



NEWSLETTER No. 50 October 2013

An informative service to the muzzle loading cannon enthusiast

COMMITTEE POINTS

- Our past Chairman, Jacobus van Niekerk has been grilled and tested and reclassified unanimously by the Gunner's Board as a Senior Gunner.
- A letter of intent and some documentation has been passed to our Regional Representatives in the distant provinces to keep them abreast of developments.
- As a result of recent TV and radio coverage of cannon related events and members passing on newsletters to second and third parties CAOSA has had several enquiries regarding new membership.
- Erick Kellerman and Riaan Conradie have been working overtime on the CAOSA website to make it more logical and user friendly, the results are self evident – go look !
- Barbara George, treasurer to CAOSA since the last AGM, has consolidated our financial records and put us on the right path for a promising future. Having achieved what she set out to do she has now resigned as treasurer and from the Committee. We thank her for the good work and support that she gave us over the past months. The Committee has appointed Frederik Conradie as the caretaker Treasurer until the next AGM.

MILITARY TATTOO

The annual Military Tattoo at The Castle in Cape Town takes place in early November and CAOSA has again been invited to contribute by means of our participation in the event. Martin Venter (martinventerwp@yahoo.com) has again undertaken the leadership and advisory role but is now looking for CAOSA members who would like to participate.

BREECH PREPONDERANCE

The breech preponderance of a cannon is that downward force that the cascable exerts on the transom and quoin when the cannon is pivoted on its trunnions. This is the force that keeps the muzzle up and allows the elevation to be adjusted by means of wedges (quoins) under the base ring. I have seen no figures for the measurement of breech preponderance but it is probably proportional to the nationality, style and calibre of the gun.

I am aware, from anecdotal experience, that the breech preponderance for an unloaded 6 pdr Finbanker is somewhere in the region of 140 - 160 kg. Obviously this weight increases very slightly when powder and shot are loaded into the chamber.

Swivel guns are excluded from this principle as they are designed to almost balance on their trunnions with a slight preponderance even when unloaded and the tiller removed.

Another exception to the rule is early replicas/fakes, particularly of Indonesian origin, because these were disproportional copies of European cannon with dolphins and/or trunnions incorrectly placed. When a cannon is placed on a carriage and it falls on its muzzle, this is cause for suspicion. Durr no. 824 is such an example.

CANNON PROOF FIRINGS

West Battery in Hout Bay now has two additional 24 pdr and one 36 pdr gun in firing condition and proof fired for safety. Martin Venter, Jürg Zimmermann and I joined forces with Allan Delbridge and the Hout Bay gunners to put the guns through their paces. The 24 pdrs were each loaded with 1,600g of FFG powder and a bag of blasting grit in front of that. The heavy guns and concrete carriages recoiled slightly and in a split second the blasting grit did for the rusty bores what no man with a scraper and brush could do in a month.

The Hout Bay gunners, with Chris Everett leading, arranged all the repairs, carriages, cranes and accoutrements, Jürg recorded all the details for the certificates, Martin did the loading and firing while I cowered behind something big, heavy and solid.

The inaugural public firing of these guns took place on 20 September and was attended by representatives of all the companies and organisations who contributed time, effort and resources to the restoration project.

Capt Bester of the SAPS Explosives Unit also attended and he made some interesting observations regarding gunner procedures and safety.

Hout Bay now has a few more feathers in their hat.

Erick Kellerman was requested to proof fire the four ¼ pdrs and one ½ pdr of “Conradie Battery”. This was undertaken near the Bloemendal Restaurant on a remote mountain top between Durbanville and Bothasig. All guns were loaded with a double charge of FFG powder, a grass wad and a bag of sand. In each case this resulted in the guns, which were laying flat on the ground, recoiling by approximately their own length and Frikkie and Riaan Conradie had smiles that could not be erased with dynamite.

CARRIAGE PARTS

THE BED - In 1617 the Tower inventory of Ordnance listed “beds” as being the carriages for “Great Ordnance”, for others as “Ship Bedds” and “Field Bedds”. It appears that this was the term used for complete gun carriages until 1726 when the term “carriage” was adopted. The term “bed” then referred to the large block of wood on which the quoins were placed to set the elevation. On garrison and ships carriages the bed was a long heavy beam of wood which pivoted on the middle through bolt and rested on the rear axletree and supported the quoins. In the late 1800’s mortars were still mounted on beds in the form of a large block of wood which was hollowed out sufficiently to receive the breech and trunnion of the mortar at a 45° elevation.

ADDITIONS TO THE DURR RECORD

A Swedish cannon was recently unearthed in Orange Street Cape Town, it appears to be a 12 or 18 pounder. Once it has been cleaned we will get a chance to measure, identify and record it as Durr number 980. We will also make our input as to where it should be displayed.

Two short large calibre cannon (Durr no's. 981 & 982) were unearthed at a building site in Bree Street, Cape Town. One appears to be a Swedish “merchants” gun and the other could be a howitzer – time and a lot of cleaning will tell.

OVERSEAS VISITORS

On 07 September a group of Australian black powder shooters, in SA to participate in the Black Powder Championships, led by Peter Burgess visited the Castle and fired the ½ pounder cannon. I led them through the incomplete displays in the CAOSA Office and enjoyed coffee and exchanged humorous black powder anecdotes with them at the restaurant. A fair dinkum bunch of mates !

HERITAGE DAY 24 SEPTEMBER

There were public firings at several sites on Heritage Day as usual. Two shots by the SA Army before large crowds at The Castle and the 9 inch RML fired in Simon's Town. One of the most significant firings was the inaugural public firing of the 6 pdr gun (Durr 15) at the Brackenfell Nature Reserve, the first firing at this site since 1806 when the original gun called the Burghers to the Battle of Blouberg. This gun was donated to the reserve by the Tygerberg Reserve when they received their original 12 pdr gun back from the Parow Municipal Offices. Jürg, Frikkie and Riaan organised the event, Frikkie explained the functioning of the gun and tools, Riaan was the gunner and loader and he instructed Mr Dirk Morkel, the owner of Bellevue Estate, who fired the gun. The crowd of around 1,000 (yes - one thousand) spectators were visibly and audibly impressed by the shot.

The CAOSA committee are not aware of Heritage Day being celebrated in other provinces.

NEW MEMBERS

Eddie Heimann has joined CAOSA and will be involved mostly with the Tygerberg guns.

Ian Goddard joined just in time to make it in to the newsletter.

Ian is from Fish Hoek and will be introduced by Martin to the guns in and around Simon's Town.

Welcome on board Eddie and Ian.

CAOSA WEBSITE

Readers are advised that upcoming events are publicised on our website at

www.caosa.org.za

UBIQUE

Gerry de Vries Chairman / Researcher