



NEWSLETTER No. 65 January 2019

An informative service to the muzzle loading cannon enthusiast

The silly or daft season is now behind us; we are well into the year 2019 and there lies much to do ahead of us.

The AGM will take place in March (venue and date to be advised) and there will be some traumatic changes. Martin Venter has indicated that he will no longer be able to stand for Chairman due to work pressure. Erika Foot will no longer be available as Secretary because she is earmarked for courses which are essential to her work. Both have served us well and will be difficult to replace.

NTIDA CANNON STATION

Erick Kellerman, Jacobus van Niekerk and Jurg Zimmerman have embarked on an ambitious development at the Ntida Wine Estate which includes cannon firings, historical displays, evening talks and discussion groups. They already have nine cannon lined up on the dam wall which range from a ½ pdr to a 36 pdr, all on carriages and eight of them have already been proof fired. I think that all CAOSA members who need to widen their cannon expertise and experience should go and learn from what is happening at Ntida.

ANOTHER PROOF FIRING

Frikkie and Riaan Conradie restored and proof fired Durr 399, the four pounder gun in the farm Stirling in the Blackheath area. The owners were so excited that they adopted Frikkie as their very -very long lost 71 year old son. It is pleasing to see the expansion of such expertise and ability; well done to both of you.

ZAR CANNONIERS

There is a new cannon organisation starting up in the old Transvaal, several of their members have cannon and most seem to be on field carriages, which makes sense as they are pretty far from the sea. I note that one of our CAOSA members, MC Heunis, seems to be offering assistance and a few words of caution to this informal group. We would welcome any approach by them and would make available any information or advice that we have; although they seem to concentrate on the live firing of cannon, the subject matter already binds us.

MAINTENANCE

Peter Sachs who lives in Canada but owns four of the 17th C bronze cannon standing at Ke Monate requested me to repair and service and wax/oil his guns and carriages. One of the dolphins had broken off and I had to drill and peg it back on with Pratley's Powder bond. The awkward angles resulted in me being super glued to several tools, tubes, bottles and to myself. Olivia and I then waxed and oiled all five guns and carriages. The fifth one, a Dutch bronze gun, belongs to CAOSA member Paul Brand in Pretoria. The unrelenting glue on my hands survived for three days.

THE CANNON TIME LINE

The unique display that was being developed by CAOSA to enhance the historical interest points at Chavonne's Battery has been put on hold until a permanent home is negotiated for CAOSA. I have put in a lot of time and research on this project and James Page McDonald has made his facilities available and spent a fair amount of money on its development and we look forward to more positive developments in this new year.

THE DURR RECORD OF CANNON

There have been several corrections and additions to the Durr Record. Most are minor adjustments or known gun movements. Ryk de Wit in Plettenberg Bay heard about another cannon on the shores of the Langebaan Lagoon. When he came down to the Cape again (he cannot seem to stay away) he picked me up and we undertook a 400km tour of several cannon up the West Coast. We recorded Durr No. 1046, a four pounder cast at Finspang in Sweden in 1795. On the way back we stopped and updated the historical data for the info office in Malmesbury.

FIRINGS

There have been several firings over the Christmas season, but I have not been able to keep track of them all due to ongoing disagreements between my computer and myself.

Erick has done some firings at Ntida while training new gunner Alfred de Vries.

Johan Brand had a few firings for public events at Ke Monate.

I fired for large mobs of tourists at the Castle.

The owners of the 4 pdr that Frikkie and Riaan proof fired on the farm "Stirling" had their first social firing which apparently was a huge success.

Sorry! I will try harder to keep track of the firings, but please let me know WHY the firing took place.

THE MAYOR'S SHOT

In August 2006 I was asked to provide a cannon which could fire the opening shot for the celebrations of Durbanville's 200th anniversary. Ryk de Wit offered his half pounder gun for the event and I supplied the gunpowder. The firing was to take place in the garden of the Durbanville Municipal Office which happens to be across the road from the police station. Knowing what was likely to happen, I went to the police station and invited them to attend the firing.

The garden is fairly small and the lawn section where the firing would take place was surrounded by dense bushes and shrubbery. I placed the gun in the middle of the lawn but as close to the building as was reasonable, with the muzzle aimed at the police station across the road and waited for the guests to arrive.

The then Mayor of Cape Town, Helen Zille was to fire the gun with a crowd of dignitaries looking on. The crowd grew steadily, all dressed in their finery and several policemen arrived in uniform before the Mayor appeared wearing a loose black, red and gold cloak and the impressive Mayoral Chain. By the time a few lengthy speeches had been made the daylight was beginning to change from dusk to dark.

I gave the Mayor the usual short safety instructions, lit the slow match and handed the linstock to her. She said a few kind words about Durbanville followed by "I hereby declare the celebrations officially open", and fired the gun.

In the half dark there was a bang, an impressive flame and a massive cloud of smoke followed by a scream. A drunken hobo had been sleeping unseen in the surrounding bushes.

Noticing what had happened the Mayor rushed forward to apologise to the man and the policemen went with her.

The hobo, having been awakened by a thunder clap from hell, saw the smoke of Hades from which was emerging a caped apparition in red, black and gold flanked by a couple of burley policemen. He did not even have time to consider fight or flight as he cleared the four foot fence without touching it and vanished at an impressive pace.

I suspect that the Mayor did the community a great favour; that the hobo sobered up in less than a second and probably swore off liquor for the rest of his life.

UBIQUE

Gerry de Vries