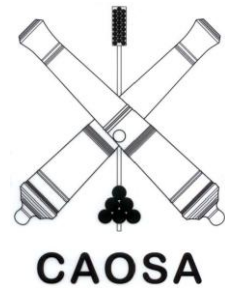


CANNON ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

Gunners Room, The Castle of Good Hope Cape Town

SAPS Registration number: 28/1/3/8/2/1 23704



NEWSLETTER No. 55 February 2015

An informative service to the muzzle loading cannon enthusiast

CROSSING OF THE BAR

For those who have not heard – Sir David Graaff, one of our most ardent early supporters passed away recently. We used to have regular firings at the restaurant on his farm De Grendel and these were attended by many members of the public.

The prize offered by Sir David of a case of wine for the first gunner to lob a golf ball from a mortar placed on a designated spot on the stoep into the fountain in the dam was never earned, and it was not for the want of trying!

Sir David was CAOSA's main sponsor for the re-enactment of the Battle of Blouberg on the bicentenary in 2006. He also bought two of the cannon from Sentinel Wines when they were liquidated, thus helping to keep these historic items in South Africa.

Those of us who were privileged enough to meet Sir David will not forget his generosity and support.

COINCIDENCE ?

Since the last newsletter I have received three requests for advice on cannon and their carriages, all from the Parow – Kuils River area. By coincidence (I assume) two of these guns once stood next to each other. One is Durr 279 which stands outside the Kuils River Municipal Offices and the other is Durr 399 which stands on Vlaggeberg in Kuils River on land which at various times formed part of the farm Saxenburg, the farm Skoonheid and now Stirling.

The connection between the two guns is that they once stood side by side on Vlaggeberg. 279, Dated around 1660 is one of the original signal guns placed on the mountains in the late 1600's and early 1700's. 399 Was a replacement gun when the trunnions on 279 were damaged and it could no longer be mounted in a carriage. The old stood alongside the new until 24 May 1972 when the owner of the farm "Skoonheid" donated the old gun to the Kuils River Municipality as an adornment for their offices.

The Dutch did not allocate their newest and best guns to the signal system, it was usually the old guns which were worn out internally or badly corroded externally but were still capable of firing a noisy blank shot. Some still do !

BATTLE OF BLOUBERG

On Saturday 10 January at The Castle of Good Hope CAOSA commemorated the Battle of Blouberg and the following is a report from the Acting Chairman, Martin Venter :-

The above event was a great success, we had a lot of visitors, did some cannon firing with models, 1/4 and 1/2 pdrs with the limited powder that we had available. Refresher training was done with four members and went well, the Chairman's gun (Model of a 6 pdr Napoleon gun) and the Gunners Board gun (Model of a 9 inch RML) were fired at least 5 times each and didn't disappoint us at all.

The AGM will take place on the 07 March 2015, the venue will be made known closer to the date as the Castle will be busy with renovations around the Gunner's Room at the time.

NOON GUN & WW II

With the disruption of non essential supplies during the Second World War (1939 – 1945) the local stock of electrical detonators for the Noon Gun was depleted. Faced with the unpopular possibility of discontinuing the Noon Gun, the gunners experimented with the available percussion detonators and developed a technique which involved hitting the detonator with a large hammer.

A small electrical bell was attached to the existing firing circuit and when this rang the gunner would strike the detonator with a firm glancing blow which would carry the hammer past the detonator by the time the main charge exploded. With the hammer out of the way the explosion would eject the detonator case to some unknown altitude. Several hammers were damaged by the gunners using this incorrect procedure and very few of the hundreds of ejected casings were ever found.

This improvised method of firing continued until electrical primers became available long after the end of the war.

THE HOME OF CAOSA

CAOSA has been privileged to occupy a room at The Castle of Good Hope as our HQ and as our postal address. This occupation was recently interrupted by a renovation project on that section of the castle. Several members, mostly gunners, moved all of CAOSA's prized possessions to Chavonne Battery for the duration of the 8 month long renovations.

UBIQUE

Gerry de Vries - Researcher