

CANNON ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

Cannon Association of South Africa c/o
Chavonnes Battery Museum, Nedbank Building,
Clock Tower Precinct,
V&A Waterfront, Cape Town, 8000



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An informative service to the muzzle loading cannon enthusiast

You should have been at the AGM at Ke-Monate in March. The election of office bearers was a complete fiasco with nobody wanting to serve in any of the posts. Eventually James was persuaded to serve another term as Treasurer and Dale, who was not at the meeting, was elected as Secretary. Peter was also elected as a member in his absence but there were no volunteers for the post of Chairman. After much discussion it was decided that in the absence of a Chairman the Secretary would assume the responsibility until a chairman could be found.

It was decided that to overload the new Secretary in this manner would do CAOSA no good at all and Frikkie Conradie, in a moment of weakness (or insanity) volunteered to be Chairman. The moment of insanity was infectious and I heard myself saying that I would serve as the other member of the committee. This is how CAOSA fell into its present predicament.

Why is it that nobody wants to serve a second term on the committee?

Whatever number of members I ask this question – that is the number of different answers I get.

Too much infighting, a thankless job, people acting in self interest, no support from members and lack of resources seem to head the list of reasons for not wanting to serve again; I have certainly experienced them all first hand.

The present committee is trying to take whatever steps are required to rectify this situation.

THE GUNNERS BOARD

I had for years advocated the separation of the functions of the Committee and those of the Gunner's Board and this has now happened. Not only a separation of the functions but a complete break-away and the Gunner's Board have moved geographically such that they now have no contact with the Committee at all. I guess that I never made myself clear and understandable, or maybe there were people who did not want to understand.

Immediately after breaking away from the Committee several promotions took place. The Gunners Board, and CAOSA, now have two Master Gunners, (and I am not one of them) two Chief Gunners, three Senior Gunners and no Gunners? The Gunners Board must have taken a credibility knock among those who have been firing cannon with CAOSA for years but who are not yet formally classified even as a basic Gunner.

NITIDA CANNON STATION

The collection of cannon which were at Bloemendal have now moved to the wine farm Nitida on the road between Durbanville Hills and Bloemendal. Erick, Jurg and Jacobus have invested a great deal of resources, time and effort in getting the cannon all mounted on carriages on the dam wall. They have seven cannon ranging from a half pounder to a 36 pounder Carronade and all have been proof fired and are ready for action.

The guys at Nitida have had several notable firings, one of which was our Secretary, Dale, firing her first ever cannon. Unlike most of us who started with models and small cannon, Dale started with the 36 pounder Carronade. A wind from the front gave her a good smoky welcome to the world of cannon.

Nitida also hosted a large group of handicapped guests who fired several of the cannon while sitting in a wheel chair. They are also sponsoring ten cannon shots at a family fun day in the Hillcrest Quarry on 07 September. The ten shots will be auctioned off and the proceeds go toward House Andries Olivier quadriplegic Centre.

This sub-organisation consisting of CAOSA members is now a self governing entity, with its own budget, its own web site and steering committee. This is much the same as Hout Bay was and CR&P, SABRE, Chavonne's Battery and OVSAC still are, independent and with their own objectives, but still part of the greater CAOSA network.

To learn more about the Nitida Cannon Station contact Erick at erickkellerman@gmail.com .

RECENT FIRINGS

Frikkie and I were requested by the City Council to fire a 21 gun salute for those who had lost their lives in criminal activities. We explained that a 21 gun salute is reserved for a serving head of state, but that a seven gun "tribute" to the victims of crime would be appropriate. This was settled and the firings were scheduled for 18 July at the Castle. Alf Parris brought his half pounder and the three of us fired the seven shots using half and quarter pounder guns and the VIP clients were happy.

TIME GUNS

No, it's not about Cape Town's famous Noon Gun; it's about others in regular use around the world.

I have for years known about the time gun fired in Wellington, New Zealand and I was made aware of the gun fired in Edinburgh in Scotland. Starting in 1840 the Guard Ship in Simon's Town used to fire a cannon at 20h00 as a time check throughout the fleet, this automatically regulated all time in Simon's Town. The firing of this gun was changed to 21h00 and was well known as the nine O clock gun. This ended with the introduction of radio communications in 1934.

James Macdonald informs me that a time gun was fired in his home town, Nassau in the Bahamas. A brief visit via the internet shows Fort Charlotte which had more than 40 cannon of several calibres including 13 inch mortars. A cannon identifiable on a photograph shows a Miller pattern gun of probably 24 pounder calibre.

Does anybody know of other time guns elsewhere in the world?

THE REPLICA LONG TOM

Ok, Ok – I know that it is not a muzzle loader, but a CAOSA member was directly involved. The replica Long Tom manufactured in Graham's Town by Basil Mills has been officially placed in its new home. My monitoring of the communications of the ZAR Kanoniers shows that the gun caused a bit of excitement up north with members queuing up to fire it. A later communication informed all that it was a replica and that it was now safely in the War Museum in Bloemfontein. Well done Basil! MC Heunis, also a CAOSA member, has managed to import vital parts for the Krupp 87mm Field Gun in Bloemfontein – well done to you too MC!

CHAVONNE'S BATTERY

The guns and carriages at Chavonne's were last given any maintenance about six years ago and nature was beginning to reclaim them. Dale asked CR&P for a quotation to do the necessary and she submitted this to the V&A Waterfront. Several months and many reminders later the V&A undertook to sponsor the work.

The guns were chipped, sanded, de rusted with Rust Buster, and painted with two coats of Durham black roof paint. The broken carriage trucks (wheels) were removed, repaired and painted before re-installation. The carriage for the French 36 pdr was extensively repaired and strengthened and all carriages were lavishly oiled at least twice to preserve them.

Well it is our home you know!

NEW CARRIAGE FOR BABYLONSTOREN

I was tasked with the construction and delivery of a standing carriage for the 8 pounder Finbanker signal gun on the farm Babylonstoren east of Paarl. I delivered the carriage about a month ago to the gun which was lying in a shed down at the farmhouse. Today I learned that the gun is back on the carriage quite high up the mountain. Silly me, I asked how they got the gun up there and I was immediately shown a video of a large helicopter arriving at the carriage with the gun dangling on a long cable. We mere mortals can sometimes afford a crane but this cannon flew business class.

UBIQUE,

Gerry de Vries : Researcher

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