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An informative service to the muzzle loading cannon enthusiast

THE GUN SALUTE

The often asked questions regarding the origin and nature of a gun salute can now be answered thanks to a document passed to me by Harry Croome.

The discharge of guns, originally with live ammunition, was meant to express a voluntary form of defencelessness and that the unit or ship was at the mercy of the dignitary being honoured, in much the same way that the handshake held the sword hand to indicate that no aggression was intended.

It appears that during the early 1600's the tradition was that a ship would fire seven guns as a salute and that the shore battery would fire three shots for each shot fired by the ship, resulting in a 21 gun reply. The reason for the seven guns from the ship stemmed from the composition of a shore battery which, in those days, was six field guns and a howitzer and one shot was fired from each.

The gun salute was formalised in 1912 and there is a very strict protocol that must be followed. A salute may never be more than 21 guns and then only for Royal personages, Heads of State and The Pope. There are salutes of less guns for Senior Military Officers and state officials. The firings conducted by CAOSA are merely celebrations of notable events and must never be regarded as a salute.

One minor mishap with firing occurred in Cape Town on 31 December 1704 when it was tradition that ships fired at midnight to welcome the New Year. One of the live rounds fired by the French ship *HIRONDELLE* landed near the Castle. The Governor had the ball ceremoniously handed back to the Captain of the ship, the accompanying message was probably quite colourful.

Governor MP de Chavonne (1714 – 1724) was keen on the traditional salutes and always insisted that the correct protocol was followed. When the English ship *MARLBOROUGH* anchored in the bay without firing the customary salute de Chavonnes sent an ultimatum to the ship, "Salute or be driven from the bay by gunfire". The Captain sent a senior messenger to beg the Governor that they be excused the ceremony as they had a live elephant on board.

AMSTERDAM GUNFOUNDERS

The first bell and gun foundry in Amsterdam was established at the Keizersgracht / Molenpad in C.1599 with Cornelis van Ammelroy as the Head Founder and his guns were designed in Utrecht Foot (12 * 26.828 mm). He was followed by Gerard Koster 1 who designed his guns in Mechelen foot (12 * 23.343 mm) and ruled the foundry between 1606 and 1618. Koster was

followed by Jan Aelten van Meurs 1619 – 1623 and he in turn was followed by the brothers François and Pieter Hemony.

The second foundry was established on the corner of Karthuizerstraat and Baangraght in 1625 with Assuerus Koster 1 (son of Gerard) as the first gunfounder until C.1652. He was followed by his son Gerard II in 1654 and by Mamertus Frémy for a brief period and then his son Claude Frémy in 1681. Claude Frémy designed his guns in Amsterdam foot (12 * 25.739 mm). The foundry was run jointly by Claes Noorden and Jan Albert de Grave who designed their guns in Rhineland foot (12 * 26.162mm) from 1699 to 1713 when Claes Noorden retired and Jan Albert de Grave took over until 1729. Cyprianus Crans (Janzoon – son of Jan Crans) managed the foundry from 1734 until 1755 when Pieter Seest succeeded him until 1781. Pieter's sons Christiaan and J (Jan?) Seest followed their father until 1792.

It is interesting to note that there are guns from most of these gun founders in South Africa today whereas many of their guns that remained in Europe were sent to scrap merchants during the metal shortages of WWI and WWII.

Many experts have stated that Carronades were never cast in bronze, but in South Africa we have five bronze 12 pounder Carronades cast by Christiaan Seest at the Amsterdam foundry in 1804 bearing the name of the Batavian Republic, a situation probably unique in the world.

CAOSA SITUATION

My recent resignation as Chairman of CAOSA may have led to some concern regarding the health and future of the association. I thank all those who 'phoned, visited or e-mailed messages of commiseration, rest assured that I am neither suicidal nor dejected over the matter and nor do I harbour any ill feelings toward anybody. I have great faith in the present Committee under the leadership of the Vice Chairman, Martin Venter and I believe that they will carry CAOSA forward at least to the next AGM in March 2015 when elections will take place.

One of the problems that CAOSA is experiencing is that many of our most capable members are not willing to hold office in the prevailing environment where there is a perceived lack of cohesion and camaraderie.

My departure from the Committee, and only from the Committee, leaves a hole like the one left when you scoop a cup of water out of a full bucket – none! -- the hole is immediately filled and the level in the bucket just drops by a fraction. I will remain a member of CAOSA until I face the Grim Reaper and his firing squad.

BIG CANNON DAY

CAOSA is planning a large cannon firing event at Bloemendal on 25 October. The co-ordinator is again Erick Kellerman, prepare to bring-and-fire and to learn a lot. More detailed information will be promulgated either by Erick or by the Secretary.

UBIQUE

Gerry de Vries : Researcher