



NEWSLETTER No. 8 - JULY 2003

A free service to the muzzle loading enthusiast

GUN 599 (BLOEMFONTEIN) STOLEN

The 2½ pdr iron gun from the Fort in Bloemfontein was stolen on or about 12 April while it was making smoke and noise at the Witblitz (moonshine) Festival in Philippolis. Please be on the lookout for it.

The theft had an odd twist. The gun was stolen at the same time as the gunade (457) was being moved from Cape Town to Pretoria. The trucking company, hearing about the theft of the gun, put two and two together and came up with five. The Bloemfontein police were on the lookout for me and the truck when Nico Fourie advised them that that was another gun. Thanks Nico, jail is not one of my favourite haunts.

GUN 741 (PORT ELIZABETH) IDENTIFIED

This strange looking 18 pdr gun which resembles a gunade has been identified as a commercial, or "merchants" replica of William Congreve's 1813 design for a 24 pdr for the Royal Navy. It looks like a long carronade, and is in fact an outsized gunade, it has no muzzle cup or chamber and has trunnions as opposed to a mounting loop. The commercial sector very quickly copied any Board of Ordnance patterns in order to compete in the lucrative civilian market for trading ships. The gun was probably cast in about 1815 - 1820.

COURSE FOR GUNNERS

At the request of the Hout Bay Heritage Society I developed a course for the training of gunners. This was required to replace the late Peter Gibb, the past gunner who died in a motor accident, and who had done so much for the benefit of guns and gunnery in Hout Bay.

The course on 19 March was attended by 19 prospective gunners, most from Hout Bay, five from the Black Powder Club, one from the Muizenberg Heritage Society and two SAPS members.

The morning was spent on theory and covered the subjects: types of guns, carriages, ammunition, equipment, the functions and responsibilities of the gunner, gunpowder, the legal requirements and, above all, the safety of the public.

The afternoon was spent learning, among other generalities, how to load, prime and fire a gun safely. The practical elements were made more interesting by members of the group acting as inquisitive onlookers and by a force 2 gale which precipitated some improvisations.

This course has now been added to the list of services that we provide. The 23 page course notes are available from me at R50.00 all inc. or in exchange for 30 local postage stamps. I have no stock of the notes, but they will be printed on demand.

CLAUDE FREMY - BELL AND GUNFOUNDER

Claude Fremy was born in 1646 in Winterswijk, a small town on the Dutch border with Germany. When exactly he began his apprenticeship at the foundry in Karthuizerstraat in Amsterdam is not known, but he was appointed as the Master Gunfounder of that foundry in 1681. He cast several guns for the Amsterdam chapter of the VOC and probably others for the Amsterdam Admiralty.

Fremy marked his guns "C. FREMY : ME : F : A : LODAMI : Ao 1685" or

CLAUDY · FREMY · ME · FECIT · AMSTELODAMI · 1695.

Guns 196 and 197 in the Cape Town Maritime Museum were cast by Fremy in 1685 and the bell in the tower at the Castle was cast by Fremy in 1697.

Claude Fremy died on 3 January 1699.

ML GUNS USED INLAND

I have, with a certain amount of prodding by MC Heunis, decided to list in the Durr Record some guns which I have not seen, and a few guns of which the present whereabouts is not known. These are ML guns which were used in local battles, from Blood River in 1838 to the Boer War ending in 1901. These are pieces for which a reasonably credible description exists, some markings are known, and photographs exist of some of them.

My thinking is that if I do not record what we already know of these historic pieces, then how are we going to recognise them if/when we find them.

The most famous SA gun, "Grietjie" or "Ou Griet" of Blood River fame is already recorded as number 700 and is at the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria.

Provisional numbers are allocated to the following guns which were reported on in detail by the late Maj DD Hall.

Gun 781 is a bronze 1 pdr Portuguese gun which was given to Cmdt Gen. Potgieter by the Governor of Mozambique in 1850. The gun was named "Agoesta" and was at the old Boom Street Museum in c.1902.

Gun 782 is a 4 pdr English iron carronade with the word "SOLID" on the right trunnion. This gun was also at Boom Street and is very similar to gun 700. This gun does not have the piece missing from the muzzle, which "Grietjie" has, and must thus be her twin.

Gun 783 is a 2 pdr English gun on an iron carriage made in the form of the Union Jack. This piece was also at Boom Street. See page 89 of ML Cannons of SA.

Gun 784 is an English 6 pdr gunade by BP & Co, weight 5 - 3 - 8 recorded also at Boom Street. This piece is very similar to the gunade used at Rustenburg in 1881.

Gun 785 is another 2 pdr iron gun which was at Boom Street in c.1902.

The trick now is to ensure that these guns have not already been recorded elsewhere, and to attempt to tie each gun in with photographs of guns in use before and during the Boer War.

MORE ON GUN MARKINGS

The simplistic explanation of some gun markings in our book has led to some confusion and several enquiries. It must be remembered that over the centuries when ML cannon were in use there were generations of gunfounders in many countries and some generations of guns became obsolete, as did the markings used by specific foundries. It was inevitable that at some time a founder was going to use the same, or a very similar marking to that which had been used a century earlier.

When identifying a marking, "F" or "B" or any other marking on a trunnion end, it is essential that the country of origin and approximate age of the gun be identified by the style and proportions of the gun, before the marking can be confidently attributed to a specific gunfounder or foundry.

As an example, an "F" on the trunnion end of an 18th century Swedish gun can reasonably be attributed to the Finspång foundry, whereas a very similar "F" on an English gunade would be the markings of Fawcett Preston & Co in England. An "L" on a trunnion end could signify the Lauvrig Works in Norway or a French gun with the "L" for one of the Louis.

Another point of confusion is the ancient form of letters. An "I" could, and often does, signify a "J" and a "V" was the easier manner of chiselling out a "U". Well, nobody said it was simple!

NEW MILITARY MUSEUM

I have mentioned before that many guns are better preserved in private collections and museums than they are in some state run museums. One such example is a Military Museum which has been established by Jack and Heather Seale at their Hartebeespoort Snake and Animal Park.

Jack has collected several rare artillery pieces, some of which were rescued from vanishing under pitiful conditions, and they have restored them to display condition. The collection includes 7 pdr RMLs on mountain carriages, 2½ inch "Screw Guns", 12 and 15 pdrs and a magnificent collection of bronze guns. He also has a few pieces which I have been unable to identify (YET).

The museum is well worth a visit.

2

CANISTER or CASE SHOT FOR SBML PIECES

Since man began propelling stones at his enemy by discharging gunpowder behind the projectiles in a closed tube, there has been some form of multi-projectile ammunition. Grape shot was made of 12 to 30 fairly large round shot tied in a bag, canister, or case was made of finer and more numerous shot for use against men and horses. The mentions of case, or its forerunner, in official English documents reads as follows, but it needs to be noted that all European countries very quickly copied each other and the trends would have been applicable across borders and seas.

YEAR	DESCRIPTION
1568	- <i>Dice Shotte of yron, leade or stones.</i>
1589	- <i>Haileshotte containing burres of iron.</i>
1600	- <i>Dise shott of iron in square forme.</i>
	and <i>Burr or haileshotte of fragments of iron rough and ragged.</i>
1603	- <i>Cases filled with square shott</i>
1620	- <i>Langrell shotte and "Bace and Burr".</i>
1635	- <i>Tynn cases fill'd with musquette shotte.</i>
	and <i>Tynn cases fill'd with iron pestles.</i>
1729	- <i>Hail Shot being cases filled with stones, slugs and bits of iron.</i>
1779	- <i>Tin-case shot - a great quantity of iron balls in a tin box.</i>

All subsequent listings and communications refer to either *case shot* or *canister shot*.

It appears that by 1779 the general formula for case shot had been established and lasted for the next century. The firing of square, "rough and ragged" and scrap iron items which had seriously shortened the lives of many bronze guns, had ceased. Neatly packed smooth round shot in a well formed metal cylinder performed better than scrap, and did not damage the bores.

Case shot was primarily used in field guns by land forces to defend their position from cavalry and infantry attack. The effective range was very short and most artillery instructions indicate that case shot should not be used at a range greater than 300 yards.

A point of South African interest occurred at the Battle of Blood River in 1838 where the gunners filled peppermint tins with rifle and pistol lead shot, scrap pieces of iron, including the legs of cast iron cooking pots, to make their own case shot. Now we know why they suspended the pots over their cooking fires!

Newsletter No.9 will contain an article on the effectiveness of case shot.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

I sit here on odd occasions and an idea comes to mind on a subject that has not been adequately covered, either in the book or in the past newsletters. I then research the subject and begin to poke a finger at the keyboard. How about some of the readers suggesting a subject, there must be unanswered questions out there. I need not publish the question, nor the name of who posed it. I just need the question.

Newsletter No. 7 (readership 238) was partially sponsored by Deon Visser of Valhalla and Newsletter No. 8 was partially sponsored by Bobby Cheetham of Port Elizabeth. Thanks guys! I have also been receiving requests for back issues of the newsletter, an encouraging sign.