

THE MARTINI-ENFIELD RIFLE IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

PART III

The Pattern 1888 Sword Bayonet in Colonial W.A.

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ABSTRACT

The examination of the three groups of unique Martini-Enfield Modified, W.A. Pattern rifles, discussed in Parts I and II, is extended to include discussion of the Pattern 1888 sword bayonet which accompanied them to W.A. The use of this bayonet on W.A. Martini-Enfield arms is an extension of a purchasing policy for this combination which began in 1893-95 and continued in W.A. through to the early Federation period. The exclusive use of the Pattern 1888 bayonet on its .303 inch Martini-Enfield rifles between 1898-1900 sets W.A. apart from all other users of the Martini-Enfield throughout Australia and possibly the world. Evidence is examined which indicates that W.A. never issued the Sealed Pattern Martini-Enfield or the accompanying Pattern 1895 socket bayonet as has hitherto been supposed.

INTRODUCTION

The physical characteristics of the three groups of WA Pattern Martini-Enfield rifles and their procurement by the colony of Western Australia has been described in Parts I & II of this series. Similarly, their predecessor arms, the Martini-Metfords and their successors, the Lee-Speeds have also been discussed in order to maintain the continuity of the procurement programme adopted by the Colonial Government. The common link between these various types and models of arms has been their ability to accept the Pattern 1888 sword bayonet. It is the nose-cap which was fitted to these rifles to facilitate this bayonet which makes the WA Pattern Martini-Enfields unique in Australia. All the evidence uncovered in this study points to Western Australia issuing the WA Pattern arms only; ignoring the other types of Martini-Enfields.

Abbreviations which may be found in the text are as follows:

M-E = Martini-Enfield; M-H = Martini-Henry; M-M = Martini-Metford; Mk = Mark; ML-E = Magazine Lee-Enfield; Pat. '95 = Pattern 1895; Pat. '88 = Pattern 1888; RSAF = Royal Small Arms Factories; SMLE = Short, Magazine Lee-Enfield.

W.A. ISSUE RIFLES AND BAYONETS 1895-1900

In studies of Australian colonial military arms, references have been made to the effect that the Sealed Pattern Martini-Enfield Mark I and II and its accompanying Pattern 1895 socket bayonet were used in all the Australian Colonies. The most notable work to make this statement is Ian Skennerton's excellent reference book "Australian Service Longarms". In describing the Sealed

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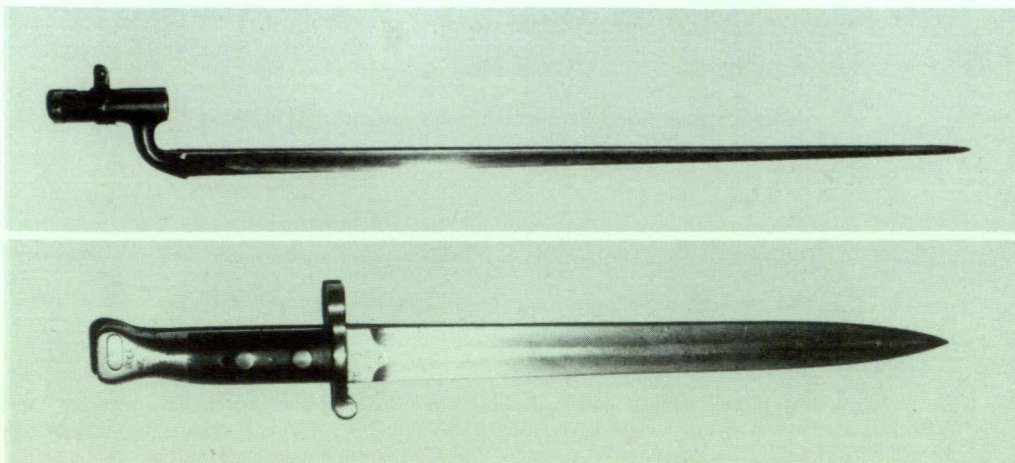


Figure 1 The bayonets which accompany the Martini-Enfield Rifles. (Top) The Pattern 1895 which was issued with the Sealed Pattern Martini-Enfield, and (bottom) the Pattern 1888, which was used on the Martini-Enfields Marks I and II Modified W.A. Pattern. (Photo R. Stein)

Pattern Mark I (page 115), the Mark II (page 117) and their Pattern 1895 bayonet he states that these arms were used “by all the Colonial Governments”.¹ When this work was written (1976) nothing was known about the Martini-Enfield Mark I and II Modified W.A. Pattern rifles or the Unofficial Conversion Martini-Enfield Mark I WA Pattern located and described in Part I of this paper. In the intervening 18 years only the M-E Mark I Modified WA Pattern has been described, (1989) and then only from archival sources² as no actual specimen had ever been located until this present work was compiled. In contrast, much is known about the Sealed Pattern M-E Marks I and II and their various Australian colonial issue histories. Thus, as little was known about W.A. issue arms other than W.A. was known to have had “Martini-Enfields”, and the fact that colonial arms research done in the Eastern States seldom ever includes W.A. led to the not unreasonable conclusion that W.A. used Sealed Pattern arms and Pattern 1895 socket bayonets like the other Australian colonies.

As mentioned most authorities on Australian arms state that the Sealed Pattern Martini-Enfield Mk I & II with the Pattern 1895 bayonet was issued and used in all the Australian colonies, a reasonable assumption in view of the lack of evidence to the contrary. Evidence gathered by the author tends to refute this assumption. In fact it is felt that no Sealed Pattern Martini-Enfields or Pattern 1895 bayonets were ever issued in W.A. to Defence Force members during the Colonial period ending on 31st December 1900. The evidence to support this conclusion is not derived from archival or physical evidence which proves that they were not used, but rather from a *lack* of evidence which might indicate that they *were* used, indeed the evidence uncovered shows only the WA Pattern - Pattern 1888 combination in use here.

As discussed in Part I and II the contemporary documentary, photographic and physical evidence uncovered shows that only the W.A. Pattern Martini-Metfords, Martini-Enfields and

¹ Skennerton I. D., Australian Service Longarms. Privately Published. Qld. 1975

² Temple B.A., and Skennerton I.D., Treatise on the British Military Martini. Vol. 1 (1983) Vol. 2 (1989). Privately Published. Qld. Vol 2 Pp 417-419



Figure 2 The First W.A. Contingent to the Boer War on Parade prior to departure. All men bear W.A. Pattern Martini-Metford and Martini-Enfield rifles. Back row (L-R) soldier number 1 and front row soldiers 10 and 11, are armed with Martini-Enfield rifles identifiable by their shorter barrels and different sling placement. All these rifles bear fixed Pattern 1888 bayonets. (Photo courtesy of Geraldton Historical Society Batty Library 66270P)

Lee-Speed rifles and their Pattern 1888 bayonet were ever issued here during the late Colonial era. Not one contemporary photograph was found which shows either the Sealed Pattern Rifle or the Pattern 1895 bayonet in the hands of W.A. Defence Force members. Additionally the 1904 Returns list the total of .303 rifles of all types and in addition all types of bayonets used in W.A. The total of .303 rifles comes to 5106 of all types,³ including the M-M, M-E and Lee-Speeds described in Parts I and II. The total for bayonets is "about" 5000 Pattern 1888 bayonets. *No* Pattern 1895 bayonets are listed.⁴ It can be seen that the number of rifles to the number of Pattern 1888 bayonets, closely tallies. Thus the Returns totals which pairs a Pattern 1888 bayonet to each rifle, combined with the absolute lack of W.A. marked Sealed Pattern arms or Pattern 1895 bayonets physically located or even appearing in photographs or Returns tends to the conclusion that the Sealed Pattern rifle and the Pattern 1895 bayonet were not W.A. issue, as has been supposed. Any Sealed Pattern M-Es and Pattern 1895 bayonets now found in W.A. probably emanated from the Eastern States as Reserve arms after 1903,⁵ as all those examined bore Eastern states Colonial and/or Commonwealth markings. It is doubtful whether any Pattern 1895 bayonets accompanied these arms on issue to the rifle club reservists as they do not appear in the 1904 Returns.

There is one exception to this general use of the Pattern 1888 bayonet. The 200 Martini-Metford Mark IIs purchased in 1898, being Sealed Pattern rifles, took the Pat. 1887 bayonet, but as the bayonets do not appear in contemporary photographs or in the 1904 Returns, it is concluded that the bayonets apparently did not accompany the rifles to W.A., instead, there is evidence to suggest that the rifles were possibly modified to accept Pattern 1876 M-H socket bayonets. Two interesting photographs were found, one in the W.A. Museum Photograph Collection (W.A.M. 7600 396)

³ Dominion Returns for Land Forces to 31 December 1904, quoted by Temple and Skennerton in private correspondence. 18-7-91, 18-3-92. The other types of .303 arm used by W.A. Troops and making up the remainder of this total were the various Lee Magazine rifles issued in South Africa and also acquired in the early Federation period 1901-03.

⁴ Skennerton I.D., and Richardson R. "British and Commonwealth Bayonets" Privately Published. Qld. 1986 p. 274.

⁵ Army Museum of W.A. archives. General Order 263, 26th November 1903. This order describes the allocation of 600 M-E .303 rifles to W.A. for loan to rifle club members. Bayonets are not mentioned.

Table 1 W.A. Pattern Arms and their issue bayonets.

ARM	NUMBER	DATE	BAYONET
Martini-Metford Mark I (WA Pattern)	700	1895	Pat. 1888
Martini-Metford Mark II	200	1898	Pat. 1887*
Martini-Enfield Mark I WA Pattern	200	1898	Pat. 1888
Exchange/Unofficial Conversion/Surplus	323 (if converted)	1899/1900	Pat. 1888
Martini-Enfield Mark I & II WA Pattern	200	1900	Pat. 1888
Unofficial Conversion M-E Mark I WA Pattern	251	1900	Pat. 1888

* Sealed Pattern rifle taking the Pattern 1887 sword bayonet.

and one in Battye Library (2272 B/17) which supports the possibility of this modification having occurred. The photographs show the men of the Third Contingent riding through respectively, North Fremantle and Fremantle in March 1900. The men are armed with Martini-Metfords Mk II, and as the photographs were taken from behind the troopers some of their bayonets are visible. Those visible are unmistakably Pattern 1876 Martini-Henry socket bayonets. Although the diameter of the barrel was correct for the Pattern 1876, this bayonet would not fit the M-M II as the foresight has a short 'ramp' behind it preventing the bayonet locking into place. The square 'post' sight of the original M-H from which the M-M II was converted and for which the bayonet was made easily facilitates this operation. Very little metal has to be filed away however to remove this 'ramp', indeed an unskilled man with an ordinary file could modify the sight in a matter of minutes. It would also be necessary to modify the socket bayonet sight bridge and locking ring to accommodate the higher M-M II foresight. As the M-M II alone, out of the various M-M and M-E conversions in W.A. service, has the same large diameter barrel as the original M-H, it is the only arm which would have been capable of readily accepting the Pattern 1876 after this simple modification. It is also the only arm which would require a bayonet different from the Pattern 1888 used on the other conversions, as the Pattern 1888 muzzle ring is smaller in diameter being designed to fit the slimmer profile of the .303 barrels of the M-M I and the M-Es. Such a modification would have allowed the W.A. Government to save the purchase price of 200 Pattern 1887 sword bayonets by using some obsolete bayonets they already had in store. These photographs certainly point to the possibility that the Third Contingent was issued with a number of M-M IIs modified to take the modified Pattern 1876 socket bayonet.⁶ The use of the Pattern 1876 would help explain the lack of Pattern 1887 bayonets appearing in any contemporary photographs or documents. Even though the photographs depicting the M-M II and the Pattern 1876 bayonet are clear enough to identify the "post" shape of the foresight, they are not clear enough to see details of the bayonet socket. The contention of the modification of the sight will have to await the

⁶ A number of Pattern 1876 bayonets with this modification are known in local collections but as this type has been imported from overseas in recent years it may not be possible to identify a W.A. specimen and so confirm this hypothesis.

discovery of further supporting photographs or an original M-M II with modified sight to confirm it, but the indications are that this modification was done. The same reservations apply to the modified Pattern 1876 bayonet. The possibility that the men are actually holding .450 inch Martini-Henrys is discounted by the .303 ammunition bandoliers and the thin .303 inch clearing rods visible in the photographs (see Figure 4 in Part II). It is also known that the .450 inch Martini-Henry was obsolete by 1895 and many were in the process of being converted locally to .303 inch, by 1899-1900, and thus would be unlikely to have been issued in their obsolete form. Apart from this one tentative departure, all other .303 inch Martinis in W.A. service were fitted to take the Pattern 1888 sword bayonet.

CONCLUSION

The rifles taking the Pattern 1888 bayonet have been identified in Part I of this paper and their procurement has been chronicled in Part II. All these arms take the Pattern 1888 Sword Bayonet (see Table 1) with the exception of the 200 Martini-Metford Mark IIs of 1898. The possibility of these rifles being adapted to utilize the Pattern 1876 Martini-Henry socket bayonet has been discussed and the evidence to support this proposition has been described. Although inconclusive without confirmation in the form of documentary or physical evidence, the possibility is presented in the hope that it will stimulate interest and further research to confirm or dismiss the proposal. All WA Pattern Martini-Enfields described in Part I and II are designed to fix the Pattern 1888 bayonet but will, without modification also fix the Pattern 1895 socket bayonet. However, the fact that it has been shown that W.A. specifically requested the means to fix the 1888 bayonet (the nose cap), and as no 1895 bayonets are pictured, documented or listed in the 1904 Returns, the conclusion that the Pattern 1888 bayonet alone was used by W.A. on .303 Martini-Enfield rifles is supported.

The author would welcome information regarding additional specimens of W.A. Pattern rifles and bayonets.

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 - (b) Photographic Collection.
 - (c) W.A. Colonial Secretary's Office correspondence 1876-1902.
 - (d) Colonial Office correspondence 1893-1900.
 - (e) Agent General's Reports 1896-1900.
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 - (g) W.A. Statistical Registers 1895-1900.
 - (h) W.A. Year Books 1886-1904.

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 - (j) Newspaper archives.
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 - (a) Arms and Armour Collection
 - (b) W.A.M. Photograph Collection
 10. Royal Small Arms Factory Archives
 - (a) Annual Accounts 1897-1900
 - (b) Manuscript of Production.