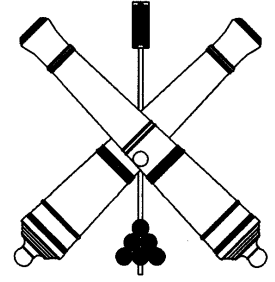


THE CANNON ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

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NEWSLETTER No. 24 - October 2007

A service to the muzzle loading cannon enthusiast

SALE OF SENTINEL CANNONS

I am pleased to report that all twelve of the Sentinel guns were sold to buyers in SA, and all but two are in the Western Cape. Three are going to historical sites, Groote Post, Hessewakloof and possibly on top of Signal Hill. The VOC bronze 6 pdr was bought by one of our members who is thinking of moving to Cape Town, what a profound idea !

COASA EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

At an extraordinary meeting held at De Grendel wine farm on 25 August and attended by 12 members, Jacobus van Niekerk was elected Chairman and Jurg Zimmerman was elected as the fifth member of the CAOSA Committee. At this meeting the rough Constitution was, after a few additions, alterations and altercations, accepted in principle for distribution to all members.

This will become the "Interim Constitution" and will suffice until the next AGM. In terms of this constitution there will be several levels of membership which will cater for all types of members. Gunners who want to be trained, certified and graded will have to be individual full members. Those historians who study the subject, but do not wish to be gunners can opt for the associate level while there are levels which cater for corporate, interested observers, donors and those who wish only to receive the newsletters.

The CAOSA organisational structure will be based on four documents; the Constitution, the safety/training manual, a code of conduct and an hierarchical seniority structure based on defined gunner competencies. The administrative structure of CAOSA (the committee) will be totally divorced from the operational structure (gunners) as a highly qualified office bearer may not wish to be a gunner at all.

We naturally took advantage of the excellent De Grendel facilities and hospitality and can recommend a visit to their tasting room. You can e-mail mia@degrendel.co.za

THE GUNNERS BOX

THE THOUGHT - You cannot take pride in what you are doing, nor do you appear efficient if you are running around in front of spectators borrowing pieces of minor equipment.

Any gunner of note should have a personal red wooden or plastic box containing a set of the smaller equipments required to serve a gun. This removes the need for running around and borrowing tools and gives the gunner a set which is ready at hand, and familiar to him in terms of content and placement.

This box should be labelled "EXPLOSIVES" on all sides and have compartments for at least three charges for the gun being served. Even in the case of the gunner not being in possession of a black powder permit, it allows the Senior Gunner to distribute, on site, charges to each gun which can be safely stored near the gun until used.

The box should also contain a vent pricker, a small mirror for bore inspection, an apron of lead to cover the vent, a knife or scissors, a cigarette lighter or matches which are removed to a pocket before any gunpowder is stored in the box, and a few small 10ml plastic bottles for priming powder. The plastic bottles should be colour coded to designate coarser powder for the vent and finer powder for the pan.

The box should also contain a few long "church warden" pipe cleaners for drying the vent in the event of a very wet sponging, a common cause of misfires, and a cloth for wiping the inevitable black mess off one's hands.

Ideally the gunner would have a personal linstock which is in three or four parts which can be disassembled and stored in the box, and a few 400mm lengths of slow match stored in an air tight container.

Handy additions would be a small tube of black silicone sealant for sealing the vent on completion of a shoot, a small note book and pencil and a check list of the contents fixed into the lid of the box..

RECENT FIRINGS

It is very pleasing to see our more experienced gunners step into the breach and assist with firings at the different venues which do not have a resident gunner.

The two 4 pdr gunnades which belong to De Grendel Wines in Cape Town (Sir David Graaff) have been cleaned, serviced and proof fired. They have no intention of training a gunner, but will call on CAOSA members to assist in the event of such a requirement. The guns were fired by Jurg Zimmerman and Neville Potgieter twice on 15 and twice on 16 September for the Season of Savignon festivities.

Hout Bay East Battery was in action again on 29 August with an international shoot to honour the visiting NATO Fleet who are on an around-Africa diplomatic tour. The six 18 pdr guns were manned by officers and sailors off the Dutch, Danish, French, Canadian, Portuguese and USA ships under the supervision of the Hout Bay gunners and assisted by Ian van Oordt, Alf Parris and Gerry de Vries Snr. After a brief stint of training they fired six guns in sequence, waited for 10 minutes, reloaded and a second pair of gunners did the same again. All 24 participating gunners then drank a toast to the guns of oldest working gun battery in the world and were each handed their passports as honorary citizens of the Republic of Hout Bay.

On Saturday 01 September Martin Venter and John Newton fired the 6 pdr at False Bay Yacht Club in Simon's Town to launch the new sailing season. Ian van Oordt fired the FBYC gun for them again in the rain on 22 September.

The 6 pdr on Paarl Rock was fired on 21 September by Jacobus van Niekerk, on 22, 23 September by Gerry de Vries, and on 24 September by Leon de Vries in support of their four day festivities over Heritage Day. The firings were sponsored by Chas Everitt, the renowned property brokers.

Jurg and Neville fired the Tygerberg Reserve 6 pdr at noon on Heritage Day before a large crowd of delighted visitors.

The firings over the Heritage Day weekend stretched our resources in terms of BP permit carrying gunners to the limit, however we managed to stay within the law.

RESEARCH TOPIC

Ian van Oordt and Theodore Yach, new member No. 66, want to study and try to classify in some way the long thin Indonesian Lantakas. Very little is known about these attractive items other than rumour, stories, assumptions and some photos. If you have any credible information, or you suspect that you know someone who does, please let us know. When you have nothing, every little helps.

CANNONS AND THE LAW

As far as I can gather from various communications the muzzle loading cannons have been included in the act under the same heading as the muskets and other ML single shot side arms. The indication is that a licence is not required to own a ML cannon, but if the gun is going to be fired the owner/gunner must have a Black Powder Permit and some form of proficiency certificate from an accredited organisation.

The nature of the proficiency certificate and the identification of the accredited organisation have yet to be defined. CAOSA, having the most comprehensive body of information and expertise on the subject, will probably offer our services to the SAPS.

The Act seems to make no distinction between an original cannon, a replica cannon, a functional model cannon and a non-working display model. The legality of manufacturing a display model, a working model or a full sized replica has not yet been addressed. However, as long as we continue our activities responsibly and safely there appears to be no reason for more intense official attention.

“UBIQUÉ”

Gerry de Vries : Secretary to CAOSA