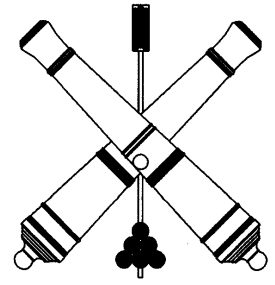


THE CANNON ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

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A service to the muzzle loading cannon enthusiast

OPENING OF CHAVONNE'S BATTERY

The Cape Town historical, military and tourism communities were very pleased to note the opening of Chavonne's Battery in the V & A Waterfront to the public. The new "Curator" is Willem Steenkamp assisted by his daughter in law.

Four members of the Cape Town Black Powder Club, dressed in their old Cape finery complete with feathers in their hats launched the proceedings by firing a timed volley with their old muskets. This was followed by three cannon shots timed fifteen seconds apart. Willem, also dressed in a uniform of C.1800, then made an uncharacteristically short but sharp speech which the Musketeers applauded with another volley. This was followed by a formal toast which CAOSA saluted with another three gun rippled volley. On learning that they would not be participating in the toast all three cannon were reloaded and the gunners had the idea of taking aim at the battery. Fortunately common sense prevailed and the gunners eased the tension by simply firing all three guns simultaneously. A noisy but successful day. Only at Chavonne's Battery can the visitor see a selection of cannon, a collection of ammunition and loading equipment, an array of models depicting battery life and a glimpse into forgotten aspects of life at the Cape all under one roof. And it is air conditioned to boot !

BRONZE DUTCH CARRONADES

There are five 12 pounder bronze carronades in South Africa, Durr 555, 564, 569, 595 and 777. These are true carronades in that they have a mounting loop in place of trunnions, a muzzle cup, a reduced diameter chamber and meet all the proportional criteria for a carronade.

The inscription within a folded band on the first reinforce reads "MARINE DER BETAAVSCHE REPUBLIEK" and the founder "C. SEEST AMST. Ao 1804" Christiaan and I. (Jan) Seest were the sons of Pieter Seest who was the Foreman and later Director of the gun and bell foundry in Amsterdam from 1755 – 1781. Christiaan and his brother must have taken over some duties at the foundry as they are known to have cast six church bells between 1781 and 1792, but no guns had been found bearing their names until these five were located. Christiaan Seest left Amsterdam for the Dutch East Indies in 1816 and very little is known of his later activities.

The five carronades were salvaged off the Royal Dutch Corvette ZEEPAARD (Capt. Reynes) which was wrecked off Sardinia Bay in South Africa on 07 May 1823.

MEN WHO INFLUENCED THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARTILLERY

Jean-Florent de Vallière (1669 – 1759) De Vallière was a French artillery officer tasked with bringing order to the chaotic variety of guns, ammunition and equipment then being used by the French land forces. There was very little in the way of standardization and guns of the same

calibre made by different manufacturers could often not use the available ammunition made by a second manufacturer. Vallière studied the expected requirements in terms of siege, field and garrison artillery and prescribed only five calibres of gun, 24, 16, 12, 8 and 4 pounders. In addition he defined the 8 and the 12 inch mortars for land use. He also established the dimensions of the guns and set tolerances for the ammunition.

Vallière's work resulted in the publication of the first French artillery standard in the Royal Ordinance of 07 October 1732. The Vallière guns soon proved too large, heavy and cumbersome for mobile field artillery, but this system was fiercely defended by his son Joseph-Florent de Vallière until it was radically modified by Jean-Baptiste Gribeauval in C.1763.

ML GUNS IN USE DURING THE BOER WAR

Modern breech loading cannon made their first appearance in the 1860's with several inventors producing examples for demonstration to the armed forces. Some, like the Armstrong and the Whitworth patterns were adopted and went into production, but several catastrophic breech failures resulted in them being withdrawn from service. The rifled muzzle loading (RML) gun became the standard for five or six years before a satisfactory breech mechanism was invented. It was thus from the 1870's that BL guns were introduced in greater numbers, but the old RML guns were still in service up to and including the Boer War 1899 – 1902.

The most prolific RML's used by both sides of the war were the Armstrong 7 pdr, the 2 ½ inch "Screw Gun" and the few Krupp RMLs that the Boers had. On the English side most RMLs were used during the sieges of Kimberley and Mafeking, as the main armament on armoured trains and by the Town Guards. Both sides made use of guns captured from the other.

For detailed information on the Boer War RMLs contact MC Heunis of the Orange Free State Artillery Corps at kruppgun@yahoo.co.uk.

NO SECOND CLASS MEMBERS

CAOSA now has 87 members and the association is growing steadily. The Committee has discussed and registered deep concern about the possible isolation of members who live outside of the major centres where most activity takes place. The discussion extended to overseas members and what the interest and involvement of all individual local members was. It was noted that somewhere around 25% of members were mainly interested in being gunners and firing cannons at various public events and that about 20% of members were mainly interested in model cannons. An unknown percentage were primarily interested in the preservation of our heritage as represented by the old cannons and yet another undefined group were only interested in the history in which the guns participated.

When all of the above are summed, and the fact is taken into account that many members are interested in more than one aspect of cannons, then one cannot help feeling that there is a group of members who have not been recognised. This undefined group consists of members who neither participate in the activities, nor place any demands on CAOSA, yet they remain loyal members. These are the supporters, the believers in the CAOSA objectives, the silent ones who, by their membership and contributions, make many things possible.

One of our Senior Gunners was heard saying, "There are only two types, those who are members and those who are not".

You have been formally recognised and we do appreciate your support !

NAVY FESTIVAL 14 – 16 MARCH 2008

CAOSA participated in the Navy Festival for the fourth time this year. We were allocated a different position in the Simon's Town Docks on this occasion and it was far better for us than it had been in the past. The SA Navy, subject to stringent regulation, provided the gunpowder in the form of two 25kg containers. Ian van Oordt and Barbara George did magnificent work in converting the powder into 264 charges for seven different calibres of gun.

There were fifteen guns used over the three days with some present all the time and a few for one of the three days. The guns used were:- a 9 pdr SBML, a 7 pdr RML, three 6 pdr SBMLs, two 2 pdr, one 1 pdr, four ½ pdr and one ¼ pdr SBMLs, one mortar and one model Swedish gun.

Ian, Allan Martheze, Jurg Zimmerman and Alf Parris wore period uniforms which added an essential ingredient to the event. Twenty one CAOSA members, including two from George and one from Worcester, participated in the three days of firings and much experience was gained.

TWO MODEL MORTARS

We have been contacted by an individual who lives in Durbanville and has two hand made golf ball mortars for sale. This hurts, but his models are far more attractive than those that I make. I have not seen the mortars in the flesh, but I have a close-up photograph with which I can find no fault. His asking price is R4000 each. If you are interested I can e-mail a photo to you and put you in contact with the seller directly.

ASSOCIATION EFFECTIVENESS

The Association now has 87 members on the books and our efforts are having a marked effect on the perceptions by the public of our cannon heritage. Guns are no longer lying abandoned in odd places and mounted guns are being cleaned, painted and preserved. The services of our qualified gunners are also in ever increasing demand.

The administration, liaison, printing, postage and persuasion that have led to such good results have cost the Association more than the entire income from annual membership fees. We were most fortunate to have received donations from good friends such as De Grendel, Len Schmidt and Ian van Oordt that enabled us to reach that bit further than would have been otherwise possible.

Members are reminded that the membership fee of R70 pa was due at the end of March and several members are presently not in good standing. The Association's dedicated bank details can be obtained from the Secretary.

Any contributions to CAOSA would be most welcome and a full accounting of their effect would be provided.

Gerry de Vries