

The Post-WWI CAC 303 Mark VI Match Cartridge

New Zealand forces were able to enter WWI armed with the 303 MLE Rifle directly through the ability of CAC to provide sufficient quantities of the Mk.VI ammunition for which they were sighted. Without this support an early NZ involvement would not have been possible. The various Defence Rifle Clubs administered by the military had been in existence since colonial times and most volunteers were well-trained riflemen, competition having been encouraged for many years. Their ammunition was provided via the Army Department and included a number of CAC headstamps exclusive to match use. Target competition reduced to troop training throughout the war years but the pre-WWI Defence Rifle Clubs reformed in 1920 and reformatted in 1923 to become the National Rifle Association, which august body has continued to administer formal shooting competition in NZ to the present.



CAC did not begin loading Mk.VII ammunition until 1917 and discontinued military supply of Mk.VI in 1918. At the close of hostilities the MLE rifle remained in predominant use in NZ. The SMLE was not yet available in quantity for

home use and there remained a civilian demand for Mk.VI ammunition.

Beginning in 1923 (their formative year) and continuing until 1930, the NRA secured a supply of Mk.VI ammunition from CAC for competition use. Many of these cartridges have since become increasingly harder to find and, to add confusion, most dates may also be found with a normal Mk.VII headstamp and Mk.VI bullet. In the ongoing study of "things CAC" the question of their packing has never been asked (or possibly even known).

Recent research and restoration within the Luckin collection by Henry Shields has found a hitherto unrecorded packet that, along with a second, little-known packet, adds some light to what may well be an answer to their packing:

The sterile wrapper with its coarse string tie came to the writer back in the 60s from an old target shooter. It contained Mk.6 cartridges headstamped CAC VI 29 and is one of several sterile examples known. The second wrapper, discovered in the Luckin collection, is far more significant. It contains cartridges headstamped CAC VI 25 and is the first of its type yet recorded.



CAC discontinued loading 303 Mk.VI in 1930, but their 215 grain RNSP bullet was continued until 1942 and it is probable that this commercial load satisfied the steadily declining demand for a Mk.VI cartridge among target shooters of the day.

Any further information on the 1923/30 series Mk.VI cartridge or its packing would be greatly appreciated.

BWG.