹⁷ The final straw was a rumour that the Enfield rifle's cartridges violated the religious requirements of Hindus and Muslims in

¹⁴ For histories of India and the 1857 Rebellion, see Bandyopadhyay, *From Plassey to Partition*; John Keay, *India: A History* (London: HarperCollins, 2000); Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt, 1857-1858*; Mukherjee, *Spectre of Violence*.

¹⁵ John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain* (London: Penguin, 2012), 247–48.

¹⁶ Richard Holmes, *Sahib: The British Soldier in India 1750-1914* (London: HarperCollins, 2005), 71.

¹⁷ Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, 247.

that they were lubricated with tallow made from pig and cow fat.¹⁸ However, many Britons believed that the rejection of the Enfield had been the main reason for the Rebellion. As a result, the rifle became central to British narratives of the conflict.¹⁹

Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that the Enfield formed a significant part of New Zealand's press reportage on the Rebellion. Describing the battles of the Rebellion, the press emphasised the power of the Enfield rifle, with many reports directly attributing victory to it. As had been the case during the Crimean War, much of the reportage was incidental, with articles briefly noting the rifle's success. For instance, at Sanganer, south of Jaipur, the Enfield "told well amongst the rascals".²⁰ At Bareilly, where forces under Sir James Outram were confronted by an army of thirty thousand, "The Enfield rifle did its work, and the insurgents were defeated with a loss of four hundred men, while the British did not leave a man upon the field".²¹ Near Rohilkhand, "the 82nd let in with the Enfield and a lot were knocked over".²²

Other reports made more bizarre claims about the Enfield's part in battles. An anonymous "letter from a young lady", claimed that "all the insurgents who are wounded by our Enfield rifles are immediately killed by their comrades: as the Enfield rifle is discharged by the objectionable cartridge, so the men who are wounded by it have lost caste". Though highly unlikely, this assertion attributed an almost magical level of power to the use of the weapon against the Rebels. The author went on to state that "the sepoys come out to fight with ladies' dresses on – is it not revolting?"²³ Thus, the account depicted the Rebels as feminine as well as superstitious and barbaric, as opposed to the modern, masculine, civilised British soldiers.²⁴ While such claims likely had no basis in fact, they clearly illustrate the intersection of race, gender and British beliefs about Hinduism as well as demonstrating the centrality of the Enfield rifle to these discourses.

The Rebellion raged most hotly in Awadh and it was there that the British and settler press devoted the lion's share of its attention. In this contentious theatre of the conflict, gender, race

¹⁸ Rudrangshu Mukherjee, "'Satan Let Loose upon Earth': The Kanpur Massacres in India in the Revolt of 1857", *Past and Present* 128 (1990): 95.

¹⁹ For a full discussion of the Enfield's cartridges and the extent to which they contributed to the Rebellion, see Saul David, 'Greased Cartridges and the Great Mutiny of 1857: A Pretext to Rebel or the Final Straw?', in *War and Society in Colonial India*, ed. Kaushik Roy (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 82–113.

²⁰ 'The Position of the Revolt', *Otago Witness*, 6 November 1858, 4.

²¹ 'India (From the Friend of India, January 21)', *Daily Southern Cross*, 13 April 1858, 3.

²² 'Rohilkund', *Otago Witness*, 17 July 1858, 6. From the *Calcutta Englishman*, 3 May 1858.

²³ 'Incidents of the Indian Mutiny', *Colonist*, 8 December 1857, 2.

²⁴ For a discussion of this trope in the history of the British colonisation of India, see Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

and the Enfield rifle became deeply intertwined in British narratives. Two sites in particular drew the British gaze: the besieged and isolated garrisons at Lucknow and Kanpur, which a small column under General Henry Havelock attempted to relieve. While the British at Lucknow endured the siege, those at Kanpur surrendered to local Rebel forces when they were offered safe travel down river to Allahabad. However, as they boarded the boats, the Rebels attacked, killing most and capturing 200 women and children.

In the following weeks, British forces under Havelock began to advance on Kanpur. The rebels there were led by Nana Sahib, a local aristocrat who had been denied his adopted father's pension by the British.²⁵ Nana Sahib's army met Havelock's at Fatehpur on the 12th of July, only to be resoundingly defeated. Reports from the battle emphasised the role of the Enfield in the victory. *The Times* put it that "the Enfield rifle in the hands of the 64th and 78th made itself felt at Cawnpore [Kanpur] like some novel and unprecedented instrument of war".²⁶ Other commentary gloated that the weapon that rebels had rejected was now used to kill them. The *Daily Southern Cross* reported that

The 64th and 78th levelled their rifles, and as the clear and sharp volley rang through the air, the mutinous host were taught by a terrible practical demonstration the value of the cartridges which they had so much affected to despise. All their musketry volleys availed them naught against the deadly tubes of the 78th and 64th. The balls which reached our men fell amongst them spent, and harmless as autumn leaves. In vain they tried to bring their artillery to bear upon us, the Enfield rifles swept away the gunners like chaff.²⁷

Following the battle, Havelock issued a famous order which was reprinted in the press across the British world. He thanked his troops whose "arduous exertions" had produced "the strange result of a whole army driven from a strong position, eleven guns captured, and their whole force scattered to the winds without the loss of a single British soldier".²⁸ Havelock attributed the victory to

The fire of the British Artillery, exceeding in rapidity and precision all that the Brigadier-General has ever witnessed in his not short career; to the power of the

²⁵ Mukherjee, *Spectre of Violence*, 50.

²⁶ 'There Is One Kind of Education, We Are Happy to', *The Times*, 18 August 1858, 6.

²⁷ 'India. (From the Bombay Telegraph and Courier, July 30.)', *Daily Southern Cross*, 23 October 1857, 3.

²⁸ 'India', *Lyttelton Times*, 4 November 1857, 3. The same article was also printed in the *Wellington Independent*, 21 October 1857, 3.

Enfield Rifle in British hands; to British pluck—that good quality which has survived the revolution of the hour; and to the blessings of Almighty God in a most righteous cause—the cause of justice, humanity, truth, and good government in India.²⁹

The press was quick to link the Enfield's role in that battle to broader claims of British civilisational superiority. In a retrospective article on the year of 1857, the *Daily Southern Cross* positioned the battle of Fatehpur as a crucial engagement of the conflict, stating

It was the first victory of the war, and, in moral effect, perhaps the most important. It convinced both mutineers and Europeans that the old innate indestructible superiority of race was as complete as ever; that, whatever the disparity of force, battle meant victory for the British. It taught them, too, the withering power of the new weapon, the Enfield rifle, which the Sepoys had refused to use. From that day forward the Europeans attacked with a disdainful confidence which of itself was an assurance of success.³⁰

Havelock's column continued to Kanpur, defeating three more armies along the way. Possibly seeking retribution for British violence against Indian civilians on the march, the rebels then killed their prisoners the day before the British arrived.³¹ Upon capturing the city, Havelock's army were shocked to find the remains of the 200 women and children. As historian Lydia Murdoch put it “for many Britons, British womanhood came to symbolize the values associated with the British “civilizing mission”: Christianity, chivalry, and self-sacrifice, as well as a belief in racial superiority”.³² Given that the second massacre directly targeted so many women, Britons considered it to be an attack on the values they treasured most dearly.³³

The massacre changed British attitudes to the conflict. Initially, many Britons had blamed EIC mismanagement for the outbreak of Rebellion, dismissing claims about the Enfield cartridge's role.³⁴ Benjamin Disraeli, then a British opposition MP, had asserted that “the decline and fall of empires are not affairs of greased cartridges. Such results are occasioned by adequate causes, and by an accumulation of adequate causes”.³⁵ But the news caused such rage that it changed

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ ‘Retrospect of the Year 1857’, *Daily Southern Cross*, 4 May 1858, sec. Supplement, 1.

³¹ Mukherjee, “‘Satan Let Loose upon Earth’”, 112.

³² Murdoch, “‘Suppressed Grief’”, 369.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Streets, *Martial Races*, 37.

³⁵ Ibid.

the Rebellion from “a military conflict on the imperial periphery to a popular national struggle in which even ordinary Britons felt invested”.³⁶ One effect of this was to transform British troops and their allies into “chivalric heroes”; conversely, the Rebels became villainous cowards.³⁷ As the Rebellion continued, the British used the massacre to vindicate their brutal reprisals on the Indian population.³⁸ Having recaptured the city, Havelock marched onward to Lucknow, only to die of dysentery while attempting to relieve the beleaguered garrison, but gained martyrdom in the process.

Nana Sahib and Havelock, as perpetrator and avenger of this act respectively, became the villain and hero par excellence of the Rebellion. Havelock became the “wish-fulfilling projection of an idealised and omnipotent national identity founded upon racial and religious superiority, as the very figure of the nation”.³⁹ As Graham Dawson pointed out, an elderly, middle-class, proselytising Baptist was not typical heroic material, yet the news of Havelock’s death prompted mourning across Britain.⁴⁰ British response to the Rebellion had been shock at first but quickly moved to cries for revenge, and in late 1857, “the major vehicle for these phantasies of national revenge was the flying column led by Brigadier-General Henry Havelock”.⁴¹ Due to the absence of information on the conflict, the news of Havelock’s recapture of Kanpur had “the instantaneous, omnipotent quality of wish-fulfilment, giving the impression that victory had been won at the waving of a wand”, or indeed, the waving of an Enfield rifle.⁴²

News of the Rebellion caused similar outrage in the settler colonies. The Australian papers were quick to condemn Indians as “fiends, monsters, scoundrels, idolaters, and brutes”.⁴³ Christianity was a fundamental reason. As Angela Woollacott put it, “the rebellious sepoys and their supporters were considered viciously ungrateful for all of the benefits of Christianity and civilisation the British considered they had brought to the subcontinent”.⁴⁴ In the United States, the press responded with a similar horror that was underscored by parallel racial anxieties about

³⁶ Ibid., 41.

³⁷ Ibid., 11.

³⁸ Murdoch, “Suppressed Grief”, 370.

³⁹ Dawson, *Soldier Heroes, British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities*, 98–99.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 79–80.

⁴¹ Ibid., 94.

⁴² Ibid., 96.

⁴³ Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, 179.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 179–80.

potential slave rebellions.⁴⁵ When news of the Rebellion reached New Zealand, it provoked similarly hysterical reactions.

Where the press posited the Enfield as a manifestation of British character and civilisation, they also paid attention to the types of weapons used by their opponents. W. H. Russell reported on the pursuit of Tatya Tope, a supporter of Nana Sahib. He noted that

He is surrounded by 300 mounted spearsmen [sic], encased in shirts of chain-mail.... Devotion like this sounds very romantic...but canister and shrapnel-shell make fearful havoc amongst their ranks, and their chain-mail would avail them but little when exposed to the deadly discharges of the Enfield rifle.⁴⁶

No doubt choice of weapons for the rebels would have been decided more by availability than ideology. Nevertheless, by contrasting the different types of weapons used by each side the press highlighted the supposedly civilised and modern nature of British forces while disparaging what they saw as the barbaric and medieval character of the rebels.

Press coverage of the Rebellion often juxtaposed reports of glorious victories with accounts of helpless Britons, particularly women and children, being violently murdered. Directly below the *Lyttelton Times*' story on Havelock's victory at Fatehpur, they reported accounts of "a whole family at Allahabad being tied to trees, their toes and arms chopped off, and their tortured bodies burnt alive". Quoting a letter to *Agra Times*, the paper wrote of

Ladies violated, tortured by sepoys and others; their mutilated remains perambulated about the street. A lady far advanced in pregnancy, trying to escape, fell in unfortunately, with some of these villainous scoundrels, and whatever else they may have done to the poor creature, I will only tell you, they cut her open alive, took out the child, and burned both.⁴⁷

Such accounts of violence against British women were not simply cynical propaganda, they resonated deeply with individual British subjects around the Empire, evoking genuine emotion.

In contrast, the British press often portrayed Indian women as spiteful initiators of violence.⁴⁸ Accounts of Lakshmibai, the Rani of Jhansi are a prime example. Lakshmibai joined the

⁴⁵ Nikhil Bilwakesh, "'Their Faces Were like so Many of the Same Sort at Home': American Responses to the Indian Rebellion of 1857", *American Periodicals* 21 (2011): 1.

⁴⁶ 'The War in India', *New Zealander*, 7 May 1859, sec. Supplement, 1.

⁴⁷ 'India', *Lyttelton Times*, 4 November 1857, 3.

⁴⁸ Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 74.

Rebellion when it broke out, eventually fighting alongside Nana Sahib and Tatya Tope.⁴⁹ According to wildly sensationalised British narratives, she commanded that the European population of Jhansi be raped, murdered, torn to pieces, and their faces tarred black, overturning all British power structures in the process.⁵⁰

Just like the rebels of Kanpur, the Rani met her fate through European technology, dying in battle near the city of Gwalior in 1858. *The Times* reported that

The Ranee of JHANSI [sic] and her sister – two Amazons in courage and crime – succeeded in holding together some of the Gwalior troops. About a hundred of the 8th Hussars, following at full speed, and armed with revolvers, came up with them, and in a few moments 400 of the most desperate of the rebels lay dead on the plain.⁵¹

The report went on to recommend that all British Light Horse regiments should be similarly armed in future. This instance further demonstrates the British emphasis on modern, masculine military technology defeating ‘barbaric’, feminised Indian antagonists in accounts of the Rebellion. For the British, such narratives served to demonise their enemies and to glorify their technological accomplishments. They also positioned military technologies like Enfield rifles and revolvers as both symbols of British might and the enforcers of its power.

Concerns about the body were also at the centre of Britain’s attempts to punish the rebels and reinstate their power over India. One of the most vitriolic forms of punishment was to execute rebels (and suspected rebels) by tying them to cannons and blowing them to pieces. According to Rudrangshu Mukherjee,

British power had articulated itself by marking and mastering the sepoy’s body; when the latter defied that mastery, the dominance could only be restored by disembodiment of the rebel body with pomp and in public. Such rites of punishment used the body as the anchoring point of the manifestation of power.⁵²

Once again, Britain’s military technology was deeply implicated in the reassertion of imperial power.

⁴⁹ Prachi Deshpandi, ‘The Making of an Indian Nationalist Archive: Lakshmibai, Jhansi, and 1857’, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 67 (2008): 855.

⁵⁰ Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire*, 74–76.

⁵¹ ‘There Is One Kind of Education, We Are Happy to’, *The Times*, 18 August 1858, 6.

⁵² Mukherjee, *Spectre of Violence*, 45.

Contrasting narratives about the violence of the Rebellion were crucial to constructing collective British understandings of the conflict, and accounts of the Enfield's part in the Rebellion played into broader narratives of different types of gendered and racialised violence. British depictions of Indian men's violence were predominantly in the form of sexual attacks on and murders of British women and children. In contrast, British men's violence was structured, precise fire with the Enfield rifle against armed opponents. Of course, these narratives did not necessarily represent anything near the truth of the conflict. In actual fact, brutal British reprisals killed huge numbers of Indian civilians; over 100,000 Indians died in the Rebellion, compared to 11,000 British soldiers, most of whom died from disease.⁵³ Nevertheless, accounts of the British fighting the rebels vastly improved the reputation of soldiers.⁵⁴ They also positioned the Enfield as an emblem of civilised British masculinity.

The Rebellion's aftermath reverberated through the rest of the nineteenth century. One of the most immediate consequences for British rule in India was the need to reorganise its Indian soldiers to prevent a second Rebellion. Britain did so via two avenues. Firstly, it increased the ratio of British to Indian regiments.⁵⁵ Secondly, it commissioned a new smoothbore pattern of Enfield to arm the Indian regiments, leaving them without the advantage of rifled weapons. Britain then armed the Irish Constabulary with the same weapon in 1858.⁵⁶ This measure had the practical goal of facilitating the suppression of any future rebellion, but it also enshrined the status of the Enfield rifle as a deeply raced weapon and symbol of British power.

In the aftermath of the Rebellion, the press could not but approve of this measure.⁵⁷ A few years later though, the matter seemed less urgent to the press. When Indian regiments joined Britain's 1868 Abyssinian Expedition, newspapers criticised the fact that they were still armed with smoothbore muskets.⁵⁸ By 1870, some regiments of the Madras Army were at last being armed with the Enfield, though by this time, the Enfield itself had become outdated.⁵⁹ When the Second Anglo-Afghan War broke out in 1878, British regiments were armed with the state of the art Martini-Henry rifle while their Indian colleagues had only the outdated Snider.⁶⁰ Such

⁵³ Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, 256.

⁵⁴ Spiers, *The Army and Society*, 135.

⁵⁵ David Killingray, 'Guardians of Empire', in *Guardians of Empire: The Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers c.1700-1964*, ed. David Killingray and David Omissi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 7.

⁵⁶ Smithurst, *The Pattern 1853 Enfield Rifle*, 21–22.

⁵⁷ See for instance 'Otago Daily Times', *Otago Daily Times*, 22 April 1862, 3.

⁵⁸ 'The Oamaru Times, and Waitaki Reporter', *North Otago Times*, 4 February 1868, 2.

⁵⁹ 'Indian Intelligence', *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 14 December 1870, 4.

⁶⁰ Holmes, *Sahib*, 82.

reluctance to arm Indian soldiers with the same weapons as their British counterparts demonstrates the ongoing anxieties regarding race and weapons in imperial policies.

Given the importance of the Rebellion in British culture and the Enfield's prominent role in narratives of the conflict, it is not surprising that 1857 profoundly changed the rifle's position in imperial discourse. It was no longer simply an effective weapon that demonstrated Britain's technological accomplishments. The Enfield was now a deeply raced object, closely bound up with British ideas of superiority. Ultimately, the Enfield's role in gendered narratives about the violence of the Rebellion formed a central component in the reassertion and maintenance of British power in India.

The Volunteer Movement

In July 1860, Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, and various other dignitaries, made their way to Wimbledon Common where the National Rifle Association of Britain (NRA) was hosting its inaugural meeting and rifle shooting competition. Formed in 1859, the association sought to promote the newly established Volunteer Force and rifle shooting more generally. The competition, and its generous offer of prize money, attracted 360 competitors and thousands of spectators, as well as numerous public figures. Sidney Herbert, President of the Association and Secretary of State for War gave the opening address to the meeting, stating that "the association hoped, by establishing rifle shooting as a national pastime, to make the rifle what the bow was in the days of the Plantagenets, the familiar weapon of those who stood forth in the defence of their country".⁶¹ The Queen then addressed the crowd, pronouncing

I have witnessed with pleasure the manner in which the ancient fondness of the English people for manly and sylvan sports has been converted by your association to more important ends, and has been made an auxiliary instrument for maintaining inviolable the safety of our common country.⁶²

⁶¹ 'The National Rifle Association, at Wimbledon', *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 24 October 1860, 4. From the *United Service Gazette*.

⁶² *Ibid.*

She then fired the opening shot of the competition using a Whitworth rifle fixed to a sliding rest (see figure five). Pulling a cord attached to the trigger, she scored a bull's eye at 400 yards. The *United Service Gazette* reported that her “*debut* as a volunteer was declared to be the most popular character in which our beloved Sovereign has appeared during her long and glorious reign”.⁶³

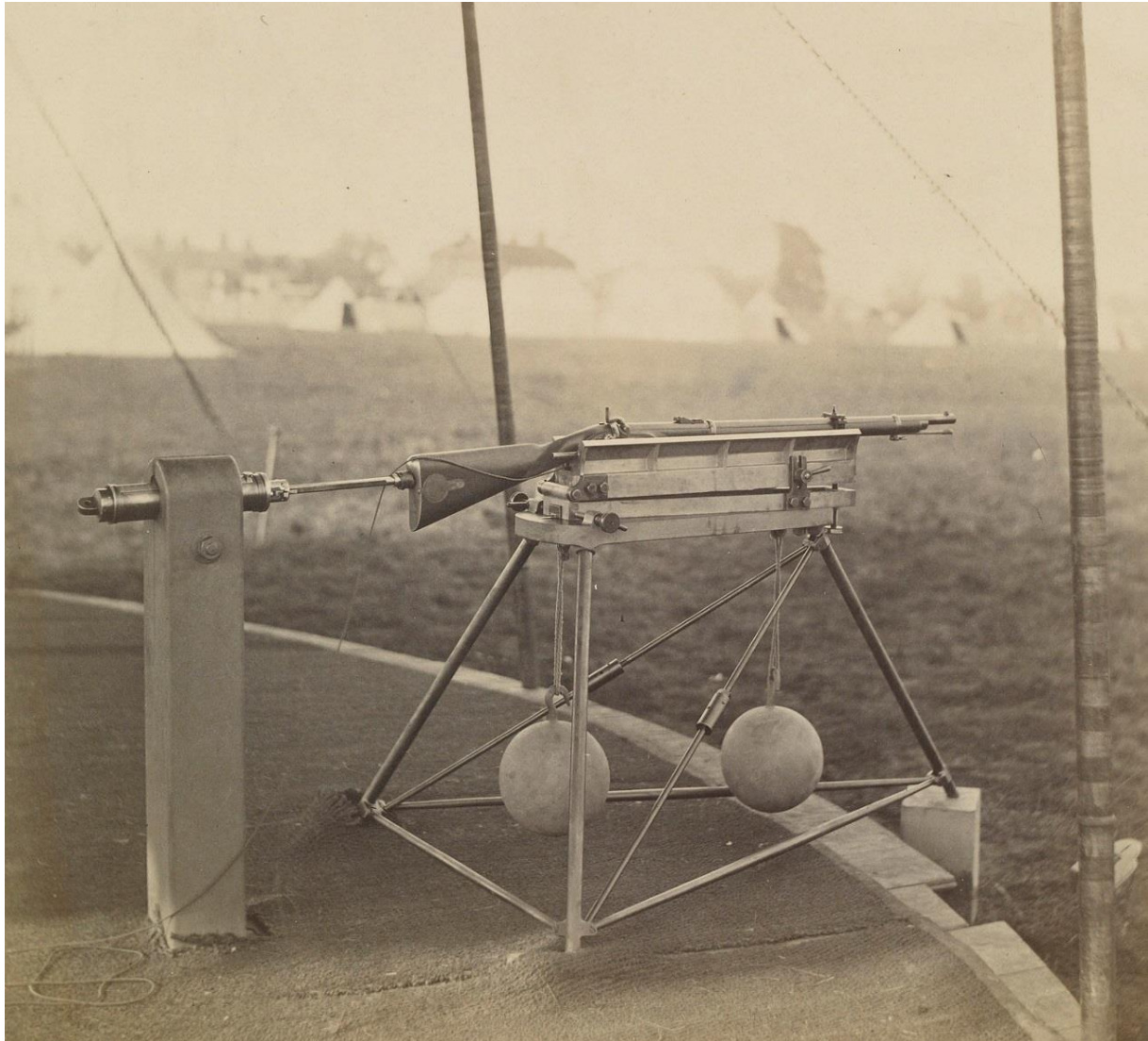


Figure 5. Roger Fenton, The Whitworth rifle, fired by The Queen at Wimbledon, 2 July 1860, Albumen print: RCIN 2941854, Royal Collection Trust.

In the following week, Lord De Grey and Ripon presented the prizes to the competition's winners at Crystal Palace. There, he commented that

Eighteen months ago...we had no right to say that the rifle was the national weapon of Englishmen, but already a great advance has been made, and the boast will soon

⁶³ Ibid.

be in the strictest sense true if all alike bear in mind the counsel, that it is above all things needful that the Volunteers should exercise themselves in learning to use the admirable weapon which the Government will place in their hands.⁶⁴

Who were the volunteers and how had they helped to make the rifle Britain's national weapon? The Volunteer Force was a part-time army of Britons who formed rifle and artillery corps. It was formed in 1859 in response to a broad social movement of people who were disturbed by the military crises of the 1850s and wanted to contribute to their nation's defence without joining the military formally. In the event of an invasion, the Force would be called out to fight in support of the regular army. In preparation, volunteer corps gathered regularly to practice rifle shooting and other military drills, often entering competitions. The establishment of the Force was met with intense enthusiasm from the British public, especially the middle class, and the movement it generated helped to reshape popular attitudes to the military.

The Volunteer Movement hinged on the Enfield rifle, which was the main weapon of the Force. The rifle was more than just a tool. Its nature, as a weapon requiring precision and skill to use, helped to shape the movement's ideology and influenced how the volunteers saw themselves. Consequently, the volunteers' adoption of the rifle added a new layer of discourses to the Enfield. This section explores the use of the Enfield by the volunteers and the rifle's place in the movement's ideology. It first considers the background to the movement's foundation before examining the writings of prominent volunteers and the press on the rifle.

It is important to situate the Volunteers in the context of Britain's military and amateur traditions in the post-Napoleonic period. In this era, Britain relied mainly on its navy for defence, so the army was small by European standards. Numbering only 109,000 in 1835 it grew to 152,000 in 1854.⁶⁵ Scotland and Ireland were both prominent recruiting grounds through the first half of the century, though as England industrialised, recruits were increasingly drawn from the urban working class. Debts under thirty pounds were remitted on enlistment, so financial difficulty was a strong motive for some; others joined up for adventure and bounty.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ 'Report on the Taku Forts after Their Capture', *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 28 November 1860, 4. From the *Saturday Review*.

⁶⁵ Strachan, *Wellington's Legacy*, 182.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 51–52.

Soldiers of the line had a poor reputation that stemmed from their low pay and penchant for alcoholism.⁶⁷ The Duke of Wellington himself famously referred to his own soldiers as “the scum of the earth”.⁶⁸ As the army served as a guarantor of social order and was used to suppress political dissent, it often incurred the resentment of civilian populations, especially during the Chartist era.⁶⁹ Even within the army itself, officers held the rank and file soldiers in low regard. In the words of historian Erica Wald, officers viewed their troops as “a rowdy assortment of reprobates, drunkards, pickpockets thrown together with the labouring poor who completed their ranks”; yet it was these vices that were considered to make them valuable.⁷⁰ As Viscount Melville commented, “the worst men make the best soldiers”.⁷¹ In contrast, officers were expected to be gentlemen, or “be prepared to act and behave like a ‘natural’ gentleman”.⁷² Between working class soldiers and upper class officers, few members of the middle class enlisted.⁷³

Britain had traditionally supplemented its standing army with a militia raised by ballot. However, calling-up the militia was extremely unpopular and caused considerable economic disruption by removing men from the workforce.⁷⁴ Associated with the lower classes, it was disdained by the middle class.⁷⁵ In the 1830s and 1840s, a movement arose demanding the establishment of a Volunteer Force as an alternative to the Militia.⁷⁶ The movement remained small until the 1850s when it burgeoned thanks to a series of military crises that left Britons fearing a French invasion. In 1851, Napoleon III had seized power in France via a coup d’état. He began modernising the French navy, investing in armoured steam ships which had the potential to threaten Britain’s control of the seas.⁷⁷ With the debacle of the Crimean campaign revealing the vulnerabilities of Britain’s military machine and the Indian Rebellion taking 25,000 troops out of Britain to the subcontinent, the nation was left relatively defenceless.⁷⁸

⁶⁷ Spiers, *The Army and Society*, 52.

⁶⁸ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 77.

⁶⁹ Streets, *Martial Races*, 21; Geoffrey Wawro, *Warfare and Society in Europe: 1792-1914* (London: Routledge, 2005), 35.

⁷⁰ Wald, *Vice in the Barracks*, 9–16.

⁷¹ W. F. P. Napier, *History of the War in the Peninsula and in the South of France: From the Year 1807 to the Year 1814*, vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1828), 73.

⁷² Spiers, *The Army and Society*, 1.

⁷³ Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, 42.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁷⁵ Smithurst, *The Pattern 1853 Enfield Rifle*, 52.

⁷⁶ Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, 14. As Beckett noted, Hans Busk claimed to have advocated for a Volunteer Force since 1837.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁷⁸ Smithurst, *The Pattern 1853 Enfield Rifle*, 52.

Through the 1850s, military authorities consistently rejected the calls for a Volunteer Force.⁷⁹ The British military establishment was aware of the deficiencies in defence, but they were reluctant to resort to a Volunteer corps. Figures such as the Duke of Wellington and John Fox Burgoyne supported reinforcing Britain's fortifications and bolstering the army itself while the Duke of Cambridge denigrated volunteers as "very dangerous rabble" and "unmanageable bodies that would ruin our Army".⁸⁰ Others such as William and Charles Napier were more supportive.⁸¹

In 1858, a final crisis prompted Britain to heed the volunteer promoters. In January of that year, Italian nationalist Felice Orsini attempted to assassinate Napoleon III. He failed but his close connections to the Italian community in Britain and the fact that the bombs he had set-off were manufactured in Birmingham aroused fury and suspicion in France. The subsequent diplomatic fallout left Britain fearing invasion once again. Though the crisis soon subsided, the press demanded the establishment of a Volunteer Force nonetheless.⁸² Lord Derby's Conservative government submitted to the pressure and announced the establishment of the Force in May of 1859. Initially, they refused even to supply the force with any arms, leaving aspiring members to pay their own way entirely, but when the Liberal government under Lord Palmerston took power later that year, his Secretary of State Sidney Herbert decided to issue twenty-five Enfield rifles per 100 volunteers.⁸³

In 1859, 133 corps were established. Another 578 followed the next year, testifying to the immense popularity of the movement.⁸⁴ Over the course of the century, the size of the force waxed and waned depending on whether or not the country was threatened; numbers enrolled in the 1860s grew from 161,239 in 1861 to 195,287 by 1869, only to drop off to 178,279 in 1872.⁸⁵

The character and class composition of the movement varied widely across Britain. As Beckett pointed out, some units like the 48th Middlesex (Havelock's Temperance) Rifle Volunteer Corps were "purely artisan", while the Victoria Rifles excluded those who were "polluted by trade", and other units were even sponsored by aristocrats and resembled "bands of neo-feudal

⁷⁹ Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, 15.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 10–11.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 11–13.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 19.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 20–23.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 93–102.

retainers”.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the Force trended towards the middle class during its early years, and later acquired a more working class association.⁸⁷ While the government supplied some rifles, other costs for joining and maintaining membership were substantial. Between uniforms and annual subscriptions, costs could total between £7 and £14. Such costs made joining the movement prohibitively expensive for many of the working class.⁸⁸

The movement defined itself against regular military forces and consistently claimed to be better soldiers than regulars, despite evidence to the contrary. As historian Olive Anderson pointed out, it was “permeated by hostility to the professional army”.⁸⁹ It was perhaps the predominance of the middle class that gave the Volunteers this characteristic. Having been effectively excluded from the regular military, the middle class sought to make the Volunteer Force their own.

The revolution in rifle technology during the mid-nineteenth century was central to the Volunteer Movement. Indeed, the very existence of a weapon like the Enfield facilitated the creation of the Force.⁹⁰ The Enfield’s range meant that Volunteers carrying it could be employed as skirmishers and kept from hand to hand combat where their inexperience could be dangerous.⁹¹ But the Enfield, and rifles more generally, were also fundamental to determining the structure of the movement. As Smithurst posited, “its handling and accurate shooting required at the least good judgement, but also – in the acquisition of good judgement – the capacity to grasp the basics of ballistics. In other words, it required men of a high degree of education”.⁹² The volunteers embraced the Enfield and developed a deep interest in both military science and rifle shooting. The rest of this section considers the Enfield’s place in the writing of the volunteers and the press.

The most prominent Volunteer advocate and author was Hans Busk. With Alfred Richards and Nathaniel Bousfield, Busk was one of the movement’s foremost promoters.⁹³ His book *The Rifle and How to Use it*, discussed in the previous chapter, explored the origins of the Volunteer Movement and the state of military science. He began his text with the ineffectiveness of the

⁸⁶ Ibid., 52–60.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 52–73.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 48.

⁸⁹ Olive Anderson, ‘The Growth of Christian Militarism in Mid-Victorian Britain’, *The English Historical Review* 86 (1971): 67.

⁹⁰ Smithurst, *The Pattern 1853 Enfield Rifle*, 52.

⁹¹ Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, 11.

⁹² Smithurst, *The Pattern 1853 Enfield Rifle*, 53.

⁹³ Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, 14.

Brown Bess, recounting instances where the musket had failed to inflict casualties against Britain's enemies, despite the expenditure of huge amounts of ammunition.⁹⁴

Busk went on to praise the adoption of the Enfield in 1853, but bemoaned the apparently unprepared state of Britain's defences. Like his contemporaries, he was deeply disturbed by the growth of French military power under Napoleon III. Calling the state of British defences "humiliating", he claimed that in France, "the constant theme and topic among military and naval men is, 'How can England best be conquered?'"⁹⁵ Busk acknowledged that Britain's army could never match that of France man for man, and that the militia were insufficient, but posited Volunteers as an "eminently superior" solution.⁹⁶ He touted the strength of the Volunteer Force, going so far as to claim that,

A few trained men, accustomed to act together, relying upon their own individual skill, and able to confide in their comrades, may be led without hesitation against a mere host, however, armed, many times numerically superior to themselves.⁹⁷

Such rhetoric emphasised the individualistic discourse of the movement, which was facilitated by the fact that the Enfield could be used as an individual weapon, unlike the Brown Bess, which was only effective when fired in a volley.

Class concerns were central to Busk's conception of an effective Volunteer Force. He emphasised

Much tact and judgement should be exercised in the selection of recruits. The value of a volunteer corps depends entirely upon the class from which it is drawn. The men composing it should, without exception, be those who, by birth or position, have a stake in the country; whose loyalty is beyond question; who would have the strongest possible interest not only to repel aggression, but to maintain tranquillity, and to defend and uphold all established institutions.⁹⁸

Along with other proponents of the volunteers, Busk was careful to avoid too close an association with rank and file soldiers, whose social disrepute contrasted with the respectability the volunteers aimed to project. Such exclusivity epitomised the disdain for the working class

⁹⁴ Busk, *The Rifle and How to Use It*, 17–18.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 217–19.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 224.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 225.

among some in the volunteers. Busk also wrote a *Hand-Book for Hythe*, to educate volunteers of the training methods at that institution, which he dedicated to Colonel E. C. Wilford, the instructor of musketry at Hythe.⁹⁹

Wilford himself was a strong proponent of the Volunteer Movement. While his first two lectures addressed issues to do with rifles in general, Wilford's third lecture took the Volunteers as its subject, and was delivered to the "Noblemen and Gentlemen" of the Rifle Volunteers at Hythe in 1859. Skill, masculinity and civilisation were his central themes. Wilford saw the Volunteer Force as the fulfilment of masculine duty and a preventative measure against social and physical degeneration. He argued that

When once we begin to delegate our arduous duties to others, and consider our proper occupations as our troubles, and employ others to think, to act, and to fight for us, then our doom is sealed, our glory is vanishing, our end is approaching!¹⁰⁰

According to Wilford, masculine endeavours were the ultimate prevention against such degeneration. He hoped the Volunteers would "aid in keeping up the manhood of the race" and "lead our manhood more into the open air", noting that rifling shooting would "be added to riding, hunting, boating, shooting, fencing, quoits, cricket, etc., etc.,"¹⁰¹

The Volunteer Movement generated numerous other pamphlets on various themes. Captain Henry William Heaton's *Notes on Rifle-Shooting*, for instance, emphasised the technical aspects of shooting and reviewed the strengths of different rifles.¹⁰² In contrast, economist Robert Dudley Baxter penned a pamphlet on the political aspects of the movement, arguing that the government should provide more support to it.¹⁰³ However, these texts did not stress the Enfield as a political object to the same extent as Busk and Wilford did.

Newspapers were an important forum for public discourse on the Volunteer Movement and its ideology. The press eagerly editorialised on the subject of the Force. They also reported on lectures relating to the movement and rifle shooting contests as well as writing about the day to day elements of the Volunteers such as drilling and practicing. Analysis of the press reveals

⁹⁹ Hans Busk, *Hand-Book for Hythe* (London: Routledge, Warne, and Routledge, 1860).

¹⁰⁰ Wilford, *Three Lectures Upon the Rifle*, 81–82.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁰² Henry William Heaton, *Notes on Rifle-Shooting*, 2nd Edition (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, & Green, 1864).

¹⁰³ Robert Dudley Baxter, *The Volunteer Movement; Its Progress and Wants* (Cambridge; London: MacMillan and Co.; Richard Clay, 1860).

the extent of public interest in military science and demonstrates the movement's broader attitudes to issues of peace, citizenship and even civilisation.

In the early 1860s, two such lectures in Britain were reported on in detail in New Zealand. In 1860, Lieutenant Barwell lectured the Norwich Volunteer Rifles. His focus was the science of firing the Enfield rifle, noting the need for precise judgement of distances and elevation; but Barwell went on to comment on the broader nature of the Force. He argued that the Volunteers were "a real peace society, inasmuch as the existence of such a force was one of the best securities against the calamity of a war".¹⁰⁴ Then,

He urged the volunteers to study their vocation with all their heart and soul, and would say to them in the words of that book which every Christian and every soldier should read 'Go ye forth, be skilful and very courageous'.¹⁰⁵

Such rhetoric demonstrated the confluence of ideas about bearing arms, Christianity and citizenship in the discourse of the Volunteer Movement.

William McKean, a Unitarian minister and volunteer captain, set out the movement's ideology even more explicitly. Lecturing the local Rifle Corps at the Evangelical Union Chapel in Paisley, Scotland, McKean began by differentiating the Volunteers from regular soldiers whom he deemed violent conquerors. In contrast, Volunteers "are peaceful citizens of a free country, and our liberties and our privileges are dear to our hearts".¹⁰⁶ McKean also positioned the Enfield and rifle technology as a central part of modernity. With great prescience he stated that

The aim and effect of modern effort is the annihilation of time and space. In these observations it will be shown that weapons of war are partaking in the advancement of the times, and may they continue to partake in that advancement till their perfection leave combatants no chance of escape – till war be made all loss and no gain – till kings, if they will go to war, have all the glory to themselves for lack of followers.

McKean spent the majority of his lecture discussing military education, arguing that it should emphasise individual skill in accurate shooting rather than mass obedience. Disparaging of conventional military drill, he put it that "the new war doctrines taught at Hythe are exceedingly simple and much at variance with those prevalent in the army". Instead of "complicated drills

¹⁰⁴ 'Musketry', *Otago Witness*, 23 June 1860, 5.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ 'Lecture on the Theory and Practice of Musketry by Captain McKean', *Otago Witness*, 28 July 1860, 6.

which it takes a soldier all his life to learn”, forming squares and massed fighting, “he is learned to shoot and skirmish [sic]”.¹⁰⁷ McKean also lectured on the Enfield rifle itself, noting the trajectory of an Enfield bullet and what calculations a rifleman needed to make to be accurate at long distances.

Others were quick to mock the eager sincerity of the Volunteer spirit. *All the Year Round*, a British literary magazine founded by Charles Dickens published a fictional account of a Captain Strongbow, who attempts to lecture his Volunteers on the rifle. His counterpoint Mr Pruffle, “a slow, middle-aged gentleman”, cannot tell the barrel of a rifle from the butt. The disheartened Strongbow then “sits up half the night studying the theory of trajectories”.¹⁰⁸ Characters like Strongbow and Pruffle embodied two stereotypes of the Volunteers: the former, promoting the enthusiastic but ineffective scientific approach, the latter a frivolous and incapable “gentleman”. Neither instilled much faith in the Volunteers as a Force capable of defending the country. Nonetheless, very few commentators disparaged the movement outright or hoped for it to fail.¹⁰⁹

In spite of such taunts, the movement grew quickly. So much so that the press quickly proclaimed the foundation of the Force had “altogether extinguished any talk of an invasion, even in military circles here. That game is up”.¹¹⁰ However, it is difficult to assess the Force’s actual efficacy given that it remained untried and calculations of the Volunteers’ potency were a matter of perspective; as Beckett put it, “Garibaldi considered that the Volunteers had rendered England ‘impregnable’ against invasion...Napoleon III harboured no such illusions”.¹¹¹

Nevertheless, British military authorities quickly realised that for the Force to be of any use it would require more training, so they opened the School of Musketry at Hythe to Volunteers. Unsurprisingly, the press enthusiastically promoted training at Hythe, where Volunteers could “learn to use with deadly effect the splendid arm which has been placed in their hands”.¹¹² An 1862 report from Hythe showed the efficacy of such training. A ‘London Paper’ quoted in *The Colonist* of New Zealand noted that “the broad conclusion to be drawn from the report of General Hay is, that the volunteers have even a stronger aptitude for the military rifle than we

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ ‘First Instruction in Musketry’, *Colonist*, 5 March 1861, 4. From *All the Year Round*.

¹⁰⁹ For an example of an anti-volunteer perspective in the New Zealand press, see ‘The Rifle Movement Ignored’, *Ko Aotearoa, or the Maori Recorder*, 1 January 1862, 13.

¹¹⁰ ‘English Extracts’, *Wellington Independent*, 24 April 1860, 5. From the *Globe*.

¹¹¹ Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, 197.

¹¹² ‘Volunteer Progress’, *Daily Southern Cross*, 14 December 1860, 3. From the *Saturday Review*.

find in the standing military force of the country, officers and men”; though they were found to be less effective than regulars in executing manoeuvres. The paper concluded that the Volunteers “will be one of the most effective forces that ever repelled an invader”.¹¹³ Nineteenth-century military manoeuvres were notoriously complicated, so it was natural for Volunteers to be slow to learn them and excel in shooting instead. Commentary on this training demonstrates the centrality of ideas about skill with the Enfield to the discourse of the Volunteer movement.

With rifle shooting the primary occupation of the Volunteers, the most public expression of their movement, predictably, came in the form of shooting competitions. These competitions ranged from small town affairs limited to single Volunteer corps to multiday national and even transnational events with considerable sums of money at stake. The press reported enthusiastically competitions throughout the 1860s and their coverage offers a window on the Volunteer Movement as well as on the broader public enthusiasm for the rifle.

Wimbledon was one of the most prominent competitions and hosted tournaments on an annual basis. In 1861, the NRA promised the top twenty volunteers a Whitworth rifle each and the right to compete for £250. The total in prize money to be won was £2,000. As reported in the *Nelson Examiner*, the organisers hoped that “England in future will be found to excel in rifles and rifle-shots as gloriously as she once did in bows and bowmen”.¹¹⁴ By 1867, the competition offered a total sum of £10,000 in prizes.¹¹⁵ Much of this prize money was restricted to competitors who were volunteers.

Similar competitions abounded through the decade. In 1860 at Vincennes near Paris, a major tournament took place involving numerous Britons. Predictably, the British press claimed that the tournament’s honours belonged to their compatriots, but rather than attributing their prowess to skill alone, they credited the Enfield rifle. As noted in the *Daily Southern Cross*, “the common Enfield may bear comparison with the most finished pieces” of the various celebrated gun makers of Europe. Despite “all sorts of cumbersome mechanisms” used by other competitors, “the plain, cheap, universal muzzle-loading Enfield”, which was “equally adapted for a battle [as] for a prize giving” was successful. Disparaging European competition rifles which were “of no value whatever to the practical soldier”, the article reinforced notions of

¹¹³ ‘The Rifle Power of Great Britain’, *Colonist*, 29 April 1862, 3. From ‘A London Paper’.

¹¹⁴ ‘Rifle Volunteer Prizes’, *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 6 July 1861, 2. From the *Evening Mail*, 22 April 1861.

¹¹⁵ ‘Miscellaneous’, *Otago Daily Times*, 12 August 1867, 6. From *The Times*.

“simple manliness” that were embodied in the object of the Enfield and served to make it such a powerful emblem.¹¹⁶ Such success abroad “vindicated a high reputation at home” for the Volunteers.¹¹⁷

Other public displays of the Volunteer Force came in the forms of drills, parades and public inspections. In 1863, Colonel McMurdo inspected the Manchester and other Lancashire Volunteer corps. Commenting on “that beautiful weapon the Enfield rifle”, McMurdo praised the Volunteer spirit elsewhere in Europe and extolled their virtues in Britain.¹¹⁸ Such public displays further served to glorify the volunteers and their weapon.

Thus, the volunteers made the Enfield their own and the rifle became the central emblem of their movement. Volunteer texts claimed that the rifle required special skills and education to use, thus positioning it as a weapon particularly suited to the middle class. But they also represented skilled use of the weapon as the epitome of masculine accomplishment. Such rhetoric ultimately served to mark the Enfield as a totem of middle class British masculinity and added another layer to the racial narratives of the Enfield’s part in the Indian Rebellion.

The American Civil War

The Enfield rifle also played a prominent role in the American Civil War, with deadly consequences. Its use in the conflict was not significant in shaping discourses of race and gender in the British Empire, nor did the conflict make as much of an impact on the Empire’s collective consciousness. Nevertheless, it is worth considering aspects of the War such as the links with the Birmingham gun trade, the increasing impact of modern science on war, and the connections between racial anxieties and military technology in the American context.

The conflict broke out in 1861 when several Southern States seceded from the Union to form the Confederacy. Slavery, and its potential extension into the west of the country lay at the heart of the struggle.¹¹⁹ At the outset, both sides were ill-equipped to carry out the war. With an army of only 16,000 in 1861, the Union recruited a large volunteer force, but was unable to arm all of its soldiers with existing stocks of weapons.¹²⁰ Turning to Britain, the North imported over half a million Enfield rifles from private manufacturers in Birmingham and London over

¹¹⁶ For a discussion of ‘simple manliness’ in Victorian discourse, see John Tosh, ‘Gentlemanly Politeness and Manly Simplicity in Victorian England’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 12 (2002): 455–72.

¹¹⁷ ‘Rifle Shooting at Vincennes’, *Daily Southern Cross*, 8 January 1861, 5. From the *Daily Telegraph*.

¹¹⁸ ‘Colonel M’Murdo on Volunteer Manoeuvring’, *Wellington Independent*, 23 January 1864, 3.

¹¹⁹ For an account of the conflict, see Keegan, *The American Civil War*.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

the next four years, as well as other weapons from elsewhere in Europe.¹²¹ With existing factories at Springfield and Harpers Ferry, the North gradually increased production until it no longer needed to rely on foreign imports; Springfield factory alone went from producing 20,000 to 200,000 rifles per year, a colossal increase.¹²²

The South also recruited a large volunteer army, but it possessed much more limited manufacturing facilities and therefore had to rely on imports to a greater extent. With a powerful navy, the North quickly imposed a blockade, which Southern ships had to avoid in order to deliver arms and other vital supplies. Nevertheless, the Confederacy was still able to import over 500,000 Enfield rifles during the War.¹²³ Unsurprisingly, the War created a boom in the Birmingham arms industry.¹²⁴ Accounts of blockade runners made the news even in New Zealand.¹²⁵ Ships running the blockade often brought massive stocks of arms. One successful Southern ship brought 12,000 Enfields and sixty tonnes of gunpowder, alongside other goods.¹²⁶ An unsuccessful shipment included “15,000 Enfield rifles, 5,000 head of cattle, some hundreds of thousands of rounds of ammunition, and a number of cannon”.¹²⁷

While common, the Enfield was by no means the only firearm in use during the war. The Northern factories produced the Springfield rifle, a weapon so similar to the Enfield that their bullets were interchangeable.¹²⁸ Despite the development of modern rifles, many soldiers still carried old smoothbores.¹²⁹ Towards the end of the war, breech-loading rifles became increasingly prominent in the Northern armies. At the Battle of Atlanta in 1864, two Illinois regiments who had bought their own Henry rifles, caused carnage among their Confederate opponents.¹³⁰

The wholesale adoption of modern rifles by both sides during the Civil War had extremely bloody consequences. The War's death toll of over 600,000 made it the deadliest in American history. But as Robert O'Connell and John Keegan have pointed out, it was not a conflict characterised by extreme hatred or widespread targeting of civilian populations; in fact soldiers saw their opponents in relatively amicable terms; instead the War was made deadly by the new

¹²¹ P. G Smithurst, 'The Enfield Rifle in America', *Arms and Armour* 5 (2008): 178.

¹²² Keegan, *The American Civil War*, 55.

¹²³ Smithurst, 'The Enfield Rifle in America', 178.

¹²⁴ Bailey and Nie, *English Gunmakers*, 17.

¹²⁵ See for instance 'Latest American News', *Taranaki Herald*, 19 July 1862, 5.

¹²⁶ 'Arrival of the "Storm Bird" with English News', *Hawkes Bay Herald*, 28 June 1862, 2.

¹²⁷ 'America', *Daily Southern Cross*, 24 October 1863, 2.

¹²⁸ Williams, *The Birmingham Gun Trade*, 47.

¹²⁹ Keegan, *The American Civil War*, 55.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 166.

weapons that were in use: the Enfield, the Springfield, and other modern rifles which caused far greater loss of life than earlier weapons had.¹³¹ The conflict also heralded the beginning of a new type of warfare characterised by mass-produced highly powered weaponry and immense casualties, and much more extensive application of science to war.¹³² To their detriment, most European commentators paid little heed, and the disasters of the First World War half a century later echoed those of the American Civil War.¹³³ The Civil War, and the massive proliferation of modern weapons that accompanied it, had an enormous effect on the gun culture of the United States. Michael Bellesiles went as far as to contend that the conflict created gun culture in America, though much of his argument has been discredited.¹³⁴



Figure 6. Breech-loading rifle, Snider action, U.S.A., 1864., 1864, Watertown, by Watertown Arsenal. Gift of the New Zealand Army, 1951. CC BY-NC-ND licence. Te Papa (DM000283).

The Volunteer Movement was an important component in the Civil War. From its genesis in Britain, the movement quickly spread out across the Anglo-Saxon world. As John Keegan related, in 1859 the USA was “infected by the fashion for “volunteering” that swept England in that year”; the movement was particularly popular in the South.¹³⁵ Keegan even suggested that the movement’s popularity bolstered martial sentiments on both sides of the conflict and was a contributing factor to the outbreak of war.¹³⁶

The War also illustrated the links between attitudes to firearms and attitudes to race. The Union was initially reluctant to recruit black Americans into its army, but was soon persuaded by the exigencies of war, and by the end of the conflict, over 178,000 black soldiers served for the North.¹³⁷ However, the Union hesitated to arm black soldiers with their best weapons,

¹³¹ O’Connell, *Of Arms and Men*, 201–2; Keegan, *The American Civil War*, 336.

¹³² For a full analysis of the influence of new military technology on tactics before and during the Civil War, see Marion Vincent Armstrong, Jr, ‘United States Tactical Doctrine, 1855-1861: The Mismeasure of Technology’ (MA Thesis, Old Dominion University, 1991).

¹³³ Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, 365–66.

¹³⁴ Michael A. Bellesiles, *Arming America: The Origins of a National Gun Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000). *Arming America* is widely discredited for its numerous inaccuracies and unsupported claims that guns were relatively scarce during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For a refutation of Bellesiles, see James Lindgren, ‘Fall from Grace: Arming America and the Bellesiles Scandal’, *The Yale Law Journal* 111 (2002): 2195-2249. Lindgren notes that Bellesiles’ account of guns during the 1850s and 1860s is relatively uncontroversial.

¹³⁵ Keegan, *The American Civil War*, 39.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, xv.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 300.

preferring to issue them with Enfields whilst their white compatriots received the American-made Springfield.¹³⁸ While the difference between the guns was negligible, some in the Union military favoured the Springfield as it was manufactured in America rather than imported from Britain.¹³⁹ This instance illustrates the pervasive connection between racial anxieties and military technology that echoed across the English-speaking world including in India and New Zealand. Yet in this instance, the Enfield was the ‘inferior’ weapon, whereas elsewhere it was a marker of ‘superior’ civilisation.

Thus, in the United States, the Enfield rifle’s trajectory diverged from the path it followed in the British Empire. Overshadowed by locally produced weapons, it was a peripheral weapon, both materially and symbolically, in the Civil War. The rifle’s role in the conflict mattered less to British audiences and it did not contribute to discourses of race and gender in Britain like the Indian Rebellion had. Nevertheless, the use of the Enfield during the Civil War further demonstrates the ways in which weapons took on varying meanings in different cultural contexts.

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Ultimately, narratives about these four events created a network of overlapping ideas about the Enfield rifle. The Crimean War revealed it to be a powerful new weapon that had the potential to win battles, demonstrating British technological superiority. During the Indian Rebellion, the Enfield became both the emblem and enforcer of British power in the subcontinent. Its role in the conflict added discourses of racial ‘superiority’ to the weapon. Then when the Volunteer Force was established, the rifle came to be associated with middle class ideologies of individualism, education, and respectability. Finally, the American Civil War provided a parallel case study of the connections between military technology, violence, the Volunteer Movement, and racial anxiety. Together, narratives about these events helped to produce a weapon that was deeply raced and gendered. However, narratives about the Enfield’s prowess were inherently unstable and required the weapon to continue performing. In New Zealand, these discourses would soon be challenged and overturned.

¹³⁸ Smithurst, ‘The Enfield Rifle in America’, 189.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

Chapter Three

“The Great Pacificator”: The Enfield Rifle in New Zealand¹

When the Taranaki War broke out in March 1860, many settlers hoped that the Enfield rifle would bring them swift and easy victory over Wiremu Kīngi Te Rangitāke and his ‘rebellious’ followers. After all, the rifle had proved itself to be invaluable during the Crimean War and the Indian Rebellion. Furthermore, it had become the weapon of choice for the incipient Volunteer Force in Britain, transforming ordinary Englishmen into expert marksmen. How could a tribe of ‘primitive’ Māori armed with ancient muskets and tomahawks defeat British regulars and settler volunteers armed with the latest in military science? The realities of warfare in New Zealand would soon dismay settler hopes. Rough terrain combined with foes well-versed in constructing fortifications and carrying out guerrilla attacks often proved to be too much for British troops to overcome, despite their famous rifle. The Taranaki War ended with an inconclusive truce in 1861, but further wars between Māori and Pākehā blazed through the rest of the decade. Throughout these conflicts, the British consistently struggled to achieve the decisive victories they sought, in spite of their superior numbers and technological advantages. Many blamed the Enfield and became disillusioned with the weapon.

Given these circumstances, what impact did the Enfield and other weapons have on discourses of race, gender, and civilisation in the colony? For one thing, the rifle played a much more ambiguous role in British narratives about the New Zealand Wars than it had in narratives of previous events such as the Indian Rebellion. Without being capable of enforcing British power, the Enfield could no longer be a valid emblem of the Empire. Furthermore, the colonial government increasingly relied on Māori allies to fight its wars as the decade progressed, giving thousands of Enfields to various iwi in the process. At the same time, the colonial and imperial governments began to rearm their forces with new weapons, making the Enfield increasingly obsolete. Nevertheless, narratives about the roles of different weapons in the wars were hugely important to the settler interpretations of the conflict. In particular, the settler press wrote with terror about the ‘tomahawk’ in the hands of Māori fighters, contrasting hand-to-hand weapons such as these with the rifles of British soldiers and settlers.

¹ As the rifle was called in ‘The Recent Colonial Prize Firing’, *Wellington Independent*, 12 April 1866, sec. Supplement, 10.

This chapter explores the Enfield's trajectory in New Zealand through the tumultuous 1850s and 1860s. It first considers the portrayal of the gun during the wars, showing how settler commentators became disillusioned with the Enfield. The chapter then assesses the rifle's part in New Zealand's Volunteer Force, noting similarities and differences between British and settler volunteers. Finally, it examines the Enfield and other contemporary weapons in the hands of Māori during the 1850s and 1860s. The chapter makes the case that the Enfield's role in the New Zealand Wars and its part in broader narratives about weapons and violence had a considerable impact on the politics of race, gender and civilisation in the colony during the period.

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The history of relations between Māori and Pākehā is well chronicled elsewhere.² But in order to understand the Enfield's role in the colony, it is helpful to provide an overview of rising tensions and conflict from the Treaty of Waitangi up to the wars of the 1860s. After the Treaty it was not long before Māori and Pākehā clashed. During the 1840s, disputes over land sales turned violent in Nelson, Wellington and Whanganui. In the north, Ngāpuhi fought a war from 1845 to 1846 against the newly established colonial government when it moved the colony's capital from Kororāreka to Auckland. The 1850s were relatively peaceful, but rising settler migration and increased demand for Māori land frayed relationships. By the end of the decade, Pākehā outnumbered Māori and many Māori began to oppose all land sales.³ In 1858, Waikato Māori established the Kīngitanga, which instituted a king to negotiate on equal terms with the government. While many central North Island iwi aligned themselves with the movement, others refrained from joining.

Pākehā viewed the Kīngitanga with deep suspicion and escalating tensions created a new wave of much larger conflicts during the 1860s. The first of these was in Taranaki where a dispute over the Waitara block erupted into war in March 1860. After a series of inconclusive engagements, a truce ended the conflict in 1861, but resolved none of the underlying causes. On top of the existing land dispute, the government resented the fact that numerous Kīngitanga fighters from Waikato had fought against the government in Taranaki.

² See for example Sinclair, *The Origins of the Maori Wars*; Ranginui Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Mātou: Struggle without End* (Auckland: Penguin, 1991); James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders from Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century*, Paperback edition (Auckland: Penguin, 2007); Michael King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 2003); Anderson, Binney, and Harris, *Tangata Whenua*; O'Malley, *The Great War for New Zealand*.

³ King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, 188.

In 1861, former governor George Grey returned to New Zealand for a second term. An imperial ‘trouble-shooter’, many hoped Grey would resolve the tensions. In 1863, he invaded the Waikato region, sparking the largest of the New Zealand Wars. Imperial forces won victories at Meremere, Rangiriri, and Rangiaowhia. With the Kīngitanga receiving reinforcements from their allies in Tauranga, the war spilled over into that region in 1864. In the same year, the Kīngitanga suffered a major loss at Ōrākau. Defeated, but not conquered, they retreated into Ngāti Maniapoto lands. Despite having lost vast swathes of territory, the Kīngitanga were still armed and posed a considerable threat to the government.

After the Waikato and Tauranga campaigns, the wars entered a new phase characterised by smaller scale conflicts between the government and Māori religious movements, often involving colonial rather than imperial troops.⁴ The most well-known campaigns against the government were led by Tītokowaru and Te Kooti, guerrilla fighters par excellence, who fought around Taranaki and the East Coast regions respectively. While smaller, these wars tended to be more brutal and vituperative. The government eventually subdued armed resistance by 1872. However, large areas of the country remained outside of government control, and Māori continued to resist colonisation and land alienation without recourse to arms.

The wars left a bitter legacy. From 1863, the government embarked on a wholesale programme of confiscating Māori land, a policy whose effects are still evident today. The conflict also wrought an immense amount of violence, leaving thousands dead and many more impoverished and dispossessed.⁵ As one of the most prominent weapons of the Wars, the Enfield was at the heart of this violence. How then did the Enfield fare in the conflict and what role did the rifle play in constructing its meaning? The following section considers expectations of the rifle before the wars, narratives of the rifle’s success, and narratives of the rifle’s failure. It also assesses some of the historiographical debates about the passage of the wars, particularly on the usefulness or otherwise of British military technology. British accounts of the wars were highly prone to exaggerating everything from the strength of the foes they faced, to the number of casualties they inflicted, and the extent of their victories more generally.⁶ Consequently, the section does not aim to unravel the inaccuracy of British accounts, instead it considers how

⁴ Belich, *The New Zealand Wars*, 203.

⁵ O’Malley, *The Great War for New Zealand*, 370–71. O’Malley estimated that Māori suffered 500 to 2,000 casualties and lost 1.2 million acres of land in the Waikato War alone.

⁶ Belich, *The New Zealand Wars*, 334.

their narratives, particularly their narratives about weapons, revealed racial and imperial ideologies.

Expectations and Realities: The Enfield's Trajectory through the Wars

Given the narratives of the 1857 Indian Rebellion and the burgeoning Volunteer Movement, it is not surprising that at the beginning of the Taranaki War, many commentators had high hopes that the Enfield would bring a swift and easy victory. Two articles in particular demonstrated the strength of these narratives. The first was the letter from "Pahari", the former New Zealand settler in British India referred to in the Introduction who wrote regarding the 1857 Rebellion. The second came from *The Times* and discussed the Volunteer Movement in relation to the outbreak of the Taranaki War.

In August 1858, much of northern India was still embroiled in the ongoing Rebellion, though it had gradually become clear that British forces would triumph. "Pahari" began by giving an account of the conflict thus far, before turning to comment on New Zealand, writing "I see you are likely to have your little wars in the Northern Island, and the fair face of Taranaki is disfigured by this curse".⁷ The author vaunted the martial prowess and technological advancements of the British, claiming that

If the whole Maori nation were assembled on the plains of Canterbury, the colonists, after three months training and with two or three field pieces, would most effectually extinguish their military ardour.⁸

Of course, he acknowledged that the New Zealand context made set battles unlikely, and prophetically questioned "what is the use of the Enfield rifle and a highly trained soldier in a bush through which it is next to impossible to penetrate?" But the author was eager to "turn in some of our riflemen and see" nonetheless.⁹ He emphasised the shocking power of the Enfield, writing "the Maori [sic] has never heard the rush of the conical bullet past his ear, nor seen this eccentric missile turning a summersault through his comrade's body", before going on to reiterate the weapon's ostensible impact in India. He wrote

It is no uncommon thing for our artillery to practice at a group of cavalry who will ride about with the greatest nonchalance; but when the Enfield bullet comes rushing

⁷ 'English and Foreign', *Lyttelton Times*, 22 December 1858, 4. Presumably the author referred to the Puketapu feud, a violent dispute between pro and anti-land selling Māori factions in Taranaki.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

in they wildly scatter and ride hurriedly off. Nothing has so cowed the natives in our late Indian wars, as what Col. Hay at Hythe, calls the Enfield rifle of 1853.¹⁰

The author's narrative of the Enfield crushing the Rebellion located the rifle as not only a potent tool of British supremacy but as a symbol of imperial power. It also positioned the rifle as the ultimate weapon against rebellious colonised peoples. The author had little doubt the Enfield would soon stamp its authority on the colony.



Figure 7. Mr C Cobb, with a rifle. Harding, William James, 1826-1899: Negatives of Wanganui district. Ref: 1/4-004258-G. ATL, Wellington, New Zealand. /records/23045255.

¹⁰ Ibid.

The second article concerned the outbreak of the Taranaki War in 1860 and was originally published in *The Times* though it also circulated in New Zealand papers. It acknowledged that “the native population is possessed with strong martial instincts, is courageous even to ferocity, and is quick in adopting the arts of war”. But it emphasised that “the colonists, if well organised and provided with the best inventions of modern science, would need but very little support in dealing with their intrepid but ill-equipped antagonists”.¹¹

The article linked the Enfield closely to the Volunteer Movement, claiming that colonial irregulars would make better opponents against Māori than imperial soldiers. Noting volunteers’ efforts in the early skirmishes of the war, it stated that

We think it impossible to deny that the tactics of the colonial Volunteers were better adapted to the actual exigencies of the war in hand.... We observe also that the alacrity of the colonists in the duty of self-defence was most remarkable.... The colonists understand the natives and the country; they have the natural intelligence of volunteer soldiers, every man of them fights for his own hand [sic: land?], and they soon engraft the subtlety of the savage upon the hereditary valour of the Saxon.¹²

The article even went on to question the use of regular soldiers in the conflict, given the imputed effectiveness of volunteer riflemen. It suggested that,

We might do far better by improving such material as the colony evidently contains than by sending fresh battalions across the globe to take the place of Volunteers. A cargo of Enfield rifles, a battery of Armstrong guns, a few light ships of war off the coast, and some hearty words of encouragement and sympathy from home, would, we think, put the colonists in a position to dispense in a great measure with the aid of regular troops.¹³

The timing of the article was significant. As the war progressed, settlers and their sympathisers in Britain grew increasingly frustrated with the imperial forces and their lack of success. Given the growing Volunteer Movement in Britain, it is unsurprising that many believed the volunteers could do better. Their rhetoric epitomised the discourses of volunteer intelligence, individualism and skill that were engrafted onto the Enfield rifle during this era. The article

¹¹ ‘The War in New Zealand’, *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 29 August 1860, 4. From *The Times*, 18 June 1860.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

posited the weapon as the emblem of a courageous class of settler-citizens, who would use the weapon with intelligence to crush the incipient rebellion.

Early in the wars, the press was eager to report on the Enfield's battlefield success. Most accounts that discussed the rifle on the battlefield mentioned it only in brief, though some went into greater depth in analysing the weapon's impact. The *Taranaki Herald* noted an instance of Māori attempting to drive off cattle from settlers' farms, only to be repulsed by rifle shots from 1,800 yards, a distance well beyond the gun's standard range of effectiveness. The report noted that "the natives have a wholesome dread of the Enfield rifle".¹⁴

James Alexander, a British soldier and adventurer who fought in Taranaki, wrote an account of the conflict and his experience in it. Alexander recorded several instances of the rifle's effectiveness. He noted that a chief named Aperahama was killed "by a bullet at long range from the deadly Enfield rifle". He also noted that during one skirmish,

A remarkable instance of the powers of the Enfield rifle occurred at the Omata blockhouse about this time. Lieutenant Chevalier, 65th, saw on the Waireka hill, upwards of 2,000 yards distant, a party of natives, the sight was elevated for the apparent distance, and, unknown to the marksman at the time, two shots took effect. The wounded Maories [sic] fell by unseen and noiseless means, no report being heard.¹⁵

Other instances also pointed to the rifle as being highly effective. The *Taranaki Herald*, reporting a skirmish near Huirangi redoubt, wrote

We had also an excellent proof of the accurate aim of our troops with small arms. A slender pole, bearing a small flag, was planted by the enemy near the left front of the pa. One of the coverers levelled his rifle for it, and at 400 yards cut the flag clean off the pole with the first shot, and then planted several bullets in succession at the butt of the dismantled staff.¹⁶

This instance presents an interesting juxtaposition of opposing symbols, the flag on one hand and the rifle on the other. The triumph of the rifleman in bringing down the flag at such a range

¹⁴ 'Continuation of Journal', *Taranaki Herald*, 23 February 1861, 2. Republished in the *Otago Witness*, 23 March 1861, and the *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 23 March 1861.

¹⁵ James Alexander, *Incidents of the Maori War, New Zealand, in 1860-61* (London: Richard Bentley, 1863), 189.

¹⁶ 'Huirangi Redoubt', *Taranaki Herald*, 9 March 1861, 3.

epitomised Britain's technological superiority and demonstrated the celebration of military precision in the settler press.

The settler press also highlighted the Enfield's role in their victories. Writing on the Battle of Ōrākau in 1864, where British forces resoundingly defeated Rewi Maniapoto and his Ngāti Raukawa and Tūhoe supporters, J. E. Gorst noted that "the defenders had only a few double-barrelled smooth-bores and old sticks of arms to oppose to our Enfield rifles, hand grenades, and conical shells".¹⁷

Other commentators noted the impact of the gun on its Māori victims. Reporting from Te Awamutu in May of 1864, a correspondent for the *Daily Southern Cross* related that several wounded Māori prisoners had died there. He noted,

That so many of the wounded Maories [sic] have died is accounted for by the fact that the Enfield rifle makes a very large wound, which is caused partly by the rotatory motion of the bullet, and partly from the tremendous velocity with which it travels. Indeed, at Rangiriri some of the natives were so severely wounded that it was in some cases doubtful whether the wound had been inflicted by the rifle ball or hand grenade.¹⁸

Such evidence highlights the acute human costs of the Wars and the very real consequences of the Enfield's use in conflict. It also demonstrates British and settler confidence in the weapon's prowess on the battlefield.

Despite the Enfield's high billing as a revolutionary weapon, it was not long before many in New Zealand became frustrated with its technical failings and limited strategic value. The former were criticised early on while the latter took time to become apparent. Doubts over the Enfield's usefulness were particularly common in the wake of defeats, the first of which came early in the Taranaki War. In June 1860, a British attack on Puketakauere pā near Waitara resulted in a resounding loss, with around thirty soldiers killed and more injured. *The Times* reported the battle with dismay as "very painful and disastrous", but struggled to comprehend how it had come about.¹⁹ Commending Māori skill and courage in the engagement, the article noted

¹⁷ J. E. Gorst, 'New Zealand Conquests', *Daily Southern Cross*, 24 August 1865, 5. From *Macmillan's Magazine*.

¹⁸ 'Camp, Te Awamutu (From Our Own Correspondent)', *Daily Southern Cross*, 2 May 1864, 5.

¹⁹ 'The Native War in New Zealand', *The Times*, 13 September 1860, 12.

It is difficult to believe that even a threefold superiority of numbers would have enabled them to defeat our troops, armed with the Enfield rifle, unless they are in possession of more deadly firearms than we have reason to suppose.²⁰

Such a comment demonstrated prevailing British faith in the rifle. How could ‘savage’ enemies defeat British soldiers with the latest in military technology? The article suggested that the British had simply underestimated the defenders and that a lack of reinforcements was the cause of the defeat. It also condemned the “stiffness of regimental organisation”, suggesting that “we strongly suspect that the Maoris [sic] would rather meet a regiment of redcoats in “high fern” than a similar number of backwoodsmen accustomed to bush fighting”.²¹ Such hints that Volunteers would have been more successful were especially pertinent in light of claims that Volunteers were inherently more accurate with the Enfield, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Another article published in September that year, began by looking back at the inconclusive Northern War of 1845-46, noting that the inadequacy of the Brown Bess was partly responsible for British failures in that conflict. There, “Our soldiers, armed with the old, smooth-bore musket, pipelayed, belted, buttoned, and shakoed [sic], were but a poor match for the half-naked savages”. As a result, Māori acquired “the most unbounded contempt for our regular forces”. The article went on to note that,

We had certainly hoped that the introduction of arms of precision would have given us so signal an advantage in coping with uncivilised races that the Caffre [Kaffir] and New Zealand wars would at once be put an end to. But we suppose that there is a degree of mismanagement against which courage, discipline, superior organisation, weapons, and intelligence are powerless, and that such a degree of mismanagement we have contrived to secure for ourselves in the present inglorious campaign in New Zealand.²²

Thus, the article blamed the flaws of the regular army rather than the rifle. However, it was not long before the Enfield’s technical flaws became subject of settler frustration. In 1861, *Taranaki Herald* complained that Enfield barrel bursts had become “a matter of very frequent

²⁰ ‘The News from New Zealand Which We Pub-’, *The Times*, 14 September 1860, 6.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² ‘The New Zealand War’, *New Zealander*, 28 November 1860, 6; ‘The Times on New Zealand’, *Colonist*, 4 December 1860, 3. From *The Times*, 17 September 1860.

occurrence in this quarter”, noting that one private had even lost three fingers as a result. The paper put it that

Indeed, few rifles in the hands of our New Zealand troops can lay claim to the first class; they were made to meet the demands of the Crimean war, and furnished by contractors who hurried the work and cared but little for the efficiency of the weapons if they could but get them off their hands.... All the damaged rifles will be sent home to the Tower, and it is hoped that the quality of Enfield, at present used in the line, may be soon superseded by a better and more lasting description of arm.²³

In another issue also reporting barrel bursts, the *Taranaki Herald* blamed “the imperfect loading of the gun by our men, who are perhaps emulous of the speed of their antagonists”. The paper also suggested that “it is obviously too light a weapon for the ordinary wear and tear of a campaign”.²⁴ It is most likely that the rifles were simply not loaded properly.²⁵

A more serious strategic problem was the weapon’s ineffectiveness in the bush, where its long range had no benefit.²⁶ The weapon also had limited value against Māori fortifications. Māori often used layers of flax to augment their defences, which were surprisingly effective. Robert Carey, a British general who fought throughout the New Zealand Wars, commented that “though they might not stop a bullet from the Enfield rifle at a short range, [they] would certainly divert its course”.²⁷ Similarly, Māori trenches diminished the Enfield’s usefulness. As the *Taranaki Herald* pointed out, “the advantage of an accurate aim is lost when our enemy is ensconced in a deep rifle pit; the bayonet is the only weapon that can reach him there, it is the only weapon he has yet learned to fear”.²⁸

The Enfield came in for more criticism after Tauranga Māori resoundingly defeated the British at Pukehinahina (Gate Pā) in 1864. When the news reached Britain, *The Times* printed an article lamenting the defeat and criticising the wars as being fought on behalf of “the speculators at Auckland”. It noted that despite the work of “10,000 men, and a fleet, both provided with the best new rifled guns and muskets”, British forces were only “driving the savages from one

²³ ‘Huirangi Redoubt’, *Taranaki Herald*, 9 March 1861, 3.

²⁴ ‘Monthly Summary for the European Mail’, *Taranaki Herald*, 12 March 1861, 1.

²⁵ Phil Cregeen, ‘Pattern: 1853 Enfield Rifle (Enfield Long Rifle/ 3 Band Enfield)’ (New Zealand Arms Register, 2012), 3,

http://www.armsregister.com/arms_register/arms_register_documents/nzar_36_pat_53_enfield_rifle.pdf.

²⁶ Ryan, ‘The Maori Warrior and British Soldier’, 105.

²⁷ Robert Carey, *Narrative of the Late War in New Zealand* (London: Richard Bentley, 1863), 116.

²⁸ ‘Huirangi Redoubt’, *Taranaki Herald*, 9 March 1861, 3.

resting point to another”. In doing so they were “acquiring no glory” as starvation became their main weapon to defeat Māori. The paper also acknowledged that the Enfield had not performed well in the battle. The initial British charge was surprised by the strength of Māori resistance in the pā, but even after that, “they were still at a disadvantage in their firearms, the Maories [sic] having double-barreled [sic] smooth bores, and the British soldier the Enfield rifle, certainly not intended for close quarters”.²⁹ The article also circulated in the New Zealand press later that year.

As early as 1861, some commentators were disparaging the Enfield outright. One anonymous military observer wrote to the British *United Service Gazette* to complain of the rifle’s technical failings, noting that recent battles in New Zealand testified to the “dangerous unreliability, the, in short, utter worthlessness of the Enfield”.³⁰ The author recommended the immediate adoption of the recently invented breech-loading Calisher and Terry rifle, by which, “our infantry will be rendered invincible”.³¹ From 1863, the government did start arming some of its units, such as the Forest Rangers and some allied Māori, with the Calisher and Terry rifle.³² The British military officially adopted the Snider rifle in 1866.³³ But as was the case with the Enfield, it took a long time to resupply the entire army. Snider shipments did not arrive in New Zealand until late 1869 and they did not, according to Tim Ryan, play any part in the Wars.³⁴ Thus, the Enfield remained the most prevalent weapon throughout the period.

By the late 1860s, settlers were thoroughly disillusioned with the weapon and eventually the government sought alternatives. In 1869, Major Charles Brown, representative for Omata, introduced a motion to Parliament to consider how best to arm colonial forces. Some advocated for the Snider, while others promoted the Spencer or Martini-Henry rifles.³⁵ In a widely reported debate, all agreed that the Enfield was a failure.³⁶ Premier Fox described the weapon as “very unsuited for bush warfare” and called it “a great pity that after nine years of war we should be left in this colony so badly supplied with arms”.³⁷ Edward Stafford recognised that

²⁹ ‘New Zealand’, *New Zealand Spectator and Cook’s Strait Guardian*, 21 September 1864, 4. From *The Times*, 15 July 1864.

³⁰ ‘Calisher and Terry’s Breechloading Rifle’, *Otago Witness*, 16 March 1861, 10. From the *United Service Gazette*.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ryan, ‘The Maori Warrior and British Soldier’, 117.

³³ Storey, *Guns, Race, and Power*, 135.

³⁴ Ryan, ‘The Maori Warrior and British Soldier’, 117.

³⁵ ‘Arming the Colonial Forces’, *Wanganui Herald*, 26 July 1869, 2.

³⁶ The debate was reported in Ibid.; ‘Evening Star’, *Evening Star*, 27 August 1869, 2; ‘West Coast Times and Westland Observer’, *West Coast Times*, 1 September 1869, 2; ‘Local & General’, *Wairarapa Standard*, 5 August 1869, 3.

³⁷ ‘Local & General’, *Wairarapa Standard*, 5 August 1869 3.

war in New Zealand was inherently different to European war, and suggested that a shotgun would be better than an Enfield, while Brown even noted that a bush-knife (machete) would make soldiers more effective.³⁸ Such debates soon became much less urgent as the wars drew to a close in 1872 and the Enfield diminished in importance both materially and discursively. Nevertheless, the rifle had reached the low point of its trajectory.

What was it that minimised the Enfield's effectiveness so severely in New Zealand? Applying Daniel Headrick's model of technological development facilitating imperial expansion, historians might expect the British to have triumphed with relative ease.³⁹ But in New Zealand, the Enfield, and the breech-loading rifles that followed, failed to stamp their authority on the colony. As a result, the wars of 1860-1872 often had ambiguous results that belied the technological and numerical advantages of the British. Clearly, the course of the wars was determined by more than technology alone. Keith Sinclair credited Māori "courage, cunning, and skill" as well as their understanding of the land, but concluded that "the assorted weapons of the Maoris [sic], old flint-lock muskets, double-barrelled shot-guns, native clubs, and spears were in the long run no match for gunboats, howitzers, Enfield rifles, and hand-grenades".⁴⁰ Sinclair's assertion, made in relation to the Waikato War, appears to conform to Headrick's model, though it is less relevant later in the 1860s, when Māori fighting against the crown did obtain high powered modern weapons.

According to James Belich, Headrick's model simply does not fit the New Zealand example.⁴¹ He posited that by developing modern pā, Māori were able to blunt British artillery and rifle fire and create a more even playing field.⁴² Belich posited Britain's numerical advantage as far more important than technology in explaining their eventual triumph over Māori.⁴³ Nigel Prickett also credited Māori fortifications with cancelling out British technological advantages.⁴⁴ Tim Ryan emphasised rough terrain and thick bush as a factor that neutralised the Enfield's power.⁴⁵ Military historian Richard Taylor has since disputed Belich's claim, arguing that the reliance on the pā system was often strategically costly and that Māori military

³⁸ Ibid., 3.

³⁹ Headrick, *Tools of Empire*.

⁴⁰ Keith Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, 3rd revised edition (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1988), 132–37.

⁴¹ Belich, *The New Zealand Wars*, 294.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Nigel Prickett, 'Pākehā and Māori Fortifications in Taranaki, 1860-1881: Form and Purpose', in *Contested Ground Te Whenua I Tohea: The Taranaki Wars 1860-1881* (Wellington: Huia, 2010), 100.

⁴⁵ Ryan, 'The Maori Warrior and British Soldier', 105.

leaders were more successful using guerrilla warfare.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Belich's argument for the modern pā does explain why the Enfield rifle and other British military technology was often nullified during the wars. It also explains why settler commentators became frustrated with the Enfield. As he put it,

It was almost impossible for a Victorian to acknowledge that a wonderful scientific achievement such as the Armstrong gun was functionally inferior to an anti-artillery bunker, a mere hole in the ground.⁴⁷

Instead, the British were prone to disparaging the Enfield or their own mistakes rather than acknowledging Māori success. Consequently, the rifle lost value in the minds of the British public.

New Zealand Volunteers and the Enfield Rifle

Alongside regular soldiers, Volunteers were prominent users of the Enfield rifle in New Zealand. From its origins in Britain, the Volunteer Movement had quickly spread to the colony. The threat of the wars of the 1860s hung over the movement from its inception. Consequently New Zealand's Volunteer Force garnered a more martial character than its British equivalent which remained untested by war. Nevertheless, much of its character echoed its British counterpart. Just as in Britain, rifles were central to New Zealand's Volunteer Force, both as the tool of their trade and as an object whose capabilities informed their ethos. This section considers some of the features of the movement in New Zealand during the late 1850s and 1860s with particular reference to the role of rifles.

Just as in Britain, the New Zealand Volunteers had their origins in the militia. In 1845, the Militia Ordinance had made men from 18-60 eligible for service, but this was only employed in instances of direct danger.⁴⁸ It was replaced by the 1858 Militia Act, which enabled the formation of Volunteer Corps and exempted their members from militia service; the first corps were formed in Auckland and Taranaki later that year.⁴⁹ With the spectre of war on the horizon,

⁴⁶ Richard Taylor, 'The Strategy of War: The Taranaki Wars and the Development of Māori and British Strategy', in *Contested Ground Te Whenua I Tohea: The Taranaki Wars 1860-1881*, ed. Kelvin Day (Wellington: Huia, 2010), 63.

⁴⁷ Belich, *The New Zealand Wars*, 322.

⁴⁸ Phillips, *A Man's Country?*, 137.

⁴⁹ Crawford, 'The Volunteer Force', 150–51.

few settlers needed much persuasion to become members, and even in 1871, when the wars were coming to a close, the force included over 8% of military-aged Pākehā men.⁵⁰

In terms of class composition, New Zealand's Volunteers were similar to Britain's, with the middle class predominating but each corps possessing its own character.⁵¹ Māori participation was a distinct element of New Zealand's Volunteers with individuals joining various units. In the 1870s, some all-Māori units were established, though their participation was often controversial as Pākehā speculated over their loyalty.⁵² The Volunteers had a good reputation in the colony, and the ideals of "patriotism, respectability and manliness" exemplified their image.⁵³

From the moment of its creation the Volunteer Force found enthusiastic and vocal supporters in the colonial press, who reported on their activities and cogently explained their ideology. In November 1858, the *New Zealander* hailed the formation of two rifle companies in Auckland as "a very useful proceeding", both in terms of military defence and also as "the initiation of a system of Physical Training which will exercise a most salutary effect, moral and mental as well as sanitary, upon the youth of this Colony".⁵⁴ While dismissing the likelihood of either an internal war or of foreign invasion, the paper stated "we have no faith in or sympathy with those extreme Peace doctrines which would lead free-born Britons to place their necks unresistingly beneath the foot of a Russian Czar or any other despot" and noted that the newly enlisted Volunteers were "all sworn subjects of Queen Victoria, and all having an actual stake or interest in the Province", and "furnished with the Enfield sword-rifle, they present a very respectable and serviceable appearance".⁵⁵ Such rhetoric served to highlight the confluence of middle class sensibilities and martial ideologies within the movement.

Manly independence, skill, and respectability were the foundations of the movement in New Zealand. Discussing the formation of a Volunteer Corps in the province, the *Taranaki Herald* noted that "in our isolated position it is every man's duty to put himself in some state of readiness and preparation, and there is no reason whatever why the force should not be doubled".⁵⁶ The minutes of the First Company of Auckland Rifle Volunteers reveal some of

⁵⁰ Ibid., 148.

⁵¹ Ibid., 160.

⁵² Ibid., 153.

⁵³ Ibid., 157.

⁵⁴ 'The Auckland Volunteer Rifles', *New Zealander*, 20 November 1858, 3.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ 'Taranaki Herald', *Taranaki Herald*, 17 December 1859, 3.

the martial enthusiasm and social structure of the movement in New Zealand. Beginning with the rules of the company, it stated that the motto of the Company shall be the word “Ready”.⁵⁷



Figure 8. Private of the New Zealand Militia in campaign dress. Harding, William James, 1826-1899: Negatives of Wanganui district. Ref: 1/4-006785-G. ATL, Wellington, New Zealand. /records/22807152.

⁵⁷ Auckland Rifle Volunteers: Minutes of the First Company, District Orders, 1858-1875, NZMS 2, Auckland Libraries: Sir George Grey Special Collections.

The diary of Frederick Thomas Baker, son of missionary Charles Baker, reveals another aspect of the Volunteers. Born in 1839, Frederick Baker kept a journal between 1859 and 1860 in which he described everyday life in Auckland. When the Taranaki War began, Baker commented that large numbers of new volunteers joined up. He recorded that a third company of volunteers was in formation and assumed “higher grounds” than others, writing that

None are to be officers but those who have had commissions in the army. Their uniform is to be rifle green and is to cost £4 or more. They now number upwards of forty members.⁵⁸

However, as the year of 1860 progressed, Baker noted that early enthusiasm was overtaken by fear. In May, he related that

Many cowards are terrified at the aspect of affairs in Auckland and are skulking off to the neighbouring colonies, of course leaving their property to be protected by those who have courage to remain. In the event of such protection being required and given the property of such persons ought to be confiscated for the good of the state.⁵⁹

Disdaining such ignominy, Baker joined the Parnell Militia later that month. He also purchased a shotgun for £6.10 and recorded practicing with rifles at the beach. However, he had little sympathy for the more virulently anti-Māori settlers and through his father was closely tied to the ‘Church Party’, led by Bishop Selwyn, who opposed the Taranaki War. He attended the ‘Monster Meeting’ of Auckland settlers in May 1860, and was disappointed when Selwyn’s supporters were shouted down.⁶⁰ Working for the Native Affairs Office, Baker also wrote numerous letters “to reassure the natives who have been entertaining great suspicions of the Pakehas [sic] from the fact of the civilians taking up arms”.⁶¹ Unfortunately, the journal stopped in 1860. Baker himself went on to become a priest at Waitara until his death in 1896.⁶²

As was the case in Britain, shooting contests formed a sizeable component of Volunteer activity. Though competitions in New Zealand offered far less money, they were followed with

⁵⁸ Frederick Thomas Baker, *Original Journal of the Two Sons of Charles Baker, 1859-1861*, Charles Baker – Papers, MS-22, 69/32, Auckland War Memorial Museum.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ For a discussion of the public meeting and its context, see John Stenhouse, ‘Religion, Politics, and the New Zealand Wars 1860-1872’, in *God and Government: The New Zealand Experience*, ed. John Stenhouse and Rex J. Ahdar (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2000), 21–39.

⁶¹ Baker, *Original Journal*.

⁶² ‘Auckland Diocesan Synod’, *Taranaki Herald*, 23 October 1896, 2.

keen interest by press and public alike. An 1861 competition in Auckland offered £30 to the best shot using an Enfield, while a separate contest for users of other weapons had a prize of £20.⁶³ Reported in several papers, the competition's goal was:

To promote and encourage what should be the aim and end of all Rifle Associations – an earnest desire to attain excellence in the use of a weapon which is so eminently calculated to play a conspicuous part in modern warfare, as well as to impart a feeling of mutual confidence and stability, especially in young and sparsely peopled Colonies.⁶⁴

The paper went on to comment on arms control in the country, demanding the end to restrictions on Europeans. In 1860, the government had banned all sales of guns for sport in an attempt to prevent Māori from increasing their stocks of arms; the provision did not prevent settlers from buying guns for self-defence, but caused settler ire nonetheless, and was allowed to lapse in the following year.⁶⁵ The article put it that “no difficulty ought to exist against good and loyal colonists supplying themselves, from time to time, and as improvements occur, with the very best weapons that may offer [sic] and which their purses may reach”.⁶⁶ Despite minor restrictions such as this, there were no serious impediments to Pākehā gun purchase during this period; all restrictions were aimed at Māori.⁶⁷ The article made no explicit reference to Māori, but given the ongoing Taranaki War, they would not have been far from the minds of readers. The author's emphasis on “good and loyal colonists” as being entitled to buy firearms deliberately excluded ‘rebellious’ Māori.

While prize money for rifle competitions was not as generous as it was in Britain, the rifles also distributed as prizes could be powerful incentives. In 1860, the Wellington Volunteer Rifles awarded a rifle each to the twenty best shots in their company.⁶⁸ Emphasis on rifles as prizes tied small provincial shooting competitions to much bigger ideologies. For example, when John Perry Robinson the Superintendent of Nelson, distributed prize rifles to the Volunteers of his province in 1862, he claimed that “such arms have always been the favourite weapon in countries that boasted of their freedom and independence”.⁶⁹

⁶³ ‘Auckland Rifle Association’, *Auckland Register*, 28 January 1861. Also published in the *Taranaki Herald*, 16 February 1861, 4.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Craig Innes, ‘Arms Control in New Zealand 1854-1861’ (MA Thesis, Massey University, 2005), 154–55.

⁶⁶ ‘Auckland Rifle Association’.

⁶⁷ Innes, ‘Arms Control in New Zealand’, 133.

⁶⁸ ‘Local Intelligence’, *Wellington Independent*, 15 June 1860, 2.

⁶⁹ ‘Presentation of Provincial Government Rifles’, *Colonist*, 5 August 1862, 2.

Many saw the threat of Māori rebellion as the main reason for becoming a volunteer. As the 1860s progressed, the wars that raged in that decade became increasingly bitter and brutal. In the settler imagination, the rise of the Pai Mārire religion, known to them as the Hau Haus, were the ultimate reason for the Volunteers' existence. In 1866, the *Wellington Independent* reported on a recent shooting contest for Volunteers, but expanded the article to discuss the ongoing colonial conflict. The author encouraged the settler war effort, hoping that the “‘running deer’ of Wimbledon, [sic]”, that is, the moving target used in shooting contests, would be “superseded by an effigy of a Hau Hau in full retreat, which our young riflemen of quick eye and ready hand will riddle most unmercifully with their bullets”.⁷⁰ Such vitriolic statements are evidence the polarisation and fear that characterised the wars of the late 1860s. They also demonstrate the way in which settler texts positioned the rifle as the ultimate tool for violence against Māori.

Volunteers were not always welcomed even by Pākehā. In 1859, Reverend Thomas Gilbert of Taranaki wrote a bitter complaint to the *Taranaki Herald* that Isaac Newton Watt, Captain of the Taranaki Rifle Volunteers, had used the side of Gilbert's church to draw diagrams instructing his men in military tactics, noting, “how utterly inappropriate such emblems are”.⁷¹ A member of the “Church Party”, Gilbert opposed what he perceived as growing settler aggression and the Taranaki War which broke out the next year. He noted that the advent of the Volunteer Movement had only served to make Māori suspicious of settlers' intentions: “This was their frequent inquiry, - ‘Why all this preparation? Why should every settler be made to bear arms, except it be to exterminate the Maories? [sic]’”.⁷² The following week, a Volunteer charged Gilbert with opposing the Volunteers in general, but suggesting that if war broke out, Gilbert would soon “look up to his armed and prepared neighbour for active aid”.⁷³ Ironically, this was not the case. When the Taranaki War broke out the following year, local Māori designated Gilbert as tapu and did not threaten him or his family.⁷⁴

Others were sceptical of the elitist tendencies of the volunteers. The *Southland Times*, hoping to promote interest in the Volunteers and rifle shooting printed the advice of Scottish marksman Horatio Ross. Ross recommended “aperture sights”, “Vernier's scales”, and “a match rifle with

⁷⁰ ‘The Recent Colonial Prize Firing’, *Wellington Independent*, 12 April 1866, 10.

⁷¹ ‘To the Editor of the Taranaki Herald’, *Taranaki Herald*, 22 October 1859, 3.

⁷² Thomas Gilbert, *New Zealand Settlers and Soldiers, Or, The War in Taranaki: Being Incidents in the Life of a Settler* (London: A. W. Bennett, 1861), 23.

⁷³ ‘To the Editor of the Taranaki Herald’, *Taranaki Herald*, 30 October 1859, 3.

⁷⁴ Belich, *The New Zealand Wars*, 87.

all the modern improvements”, in other words, all the most expensive equipment and accoutrements.⁷⁵ In response, “An Old Volunteer” rebuked the editor, pointing out that Southland Volunteers would be “utterly ignorant of such delicate niceties”, which were “of importance to “gentlemen” who live at home at ease” rather than true Volunteers.⁷⁶ The exchange clearly illustrates the dissonance between two competing masculinities: the rough and ready settler and the gentlemen. In this scenario, the cheap and readily available Enfield was the tool of the former.

Just as it had been in Britain, the Enfield proved to be a crucial component in the Volunteer Movement in New Zealand. Rhetoric about the weapon being associated with respectable, property owning volunteers certainly echoed similar sentiments in Britain. But in New Zealand’s Volunteer Force, the Enfield was also inextricably linked to wars against Māori ‘rebels’.

Tomahawks, Muskets, and Rifles: Māori Arms in the Wars

While settler commentators wrote eagerly about the Enfield in the hands of imperial soldiers and volunteers, they also fixated on Māori possession and uses of weapons. Māori were frequent and skilled users of firearms, including the Enfield, but settlers more often pictured them with ‘tomahawks’, a catchall name describing traditional weapons such as patu and mere as well as European style axes. Examining narratives around Māori possession and usage of weapons during the mid-nineteenth century provides a useful window onto discourses of race and power during this era.

From the time of European encounter, Māori were enthusiastic adopters of firearms. In the first half of the nineteenth century, iwi bought thousands of muskets from Pākehā traders, facilitating the intertribal Musket Wars which killed as many as 20,000 people.⁷⁷ Māori also acquired some European artillery during this era, which they even used during the wars of the 1860s.⁷⁸ After the Treaty, the colonial government attempted to limit Māori access to guns, despite being well aware that ownership was already high. In 1845, Governor Grey introduced

⁷⁵ ‘Southland Times’, *Southland Times*, 25 June 1864, 2.

⁷⁶ ‘Original Correspondence’, *Southland Times*, 30 June 1864, 3.

⁷⁷ Anderson, Binney, and Harris, *Tangata Whenua*, 176. For a discussion of the Musket Wars and the role of muskets in them, see chapter six, ‘Old Ways and New Means’.

⁷⁸ Trevor Bentley, *Tribal Guns and Tribal Gunners: The Story of Māori Artillery in 19th Century New Zealand* (Christchurch: Wilsonscott Publishing International, 2014), 127–28.

the Arms Importation Ordinance with the goal of limiting the supply of guns to Māori.⁷⁹ Critics of Grey including George Clarke, the Protector of Aborigines, and former Governor Robert FitzRoy, pointed out that the law contravened the rights of British subjects guaranteed to Māori by the Treaty, but to no avail.⁸⁰ By the end of his governorship, Grey had put in place two further arms control ordinances, though he ensured that the legislation did not apply to settlers.⁸¹ In fact, the colonial administration actively encouraged settlers to arm themselves, providing them with both guns and training through the Militia Ordinance.⁸² The Australian colonies instituted similar legislation to prevent Māori from sourcing weapons from across the Tasman Sea.⁸³

When Grey's successor Thomas Gore Browne became governor in 1855, he allowed the laws to lapse, acknowledging their failure to limit Māori gun ownership; unsurprisingly, settlers protested this development, and arms were restricted again when the Taranaki War broke out in March 1860.⁸⁴ Māori protested arms restrictions to the government, but they also worked around them with ease; traders sold arms to Māori by the simple expediency of conducting the sale at sea beyond the reach of British law.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, the legislation demonstrates British concern about Māori gun ownership and use as well as illustrating the centrality of guns to racial politics in nineteenth-century New Zealand.⁸⁶

Access to firearms became even more important to both sides when the wars of the 1860s broke out. During the wars of the 1860s, Māori were able to augment their previous stock of weapons through three avenues: buying illegally smuggled weapons, winning new weapons from opponents on the battlefield, and (for those who fought on the same side as the British), receiving weapons from the British in return for military services. For those fighting against the British, modern weapons could be hard to come by, so many relied on the firearms already in their possession which tended to be outdated smoothbore muskets or double-barrelled shotguns known as *tūpara*. This had serious consequences in battles during the early 1860s, as Māori combatants were thoroughly outranged.

⁷⁹ Craig Innes, 'Māori with Guns: Armed Māori and the Early Settler Parliament', in *Terror in Our Midst? Searching for Terror in Aotearoa New Zealand*, ed. Danny Keenan (Wellington: Huia, 2008), 65–66.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁸¹ Innes, 'Arms Control in New Zealand', 13–18.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 42.

⁸³ Jeff Hopkins-Weise, 'The New Zealand Wars and the Australian Colonies', *The Volunteers: The Journal of the New Zealand Military Historical Society* 41 (2015): 29.

⁸⁴ Innes, 'Māori with Guns', 68–69.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 73–74.

⁸⁶ Innes, 'Arms Control in New Zealand', 7.

The diary of Lionel Edward Tedder, a non-commissioned officer in the 40th (second Somersetshire) infantry regiment, detailed a telling example of a skirmish made lopsided by the guns available to each side. Describing an engagement at Pāterangi pā on the 8th of February 1864, Lionel Edward Tedder wrote,

[We] kept up at the hill all day, ‘Jack’ sending volley after volley at us without doing any damage as the distance was too far for the generality of their pieces, but in nice range for us [at] about 700 yards.⁸⁷

Three days later, Māori defenders attempted an ambush of British soldiers who were bathing in a nearby river, only to be cut off by British reinforcements that included Tedder. He wrote “we succeeded in giving one lot a beautiful volley at 300 yards and sending them to the right about in double time”.⁸⁸ In such circumstances, the Enfield could prove to be decisive.

An 1864 government paper documented all of the Māori fighters who had surrendered in that year, revealing a slice of Māori weaponry at this point in the wars. Including men from the Waikato, Tauranga and Whanganui districts, the report noted that 578 men had surrendered, giving up 165 guns and 39 traditional weapons in the process. Of the 165 guns, most were described simply as “musket”, “old flint musket” or merely “gun”, and only four were Enfield rifles, all of which were surrendered in the Tauranga district.⁸⁹ Spencer Percival Nicholl, a British Ensign with the 43rd Light Infantry, recorded Māori surrendering arms, including four Enfields after the British victory of Te Ranga.⁹⁰ Thus, it is possible that the only Enfields recorded as surrendered by Māori in 1864 had in fact only been captured by Māori a few weeks earlier.

While the report recorded the limited firearms Māori possessed in the early 1860s, there were clearly other factors at play. Given that the men surrendered so few guns, it is probable that some hid or gave away their weapons beforehand. According to Belich, Tauranga Māori had captured “dozens” of Enfields at Pukehinahina.⁹¹ Indeed, “most of the guns [surrendered] were Ngai-te-Rangis’ grandfathers’ weapons rather than their own.... It is highly likely that the Tauranga Maoris [sic] remained fully armed and the British knew this to be so”.⁹² Nevertheless,

⁸⁷ Lionel Edward Tedder, *Diary, 1863-1864*, Tedder, Lionel Edward, b 1840? : *Diary and accompanying papers*, Ref: MSX-7069, ATL.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ ‘Return of Arms Surrendered by Natives’, *AJHR*, 1864, Session I, E-06, 1-25.

⁹⁰ Spencer Perceval Talbot Nicholl, *Journal, 1863-1864*, MS-1712, ATL, 270.

⁹¹ Belich, *The New Zealand Wars*, 194.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 194–95.

such exchanges underscored the extent of British technological superiority and demonstrated the importance of weapons in the conduct of war.

Besides lacking modern firearms, Māori fighting against the government were also severely short on military supplies. Forced to improvise, Māori made cartridges from newspapers and Bibles, bullets from nails and marbles, and even produced their own percussion caps and gunpowder.⁹³ Improvised bullets were slower, but could cause unpredictable damage in the bodies of those hit, and were more likely to cause infection.⁹⁴ Māori often welcomed deserting Pākehā like Kimble Bent who had expertise in repairing guns and producing ammunition.⁹⁵



Figure 9. Kinder, John, 1819-1903. Wiremu Tamihana Tarapipipi Te Waharoa with a double barreled shot-gun. Ref: 1/2-019840-F. ATL, Wellington, New Zealand. /records/22869781. Tarapipipi was one of the central figures of the Kīngitanga.

⁹³ Ryan, 'The Maori Warrior and British Soldier', 109–10.

⁹⁴ Tim Ryan, 'The British Army in Taranaki', in *Contested Ground Te Whenua I Tohea: The Taranaki Wars 1860-1881*, ed. Kelvin Day (Wellington: Huia, 2010), 136–37.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 134.

Despite being well and truly outgunned during the Taranaki, Waikato, and Tauranga campaigns, Māori were able to adopt strategies that maximised the damage their weapons could inflict. As Tim Ryan pointed out, the tūpara “was ineffective at long range but was devastating in hand-to-hand fighting, causing horrific wounds, and was especially deadly in ambush and during British assaults on pā”.⁹⁶ The smoothbore musket was also most effective at close range. The battle of Pukehinahina, where Māori defenders waited until the British were close to their trenches before opening fire, exemplified this strategy.

Later in the 1860s, conflicts were characterised by a different type of warfare. The likes of Te Kooti, Riwha Tītōkōwaru, and followers of Pai Mārire continued to resist British colonisation, but they often fought in smaller numbers than those present in earlier engagements and made use of guerrilla tactics much more extensively rather than engaging in set battles. Furthermore, rather than fighting against large regular armies like the one that invaded Waikato in 1863, they battled a mix of regulars, irregular settler volunteers, and Māori iwi fighting in alliance with the British. During this period, Māori fighting on both sides had far greater access to modern weapons.

In this era, those Māori fighting with the British received vast numbers of modern rifles to facilitate and reward their service. An 1868 report to the government noted that 3,609 guns were issued to Māori in the period of 1865 to 1868 alone; 2,061 of these were Enfield rifles, 1,300 of which went to East Coast Māori.⁹⁷ Accompanying the weapons were 345,000 rounds of ammunition and 3,102 sets of accoutrements.⁹⁸ The flow of arms continued over the next few years. A further 255 Enfields of different models, along with a handful of other firearms and 87,120 rounds of ammunition were supplied to Māori between July 1869 and March 1870.⁹⁹

The number of arms supplied is staggering, especially in light of strict restrictions on the sales of arms and powder to Māori not long before, but the settler press did not oppose the wholesale arming of ostensibly allied Māori groups. Instead, newspapers reported transaction to “friendly natives” in neutral terms.¹⁰⁰ Some even supported the arming of previously hostile Māori.

⁹⁶ Ryan, ‘The Maori Warrior and British Soldier’, 109.

⁹⁷ ‘Return of Arms, Accoutrements, and Ammunition Issued to Friendly Natives During the Years 1865, 1866, 1867, and 1868’, *AJHR*, 1868, Session I, D-21, 7. Also discussed in Storey, *Guns, Race, and Power*, 336.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ ‘Return of Arms and Ammunition Issued to Natives from the 30th of June, 1869 to 31st March, 1870’ *AJHR*, 1870, Session I, D-13, 3.

¹⁰⁰ See for instance ‘The Southland Times’, *Southland Times*, 12 April 1869, 2; ‘Interprovincial’, *Otago Daily Times*, 31 August 1870, 7.

Upper Whanganui rangatira Topia Turoa had supported Kīngitanga and fought against government forces early in the 1860s, but he lost faith in the movement. In 1869, he offered to support the government's pursuit of Te Kooti. Premier William Fox accepted his offer and armed Turoa's followers with Enfields.¹⁰¹ The *Nelson Examiner* labelled Turoa a "staunch ally", praising Fox for "boldly" arming Turoa and uniting the Whanganui iwi.¹⁰² It may be that settlers were simply relieved to have allies at all in the fight against feared leaders such as Te Kooti and Tītōkōwaru.

By the late 1860s however, the Enfield was becoming increasingly outdated and was soon to be replaced. It is plausible that the settler government was happy to pass on old weapons in anticipation of renewing its stocks with new ones. Tim Ryan noted that even in 1870 when the Arawa Flying Column was pursuing Te Kooti, they were still armed with the Enfields and Calisher and Terry carbines, despite the fact that the government had the much improved Sniders available. Ryan pointed out that

The commanders of kupapa units complained bitterly that they, who were doing all of the fighting, were still armed with outdated firearms. It may well be that the colonial Government distrusted their Maori allies and therefore supplied Sniders only to the Armed Constabulary, who by this time had been relegated to road building and policing roles.¹⁰³

Such distrust paralleled both Britain's treatment of its Indian soldiers, who were given smoothbore muskets following the Rebellion while their white colleagues retained the much more powerful rifle, and the experience of some black Union soldiers in the American Civil War, as discussed in chapter two. It further demonstrates the close links between guns, power, and British anxieties about race.

Much to the consternation of settlers, those fighting against the government were also able to acquire modern weapons, though through different means. When Tītōkōwaru began his campaign against settler encroachments in South Taranaki, his followers had limited access to arms, though when they attacked Turuturumōkai Redoubt in one of the first engagements of the war, Tītōkōwaru's sharpest marksmen were armed with Enfields.¹⁰⁴ Later, after the

¹⁰¹ Ian Church, 'Turoa, Topia Peehi', ed. Claudia Orange, *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books; Department of Internal Affairs, 1993).

¹⁰² 'News of the Day', *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 15 December 1869, 3.

¹⁰³ Ryan, 'The Maori Warrior and British Soldier', 117–18.

¹⁰⁴ James Belich, *I Shall Not Die: Tītōkōwaru's War, 1868-1869* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2010), 86.

government's disastrous failed attack on Te Ngutu o te Manu, Tītokowaru's gained "fifty modern carbines and much ammunition", which proved to be highly effective in the ongoing war.¹⁰⁵ According to Belich, Tītokowaru augmented his stockpile of arms and ammunition through trade with ostensibly neutral neighbours Ngā Rauru, and possibly through "treasonable Pākehā".¹⁰⁶

Te Kooti was also able to acquire modern firearms and ammunition.¹⁰⁷ Having been imprisoned on Chatham Island on suspicion of spying on the government in 1866, he orchestrated a mass break out of Māori prisoners in 1868, taking thirty-two rifles, a handful of other guns, and hundreds of rounds of ammunition; he then augmented his supply through a series of raids.¹⁰⁸ In 1869, newspapers reported that Te Kooti's followers were "well armed with Spencer and Enfield rifles", but had limited ammunition.¹⁰⁹



Figure 10. Repeating carbine, Spencer model 1865., 1865, Boston, by Spencer Repeating Rifle Company. Exchanged date unknown. CC BY-NC-ND licence. Te Papa (DM000346).

Te Kooti's possession of Spencer rifles was particularly significant (see figure ten). The weapon was a highly powered repeating gun, much more effective than most other weapons in use on either side of the war. But while acknowledging Te Kooti's modern armaments, the paper emphasised his violence, noting that a "poor fellow who was captured by Te Kooti's band while endeavouring to escape, was literally cut up by his cruel captors into mincemeat".¹¹⁰ This state of affairs represented a noteworthy change from earlier eras. Where previously, 'savage' enemies were using outdated firearms or tomahawks, they now had highly modern firearms. Furthermore, settlers fought these enemies with the help of Māori allies who were

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 144.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 79.

¹⁰⁷ For a full account of Te Kooti's campaigns, see Judith Binney, *Redemption Songs: A Life of Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki* (Auckland: Auckland University Press; Bridget Williams Books, 1995).

¹⁰⁸ Belich, *The New Zealand Wars*, 221–22.

¹⁰⁹ 'The New Zealand Herald', *New Zealand Herald*, 6 April 1869, 4.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

also armed with modern weapons. In this context, military technology and racial ideology could no longer be equated with one another in settler press.

Yet the press was overly optimistic about the state of Te Kooti's ammunition. A battle near Lake Taupō in September 1869 revealed him and his followers to be well supplied.¹¹¹ Many were perturbed that he was so easily able to resupply and the press suspected foul play. The *Colonist* suggested that gunpowder sold to miners on the Thames goldfields had made its way into rebel hands.¹¹² The paper then called for the stricter enforcement of arms control laws.¹¹³ In spite of settler chagrin, imposing such laws was virtually impossible.

Thus, the late 1860s saw Māori on both sides of the wars armed with modern weapons. With combatants on each side matched relatively evenly in terms of their equipment, narratives about the wars could not claim the Enfield, or any other firearm for that matter, as their emblem exclusively. This, alongside the failure of the Enfield to have a decisive impact on the war, resulted in the weapon losing its heroic status. Nevertheless, the Enfield and other rifles remained a point of reference for settlers writing about other weapons Māori used.

While Māori were clearly confident users of firearms, it was their use of another weapon which played particularly on the minds of some of the British: the tomahawk. An axe-like weapon whose name originated from indigenous North Americans, the name tomahawk was used to describe a range of hand-to-hand Māori weapons and had strong associations with the wars between settlers and indigenous peoples on the American frontier. The image of Māori armed with tomahawks provoked fear and consternation among settlers, and the weapon also served as a counterpoint to the Enfield and other modern rifles in settler discourse. This contrast is evident in an 1866 article from the *Wellington Independent*, which put it that

So long as the Native difficulty exists – so long as Hau Haus threaten deeds of murder and cannibalism – so long as armed rebels prowl on the outskirts of civilised settlements – so long as women, and children in the remote districts are exposed to anger from the tomahawk of a treacherous foe, the colonists of this

¹¹¹ 'Important from Taupo', *New Zealand Herald*, 2 October 1869, 5; 'Latest from the North', *Southland Times*, 4 October 1869, 2. Te Kooti's followers fired over 2,000 rounds and each fallen warrior was found to have thirty to forty rounds on their person.

¹¹² 'Our Native Difficulties', *Colonist*, 29 March 1870, 3.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

island at least, have excellent reason to become skilful in the use of that great pacificator, the Enfield rifle.¹¹⁴

Thus, the article positioned the Enfield and the tomahawk as each other's antithesis. The first was the epitome of British manufacturing precision and power, requiring intelligence and skill to use, while the second was a brutal weapon for hand-to-hand combat, and took visceral strength. Emphasis on these weapons as exemplars of the relative British and Māori modes of warfare positioned the British as civilised and modern and positioned Māori as brutal savages. Furthermore, mention of a "treacherous foe" threatening women and children clearly took the 1857 Indian Rebellion as a frame of reference, acknowledging a previous conflict where the Enfield came to represent the British in a war against opponents using different types of weapons.

Fear of the tomahawk was not limited to the press. Andrew Dillon Carberry, an assistant surgeon in the 18th Royal Irish Regiment, kept a journal of his experience in the Waikato War. Carberry recorded the discovery of a Militia officer who had shot seven Māori before being hacked to death. He noted that the officer had "seven strokes scored on his skin by the Maoris [sic] one for each man he killed".¹¹⁵ When the Snider rifle began to replace the Enfield, some in New Zealand's press welcomed it as a perfect counter to the tomahawk. The *Oamaru Times* suggested that "fitted with a sword-bayonet [the Snider rifle is] calculated to answer the purpose of a tomahawk".¹¹⁶ However, concern about the tomahawk was generally unfounded. Though the weapons were prominent in the wars, far more British soldiers died from Māori gunfire than from tomahawk wounds.¹¹⁷

British anxieties about the tomahawk related more broadly to their ideas about the body and fears of its mutilation. As discussed in chapter two, British narratives about the Indian Rebellion were deeply preoccupied with accounts of women and children suffering rape, mutilation and disembowelment at the hands of Indian men. In New Zealand, fear and rumours of cannibalism circulated throughout the wars, while several prominent instances of dismemberment caused terror and outrage in the colony. In 1864, a party of British forces in Taranaki were ambushed by Māori who decapitated the seven dead soldiers and took their heads as trophies which were paraded across much of the North Island. The 1866 murder and

¹¹⁴ 'The Recent Colonial Prize Firing', *Wellington Independent*, 12 April 1866, 10.

¹¹⁵ Andrew Dillon Carberry, *Journal of Andrew Dillon Carberry, 1863-1865*, MS-53, Auckland War Memorial Museum.

¹¹⁶ 'The Oamaru Times', *Oamaru Times*, 12 September 1871, 2.

¹¹⁷ Ryan, 'The Maori Warrior and British Soldier', 111; Ryan, 'The British Army in Taranaki', 136-37.

decapitation of missionary Carl Völkner in Ōpōtiki by Pai Mārire adherents and the subsequent partial cannibalisation by Kereopa Te Rau (who ate one of Völkner's eyes) scandalised and outraged settlers.

As Simon Harrison pointed out, Europeans often distinguished between enemies they saw as civilised versus those they saw as uncivilised. Harrison put it that

The behaviour of civilized enemies in battle appeared rational and constrained by rules. Savage enemies, on the other hand, evinced emotional and unregulated violence. Above all, they were distinguished by an excessive brutality they seemed to display towards their enemies in customs such as cannibalism and the taking of body parts as trophy.¹¹⁸

The nature of the tomahawk as a weapon that literally tore bodies asunder meant that it resonated strongly with settler anxieties about bodily integrity. In contrast, the settlers' Enfield was a weapon whose results were often too far away to be seen.

Despite portraying the tomahawk as the main weapon of their Māori opponents, the British were also preoccupied with taking firearms from belligerent Māori wherever possible. In 1861, the government offered a ceasefire to Māori. The terms included a demand for the return of any firearms belonging to the government, though it did not attempt to disarm Māori, promising that on submission they would enjoy their "property, both lands and goods, without molestation".¹¹⁹ On the eve of the Waikato War, Governor George Grey issued a proclamation to Waikato Māori, complaining of abuses against Pākehā living in the region and claiming that they threatened to attack Auckland. The proclamation vowed that "those who wage war against Her Majesty, or remain in arms, threatening the lives of Her peaceable subjects, must take the consequences of their acts".¹²⁰ Thus, for Grey, the mere act of owning arms constituted a threat to British authority in the colony.

Undoubtedly settlers were deeply concerned with Māori possession and use of weapons. Settler press commentary on Māori weaponry differed at various times during the wars. Early in the 1860s they proclaimed British technological superiority, and later in the decade they fretted over the proliferation of arms among Māori. But settler commentary on Māori weapons also

¹¹⁸ Simon Harrison, 'Skulls and Scientific Collecting in the Victorian Military: Keeping the Enemy Dead in British Frontier Warfare', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50 (2008): 285.

¹¹⁹ 'The Native War', *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 11 April 1861, 2.

¹²⁰ 'The New Zealand Gazette', *New Zealand Gazette*, 15 July 1863, 277–78.

demonstrates how racial ideology was often constituted through the physical objects such as weapons during the 1850s and 1860s.

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Thus, the trajectory of the Enfield through the New Zealand Wars served to complicate two major narratives about the weapon. Firstly, the wars showed that the rifle was not the all-defeating weapon that some had hoped it to be. Secondly, the conflicts brought into doubt the 'racial' status of the Enfield as a weapon that was representative of Britishness, as Māori acquired and used thousands of Enfields and other similar rifles during the late 1860s. The result was both settler disenchantment with the rifle and the loss of the rifle's status as an emblem of the British Empire. It is clear that this process was contested. At times, the rifle was used as a symbol of British modernity and civilisation, especially as a counterpoint to the tomahawk. Technological innovations through the 1860s provided new weapons which made the Enfield as outdated as its predecessor the Brown Bess. Nevertheless, the Enfield played a significant role in the violent colonisation of New Zealand during the 1850s and 1860s.

Conclusion

The Enfield rifle's life at the centre of British imperial attention was relatively short. From the weapon's invention in 1853, it was only thirteen years until the military officially replaced it with the Snider. After 1866, the Enfield remained active in the hands of soldiers, volunteers, and hunters across much of the British world, but the number of its users dwindled inexorably with the invention of new rifles. Enfields continue to exist only in museums and in the hands of relatively niche groups of private collectors and reenactors. What then, if anything, is the rifle's legacy? Furthermore, to return to the questions posed in the introduction, what were the connections between the Enfield, imperial ideology and violence? How was this nexus produced and reproduced in different contexts, and with varying levels of success? And how did firearms and discourses of race, gender, and civilisation coproduce one another during the mid-nineteenth century?

During the 1840s and 1850s, challenges from France and Prussia demanded that Britain should have a modern weapon to match those of its rivals. Through a process of tests and experiments, private makers and the government invented a new weapon: the Enfield rifle. It was the British military's first general issue rifle and, in that sense, was its first "modern" firearm. The rifle deeply impressed contemporary British commentators with its precision and range, and it provoked an enduring and high profile interest in rifle technology in the press.

The invention of the Enfield was a catalyst for modernising other aspects of the British military and wider society. Faced with the need to resupply the military with new weapons and the increased demand generated by the Crimean War, Britain embarked on a massive renovation of the Royal Small Arms Factory at Enfield. The factory incorporated new American inspired manufacturing techniques that facilitated the rapid production of millions of identical rifles. Its scale and precision made a strong impression on Britons, and narratives about the factory helped to inculcate a sense of modernity and civilisational superiority among them. Furthermore, the factory's development stimulated the adoption of mass manufacturing techniques across Britain's economy, contributing to the process of industrialisation.

The rifle also provoked the establishment of the School of Musketry at Hythe, where soldiers and volunteers learned how to use the rifle and studied new tactics. The training methods and tactics developed at Hythe were an acknowledgement that the Enfield would change military

practice profoundly. Men like Colonel E. C. Wilford even believed that the rifle necessitated the creation of a new, rational, scientific soldier, an argument that was deeply embedded in the discourses of nineteenth-century British masculinity. The nature of the Enfield, with its long range and precision, influenced each of these institutions and contributed to the militarisation of British society during the 1850s and 1860s. In turn, Enfield factory and Hythe shaped public perceptions of the rifle, engrafting ideas of scientific rationality, skill, and intelligence onto the weapon.

Following the rifle's invention, it was not long before the Enfield found use in war and among the volunteers. The Crimean War established a reputation for the Enfield and proved it to be an effective, but technically flawed weapon. The rifle then played a central role in sparking and defeating the 1857 Indian Rebellion. The Enfield was pivotal in British narratives about the violence of the conflict. Whereas violence by Indian rebels was often depicted in the form of brutal attacks on defenceless women and children, British violence was inflicted by precise, rational, rifle fire. Though such narratives bore little relation to the truth, they transformed the rifle into a powerful symbol of British racial 'superiority'.

The rifle then played a vital part in the Volunteer Force, established in 1859. In response to fears of French invasion, hundreds of thousands of largely middle class British men formed rifle and artillery corps. Taking a deep interest in the Enfield, the volunteers constituted their ethos of respectable, educated masculinity in terms of their ability to use the rifle with skill. In the United States, the Enfield played a noteworthy role in the Civil War, though being imported rather than locally produced, it had a lower status than other guns.

In New Zealand however, the Enfield failed to live up to its revolutionary reputation and did not provide the decisive victory that the British sought. Māori fighting against the government were able to construct fortifications and make use of terrain in a way that neutralised the rifle's power. As a result, settlers began to disparage the Enfield. Materially, it was inevitable that the rifle would be superseded by newer weapons given the revolution in military technology taking place through the second half of the nineteenth century. As a symbol of British power though, the Enfield might have endured for much longer, but the weapon fell out of favour and memory among many, in part due to its ostensible failure in New Zealand. Nevertheless, the rifle remained a deeply raced and gendered object.

From the history of the Enfield, it is clear that British imperial ideologies and the violence that underlay imperial expansion both profoundly shaped, and were shaped by the weapons Britain

produced and used in this era. Yet it is also clear that this process was contested and produced differing results in different spaces and times. Narratives of the weapon's invention and production engendered one set of meanings about the rifle. Then the Enfield's successful or unsuccessful usage in different imperial contexts either reinforced or destabilised these narratives. This process created a network of overlapping and sometimes contradictory ideas about the rifle. More importantly though, the rifle and its discourses of precise, modern military science caused horrendous violence around the globe. In this regard, it is part of a British imperial legacy whose consequences are still felt today.

The history of the Enfield also illustrates the complexities of maintaining imperial power in different contexts around the globe. At times, technologies such as the Enfield were instrumental in defeating those who resisted British expansion. Yet on other occasions, as in New Zealand during the 1860s, technology did not grant Britain easy victories, and imperial power was asserted by deploying overwhelming numbers of soldiers who could remain in the field indefinitely while Māori combatants had to return to their crops.¹ This demonstrates the importance of technology in imperial expansion, while also showing the futility of deterministic approaches to technology's role history. The Enfield makes it clear that military technologies never existed in isolation; instead, they were continually contested components in an ever evolving set of imperial discourses and interactions.

Post Script

On September 11, 2001, Al Qaeda terrorists hijacked four planes, crashing three of them into the World Trade Centre towers and the Pentagon, while the fourth crashed into a field after passengers tried to gain control of the aircraft. Its target was most likely the White House or the American Capitol. The attacks killed nearly three thousand people, destroyed the twin towers of the World Trade Center, and caused major damage to the Pentagon. As Jusuf Wanandi put it, the attacks were “incredibly traumatic” for Americans, especially in their targeting of the country's main economic, military, and political symbols.²

The attacks have had severe consequences, sparking American invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq as part of the so-called War on Terror, which continues to this day. This ongoing conflict has been particularly striking for the imbalance in military technology possessed by each side.

¹ For a discussion of how planting seasons affected Māori military strategy against the British, see Taylor, ‘The Strategy of War’.

² Jusuf Wanandi, ‘A Global Coalition against International Terrorism’, *International Security* 26 (2002): 184.

Where the United States and its allies utilise a vast array of highly modern weapons and surveillance tools, the insurgents they fight have no such weapons and instead make use of improvised explosives and even vehicles as weapons. One of the most striking new technologies has been the rise of unmanned aerial vehicles, commonly known as drones. Controlled by pilots in American military bases, they have the power to strike with precision from great distances and without endangering American forces at all.

Drones are the latest in a long line of technological innovations that put ever greater distance between combatants. Just like the Enfield rifle, drones have changed both military tactics and popular attitudes to war and violence in that each of these weapons physically and discursively removes the perpetrators of violence from its victims. This process is part of what John Keegan described as the “impersonalisation of warfare”.³ But while the Enfield was celebrated during the 1850s and 1860s, drones have been highly controversial for the civilian deaths they have incurred.⁴ Nevertheless, given the potential advantage drones impart, the United States shows no signs of ceasing to use them.

The American leadership was aware of this imbalance from the beginning. As former President George W. Bush quipped, “When I take action...I'm not going to fire a \$2 million missile at a \$10 empty tent and hit a camel in the butt. It's going to be decisive”.⁵ Despite such technological advantages however, the United States has not been able to crush terrorist insurgencies. In fact, civilian deaths from drone strikes have often only served to create anger and resentment. As Mark Bowden of *The Atlantic* put it, “arguably the strongest force driving lone-wolf terror attacks in recent months throughout the Western world has been anger over drone strikes”.⁶

The proliferation of new military technology has also given rise to a new vocabulary to describe them. Phrases such as “smart bombs” and “surgical strikes” rely on new military technology to evoke imagery of clean, ethically conducted war. As J. Marshall Beier put it, the rhetoric is “recasting the bases of legitimacy in warfare”.⁷ In actual fact however, such phrases serve to create distance between civilian populations and the horrific violence of modern war. The

³ John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (London: Pimlico, 1991), 301.

⁴ For a discussion of the ethical, legal and political consequences of drone usage, see Hillel Ofek, ‘The Tortured Logic of Obama’s Drone War’, *The New Atlantis* 27 (2010): 35–44; Peshan Rajeendra Gunaratne, ‘US Drone Strikes and Their Impact on International Security in a Post 9/11 World’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka* 58 (2013): 73–93.

⁵ Quoted in Howard Fineman, ‘A President Finds His True Voice’, *Newsweek*, 23 September 2001.

⁶ Mark Bowden, ‘The Killing Machines: How to Think about Drones’, *The Atlantic*, 2013.

⁷ J. Marshall Beier, ‘Outsmarting Technologies: Rhetoric, Revolutions in Military Affairs, and the Social Depth of Warfare’, *International Politics* 43 (2006): 266.

language of military precision has been highly effective in justifying certain types of violence in the modern world, just as it served to validate imperial violence during the nineteenth century.

In many ways, September 11 and the War on Terror that followed have a lot in common with the 1857 Indian Rebellion. Just as Indian soldiers had fought for the British East India Company, the United States funded Al-Qaeda to fight against the Russian invasion of Afghanistan during the 1980s. Each group then turned on their erstwhile paymasters due to religious grievances and resentment of growing British and American imperialism respectively. The attacks by Indian rebels and Al-Qaeda terrorists on British and American civilians horrified each of those countries and shook them to their foundations. The wars that followed September 11 have proved to be just as brutal as the Indian Rebellion, and just as the British relied on the Enfield rifle to take their revenge, the United States has utilised a huge range of new military technologies to fight. Obviously, the comparison can only be stretched so far: there are also considerable differences between each case. Nevertheless, it is clear that military technology, imperial ideology, and violence have been closely tied together in each conflict.

The parallels extend to geography. When American elite forces, equipped with helicopters, night vision goggles and the latest military paraphernalia, finally conducted the raid that killed Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad, Pakistan, they were less than 100 kilometres from Murree, where “Pahari” wrote his letter to the *Lyttelton Times* extolling the virtues of the Enfield rifle.

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