



**Newsletter No. 131**

**October 2020**



**Peacetime use of Artillery –  
Avalanche Protection by Canadian  
Forces in British Columbia**



## **Membership Details**

**Membership** of the Ordnance Society runs from 1<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> June.

**Application Forms** can be downloaded from the membership section of the Ordnance Society web-site.

**Membership Rates** – the current rate for individual members is £25. A limited number of student memberships will be available at a cost of £10. Please contact Ian McKenzie for corporate, lifetime and overseas rates.

**Membership renewal Forms** are available on the OS website and are usually sent out with the AGM papers.

### **Payment**

Payment should be in £ sterling by personal cheque, banker's draft or International Money Order, payable to "The Ordnance Society". Overseas sterling cheques must be drawn on a London bank.

Payment via 'Paypal' may be possible – please e-mail The Ordnance Society for details. [ordnance.society@btinternet.com](mailto:ordnance.society@btinternet.com)

### **Committee**

Chairman:	Trevor Parker
Secretary:	Nicholas Hall
Treasurer:	Geoff Smith
Membership Secretary:	Ian McKenzie
Publicity Officer:	Neil Grant
Visits Secretary:	Neil Grant
Newsletter Editor:	Graham Whittington
Committee Members:	Nick Reed Alastair Fyfe (Co-opted)

**Journal Editor:** Clive Woodley

**E-mail:** [ordnance.society@btinternet.com](mailto:ordnance.society@btinternet.com)

**Website:** <http://ordnancesociety.org.uk/>

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### **From the Editor – Graham Whittington**

Thanks to everyone who sent in articles, photos, comments and queries for this edition of the newsletter and for inclusion in future editions. **The next edition will be published in January 2021 – copy needed by 14<sup>th</sup> December.** Please send copy to [graham.whittington@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:graham.whittington@hotmail.co.uk) - if possible electronically as a WORD document. Contact me for my address if you need to send your copy in paper form. The contributor should ensure that any copyrighted material has permission for use and that the original owner is attributed. **Views expressed in articles are not necessarily those of the editor!**

Annual Reports for 2019/2020 follow. Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2020 can be found on page 24.

## **Ordnance Society Annual Reports 2019/2020**

### **Chairman – Trevor Parker**

Like so many organisations throughout the world, the Ordnance Society has been affected by Covid-19. We don't have any paid staff so the trauma of furlough and/or redundancies has not been necessary, but a major loss has been the excellent range of visits that Neil Grant works so hard to organise. The Society did manage a repeat visit to the Infantry & Small Arms School Corps Weapons Collection at Warminster before the lockdown, but all subsequent visits this year have been postponed/cancelled.

The Society has been affected in other ways; because of social distancing, board meetings have not been possible with members getting together, so after a videoconferencing trial the last two board meetings were held using this technology. Board members are taking turns to act as 'host' for the trial software and the system is working well with interactions being straightforward; and only minor short term technical glitches.

Our local printer was closed due to the pandemic for several weeks, which meant that the postal copies of the April Newsletter No. 129 were delayed. Luckily he was able to re-start the printing business fairly quickly and we managed to post both Nos. 129 and 130 in the same envelope to members who had opted for 'hard copy'.

The big change is that our AGM has been cancelled. The board discussed various options, but with the uncertainty about the future restrictions on social gatherings and indoor venues we realised that there was no other option. We are of course very sorry and have decided that the annual reports which would have been presented at the AGM will now be printed in the October Newsletter.

Significant enhancements have been introduced to our website with a new page entitled 'ORDNANCE DOWNLOADS', which has a wide range of books, manuals, documents, drawings and photos of all types of ordnance, each available under various categories. These downloads are freely available and are designed to attract more visitors to the website and to promote membership of the Ordnance Society. Another excellent enhancement has been the updating and completion of the Newsletter indices by new, co-opted board member Alastair Fyfe.

Another project that is being launched is one that has been discussed for some time and is a survey of British BL and QF guns in the UK. The Ordnance Society is already supporting a world-wide survey of cannons, called the 'Big Cannon Project' and ours will be called the 'Big Gun Project'. The aim is to have a viewable database on the website, and input forms for both members and the public to send

in information for both new guns and updates to existing guns. There will also be the option to input photographs and link the item to it. The project should also raise the profile of the Ordnance Society and attract a wider audience and increase our membership.

I am very grateful to my fellow board members for their efforts and commitment over a challenging year, and also to our Journal Editor, Clive Woodley who is not a board member, but whose contribution in producing high quality Journals is much appreciated.

Next year is of course very hard to forecast, but my hope is for Covid-19 restrictions to be lifted enough for our super range of visits to be re-instated, and also for the AGM to be held and perhaps a 'Members' Day' where we can get together and organise lectures, artefact discussion groups etc. I also hope that we can continue to use our website to encourage more interaction with our members.

### ***Honorary Secretary - Nicholas Hall***

The role of the Honorary Secretary is perhaps mundane but nevertheless important to the administration of the Society's business. I aim to serve the requirements of your Board, for example, by preparing agendas for meetings and recording minutes, dealing with general correspondence and arranging meetings; sadly this year recommending that the Annual General Meeting be called off for this year. I am glad to say that Board Meetings have continued successfully using an online video conference programme originally arranged by former Board Member Peta Knott.

### ***Honorary Treasurer – Geoff Smith***

#### **Balances:**

#### **Community (Current)**

Barclays Bank UK P

Balance as of 18/09/2020           £ 2,559.69

#### **Business Premium (Savings)**

Balance as of 18/09/2020           £ 7,385.89

**Total funds at 18/09/20           £9,945.58**

## Payments since last report:

Journal Vol 26	£1387.00
OSNL	£207.50
Postage, fliers etc.	£206.88
	<u>£204.83</u>
	<b>£2006.21</b>

- Anticipated ongoing Newsletter outgoings £ 1000 pa
- Journal costs before year end estimate Total c. £1500 per issue depending on size etc.
- Website renewal due October \$48
- Current funds cover estimated next two year's known expenses

### Notes:

- Interest on deposits continues to be minimal.
- Our major uncontrollable outgoing continues to be postage costs for both Journal and Newsletter.
- Funds will be transferred from the Business Premium account to cover outgoings.
- Subs for this year are substantially complete.

## **Visits Secretary- Neil Grant**

Apart from the visit to Small Arms School in late February, the entire visit programme was comprehensively trashed by the Covid-19 pandemic, and almost everything had to be cancelled. We hope to be able to run most of the events next year, assuming that things have stabilised by then.

## **Journal Editor – Clive Woodley**

Firstly, my sincere thanks to Kay Smith for her terrific typesetting and excellent advice. Also the authors who have provided their papers and patiently put up with my nit-picking!

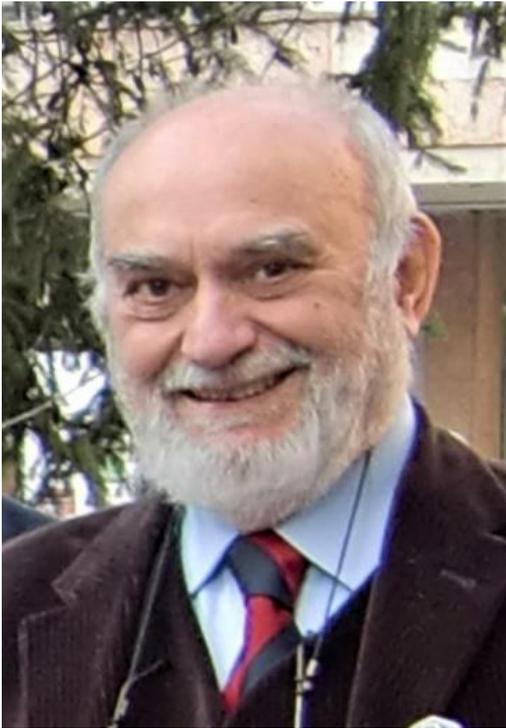
Volume 26 of the OSJ was, like Volume 25, published in colour, at the end of 2019. My sincere thanks to the Board for providing the finances. I believe it makes a tremendous difference to the papers published and the look of the Journal. This volume completed the remainder of the backlog of papers that had built up during the temporary hiatus prior to Volume 24.

Work is nearly complete on Volume 27, which should be published at the end of 2020. I will be eagerly anticipating receiving new papers during the next few months for Volume 28 and beyond.

If anybody is interested in submitting a paper then please contact me with an indicative title and content. Any questions, comments, suggestions or (positive) criticisms will be gratefully received.

**From Renato Gianni Ridella (Genova August 2020)**

**Obituary - Marco Morin** (Verona 22 August 1938 - Venice 24 June 2020)



I met Marco Morin for the first time in 2002 when he phoned me and told me he was happy to have found someone else who was dealing with historical artillery in Italy. Since then a relationship began, based at first on the exchange of information which grew to a feeling of mutual esteem and soon turned into a deep friendship. Some of you who read these lines have personally known his generosity and hospitality like I have.

His family of French descent had settled in Pula, now Croatia, during the Napoleonic period and some of its members followed military careers in the armed forces of the Austrian Empire like his grandfather Franz Morin who, commanding the destroyer Balaton, sank the French submarine

Monge in December 1915 during WW I. In the last months of the war his son, Marco's father Federico, attended the Theresian Military Accademy in Wiener Neustadt as a cadet and later joined the ranks of the Royal Italian Army as an officer. Marco Morin himself joined the Italian Air Force after his university studies and served for some years as a geophysics officer and military instructor, reaching the rank of Captain.

As for his professional standing, he had become one of the most renowned Italian forensic scientists specializing in firearms identification and gunshot residues, and was a long time consultant to the Italian judiciary for the most famous firearms crimes and was also a visiting Professor in various Universities and military Academies. In July 1990, together with four other Italian specialists, he received the Firearms Identification Diploma issued by the English Forensic Science Society and later he was appointed to the college of teacher-examiners for two years. His long collaboration with Judge Giovanni Falcone, killed by the mafia, having worked with him on 140 crime cases, is memorable. After his retirement from active duty he continued to support some of his students, extending his studies on gunshot residues. Recently, this knowledge allowed him to intervene in London in the review process in favour of Barry George, previously sentenced to life in prison for the murder of the famous BBC journalist Jill Dando. He was asked to do so by a colleague of Jill Dando who was not convinced of George's guilt, the latter being acquitted on 1 August 2008. Marco Morin did not ask any remuneration for his services.

His real passion outside of work has been the research on small firearms from the beginning to the present day and on the artillery of the Most Serene Republic of Venice in the last three centuries before its falling in 1797. For this reason the environment in which he carried on his studies was mainly the State Archives of Venice where, in 25 years of researches, he examined more than 2000 registers and files, collecting approximately 35,000 microfilms of mostly unknown documents. Certainly one of the most important records he found was dated to 1526 and demonstrated the existence of craftsmen of the Beretta dynasty already working in this year and specifically producing arquebuse barrels for the Venetian state. Previously the earliest record on this firm only dated from 1680. We remember that on this family, jointly with Robert Held, he had published the best-seller "Beretta - La dinastia industriale più antica al mondo". Regarding more recent firearms, his work "Dal Carcano al Fal. Armi da fuoco portabili delle Forze Armate Italiane" is a very famous book in Italy and abroad.

His main commitment in the last two decades has been the study of Venetian artillery on which he has published numerous articles, arriving at the accurate definition of the types of pieces produced in the lagoon city both for the state service and the defence of the merchant-ships. The underwater archaeologists working on Renaissance wrecks off the English and Irish coasts often asked his advice when they encountered cannon of such a provenance. One of his most important works in this field was carried out in collaboration with Carlo Beltrame of Venice Cà Foscari university in a project aiming to create a complete catalogue of all the surviving cannons existing in the Eastern Mediterranean that were produced during the age of the Most Serene Republic. The result of this task is the book "I Cannoni di Venezia", published in 2013.

Another scientific achievement that must be credited to him is that of having defined and shown the absolute importance of the six Venetian galleasses at the naval battle of Lepanto (1571) which were decisive for the victory of the Christian fleet over the Ottoman one.

Concluding, we remember that he was the author of more than 200 essays and author or co-author of nine books on the history of firearms, many of which can be found and downloaded from the academia.edu website.

Farewell my dear friend, go in peace where suffering is banned and where all knowledge is unveiled.

**From Melvyn Gallagher JP**

**Re: Guernsey Falcon**

In reply to Rob Morgan's question in the July Newsletter (OSNL 130) the cannon was returned to Guernsey in 1985. A reproduction carriage was built for it and it is now mounted in the Mewtis Bulwark, Castle Cornet, Guernsey.



**Photo Courtesy of Guernsey Museums & Galleries (States of Guernsey)**

The States of Guernsey had an iron saker cast and mounted on a replica carriage which was sent as a gift to Massachusetts. The full story is recorded in Austin. C. Carpenter's 1993 book "Cannon".



**Query from Warren Riess**  
**WW1 Field Gun Useage**

I have a question for OS members, something I'd like to address in a near future "second edition" of On the Eastern Front, wherein I correct a few typos and add a few bits of information that have come my way.

How long did it take a trained team to unlimber, and also limber, a German field gun then? I assume it would be similar for the British guns. There probably was a difference because if I understand correctly, most countries trained their field artillery to set up carefully, while the horse artillery were trained to unlimber and fire quickly, accuracy being secondary to speed for them. The German field artillerymen were trained to act as either, so I imagine (with no data) that without specialization they did neither as well.

Anyway, a couple of early readers asked how long unlimbering and limbering took, so I would like to include at least an approximation in the second edition.

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**From Bill Clements**  
**More Uses for the 3.7in**

With regard to the discussion about the use of the 3.7in HAA gun in roles other than AA it may be of interest to members to know that 3 AA Brigade Operation Order No 18 dated 8 September 1942 stated:

(a) Primary role of guns at BA 1 and BA 2 (HAA sites at the entrance to Belfast Lough) will be engagement of hostile aircraft in defence of convoy anchorages.

(b) Secondary role will be engagement of enemy shipping. In this secondary role targets will be engaged under operational orders of OC Fixed Defences'. (TNA WO 166/7374).

The searchlights at B132 at Whitehead and B313 at Luke's Point also at the entrance to Belfast Lough were also to operate in a dual role, anti-aircraft and anti-shiping.

**From Rob Morgan**

**The Kriegsmarine 'Marder' Manned Torpedo 1944**

The recent notes in the Newsletter on Japanese odd, arguably suicidal, weapons was interesting, and led me to a photo which I took in the Citadel at Brest a couple of years ago. This is the front end of the upper part of a 'Marder' manned torpedo. Few pieces of ordnance could be described as suicide weapons, but the German combination of two 2lin G7e electrically propelled torpedoes, clamped closely one above the other could hardly be regarded as anything else! The torpedo selected was, however, a capable weapon. Developed during the latter part of 1943, the first manned version was the 'Neger!', basic in the extreme, one-man operated, cheap, vulnerable and capable of only ten knots at the most.



The 'Neger' was a death trap; many 'pilots' died of carbon dioxide poisoning, even though a breathing apparatus was provided. Nor was this in any sense a submersible, the plexi-glass cockpit dome protecting the 'pilot' was barely above water level, the craft operated awash, and losses in attacks off Anzio, and Normandy resulted in few torpedoes or crewmen surviving. In most of the handful of sorties carried out losses exceeded 60%.

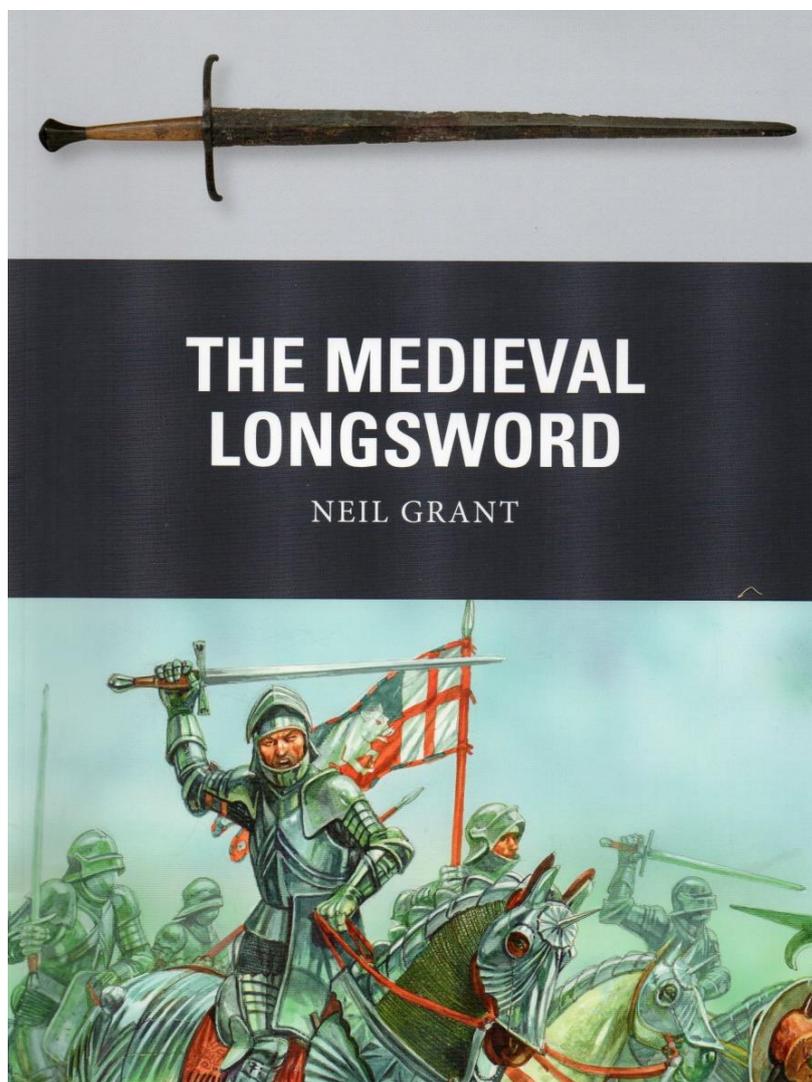
The 'Marder', remarkably, was developed from the 'Neger', differing only in the fact that it was a metre longer, and had a diving-tank and compressed air pump fitted. This enabled the 'pilot' to submerge up to (allegedly) 30 metres if attacked, adding little to the chances of survival. They usually operated in tandem with explosive motor boats, and in early August 1944, 50 sortied against the Allied naval defence line, 40 were claimed destroyed. A second sortie resulted in the loss of 26 or 27 out of 42 launched. There were a very few successful attacks; four, arguably five, smaller Allied warships were sunk or damaged, but the manned torpedo loss rate exceeded 80%. There were a few attacks in the Mediterranean, equally ineffectual, and equally suicidal. A few isolated sorties were made in the Scheldt as late as October, but, the weather conditions of Autumn in the Channel saw the end of the manned-torpedo in action. The German naval historian Cajus Bekker wrote a very readable account of these weapons in 'K-Men'(George Mann. 1973), and Richard O'Neill's "Suicide Squads" (Salamander 1999) provides a brief account of the 'Neger', Marder' and the other planned German projects.

## **Book Review From Graham Whittington**

**The Medieval Longsword** – Neil Grant with Illustrations by Peter Dennis

Osprey Publishing ISBN 978-1-4728-0600-0

Neil Grant's latest Osprey publication is every bit as well researched and interesting as his others and is certainly worth its place on my crowded library shelves.



You can learn everything you ever wanted to know about the Medieval Longsword as this book comprehensively covers the development, use and impact of the weapon, in all its bloody and gruesome glory. Neil presents a realistic view of history without any pretence of chivalry – kill your enemy any way you can.

I found the book fascinating from the first page and in fact read it twice in the space of a couple of weeks as several times the text led me to related research.

Of particular interest to me were the sections on the metallurgy and forging processes of these early weapons.

Neil's writing is refreshing free of those 'it might have been this way' which annoy me with some other authors and television documentary makers.

He clearly knows his subject. His research was comprehensive and his bibliography impressive.

Peter Dennis's illustrations and the pictorial references enhance the text and give the reader a feeling for how the weapon was used.

I wholeheartedly recommend this book.

**From Bill Clements**

**Armstrong 6" 4 Ton and 8" 12.5 Ton (Chambered) RML Guns**

During the period of 'lock down' one of my activities has been to compile a list of as many existing British 6in BL guns and gun barrels as I could find. In the course of this study I have come across what to my mind is an unusual type of gun in two calibres. The guns are the Armstrong 6in 4ton (chambered) RML gun and a similar 8in calibre gun weighing 12.5 tons. Both calibres used the Armstrong Protected Barbette loading system as did the huge 17.72in 100 ton RML guns in Malta and Gibraltar together with the two 10.4in RML guns that armed Puckpool Battery on the Isle of Wight. The loading system was also used with a number of 10in 18ton RML guns of which five are still to be seen in Tangier, one in Fort Glanville in Brisbane, Australia, and one from Fort Pudeto in Valparaiso, Chile.

It would seem that the rather unsuccessful 6in and 8in guns resembled in some respects the earlier EOC 7in 90cwt Mk I RML gun in construction, having a steel 'A' tube and iron coils. They were being produced about the time Armstrong was introducing his 6in 80cwt BL gun and were primarily for export and possibly, indeed probably, were cheaper than the 6in BL gun. However, when taking into consideration the need for a sophisticated loading mechanism they may not actually have been much cheaper than the breech-loading gun when installed.

I have identified four guns, two 6in and two 8in, that were sold to the Australian colonies of Queensland and Tasmania. The two 6in guns were bought by the Queensland government to be installed in Fort Lytton for the defence of Brisbane. These two guns, Nos 3777 and 3781 were first fired in 1884 but were found to be unsuccessful due to problems with the loading system. Three years later they were returned to Armstrong's Elswick works to be converted to breech-loaders. They were eventually superseded by two Mk V guns on HP mountings in 1897. Today one gun is on display at Fort Lytton and the other at Kissing Point Fort at Townsville.



The two 8in 12.5 ton guns were purchased by the Tasmanian government and installed at Kangaroo Bluff Fort as part of the defences of Hobart in 1885. These guns fired an 180lb shell and were numbered 3932 and 3933, but it does not seem that they were ever converted to breech-loaders as were the Queensland guns.



They remained in battery until they were taken out of service in 1925 and buried. It is possible that the Protected Barbette loading mechanism may still exist in the magazine which has been bricked up since the battery was abandoned. The guns were unearthed in 1970 and one remounted on a concrete plinth in its original gun pit.

Further investigation appears to reveal that the majority of RML guns were 'unchambered' with the exceptions amongst the heavy guns being the 17.72 in 100 ton, 16in 80 ton, and some 12.5 in 38 ton guns.

It would be interesting to know of other 6in and 8in guns of this type and where they were mounted. I assume, as these guns were clearly export guns, that Australia or, perhaps, South America were the most likely markets for them. I have been unable to find any reference to such guns being installed in either New Zealand or Canada.

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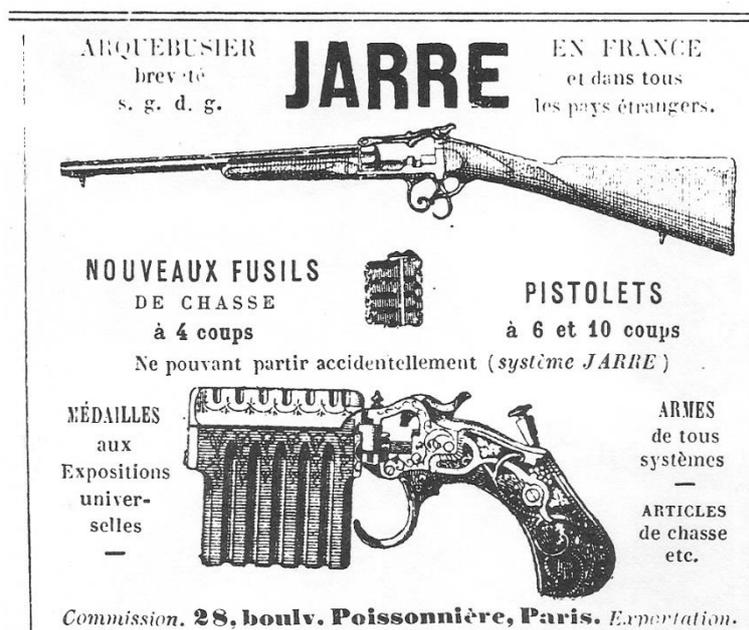
### **Responses to The Harmonica Pistol – OSNL 130**

#### **From Richard Garrett**

In Newsletter No. 130 Rob Morgan asked about the Harmonica Pistol. This curious pistol is a well-known type which is described in a number of books. The fullest description that I know of is an entry in *Armes Insolites et Systèmes* by Jean René Clergeau. Jacques Grancher, Paris 1983. This is written in French and the extract below is my poor attempt at translation:

In its first version, patented in 1862, it was applied to a curious handgun, constituted by a rectangular block of 10 barrels, connected by a double pivot to a frame bearing the butt and percussion mechanism. The weapon used 9mm pinfire cartridges, and for transport, the block was placed vertically, the barrels muzzle down, in the extension of the carcass. The whole was thus very flat and could be put in the pocket, provided that it was so large enough, because it presented a certain clutter. For firing the block, swivelling successively on its two perpendicular turrets, was first straightened horizontally, then pivoted to engage its left extremity back into a type of jaw at the end of the carcass. It didn't take more than a second or two to be ready to fire. The shooting was then done as in the

previous weapons, moving continuously, each action on the detente arming and letting the cock fall and advancing the block. The 10 shots were quickly fired, the main inconvenient being only a certain imbalance caused by the position of the block, which, at the beginning and at the end, was completely to one side. In fact, like all weapons of this kind, the balance was perfect only with the middle barrel in the firing position. Despite this, the clientele was satisfied, and this first model continued to be made, paralleling a better version that appeared later.



Jarre died a little before 1870 (1867?), his two sons took over and continued to make them, and then, in 1873, created a more convenient version, more powerful, and capable of a more precise shot. This time, Jarre's new pistol had a barrel, a dozen centimetres long and equipped with sights. It had a short box, pierced by a transverse mortise, in which a block of 10 chambers was engaged, long and small. The ammunition was 9 mm pinfire, and the movement was left-handed, under the effect of the same systems of articulated rods as the previous model.

This new version is as per the pistol illustrated on the cover of the Newsletter. Production appears to have ceased about 1880. The system was tried for long arms but they were not popular and few were made. It seems that the pistols were quite popular although no production numbers are given.

A pinfire cartridge had a built-in firing pin set at right angles to the bore.

## **From Alan Overton**

Rob Morgan seeks more information about an example of this multi-shot pistol that is offered for sale at auction by Hermann Historica.

The Jarre is the most common of this class of firearm (there are many others!) and was offered commercially as a (very) clumsy alternative to the typical revolvers of the period. Patents were granted in, inter alia no doubt, England, France and the United States of America to J. Jarre of Paris (1861) and A. E. and P. J. Jarre, also of Paris (1871), both dates approximate. There are two distinct types, but both incorporate a sliding bar of chambers or barrels. Early examples are known in percussion, but the majority are in pinfire, usually 5mm or 7mm in calibre.

The first, or early type, has a single barrel and a bar of up to ten chambers, the second, or later type, has a simple battery of barrels, like a sort of flattened pepperbox revolver. Both are double action, in that pressure on the trigger moves the breech-bar from left to right whilst simultaneously cocking and then releasing the hammer to fire the shot. Newsletter No. 130 shows the first type on the cover, and the second type illustrates Rob's question.

It will quickly be appreciated that the second type, without a barrel, whilst rather heavier and more bulky and lacking clean lines, is less complex to construct as the accurate indexing required to line up each chamber in turn with the barrel lead is dispensed with.

There are doubtless learned treatises upon these ugly ducklings of the firearms world, but Lewis Winant, *Firearms Curiosa*, Bonanza books, 1955, was probably the first to give a brief description of them, and the above remarks draw upon his pioneering research, which I hereby acknowledge.

Winant illustrates three examples of Jarre pistols, a ten chamber version of the first type and two of the second, the first of the latter having six barrels, and the second ten. Commercially, these odd designs were not an enormous success, but enough survive to indicate that limited manufacture must have been carried out over a number of years.

So far as I am aware, there is no connection between Jarre (and similar) pistols, and the strip feeds employed in machine guns. These were an attempt to overcome the difficulties manifest from fabric belt, and metal box, hopper, drum and tray feeds, all of which became pretty much obsolete when precision steel feed links were developed.

As far as Rob's other question is concerned, the photograph is not particularly clear but the SLR appears to be fitted with a Starlight Scope for night use. The large rubber eyepiece at the rear of the sight can just be made out. This opened like a shutter when pressed by cheek and brow and was designed to seal around the eye and to cut out light intrusion when the scope was not actually being used for observing. These optical sights gave a significant night vision capability albeit the picture was a ghostly green in appearance. The kit came in a sturdy metal carrying case with spare batteries and the like and a series of brackets to allow mounting on various weapons including the SLR, Colt Armalite AR 15 et al. They were indeed very heavy. In many ways a relic of the Cold War, and the technology is now regarded as archaic.

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### **Book Review from Trevor Parker**

#### **British Artillery Ammunition - Volume 3: Quick Fire - By David Ibbetson**

Volume 3 of this series follows the same informative format as the previous two volumes of 'British Artillery Ammunition' - 'Smooth Bore, Armstrong Rifled Breech Loading and Rifled Muzzle Loading'; and 'Rifled muzzle Loading'. The title 'British Artillery Ammunition' is again rather deceptive as David Ibbetson gives the reader much more information; every gun for an item of ammunition is described and usually shown with a drawing, including the different marks. Many other aspects and equipment are also very well illustrated; listed under **materials** are propellants, explosives, paint and metals; under **construction** are guns, breeches, rifling, shells, cartridges and manufacturing methods; under **ignition** are primer types and keys, adaptors and percussion tubes. Additional topics include tracers and aiming rifles

The ammunition itself has the various types described in detail with the complete cartridge, followed by the projectile and finally the cartridge case. The latter having a drawing and dimensions when available. There are sometimes multiple Marks of the gun and its associated ammunition, and each of these has full details of the various changes and improvements.

The book is a massive 961 page tome and is divided into two sections; Quick-Firing Fixed Ammunition and Quick-Firing Separate Loading Ammunition – perhaps it would have been more manageable as two separate volumes.

The book describes a number of different ammunition types and their guns that I have never heard of before, let alone seen; and there are still a few items where very little information is available and no drawings or pictures. An example of these are the guns and ammunition supplied by the USA in WW1.

All in all it is a magnificent book and highly recommended. It is available from the author, at £175, - [bmsofuses@virginmedia.com](mailto:bmsofuses@virginmedia.com)

**From Rob Morgan**

**Old Photos of Woolwich in its Latter Days**

Back in the mid-1990's I wrote a few articles for 'Gunner' magazine and one or two notes for 'The Royal Artillery Journal, and so one brilliant Summer day in 1996, I was invited to drop in and meet Major John Timbers, who was then Editor of both. The Artillery was still very much 'in' Woolwich then, and he gave me a guided tour of the site, including such magnificent pieces of ordnance as the Bhurtpore Gun, and my note and photos of that appeared in OSN soon afterwards. The parade ground display of ordnance, many of them captures, was seriously impressive, and I took a score of photos. These turned up tucked in my copy of Hogg's 'Clubs to Cannon' about ten minutes ago, and quite by chance. No idea why I put them there. Sadly, my notes, frantically scribbled as we wandered along the gun line, have vanished, and as the careful observer can see, there's no identifying plaque or plate in evidence.

I have no clear recollection of what the gun in the photo on the left is. I assume it must have gone into 'Firepower!' when the barracks closed, though perhaps it went to Larkhill. Or maybe down to Fort Nelson? I think if the two guns in the photo were a pair, I'd have tried to get them both in the shot (pun). Can anyone take my memory back twenty five years? What's the gun, and, of course, where is it now?



Likewise the one below ....



**From Rob Morgan**  
**Two Heavy Projectiles in Italy**

My friend and colleague Peter Presford's article '*Il Balipedio di Viareggio*' was published in 'CASEMATE' No 118 in May 2020. It's an account of a visit to a substantial nineteenth century ordnance test site on the Ligurian Coast, not far from Leghorn (Livorno). A short but interesting article, it includes this photograph, taken by Peter at the time of his visit - two shells on plinth, with a plaque which describes them as 'projectiles coming from the Balpiedo....centre of studies for the testing of marine armaments, operating from 1868 to 1944, an imposing technological outpost.'

The term 'Balpiedo' refers to a military or naval test centre, I understand. The two shells are an unusual monument, and their erection owes much to the local Rotary Club. The larger shell is marked '381mm', and Peter, correctly, takes this to be an example of a shell for the 381/40, 15in gun. Aldo Fraccaroli in his '*Italian Warships of WWI*' describes these guns as introduced in 1914, and states that the 381/40's were built by Armstrong, Schneider and Vickers.



Originally intended for the four cancelled *Caracciolo* Dreadnoughts, which would have mounted eight of the guns each, these were actually carried on Monitors such as the *Faa di Bruno* and *Alfredo Cappellini*. Aldo Fraccaroli records ten of these big guns afloat, and the article suggests that others, possibly there were 24 guns in total, were used as railway guns or in coast defence batteries.

The second, smaller shell in the photograph is, it seems, unmarked. I wondered if this was possibly a shell for the 305/46, 12in gun, built by Vickers and Armstrong from 1909, and mounted aboard the *Cavour* and *Doria* Classes of Battleships? The Monitor *Monfalcone* carried a single example. Italian ordnance afloat and ashore in WWI is an intriguing subject. Can any member offer more on the subject of these shells, and the guns which fired them?

**Query From Trevor Parker**  
**Anyone know what this is?**

Recovered from the sea-bed; Not a conventional munition but possibly a flare casing? It has MKII and PLAIN stamped on it - visible in a few of the photos. Dimensions are approx 1.5" x 10".

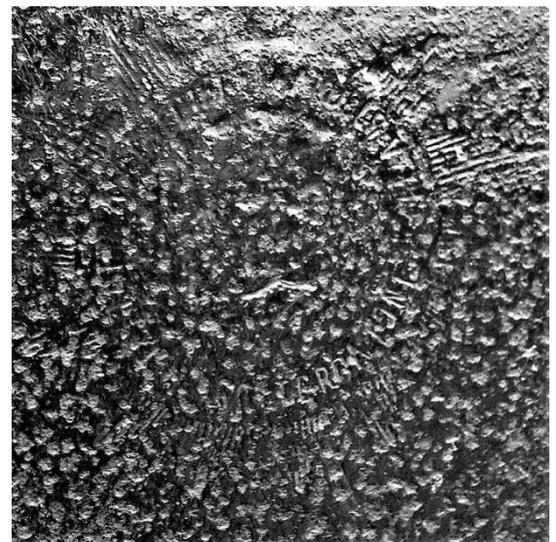
Comments/answers to [trevorparker2010@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:trevorparker2010@hotmail.co.uk) please.



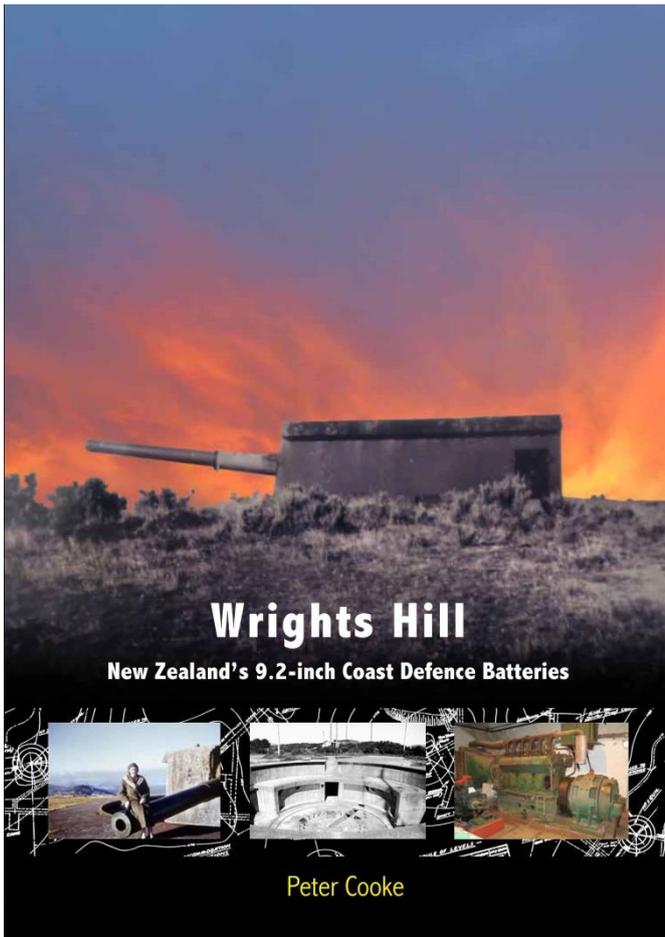
**Query From Piotr Kurzawa – email: [szczawju@gmail.com](mailto:szczawju@gmail.com)  
Cannon in Yantai, China**

Can members help to identify the manufacturer of an old piece of canon preserved in China, Yantai?

It is about 15 cm calibre smooth bore muzzle loading. Below are few pictures of it. The partial logo of manufacturer is visible (pity that gun surface is rusted).



**From Peter Cooke – email: [petercooke\\_donz@icloud.com](mailto:petercooke_donz@icloud.com)  
New Zealand's 9.2-inch Coast Defence Battery, at Wrights Hill**



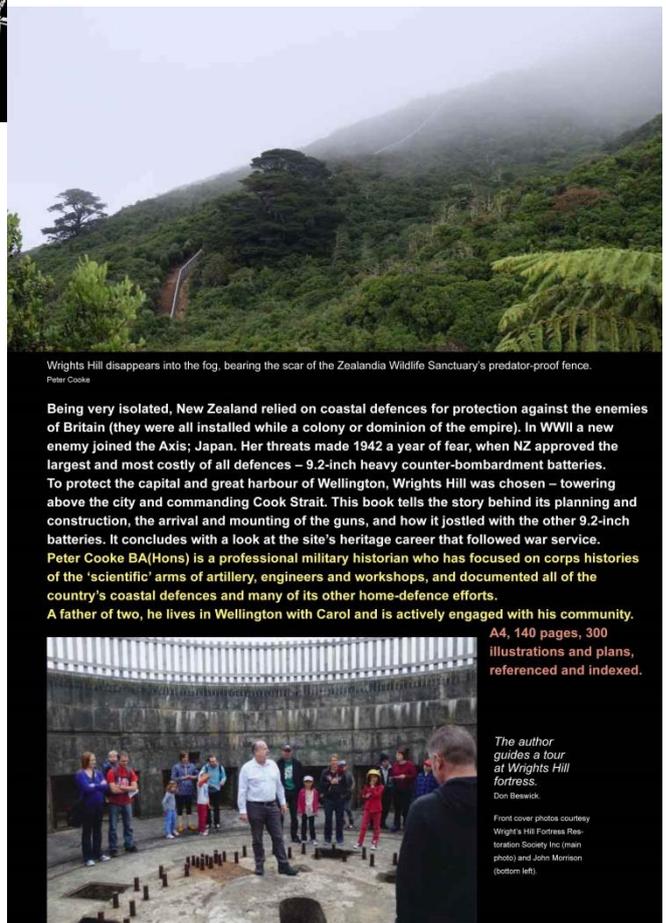
Being very isolated NZ relied on artillery coastal defences to guard its main ports. During WWII the biggest yet were installed to overlook Auckland and Wellington harbours, so crucial to maintaining the country's war effort of convoys or food and troops. Ordering the guns so late in the piece meant NZ received what turned out to be the last mark of 9.2-inch guns - the MkXV.

The book is therefore a detailed description of one of the last BL weapons to be used for fixed anti-shipping purposes. Wrights Hill is the only NZ 9.2-inch battery to be regularly opened to public.

The book describes the conditions that saw this calibre of gun recommended in the 1930s and construction beginning in 1942. Their installation is covered in great detail in photographs as is the post-military career the site enjoys now as a heritage destination for niche history enthusiasts.

The book is available for \$US40, £30 or €35 and I am happy to swap it for a book, photos or material Members may want to offer.

A review of the book by Trevor Parker follows.



Wrights Hill disappears into the fog, bearing the scar of the Zealandia Wildlife Sanctuary's predator-proof fence.  
 Peter Cooke

Being very isolated, New Zealand relied on coastal defences for protection against the enemies of Britain (they were all installed while a colony or dominion of the empire). In WWII a new enemy joined the Axis; Japan. Her threats made 1942 a year of fear, when NZ approved the largest and most costly of all defences – 9.2-inch heavy counter-bombardment batteries. To protect the capital and great harbour of Wellington, Wrights Hill was chosen – towering above the city and commanding Cook Strait. This book tells the story behind its planning and construction, the arrival and mounting of the guns, and how it jostled with the other 9.2-inch batteries. It concludes with a look at the site's heritage career that followed war service. Peter Cooke BA(Hons) is a professional military historian who has focused on corps histories of the 'scientific' arms of artillery, engineers and workshops, and documented all of the country's coastal defences and many of its other home-defence efforts. A father of two, he lives in Wellington with Carol and is actively engaged with his community.

A4, 140 pages, 300 illustrations and plans, referenced and indexed.

The author guides a tour at Wrights Hill fortress.  
 Don Bewick

Front cover photos courtesy Wrights Hill Fortress Restoration Society Inc (main photo) and John Morrison (bottom left).

**Book Review from Trevor Parker**

**Wrights Hill – New Zealand's 9/2-inch Coast Defense Batteries by Peter Cooke**

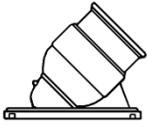
This is a remarkable book for its depth and breadth of the historical background and technical details of the gun battery built to protect Wellington and its Harbour in New Zealand's North Island.

The scope of the book could have been a narrow and focussed description of these defences, but it has been made much more interesting by explaining the history of Coast Defences, the detail of gun batteries and their equipment, and the 9.2-inch gun in particular. With this background the context of Wrights Hill Battery sits easily in the readers mind.

The book starts with a general background on coast defence, moving quickly to New Zealand in particular and the threat from Japan in WW2. There are descriptions of the weapons used, with 6-inch gun being the standard and then upgraded to the 9.2-inch gun to counter the possibility of bombardment by heavy cruisers armed with 8-inch guns. The decision to defend Wellington and its harbour and to build a battery of 3 guns at Wrights Hill is then shown in detail with the planning and construction and all the consequential difficulties. The work is explained in some detail with both maps and plans of the various buildings, tunnels and equipment. It's not until the details are digested that the scope of the support systems and infrastructure of a gun battery are realised; I found this absolutely fascinating!

The battery was not completed until after the end of WW2 and no shots were ever fired in anger. The facility was soon put on a care and maintenance basis and gradually began to deteriorate as equipment was moved out and vandalism began. The British decision to end Coast Artillery in 1956 exacerbated the demise of the battery and the gradual destruction and scrapping of the buildings, facilities and equipment, including the guns. This period is very well described and illustrated with many personal stories and anecdotes. The story ends on a happy note with the formation of the Wrights Hill Fortress Restoration Society in 1992, which has turned the area into a Heritage Site and preserved and recorded remaining buildings and structures, and even made a full size replica gun barrel in 1994.

Overall the book is very well researched and illustrated and manages to educate and inform the reader about both the Wrights Hill Battery as well as the wider context of gun batteries and their design, construction, maintenance and operation. Highly recommended.



**MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON SUNDAY 2 AUGUST 2020**  
*by conference call kindly arranged by Trevor Parker*

The meeting opened at 1002. Present: TP, GW, NG, NR, AF, IM, GS, NH

**1. Apologies for absence** - None.

**2. Minutes of the meeting of 3 May 2020** Accepted as correct.

**3. Matters arising**

TP: wished to discuss the Big Cannon project: this would be discussed at item 12 - Artillery Survey

TP had had no further contact with his graphic designer contact, who is in Canada.

**4. Chairman's Report** TP provided the following written report:

'Our local printer re-started his business and our latest Newsletter was printed, together with the previous edition, and posted.

Alastair Fyfe has done a super job on indexing our Newsletters; contents are now completed and have replaced the present ""Index of Newsletters" with "Newsletter CONTENTS PAGES by issue"; and he has also re-hashed the "Index by Subject" and produced "Newsletters ALPHABETICAL LIST OF ARTICLES". These are a great improvement on their predecessors and Alastair deserves our congratulations and thanks. There are still a few Newsletters where the original scans have errors and members were asked to send any early paper issues of the N/Ls numbers 31, 35, 42, 48, 50, and 58 to AWF. (Update, No. 35 is now the only outstanding 'problem' Newsletter)

The new webpage "Ordnance Downloads" has had two major re-hashes since it was first added to our website and now has several sub-pages for different ordnance topics. Each of these sub-pages has a three-column table with a brief description of the item and a hyperlink to it. Feedback has been very positive and the number of hits on the website has kept to the higher level since the page was launched. More items are still being sent in as well as others already received and awaiting upload.

OS member Ed Dittus (USA) has sent a vast number of items and is interested in helping the OS further. I'll be in touch with Ed over the next few days and will give an update at the board meeting next Sunday.

The 'Big Gun Project' has been put on the backburner somewhat, but I have been in touch with Paul Williams whose photo archive on Flickr is linked to from our website. He is interested in links to his gun photos from the OS 'Big Gun' database and I have included an example on the sample spreadsheet, attached. The spreadsheet itself has fields which I think should be part of a survey, but is not set in stone! It has a

couple of links to the OS Flickr page as well as Paul Williams' Flickr page. They are not accurate links, just to show the concept. I need to re-write the initial paper I wrote to kick start the project, as part of the proposal is already underway as the 'Big Cannon Project'.

Webpage – we have an increased number of hits largely due to our free 'Ordnance Downloads' – we decided to make them free. But TP concerned that some of our content RE ammo is really valuable and whether it should remain free – maybe only free to members; Board members need to consider. Big Cannon stuff later.

AWF asked if we should add an image of the article next to the download to make it more attractive. TP replied that that is what he had originally done, but it took up too much space. AWF suggested restricting amount per page and taking off the older items: TP would consider and circulate ideas but remained concerned that everything was free to everyone. GS suggested that it might not be good to remove older items as the site was in effect a growing archive.

## **5. Treasurer's Report**

Glad to report that the OS remained solvent; – subscriptions were still coming in, so balance should improve.

The last Journal cost £1387; the Newsletter £207; costs remaining fairly constant. We had two years-worth of cash in hand.

GS had not worked on the introduction of a PayPal option. But he does receive quite a few Bank Transfers. IMcK has sent him some subs info.

TP: Treasurer and Membership Secretaries both need to see the latest membership list; NG suggested SharePoint [MS Office]. TP asked should we print the membership list? All agreed we should not to do so.

A reminder in the Newsletter was needed for members to post their interests. Action GW.

The latest electronic members list should be available to all board members, as a password protected on document on our website. TP asked IMk and GS for a spreadsheet with all details to be sent to him, to be included in the new spreadsheet.

## **6. Secretary's Report**

Routine business conducted.

Concerning this year's AGM the following proposals were made to the Board regarding the Ordnance Society Annual General Meeting 2020:

'In view of the continuing uncertainty caused by Covid-19 and Government restrictions to control its spread, it is proposed that the Ordnance Society Annual General Meeting for 2020 be postponed until 2021.'

Proposed: Nick Hall, Hon Sec. Seconded: Trevor Parker, Chairman.

'That the usual AGM reports and accounts be published in the Ordnance Newsletter and on the website, and that members be encouraged to contact the Board with

any comments, views or questions.' Proposed: Nick Hall, Hon Sec. Seconded: Trevor Parker, Chairman.

Both proposals were agreed *nem con*.

Action: those Board Members concerned please to submit their Annual Reports to GW, copied to NH. Deadline: mid September.

## **7. Journal Editor's Report**

CW was pleased to report that a new Journal would be published this year.

Regarding the paper submitted by GS, this is being typeset but better definition was needed for some images. GW described possible method of improving.

TP asked GW to circulate details of how to improve digital images.

## **8. Newsletter Editor's Report**

Storage – not a problem at the moment but it may become so if we get a wet winter.

Gun Project: GW asked if TP's paper should be published in the next N/L? GW was keen to include. TP agreed to consider. Action TP.

Membership list would be very useful to GW since he cannot always tell if a submission is from a member or non-member. Action TP.

NR asked about using items published on other sites? GW was always happy to look at suggestions and finds that authors were generally happy for items to be re-published. GW mentioned that he had used TV screen grabs. GW replied that if members send him relevant suggestions he would deal with them.

GW was happy to go on as Editor for the time being. But need to think about an Editor for the future; he would be happy to introduce a new person in person to his methods.

Board Members thanked him for his good work as N/L Editor and this useful offer.

## **9. Visits Secretary's Report**

Everything cancelled until end of Aug – some things might be able to go ahead but now looking at next year.

GW mentioned how he enjoyed NG's book, he wondered if 'Game of Thrones' had known of it; in any case NG's book made 'Game of Thrones' more fun for him.

## **10. Publicity Officer's Report**

Aware of lack of time, due to him having to do someone else's job at work as well as his own.

Not a great deal he can do at the moment, but continuing to post on FB.

TP and NG would be in touch about Big Cannon project publicity.

## **11. Storage of 'old' Journals and Newsletters**

TP asked NG if his offer of storage space was still available? NG replied that this was questionable at present, due to the problems caused by Covid-19. TP asked if IMcK had finished his stocktake. IMcK replied that he had not, but that of Journals Vol. 2 and 22, he had no stock. TP observed that there were a few missing N/L from the digitised list. IMcK said he should have all issues and would look. Action IMcK.

## **12. Artillery Survey**

AWF asked would TP include Republic of Ireland? It was felt we should. Paul Williams has a lot of information on 'empire' pieces on his website. But stick to UK and Ireland. For example, Bill Clements [Fortress Study group] is covering just 6-in guns world-wide. It was suggested that if present, the plaque or label of the gun should be included: if he received a photo, it would go in.

AWF remarked that at Gibraltar, many obsolete guns were stored in the tunnels; Subterranea Britannica would be giving a webinar on these tunnels.

TP asked about including museum collections. NH replied that, for example, the Royal Armouries had a vast digital data base on its collection, a reduced version of which was on its website. It would be staggeringly time-consuming to put this data, or such from other museums, onto TP's form. TP asked about volunteer working groups; NH would consider. Action NH.

NR remarked that he had had difficulty in getting data from English Heritage on what artillery they hold on some of their many monuments. NG explained that the information is not with the staff at individual sites, it is with the curatorial staff: he would send details of whom to email. Action NG.

TP would like to get the surveys on sites started, eg Honourable Artillery Company, London, RMA Sandhurst and RA HQ, Larkhill.

NR observed that building the database would be slow: it took the Big Anchor Project ten years to reach 1,000 entries.

GS suggested U3A might help, especially since it includes a military history group. TP asked for details of their coordinator and would make contact. Action TP.

## **13. Any other business**

AWF – FSG and PFS webinars – AWF to send link

NR should OS run our own webinars, especially since we cannot do visits at present?

NR has Gotomeeting but his IT isn't too good.

NG – great if we have offers of speakers. Over Zoom free for 40 minutes. Google Groups eg is free – GS.

NH suggested if anyone would like to give a talk, propose to FSG/PFS series. AWF They use Zoom which accepts PPT. Viewer sees PPT and hears speaker. PPT mustn't be too big a file.

Booked up to Nov.

IMcK mentioned the useful book, 'Gunfire – British Artillery in WWII' by Stig H Moberg, was much reduced in the Naval & Military Press online sale.

## **14. Date of next meeting: 1<sup>st</sup> November. NH to host.**

The meeting closed at 11.54 with thanks to Trevor for arranging.

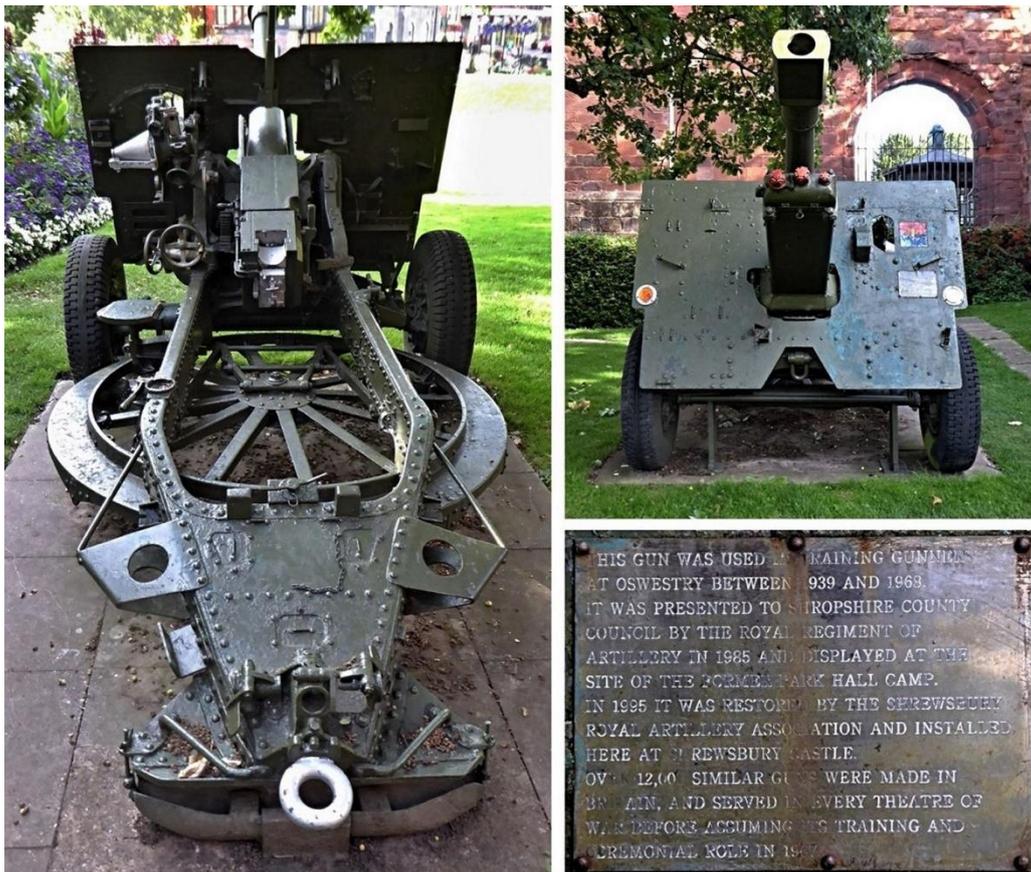
Nicholas Hall - Honorary Secretary - Aug 2020

**From Alastair Fyfe**  
**Shrewsbury Castle Guns**

There are two British guns on open-air display outside the gatehouse of Shrewsbury Castle, a 5.5inch and a 25pr. Having seen them back in 1998, a recent revisit to the town gave the opportunity for another look at them. They seem to be surviving well, although perhaps becoming a bit faded now.



Shrewsbury 5.5 in gun 1998-2020, AWF



Shrewsbury 25pr gun 2020, AWF