

Cap & Flint

The New Zealand Antique & Historical Arms
Association. Wellington Branch Inc.

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WELLINGTON.

Newsletter February 2008

www.nzaaawgtn.org.nz

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full colour

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- W.W. Greener .310 cal. take-down Martini action rifle with ammunition made by Greener
- Greener shot shell reloading tools and items recently obtained at a garage sale. A nice display.
- Grenades, with an article covering their war time production at the Ford Motor Company factory at Seaview, Lower Hutt.
- Gun with a history. A cased Webley with detailed information tracing the name of a previous owner.
- Gun with no known history. Once again a lovely cased revolver with accessories and information.
- GEW 98 rifle with bayonet and information.
- Gosser montenegrin revolvers with information on the different models.
- W.W. Greener cased 12 gauge shot gun dated 1893 with accessories and ammunition.
- Great china items, pieces of Grafton chinaware with information and reference book.
- German dress bayonets. An outstanding display of approximately two dozen different bayonets including police and Hunting assoc. A display that would have been made very much more interesting if there had been information displayed along with them indicating type, service, model etc. Rarely do you ever see such a comprehensive and quality array of German Third Reich edged weapons as were on display today.
- German 71 – 84, 11mm Mauser rifle with matching bayonet and a German W.W.I grenade.
- GEW 98 Mauser rifle with information and matching bayonet.
- German medals, postage stamps and related photographs and documents.

3rd February Meeting: The Letter “G”.

There was a good turnout of members at our February meeting with many good items on display. Unfortunately, our guest speaker was unable to attend due to ill health that prevented him from sharing his experiences as a “prisoner of war”. We wish him a speedy recovery and look forward to when he can come along and relate his experiences to us.

The letter “G” bought out a varied range of items including:

- Germany 1914 – 1918 & 1939 – 1945. A magnificent display of medals, swords, Mauser rifles, pistols, holsters and a Spandau light machine gun.
- Great Britain, Martini 577-450 cal. long lever and short lever rifles.
- Generals shoulder boards of Soviet origin.
- Blue & Greys, bayonet with good detailed information.

A selection of photographs from the Feburary meeting



Historical Highlights

The World's Largest Gun.



The 80cm Railway Gun

The largest gun ever built weighed 1344 tons, had an operational career of 13 days during which a total of 48 shells were fired in anger. It took 25 trainloads of equipment, 2500 men and up to six weeks to assemble. It seems unlikely that such a weapon will ever be seen again.

Work on the giant weapon begun as far back as 1934, when German army ordnance enquired of Krupp's the weight and speed required of a projectile to demolish the massive defences of the Maginot line that the French were then in the process of completing. Preliminary blueprints for an 80cm siege gun were compiled by Krupp's ballistic experts, but nothing more was heard from the authorities about it even during Hitler's visit to the works at Essen, in March 1936, during which he enquired into the giant guns feasibility, nothing was commissioned. It wasn't until October 1939, that Hitler, in preparing his plans for attacking Russia, initiated orders for the production of the 80cm guns.



Hitler (centre) watches the gun's assembly.

After orders in 1939 were given to develop and produce the gun, Krupp built a test model in late 1939. After the test programs for the gun were completed in mid 1940 and the results sent to Berlin, the gun and its carriage were removed and presumably scrapped. The test results were favourable and contracts were let to Krupp for the manufacture of two of the guns in late 1940-41, and a third in 1944. This last one was found unfinished in its shop at Krupp, when the American forces swept through Essen.

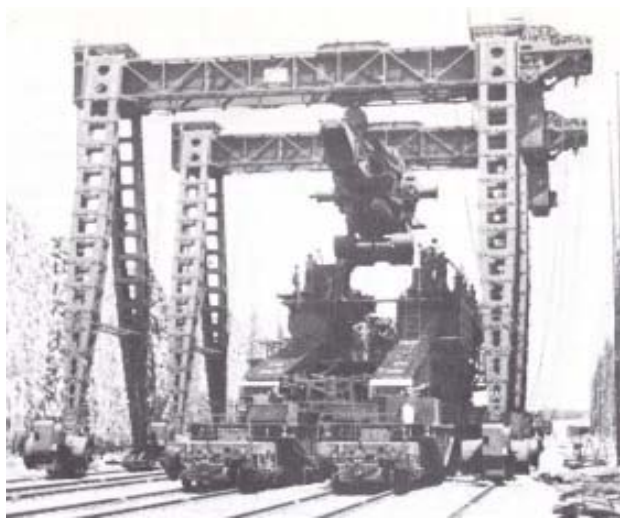
The two 80 centimetre guns that Krupp produced in 1941-1942 were the largest guns in the world. They were identical railway pieces but were different from conventional single-track railway guns in that a 4-track system was needed for emplacement. The first gun produced was named Gustav Geschutz, after an engineer

at Krupp; the second one produced was named the Dora, for the wife of the engineer who built it. Each gun was put under the command of a major general, and crews were selected and trained in the operations of the gun. The 80-cm K (E), for all its size and weight, to say nothing of its "overkill" firepower, went into action on only one occasion. It was originally intended to smash through the extensive Maginot Line forts but when the campaign in the West took place in 1940 the 80-cm K (E) was still in the Krupp workshops at

Essen and, in any event, the German army bypassed the Maginot Line altogether. Thus when the 80-cm equipment had completed its gun proofing trials there was nothing for the gun and its crew to do. To justify the labour and effort of getting the huge gun and its entourage into action, the potential target had to justify all the bother involved, and there were no really large fortification lines left in Europe for the gun to tackle. During

early 1941 one potential target appeared on the planner's drawing boards and that was Gibraltar. It was planned to assault this isolated fortress at the mouth of the Mediterranean to deny the inland sea to the Allies but as Spain was neutral, permission had to be obtained from General Franco to allow German troops to travel through Spain to make the attack. Operational planning for the assault got to the stage at which German parachute and glider troops were actively training for the assault before a meeting between Hitler and Franco showed that the wily Spanish dictator was not going to allow himself or his country to become mixed up in a major European conflict. The invasion of the Soviet Union took place during the second half of 1941 without any assistance from the 80-cm K (E), but by early 1942 the

advances of the German army were so rapid and deep that they were on the approaches to the Crimea. Ahead of them lay the naval base of Sevastopol, which was potentially a useful supply port and base for the southern German armies. The need for such a supply base was not very pressing, but what attracted the German operational planners was that Sevastopol was a heavily fortified port. Around the perimeter of the city was a long chain of fortifications, some of them dating back to the days before the Crimean War of 1854-6 but others more modern, and near the sea coast there were numerous heavy coastal batteries. The place looked ideal for an investment and siege in the old manner, to be followed up by a huge assault that would demonstrate to the world the power of the German army. Soon the relatively light forces that advanced into the Crimea were supplemented by more and



men under the control of a German army engineer unit dug through a small knoll to form a wide railway cutting on an arc of double track, and the sides of the cutting were raised to provide cover and protection for the gun by the addition of a 10 metre high fence, 150 x 500 metres long making it impossible to view the site. There was no roof on the top against aerial view because the site was out of the range of Allied aircraft in 1941. On the approaches railway troops laboured to re-lay track and strengthen possible trouble points against the passing of the "Gustav". Work on the eventual firing site reached the point where the area behind the curve of firing tracks resembled a small marshalling yard over 1.2 km long, it resembled a marshalling yard, and that was exactly what it was. In the area the 25 separate loads that formed the gun and its carriage had to be assembled and pushed and pulled into the right position and order. Farther to the rear were the accommodation areas where the numerous men of the gun crew lived and prepared for their task



Firing commenced on 5 June 1942, "Gustav" was but one voice in a huge choir that heralded one of the largest and heaviest artillery bombardments of all time. By the time Sevastopol fell early in July 1942 it was calculated that no fewer than 562,944 artillery projectiles had fallen on the port, the bulk of them from heavy-calibre guns and howitzers, and this total does not include the noisy storms of artillery rockets and the extra weight of the infantry's own unit artillery. How the civilians of Sevastopol survived it all can now be explained quite easily. They simply went underground. The city knew the bombardment was coming, for not only had their own party and other authorities told them what to expect, but the Germans constantly assailed them with radio broadcasts and other propaganda as to the wrath that was to befall them. By the time the real bombardment started they had already dug deep shelters both underground and in the walls of quarries and hillsides, and there they lived and remained for weeks, a surprising number survived.

more troops and the German planners started to scour Europe for heavy guns to form an old-fashioned siege train.

For centuries it had been the task of the siege train to bombard a besieged fortress into submission or else open a breach for attacking troops to storm. The Germans decided to repeat this performance on a massive scale. From all corners of Europe the German army assembled a massive gun park of all types of artillery from small-calibre field guns up to pre World War I large-calibre howitzers. Some were German in origin but others were old captured weapons, and to these were added the modern embellishments of artillery rockets and super-heavy artillery. Into this category came the 60-cm (23.6-in) mobile mortars, and it was realised that at last the propaganda coup could be topped by the first operational use of "Gustav".

Accordingly the 80-cm K (E) trundled to the Crimea on specially re-laid track. Well ahead of its progress a small army of labourers started to prepare the gun's chosen firing position at a small village outside Sevastopol. Well over 1500

The manpower involved in assembling "Gustav" was large, each of the 80-cm K (E)s had a complete detachment of no less than 1,420 men under



the command of a full colonel. He had his own headquarters and planning staff, and there was the main gun crew that numbered about 500, most of whom were involved with the complicated ammunition care and handling. Once in action these 500 would remain with the gun, but the rest of the gun's manpower was made up from various units including an intelligence section to determine what targets to engage. Quite a number of troops were involved in the two light anti-aircraft defence battalions that always accompanied the gun when it travelled and also supplied manpower for some assembly tasks. Once the gun was in position these AA battalions warded off unwanted aerial intruders. Two guard companies constantly patrolled the perimeter of the gun position, and at all times there was a small group of civilian technicians from Krupp who dealt with the technical aspects of their monster charge and advised the soldiers. Railway troops and the usual administrative personnel added the manpower total. Even using this small army of men it took between three and six weeks to assemble the gun, even using the two 10-tonne cranes that had been designed specially for the task. Just getting the right sub-assembly load into position at the right time was a masterpiece of railway marshalling and planning, but eventually it was all sorted out and by early June 1942, "Gustav" was ready, along with the rest of the siege train with all their cumbersome carriages and ammunition.

"Gustav" was not used against civilian targets. Its first targets were some coastal batteries that were engaged at a range of about 25000-m and special observer planes assigned to the gun observed all shots. Eight shots were all that were required to demolish these targets, and later the same day a further six shots were fired at the concrete work known as Fort Stalin. By the end of the day that too was a ruin and

preparations were made for the following day. It might be thought that 14 rounds in a day was slow going, but in fact it was good going for a gun with a calibre of 80 cm. At best the firing rate was one round every 15 minutes, and more often the interval was longer. The preparation of each shell and charge was considerable and involved several stages including taking the temperature of each charge, accurately

computing the air temperature and wind currents at altitude, and getting the shell and the charge to the breech. Projectile and charge then had to be rammed accurately, and the whole

Above Photo: note size of the soldier compared to shell & casing.



barrel had to be elevated to the correct angle. It all took a lot of time.

Once Sevastopol had fallen on 1 July the German siege train was dispersed all over Europe once more, and "Gustav" was taken apart and dragged back to Germany, where its barrel was changed. Including the 48 operational shells fired against the Crimean targets, 'schwere Gustav' had fired about 300 rounds in all, including proofing, training and demonstration rounds.

80cm Ammunition

Two types of projectiles were fired using a 300-lb. charge of smokeless powder: a 10,584 lb. High explosive (HE) shell and a 16,540-lb. concrete-piercing projectile. Craters from the HE shells measured 30-ft wide and 30-ft deep while the concrete piercing projectile proved capable of penetrating 264-ft of reinforced concrete before exploding! Maximum range was 29 miles with HE shells and 23 miles with concrete piercing projectiles. Muzzle velocity was approximately 2700 f.p.s



Weight of gun 1,344 tons

Length overall of gun 164 feet (49.98 m)

Diameter of projectile 31.5 inches (80 cm)

Weight of explosive charge 2,400 lbs. of RDX

Length overall of projectile 11 feet 6 inches (3.50 m)

Weight of propellant charge 2,500 lbs. in 3 increments



The gun's firing position as it appears today. You can still see the concrete remains of the security fence. The empty spaces between the posts were enclosed with timber, which has gone today. You can see this fence on the historic picture on page 2, just to the left of the gun.

The article below appeared in the *Dominion Post* on 16.01.08 and makes for interesting reading. For those of you that perhaps did not see the article it is reproduced in it's entirety for your information. **ED.**

Growing interest in firearms "healthy"

More New Zealanders are arming themselves with firearms licences for sport, recreation and pest control, showing what police believe is a healthy attitude toward gun use. Police figures issued to the *Dominion Post* under the Official Information Act show that about 16,000 people got firearms licences for the first time in the past two years – up from 5320 in 2002.

Police national manager of firearms licensing and vetting Inspector Joe Green said there was more interest in game hunting.

Lifestyle block and vineyard owners were getting licences for guns to scare birds and kill pests.

Firearms were used in only 1.3 per cent of all violent crime, including homicides, he said.

"You get this increased interest in firearms and at the same time the criminal use of firearms is falling.

KIWI ARSENAL

There are up to 1,113,520 firearms in New Zealand.

- 35,930 are pistols.
- 8447 are military style semi-automatics.
- 3606 are restricted weapons, these include: 9 anti-tank rocket launchers, 168 heavy-machine guns, 1741 sub-machine guns, 1081 light-machine guns, 86 rocket launchers, 6 stun guns, and one grenade.

"All these trends say to me New Zealanders have a healthy attitude toward the use of firearms."

But gun control advocate Phillip Alpers, an adjunct associate public health professor at Sydney University, said it was "wishful thinking" to believe the increase was entirely due to healthy outdoors activities.

"You have to recognise there is a component of males in particular, who fantasise about blowing away a burglar and think that guns are a solution," he said.

"There is always a group of people who lie to police and say they want it for a sport when they'll keep it under the bed."

Though it was not known exactly how many guns there were in New Zealand, police estimated there were 1.1 million. By last November, 214,396 New Zealanders held firearms licences. Of course, 8000 of the 44,667 issued in 2006 were first-time licence holder, as were about 8000 of the 37,804 issued last year.

Council of Licensed Firearms Owners chairman John Howat said the number of licensed gun owners dropped off in the 1990's after an initial increase when licenses were introduced in 1983.

Previously, gun owners had only to be registered, he said.

Mr Howat put the latest increase down to a greater appreciation of the outdoors and the availability of replica guns.

Young people progressed from plastic "soft-air guns" to buying real guns for shooting sports, he said.

And city slickers who bought a ten-acre block would take up arms when rabbits, hares and possums began "destroying their dream".

"A lot of them change their view-points on guns – there's a need for them in that situation".

Mr Alpers said though Australians had to prove they were members of a shooting club before being issued with a gun licence, New Zealanders did not. Some would say they wanted one for outdoors activities because self-defence was not an acceptable reason to want to own a gun in New Zealand.

The Big Volkswagen Rip-Off

In May 1933 Hitler banned the trade unions and were replaced by the 'German Labour Front', and strikes were banned. In order to win over the support of the working class, the Labour Front established two new organisations: 'Beauty of Labour' and 'Strength through Joy', or KdF. Both can be seen as an attempt to improve the status of workers, and their working conditions, as a substitute for wage increases.

The Labour Front's official philosophy was to reduce leisure to a mere auxiliary of work, although it preferred to concentrate on the achievements of organisations like KdF, and provide workers with the prospect of owning one of the new 'people's cars' shown in the poster and the car is the Volkswagen.



Similar posters urged workers to: "Save five marks a week and get your own car." Workers responded enthusiastically, and paid millions of marks in to the saving scheme, but they received no cars, instead the money was used to fund the military expansion plan created by Hitler, thus making it the biggest rip-off scheme in history.

A Debt Repaid

In September 1945, Great Britain was in a financial mess. It's economy wrecked after six devastating years of war, the nation needed money not only to pay for reconstruction but also to import food. During world war II, the U.S. Lend-Lease program had provided the Allies more than \$50 billion in equipment, food and fuel at no cost, but when President Harry S. Truman terminated



the arrangement at the end of the war, Britain - to avoid bankruptcy - had no choice but to ask the United States and Canada for aid. The two responded, respectively, with loans of \$4.3 billion and \$1.2 billion.

It took 61 years, but Britain has finally closed the book on those loans. On December 31, 2006, the Treasury sent final instalments of \$83.25 million to the United States and \$22.7 million to Canada. The loans were “vital support which helped secure peace and prosperity in the post-war

period,” British Economic Secretary E. Balls said in a statement. Although there has been widespread sentiment that the loans should have been provided gratis or interest-free, each came with relatively generous terms: a fixed annual interest rate of only 2 percent and a stipulation that they could be paid back in 50 yearly instalments, beginning in 1950. It actually took 56 years since 6 payments were deferred – 1956, 1957, 1964, 1965, and 1976 because of economic or political concerns.

Sixty years of interest had raised the loans' total to nearly \$10 billion, about double their original value, but one can only speculate about what might have happened without them in those first few crucial post-war years.

Women in Nelson's Navy

Women on the lower deck

Whenever Royal Navy ships of the period came into port, an armada of ‘bumboats’ immediately besieged them. Bumboats were small vessels that brought fresh vegetables, supplies and, most notoriously, prostitutes and drink to the warships. In port, most ships' captains allowed prostitutes onboard, and the men were in any case already issued with large quantities of drink - the standard allowance was a gallon of beer a man per day. If beer was not available, then a pint of wine or half a pint of spirits could be substituted.

The warships of the day were very overcrowded, and each man was only allowed 14 inches in which to hang his hammock. Add large numbers of prostitutes to the overcrowding and heavy drinking, and the scenes below decks where the men lived must have been something to behold. A sailor wrote that,

“with the women came drink and what with the drink and the women the ship's discipline came to a stop. The men and women drank and quarrelled between the guns. The decks were allowed to become dirty. Drunken women were continually coming up to insult the officers, or to lodge some complaint. Sometimes the women ran aloft to wave their petticoats to the flagship”.

It is from here where the saying “shake a leg” originates from the ship's Bosun when in port and trying to muster enough crew-men to form a work party would go through the crews quarters calling out “shake a leg” to the hammocks occupants, if a hairy leg appeared he would be tossed out to be included in the day's work party, on the other hand if a slender womans shaven leg appeared she would not be tossed out and allowed to remain undisturbed to sleep off the drunken night before.

Other women, disguised as men, are also known to have entered the Royal Navy, and to have served for some considerable time without detection. Much has been written about them, and while some of these stories are likely to be folk myths, there are a number of attested cases in which the women involved became minor celebrities.

For instance Hanna Snell, the daughter of a dyer from Worcester, enlisted in the army in 1745, deserted, and then enlisted in the marines - who were shipboard soldiers (later to become the Royal Marines) who helped keep discipline onboard ship. Hanna saw action in this capacity, and was eventually badly wounded in both thighs. Despite this, her true sex was never identified, and she recovered from her wounds. In 1750 she revealed her true identity, became a celebrity and starred on the stage.



Prostitutes being taken onboard a Naval ship

A.G.M.

We will be having our annual general meeting on Sunday 2nd March at our usual venue, Petone Workingmen’s Club, Udy Street Petone to be followed by a Mickey Mouse auction. We have got the hall booked from 10:00 am. If you have items for the auction please be early as we would like all items for the auction recorded and processed by 12: 30.

I have been advised that a couple of committee members will be standing down, and I would like to thank them for their efforts in helping to make the club the success that it is today. It will be mentioned, elsewhere in the newsletter that we are filling up for the trip to Blenheim. If you wish to go to the air museum, then this event will be a must for you. We intend to book a plane so getting reasonable numbers is essential. We also intend to have one or two other activities planned for the day. For more details contact Dave C. or myself.

Alwyn.

A Reminder

It’s the law

* Check the expiry date of your firearms licence and start the renewal process three months before that date. Fee doubles if your licence has expired.

* In the light of recent raids associated with the Jenner case, members with endorsed licences are urged to verify their C cat. items with your local arms officer.

Etiquette

A timely reminder at the start of our collecting year, to all members, especially to our newer members on the etiquette involved when viewing items on display at our monthly meetings. All too often there are occurrences where people uninvited pick up and handle items without first asking permission of the owner.

Some items displayed are very valuable and irreplaceable, so first, ask the owners permission for a closer look and I am sure that owner will only be too pleased to show it to you, and even to explain in detail the workings and the history of the item.

We all started off our collecting careers by looking at the valuable items the “Old Timers” displayed, items we then could not afford. They imparted their knowledge to the younger ones coming through and helped to nurture the collecting spirit and today we don’t want to dampen their collecting spirit either, so would like to educate them that they don’t pick up an item for a closer look until invited to. **So please, “look with your eyes only and don’t touch”**

ED.

Wanted To Buy

I am interested in buying several collectors books of German World War II daggers from the series of books written by Thomas M. Johnson titled

“Collecting the Edged Weapons of the Third Reich”

Volumes two, three, four & seven are required. If you are able to help phone **Ross, 569-9579.**

Club trip to Blenheim Update

We have fifteen confirmed members interested in going on the club trip to visit the Omasa Historic Aviation Museum in Blenheim. The visit will possibly take place in April. Present thoughts are to fly to Blenheim and also try to organise some other activities for the day. The cost will probably be around \$200 to cover travel and entry to the venue. We still need a few more people to make the whole thing viable, if you are interested in coming along, or require more details contact Alwyn or Dave C.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

- Central Branch show, Otorohanga, 24 February 2008.
- Wellington Branch A.G.M & Auction, 2 March 2008
- Hawkes Bay A.G.M & Auction, Napier, 08 March 2008.
- Auckland Arms Fair, Henderson, 5 – 6 April 2008.
- Auction, Sth. Canty. Branch, 19 April 2008.
- NZAHAA A.G.M & Auction. Christchurch, 17 May 2008.
- Militaria Auction, St. Pat’s Kilbirnie 17 – 18 May 2008.
- Wellington Branch Auction, 19 –20 July 2008.
- Militaria Auction, St. Pats Kilbirnie 25 – 26 October 2008.

Items for July Auction

A reminder to all members that we are now collecting and catalogueing items for our July auction. Any one wanting to include items in this auction should contact me.

Steve

National Annual General Meeting

The national AGM that was going to be held in Canterbury on the 17th of May, has now been cancelled ...and this is now going to be held in Timaru on the 19th of April in conjunction with the auctioning of the Keith McFadgen collection.

Next Meeting.

Sunday 2nd March 2008. At the usual venue, Petone Workingmen’s Club, Udy Street Petone from 10.00am. This meeting is our A.G.M. and will feature a Mickey Mouse auction The early start is to give time to record items for sale. Please be early if you wish to sell items. The Mickey Mouse auction will start at the conclusion of the A.G.M. Snacks will be available for purchase to our members in the club’s resturant through-out the day if they wish.