

Richmond Park Cannons

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Name: 32 Pounder 50 cwt 'Monk Pattern A' SBML

Location: Richmond Park, East Market Street, Richmond NSW 2753

Co-ordinates: 330 35' 55.13" S, 1500 45' 07.64" E

Serial Number: 6361

Date of manufacture: 1855

Manufacturer: Low Moor Iron Co of Bradford (Yorkshire) England

Founded in 1788, iron guns were supplied to the Board of Ordnance, the first castings being made in 1791 and continued until the end of the Napoleonic War in 1815. During the Crimean War gun production was resumed but was permanently abandoned after the end of the Indian Mutiny.

Material: Iron

Weight: 50 cwt, 1 qrts, 8 lb

Calibre: 6.5 inches

Weight of projectile: 32 lb

Range: 2, 900 yards

History:

One of two cannons of its type mounted on Wood Garrison Rear Chock carriages at Macquarie Point Battery, Sydney between 1856 and 1870 (near Mrs Macquarie Chair, Sydney Domain). They were sent from Sydney in 1884 to form the Bulli Artillery (Half Company). In the mid 1890's the guns were replaced and moved to a position in front of the Married Quarters at Signal Hill, Wollongong. It is one of only two guns of this weight within the 32 pounder group to be used in NSW, the other is located next to it. The carriages upon which the guns are now mounted are not of the

type the barrel was placed on when in use in Sydney or Bulli. The carriage has been made to plans typical in design of naval carriages of the 1780s/1790s. In making the carriages it appears they misinterpreted the rear elevation with the optical illusion of having the carriage sides splayed out at the lower ends.

Following Federation in 1901, a survey was conducted of all weapons throughout Australia. Those guns that were obsolete were offered, at no charge, for display in parks but the cost of moving and display was to be borne by the receiving organisation. On the 29 January 1904 Alderman Edward Campbell, Mayor of Richmond, wrote to the Premier of New South Wales requesting 'two of the pieces of discarded ordnance'. Subsequent letters were sent by the Council Clerk to Joseph Cook, the local Federal member, on 7 March and 16 March 1904 citing the former Mayor's earlier letter and repeating the request for two guns. Cook supported the request and forwarded it to the appropriate authority. When the final allocation was made Richmond was offered two 32-pounder guns and two siege carriages. The gun barrels were then located at Wollongong and the carriages in Sydney. The cost of moving the guns and carriages totalling £9.19.6 (\$19.95) was raised by the local Council. Alderman TJ Griffiths, Mayor of the Richmond Borough Council, organised a collection of donations which totalled £10.14.6 (\$21.45).

The carriages arrived first and were held at the railway yard pending the arrival of the barrels. Records of the Richmond Borough Council meeting of 16th February, 1905 indicate the cannons were in the park. The Richmond Park Conservation Management Plan indicated they were mounted in front of the Pavilion as a Boer War Memorial. The guns were reported as being on two wooden spoke wheels with metal rims. The rear end of the cannon carried shafts about six feet long, used in conjunction with horses for transport.





A 24 pounder gun being placed on a siege carriage at Woolwich in 1865. This style of carriage, known as a Block Trail Carriage, was introduced for the 32 pounder 31 March 1860 replacing the box trail design (right above). Its advantage was an improved centre of gravity allowing traverse of the gun by one man. (Woolwich photo courtesy of the Peter Webster Collection)

It is claimed when the original carriages had rotten and were a hazard to the children, who loved to climb over them, the fittings were removed and given to Council officers and the barrels left on the ground. It is not clear as to when this occurred. Some reports indicate it may have been as early as 1921 but more likely at a later date. Mr Ron Sullivan recalled playing on the guns until he left the area in 1912 but when he returned in 1921 he recalled the guns were gone. Another old resident of Richmond, Mr George Dell recalled playing on the guns between 1919 and 1923.

The *Windsor and Richmond Gazette* on 26 May 1933 reported:

Two large cannon, barrels lying on the ground in front of the grandstand in the Richmond Park formed the subject of a complaint in, 'the parks committee's report to the local council at last meeting. The committee recommended that the guns be either removed from the park or buried where they lay. Ald. Farlow asked whether any sentimental value attached to the cannons, and was informed there was not, as they originally came from Wollongong, where they had been used for coastal defence purposes.

And so the guns disappeared.

Their existence remained mainly lost to the memories of the older citizens until Mr Alex Hendrikson, of the Windsor Businessmen's Association, first heard about the cannons at a Parramatta auction in 1975. Along with other members of the organisation, he began the search for the guns but without success. The exact location of where they were buried was uncertain with some reports saying they had been buried beneath the foundations of the grand stand.

The RAAF assisted in the search but again to no avail. Reports of the search appeared in the local paper and as a result further information became available.

Using the latest information supplied by Mr. Henry Gascoigne, Mr. Eric Ridgeway of Wilberforce, an amateur gold prospector offered his services to the search leaders Cr. Rex Stubbs and Mr Alex Hendrikson.

Within five minutes of commencing the search in February 1985 the presence of the barrels was confirmed by metal detector a metre inside the oval boundary fence fronting the grandstand. Hawkesbury Shire Council arranged for excavation of the cannons. After excavation the cannons were taken to the RAAF Base, Richmond, where barrels were restored and replica carriages built by the No. 2 Aircraft Depot Armament Section. The guns were returned to Richmond Park in December 1988 and mounted near the War Memorial in Richmond Park.

The first 32 pounder cast iron guns are recorded in the 1720s and the last and over the life of the gun four different designs were produced (Blomefield, Millar, Monk and Dundas). Each came in various lengths and weight. The first 32 pounder guns appear to have arrived sometime around 1858. In December 1870 a total of 45 of these guns were in NSW; two of 50 cwt, 33 of 56 cwt and 9 of 58 cwt). In 1869 it had been 43 and they are noted as being mounted at Dawes Battery (15), Fort Denison (12), Fort Macquarie (7), Mrs Macquarie Battery (8) and one in Colonial Stores. It can be assumed the two guns of 50 cwt had arrived in 1870. The 32 pounders appear to have been dismantled by 1874.

Only 10 of these guns are listed in the 1901 Report; two of 50 cwt at Wollongong and eight of 56 cwt. 32 pounder smooth bore guns were converted to 64 pounder rifled muzzle loading guns (RML) in the 1870s and whether this is the fate of the remaining guns is still to be determined.

We are indebted to Hawkesbury City Council, Suzanne Smith and Jenny Griffiths (Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society), Denise Hayes and Peter Webster for their assistance and generosity with information for this gun.



The manufacturers name (Lowmoor) on the right trunnion)



Serial number of the barrel 6361 on the left trunnion



The weight of the barrel marked in hundredweights, quarters and pounds and date of manufacture 1855.



The cypher of Queen Victoria (photo taken in 2014)



The cypher of Queen Victoria (photo taken in 2007)



32 pounder 50 cwt smooth bore gun mounted on Wood Garrison Rear Chock carriages at Macquarie Point Battery



The guns in Richmond Park circa 1905



Close up of one of the guns showing the siege carriage on which the barrel is mounted



One of the barrels on the ground in Richmond Park before it was mounted in 1905.
(KCHC 081517 Reproduced with permission from the Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society)



One of the barrels after excavation in 1985. Despite being only just below ground surface they were hard to find. (KCHC 075002 Reproduced with permission from the Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society)