

MUZZLE LOADING CANNON OF SOUTH AFRICA

A Guide For The Enthusiast

NEWSLETTER No. 1 - November 2001

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In response to many requests for additional information, or an update of the guns located and recorded or for a progress report on the restoration projects, we have decided to provide our supporters with an occasional newsletter. This has been made possible by the minor funds and stationary remaining from our research sponsorship from DURR ESTATES.

Some letters are sent by e-mail and others by means of the old R1.30 snail mail. We realise that not everybody has e-mail, but it is our cheapest and easiest method of distribution. If you receive this by post, and have an e-mail address, please let us know at noongun@mweb.co.za

DURR GUN RECORD UPDATE

Gun 200 in the Cape Town Docks was recently removed to allow the development of Chavonne's Battery. The markings are now visible and we can record the gun as having been cast at Stavsjo (VB) in Sweden in 1782. The final resting place for this gun has not yet been decided.

Guns 334,335 & 336 have been removed from the Suikerbossie Restaurant in Hout Bay by the owner. Their present whereabouts is not known.

Guns 32, 244 and 245 have been removed from Lion Battery and mounted at Chavonne's Battery behind the Clock Tower at the V&A Waterfront.

Guns 724 and 725 near the Hartebeespoort Dam (page 120) have now been correctly identified as English 7pdr RML Mountain guns cast in 1879 and 1880. We are awaiting more detail from the owner.

RESTORATION 1

We have, at the request of the Hout Bay Heritage Society, fully restored and mounted one 18 pdr gun (Durr 322) at East Fort in Hout Bay. All eight wooden carriages at the fort were destroyed in the great Hout Bay fire, and the Heritage Society is endeavouring to have all the guns re-mounted.

We were requested to fire the gun as a celebration of the completion of the first, and most important step in the restoration. The residents of Hout Bay, who were not present at the firing, are now completing their course of valiums and sanatogen. The echoes among the mountains were impressive.

It is the intention of the Heritage Society to fire the gun at infrequent and appropriate occasions. A suitable "Gunner" has been identified in that republic and he is presently under training and obtaining the required legal permits.

RESTORATION 2

The BOE Bank, The V&A Waterfront and Gabri  l Fagan Architects are doing a magnificent job with the restoration of Chavonne's Battery near the old Clock Tower in the harbour. Five guns have been returned to the battery, two are displayed inside and three are mounted on garrison carriages on the restored section of the battery.

The unrestored section of the battery is preserved under the new BOE building and will be open to the public by year end. Several models and replica pieces of equipment will depict activities at the battery as it was in it's prime. The pick of the models is a 13 inch mortar as used by the Dutch in the late 18th century. This unique piece was made by Zane Palmer in Port Elizabeth.(See <http://www.palmersarmoury.co.za>).

The two distinct concepts of "preservation" and "restoration" led to some interesting debates.

CANNONS AND THE LAW

Several readers have enquired about the legality of owning a non-functional antique cannon. We will obtain greater clarity on this subject in time, but the law as promulgated by Government Gazette is quite clear on certain aspects.

1. It is an offence to remove any object from an historical site or wreck without written permission from SAHRA (previously known as the National Monuments Council).
2. It is an offence to remove a heritage item from the country, or to dispose of such an item without written permission from SAHRA.

The right of private ownership is recognised and respected by SAHRA, it is the improper removal, destruction or disposal of these items which they seek to prevent. However legal a transaction may be, it is recommended that SAHRA be consulted prior to transferring an old cannon from one position to another.