



NEWSLETTER No. 57 June 2015

An informative service to the muzzle loading cannon enthusiast

THE SPONGING BUCKET

“ A receptacle containing water into which a sponge on a staff is plunged before thrusting it into the bore of a gun to quench any flames in her”. (Gentleman’s dictionary – 1638).

Sponging buckets come in all sorts of shapes and sizes to suit the situation for which they were designed. The traditional shape is like half of a small wooden keg, a bucket shape with the top open end larger than the base. The inverse of this shape, i.e. with the open top smaller than the base was popular aboard ships as the water was less likely to slop out of the bucket and these, being different to the norm, were termed by the English as “French buckets”. The size of the bucket varied in proportion to the calibre and length of the gun with the sponging bucket for a 9 inch gun being large enough for a man to bath in. Field guns normally had a bucket which hung on a hook affixed to the axletree of the carriage while in transit, these were sometimes made of metal or leather. The water travelled in the artillery wagon train with ammunition and auxiliary equipment.

Whatever wets your sponge !

GUN OR CANNON ?

I have been taken to task several times in the past for my liberal use of the word “gun”. This is a generic term for any fire arm whether small and in the hand or large and mounted at a fortification. The general terms “Gunship diplomacy”, “Gunfire”, “A 64 gun ship”, “Annie get your gun”, “21 gun salute” and “save the guns” are convenient generic references to some situation involving weapons where the specific type of weapon is immaterial to the conversation.

Should someone who wants to warn others of danger shout, “He’s got a gun” or should they make a speech something like, “He’s got a chromed Smith and Wesson model 19 in .357 magnum calibre with a custom grip, recoil reducer and adjustable sights”?

There are now 1016 **GUNS** in the Durr Record, or should it be a record of mortars, SBML cannon, howitzers, carronades, RMLs, gunades, Lantakas - - - - - ?

I am going to stick to my - um - - - artillery ?

A REMINDER

Some people have the internet, e-mail, Apps, games, cameras, hot water bottles and a flock of sheep on their cell 'phones, some don't. I am one of the latter, I have a desk bound, coal burning, smoke belching computer which I only check once or twice per day. **If you need to contact me at short notice don't rely on e-mail to reach me in time, rather call 082 416 9547.**

CLEARING THE BORE

Two short cannon which were unearthed in Cape Town recently are being conserved by one of our CAOSA members. Both cannon have one or more rusty iron shot stuck in the bore and with access only from the muzzle, these can be very difficult to remove.

The procedure for removal is based on the fact that the shot was always 1/20 th of the bore diameter smaller than the bore and the premise that gravity left the shot hard against one side of the bore with the gap on the opposite side. By chipping away at the rust and sediment with a very thin tool one can normally establish where the largest gap is situated and begin work from there.

The fact that the shot is positioned exactly the length of a charge plus a wad from the back of the chamber is food for thought, the gun may have been loaded when the ship sank, not an uncommon occurrence. The first task is to clear the vent and find the gap next to the shot, then when water under pressure is forced into the vent and seeps out freely next to the shot you can breathe again.

THE DURR RECORD OF CANNON IN SA

There appears to be a fair amount of confusion regarding the nature and status of the Durr Record. The main body of the Record consists of 22 thick lever arch files containing photographs, dimensions, personal notes, news clippings, photo copies, gun movements, any additional information and in some cases the known history of individual guns. This collection has taken me 20 years to compile, has cost me a small fortune and is my personal property.

The Durr list of guns as published in my three books, and as updated from time to time, is a different animal, this list is largely in the public domain and is freely available to whoever wants it. The list contains all relevant dimensions, identifiers, markings and approximate location of each gun in South Africa. The List contains all guns that are in the Record without the photographs, personal notes and asides.

Through confidentiality agreements neither the Record nor the List contain the names and addresses of private owners/custodians, that information is only in my head which has a conveniently poor memory.

The Durr Record has nothing to do with what guns are fireable or have been proof fired, the Record has absolutely nothing to do with cannon firing at all.

CAOSA has up-to-date Durr Lists and the Gunners Board uses these as a base document to keep the record of proof firings, the proof fired guns are identified by the identity number allocated by the Durr Record, but the proof firing is not noted in the Record.

Some model cannon have been included in the Durr Record by special request of the owners, some models are included due to their antiquity or historical origins. From time to time I receive a request from CAOSA members for an updated list and I readily make such updates available, for which I occasionally end up in hot water.

“Here I stand, because I cannot do otherwise”.

UBIQUE

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Gerry de Vries – Researcher/Technical Advisor