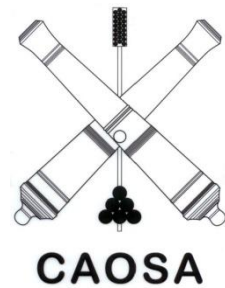


# CANNON ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

Gunners Room, The Castle of Good Hope Cape Town

SAPS Registration number: 28/1/3/8/2/1 23704



## NEWSLETTER No. 59 April 2016

An informative service to the muzzle loading cannon enthusiast

### CAOSA AGM held on 12 March 2016

The AGM was held at Bloemendal Cannon Station on the 12 March 2016. It commenced at 10h00 hrs and closed at 12h00 hrs. This allowed us time to enjoy the snacks arranged by Erick Kellerman and sponsored by the Bloemendal Restaurant.

The minutes of the previous AGM were discussed and the committee was disturbed when we came to cast our votes for the new committee as only two nominations had been received for the positions of Chairman and Treasurer. It was to be recognised, with appreciation that the Secretary & Member No 1, who served on the previous committee, volunteered to serve again on the 2016 / 2017 committee.

The chairman reminded all present to give serious consideration to their active involvement by contributing & participating in the needs & requirements of CAOSA. i.e. at cannon firing events either as gunner assistants or to support the event by speaking to the public about the history of muzzle loading cannons. Alternatively to become involved with their restoration and associated research projects.

Martin Venter Chairman

### The New/Old committee

The following members were re-confirmed as the committee members 2016-2017:

Chairman: Martin Venter

Secretary: Erika Foot

Treasurer: Jurg Zimmermann

Member 1: Nadine Sheffield

### Financial report for period 01, January 2015 to 31, December 2015

#### Accumulated Funds

**R 23439-47**

#### Represented by:

Bank  
Cash

R 21821-47  
R 1618-00

#### Receipts:

**R 11255-70**

Membership		R	6500-00
Donations		R	1500-00
Donations at Firings		R	635-00
Sales		R	1830-30
Miscellaneous	Note 1	R	700-00
Interest		R	90-46

#### Expenditure:

**(R 8496.36)**

Items for sale		R	1510-00
Stationary	Note 2	R	896-00
Refreshments	Note 3	R	1314.10
Miscellaneous	Note 4	R	4541-30
Bank charges		R	234-96

<b><u>Difference:</u></b>	<b>R 2759.34</b>
Balance as per Ledger on 31 December 2015:	R 25455-91
Balance as per Bank statement on 31 December 2015:	R 25455-91
Cash on hand on 31 December 2015:	R 742-90
Total on 31 December 2015	<b>R 26198-81</b>

- Note 1 Return R700 for cancelled AGM lunch  
 Note 2 Receipt and expenses books for treasurer R 98,  
 Printer ink R 798 for chairman.  
 Note 3 AGM lunch R 700, Committee meeting tea and sandwiches R 160  
 Committee Christmas lunch R 454.10  
 Note 4 Black powder R600, New website & Alufoil R600, CAOSA office move R1335,  
 Cannon book R150, BP for CAOSA cannon day R800, Alu foil R104.30, Web hosting fee R216,  
 Gift for website assist R120, Website up grade R316, Voucher for work on CAOSA flyers R300

## **Research**

One of the activities surrounding cannons is the research into the origins of the guns and into the lost bits of history regarding their use.

There is much research on the go at the moment into the Battle of Blaauwberg and in my archives I dug up the following story which I recorded in 1996 and re-wrote in 2006. A story which may be of interest to such researchers.

### **Battle of Blaauwberg - A side-story of significance.**

In early 1996 it came to my attention that there were cannons on the farm "Oak Valley" in the Grabouw area. After several telephone calls I contacted a Mrs Oakaline - Hewett who invited me to come and see the cannons.

Mrs Hewett was 94 years old when I met her, but she had bright eyes and a sharp mind. She told me that her father, Dr Anthony Viljoen, had bought the farm 'Broadlands' as it was known then, in 1898 and that he had brought the two cannon in question soon after the purchase of the farm. These two cannon thus had no connection to the Battle of Blaauwberg.

Mrs Hewett then told me that when she was very small she had a child minder by the name of Persent, who was an ex-slave whose parents were enslaved in Mozambique and brought to the Cape. Persent died in 1905 at the age of 106.

Mrs Hewett could remember Persent telling her family about the time that he was at the Battle of Blaauwberg at the age of 6 with his father who was a horse-holder behind the lines. Mrs Hewett could remember him speaking of great arguments among the soldiers about what should or should not be done. Dr Viljoen reportedly made notes on the snippets of information that Persent spoke about.

Once the local forces began to crumble in the face of the English pressure, Persent's father was told to accompany those forces which would retreat inland to Somerset West, and Persent had to go with them. Other forces returned to the Castle or went directly home.

He told of passing through the hills [Durbanville Hills?] near the battle site with horses, some of which were carrying one or two cannons on their backs. They eventually made camp near Somerset West and waited for instructions from the Castle.

After a period of days they heard that the Castle had surrendered and that Englishmen were coming to accept their surrender in the Somerset West area.

One of the senior officers in their group wanted to deny the English the satisfaction of capturing their cannons so he ordered that the guns be taken over the Gantouw Pass for safe keeping further inland. Persent and his father accompanied the guns up and over the Gantouw Pass and they stopped somewhere in the Grabouw area where they stayed for "a long time".

Eventually they were instructed to surrender the cannons to the arsenal / magazine in Stellenbosch, which they did and then they returned home.

(Re written from my original notes taken during the interview and telephone conversations)

Gerry de Vries - March 2006

## NOTES

A horse can carry about 200lbs and if there were 2 guns on some horses up the Gantouw Pass, they must have been very light guns.

I asked Mrs Hewett what had happened to the notes that Dr Viljoen made regarding Persent' experiences. She said that she had read them again about 10 years previously but that they had deteriorated so badly that they were probably destroyed.

If Mrs Hewett was only 3 years old when Persent died, it is likely that she recalls some detail from the reading of Dr Viljoen's notes. Some clarity in the blur of time?

### **Another Story of significance**

Many years after the Battle of Blaauwberg, Marie Koopmans de Wet wrote a letter to the senior officer at the Castle claiming that some small cannons that were used at the Battle of Blaauwberg belonged to her and were locked up in the Magazine in Stellenbosch and that she wanted them back. After lengthy negotiations and assurances given four of the guns were returned to Marie Koopmans de Wet's house.

Dr Engelenburg, a relative of Mrs Koopmans de Wet, was given two of the cannons and then stories differ as to whether there were one or two cannon which remained in Koopmans de Wet House.

The two guns (Durr 804 and 805) which were given to Dr Engelenburg are still in his house in Pretoria which is now a museum. These two guns are Lantakas, a style of gun peculiar to Indonesia and other countries in that area.

It is on record that a detachment of "Light Javanese Artillery" was stationed at the Castle and some reports say that they participated in the Battle of Blouberg.

The nature of Marie Koopmans de Wet's claim of ownership of the guns is not known, but it must have been a credible story as the case was investigated quite intensely before the guns were returned to her.

Lantakas are light guns, but are awkward beasts because they are normally fixed to a pivoting yoke which is permanently attached to the trunnions. Two of them could however be carried on a horse.

A more recent enquiry by myself at Marie Koopmans de Wet Museum, the house in which she lived, drew a complete blank and nobody knew anything about a cannon or cannons.

Now if you can put two and two together and get four, then add four more and get eight then you should be able to combine the stories above and get a credible clue as to some of the guns that were probably used by the Dutch at the Battle of Blaauwberg.

Gerry de Vries Researcher

## **Another piece of our cannon Heritage**

CAOSA is the proud owner of the only complete 18<sup>th</sup> Century three legged gun lifting Gyn in South Africa. The Gyn has been lying in pieces at the Castle for years. Olivia de Vries went as far as painting all of its parts to preserve them from the weather and the smaller parts are stored in our old workshop at the Castle.

Now we will never assemble the Gyn because someone has stolen two of the three legs, presumably for scrap metal. Each leg would need three men to carry it and it would need a long truck to carry it away.

CAOSA and South Africa are now poorer as a result. I care!

## **Restoration**

### **New carriages for the castle**

A contract has been awarded for the construction and supply of 20 new gun carriages for the 20 cannon on the Castle ramparts. Gerry de Vries developed the designs for the six different sizes of carriages and Gabriel Fagan Architects produced the construction drawings. Construction is progressing well at Universal Timber and Machine Company in Maitland where 14 carriages made of Balau are standing ready for delivery. Who exactly will fit the guns to the new carriages is still being negotiated.



## **Progress with Durr 983**

This is one of the pair of cannons unearthed in Cape Town several months ago and was adopted by one of the members of CAOSA. The cannon had a cannon ball stuck in the bore, something fairly common and not normally a major headache to remove. This writer boldly quoted to try and remove the shot and restore the gun's dignity. Unfortunately the scoundrel who inserted the shot 150 years ago did not use a common round shot, he used a double bar shot, two cannon balls joined by a solid 2,4 by 2,4 cm wrought iron bar. With strange tools, hammers, a hose pipe and much more I have so far managed to create a long brown stain in the driveway. I am resisting any calls to give up!



PLEASE if any of you have any interesting info for the CAOSA newsletter do not hesitate to forward it for the attention of Gerry de Vries at [noongun@mweb.co.za](mailto:noongun@mweb.co.za)

UBIQUE

Gerry de Vries : Researcher to CAOSA