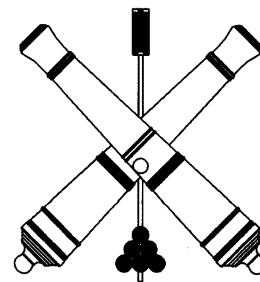


THE CANNON ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

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NEWSLETTER No. 29 - August 2008

A service to the muzzle loading cannon enthusiast

COMPUTER CATASTROPHE

It has always pleased me that I was able to blame my computer for any errors and delays, that is, until it suffered from some fatal affliction. My eldest son bought his dad a new computer and dad had to transfer more than a thousand e-mail addresses manually in order to generate the CAOSA and newsletter mail groups. I am aware that I made errors in that I have lost people, added people from some unknown source and probably duplicated some readers. If something is wrong, please complain to me, but in the gentlest of terms.

MORTAR RANGES

Many must have wondered how the range was varied in a mortar with fixed elevation of 45° and at the same time the fuze set to explode at the correct time of flight. I have recently obtained a rather tatty copy of "The Artillerist's Manual and British Soldier's Compendium" dated 1857 by Major Griffiths of the Royal Artillery. From page 13 I quote :-

"For the 13 inch mortar, to the range in yards add again half the range and multiply the sum by 0,3 for the required powder charge in ounces".

"For the 5 ½ inch (Royal) mortar, to the range in yards add 150 and multiply the sum by 0,08 for the powder charge in ounces".

There are similar formulae for each calibre of mortar.

Now it's just a case of getting the fuze timing sorted out!

ERRATA & CORRECTIONS

In our Safety Manual under the heading "Gunpowder" I have stated that gunpowder consisted of 75% saltpetre, 15% sulphur and 10% charcoal, this is incorrect, it should be 15% charcoal and 10% sulphur. This misleading information may inadvertently have saved some readers from blowing their heads off, this safety precaution was completely unintentional.

In newsletter No. 28, paragraph 1, Gribeauval was seconded to the Austrian Artillery from 1757 until 1762, and not until his death as I wrote. As Richard Tomlinson correctly stated, "Gribeauval would have had to do his most significant work after his death".

NOISE, FLAME AND SMOKE

Monday 16 June was Youth Day in South Africa and the Tygerberg Nature Reserve decided to have a very public celebration of our nation's youth. All assets were brought to bear, the view from the mountain top, an excellent youth choir, a piper who stirred the demon in us, a short but inspirational address by our wounded local MP Denise Robinson, lunch parcels, the good

company of Jurg Zimmerman, who is one of our ageing fuzzy old gunners with a Swiss accent, and a few cannon which just happened to be visiting the Tygerberg 6 pdr gun at the time. Ten shots were fired with a ¼ pdr, a ½ pdr, a 7 pdr RML and the reserve's own 6 pdr by MJ de Wit, Leon de Vries, Martin Venter, Albert van der Merwe, Ryk de Wit and Alf Parris. A good time was had by all 150 guests who attended.

The twice monthly firings (second and fourth Saturdays) at De Grendel Wine Estate have progressed as planned and have provided a useful training venue.

The regular noon firings at Chavonne's Battery on the first Sunday of the month began on 03 August. Jurg Zimmerman, in period uniform, and Erick Kellerman performed the deed before about 100 spectators when they fired Chavonne's own 2 pounder. The firing was relatively complex with a crowd behind and to one side, a blind corner to the other side, photographers all over the place and boats crossing in front. It was pleasing to note that they handled the event impeccably all on their own.

GUNNER TRAINING

The Committee has decided, in fairness to all, that the members involved with the firing of cannon should bear the costs of their training and subsequent activities without lumbering the wider spectrum of members with the costs involved.

To this end a Gunner's Board, administratively subordinate to the Committee, has been formed to administer and regulate all activities and documentation relating to the safe firing of ML cannon. The Board was formed by careful selection and appointment of several of the most senior, knowledgeable and experienced gunners.

CAOSA finds itself in a fortunate position in the pool of knowledge and experience that it has available in this unique field of historical re-enactment.

The main objectives of the Board are :-

- To ensure compliance with all legal requirements.
- To ensure the highest possible standards of safety for guns, gunners and the public.
- To strive for such excellence as would enable CAOSA, through the standards maintained by the Board, to be accredited by the SAPS.

The Board will, within parameters set by the Committee, be defining its own functions, responsibilities and level of authority for presentation to, and ratification by the Committee.

At a work session it was decided, subject to ratification, that gunners would be graded as follows:-

- a. Trainee Gunner
- b. Assistant Gunner
- c. Gunner
- d. Senior Gunner
- e. Chief Gunner, and
- f. Master Gunner.

The training and experience requirements for each level and how this will be gauged have yet to be defined, as has the authority attached to each level.

DURR RECORD

The Durr record of cannons in SA has grown to 936 guns. Two Finbankers and what appears to be a small brass home made gun are at the Army Base in Langebaan. I have photos but no dimensions as yet.

FUTURE EVENTS

There are several cannon activities which have become a regular feature of life at the Cape. De Grendel Wine Estate are continuing with noon firings on the second and fourth Saturdays of every month and Chavonne Battery in the Clock tower Precinct of the V&A Waterfront is now firing at noon on the first Sunday of the month. The Castle in Cape Town fire their ½ pounder in the courtyard at noon daily and then there is the Grandfather of them all, the Noon Gun at Lion Battery at approximately 12h00 daily, except for Sundays and some public holidays.

CAOSA will be firing an eight gun salute to the Cape Town Community Chest for the commemoration of their 80th year of sterling service to the community. This will take place at Lion Battery on 11 September 2008, time still to be determined.

NEWS FROM HOUT BAY - By Dave Cowley (seven functional 18 pdrs and a 24 pdr)

Hout Bay's East Fort gunners are getting excited about their new 1806 uniforms soon to be revealed to all. It's been several years since Gerry helped us to get the show on the road and we suspect that at long last all the hard work on the 'World's oldest working battery of original guns' is getting us somewhere.

We have at last got some serious interest from the authorities and hope that our expectations will at last be met by way of recognition.

We are proud and most grateful that CAOSA members have supported us in 'our time of need' and doubtless will be calling on members again.

In future, one of our key principles will be an authentic look whilst in the public eye hence we will be trying to meticulously adhere to the 1806 Batavian Republic Artillery uniform dress and avoid 'mixing' the authentic look with non uniformed gunners. Its quite a financial undertaking for our men but we are happy at this stage that nine of the guys have 'bought in'. We will be looking for uniformed support from CAOSA members in due course.

Up and coming firings will be Sat 9th Aug CGA's 149th Birthday, Fri 15th Aug India's National Day (Private firing), 20th Sept HB Cannon Race, 24th Sept Heritage Day.

Please contact us if you would like to attend.

Dave Cowley dcowley@zsd.co.za Tel. (021) 790 2008

NEWS FROM BLOEMFONTEIN, PRETORIA AND THE EASTERN CAPE

Not a peep, not a bang, no smoke and no bad smell, no news at all ?

Gerry de Vries
Secretary to CAOSA