

Army Museum of Tasmania

Anglesea Barracks
HOBART

Information Sheet No 6

12 Pounder BL ARMSTRONG Field Gun

LOCATION

Outside the Army Museum of Tasmania.



HISTORY

This Gun was one of two purchased by the Government of Tasmania for use by the Southern Tasmania Volunteer Artillery around 1880.

The guns were numbered 3886 and 3887. This gun is the only survivor (no 3887). It is not clear when it was disposed of but it was shown on the Inspection Return dated 23

– 27 January 1902 at the time when all military stores were being handed to the Commonwealth.¹

It is not certain when the gun left Military service but it is believed to have ended up in the hands of Francois Fouche of Old Beach who in turn sold it to Richard Cains who left it with Fouche. Whilst Mr Cains was serving in Viet Nam the gun was disposed of to Mr. Ben McKay, MLC who donated the gun to the Cambridge War Memorial. It is believed the gun at that time was complete with its limber².

The Gun remained at the Memorial until the Defence Department traded a 25 pdr Field Gun for it in 1976 when the writer at Hobart Workshop Platoon workshops, Dowsing's Point restored it. At that time, it was on its limbers wheels as the original wheels had rotted and collapsed³. The original hubs had been removed and put in a shed. A complete original hub was recovered in 2008 and a new set of wheels incorporating the original hubs are being manufactured in (2010) the United Kingdom.



The Southern Tasmania Volunteer Artillery used this gun as part of the combination of guns that the Tasmanian Government purchased for defence of the Colony. Training occurred at regular Easter Encampments which began at Mona Vale in 1885

¹ Inspection Report J. Lennox Library

² Personal Communication from Mr R. Cains, Old Beach

³ The wheels currently fitted appear to be 2nd class B No.25 Wheels, Early British Quick firing Artillery, Len Trawin

and which were held in various parts of Tasmania in the years following. Volunteers came from various parts of Tasmania to participate in these annual events.

After Federation this gun was allocated to,
1903 6th Military District, No2 Tas. Battery AFA
1906 No 1 Tas. Battery AFA
1912 Saluting Battery, Domain
1913 Ordnance Store⁴

The lineage of the current Army Reserve 16th Field Battery, Royal Australian Artillery can be traced back to the Volunteer units that used this gun.

The significant perspective is that it is one of a number of guns in Tasmania that reflect the developing technology of field artillery in the period 1870 – 1900 as gun makers struggled to overcome recoil, develop new means of ignition and sighting.

The carriage on the 12 pounder has two features that are unique not only in Tasmania but more than likely in Australia

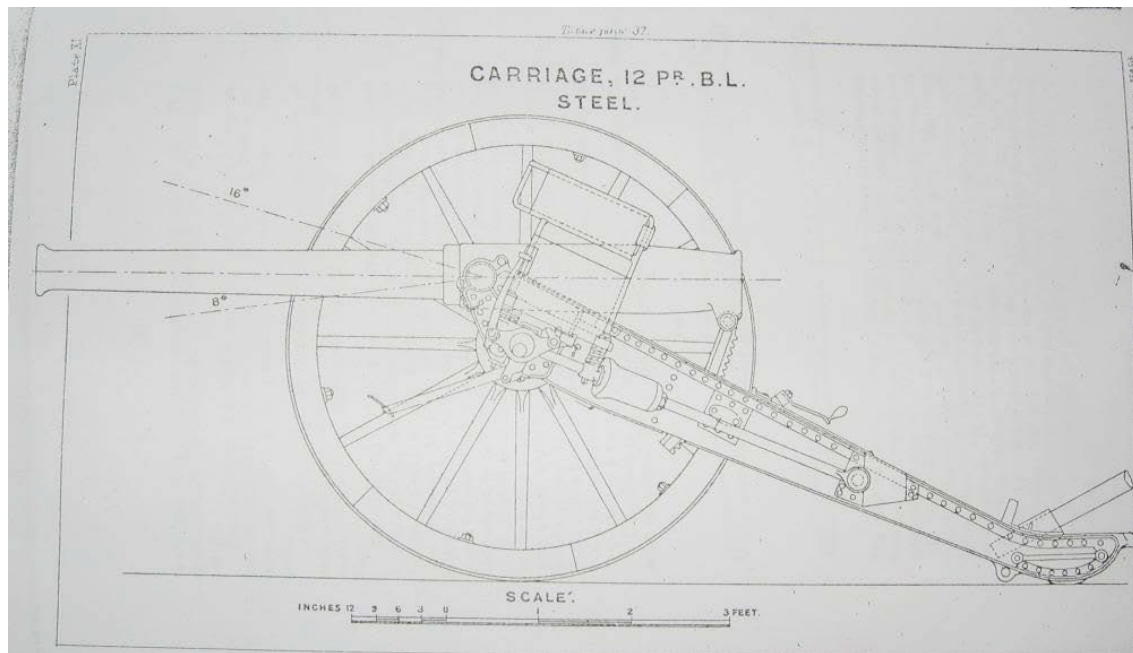


Fig.1 Drawing of Carriage⁵

Note this drawing is of a RCD pattern carriage which differs in some regards to the EOC Carriage

The first feature is the recoil-braking feature. Garrison Artillery had much earlier used sliding carriages to overcome the rearward inertia of firing a projectile. Field

⁴ Information supplied by K. Glyde

⁵ Treatise on military carriages and other manufactures of the Royal Carriage Department, HMSO 1888

Artillery had at this point been living with guns recoiling rearward with little or no mechanical means of control.

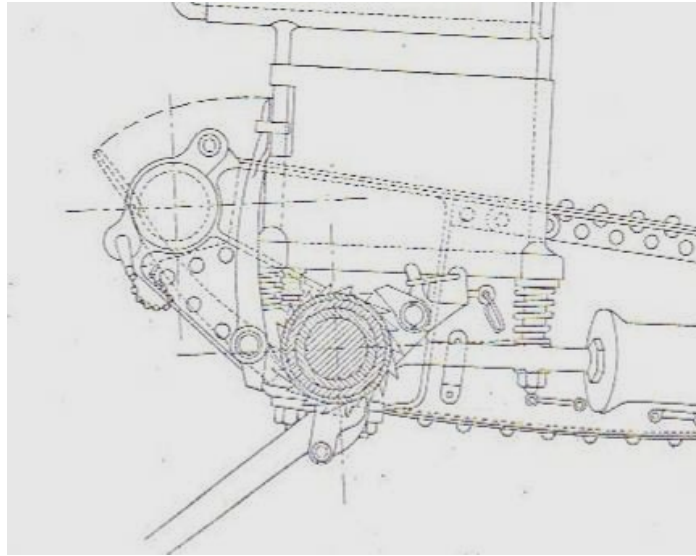


Fig.2 drawing showing the braking mechanism⁶

This gun has attached to the inner flanges of the hubs a forged steel band that has internal ratchet teeth. A pawl can be engaged when firing that prevents the rearward movement of the gun. It does not prevent the crew from running the gun forward. This braking device could also be used to lock the wheels when being towed down a steep incline to create a drag effect to slow the gun.

The pawl is visible in the above drawing in the disengaged position.

Because of this method of controlling the rearward movement of the carriage, extra pressure was exerted on the axletree as the trail was prevented from moving rearward.

To overcome this stress tensile stay bolts were attached to the axletree near the brakes and to the carriage (see figure 1 above). These tensile stays were constructed in two sections with a socket in the centre which houses a 1 inch square spring which compresses against the rearward motion of the carriage and thereby absorbs the stress that would have been otherwise placed on the axletree.

⁶ Treatise on military carriages and other manufactures of the Royal Carriage Department, HMSO 1888

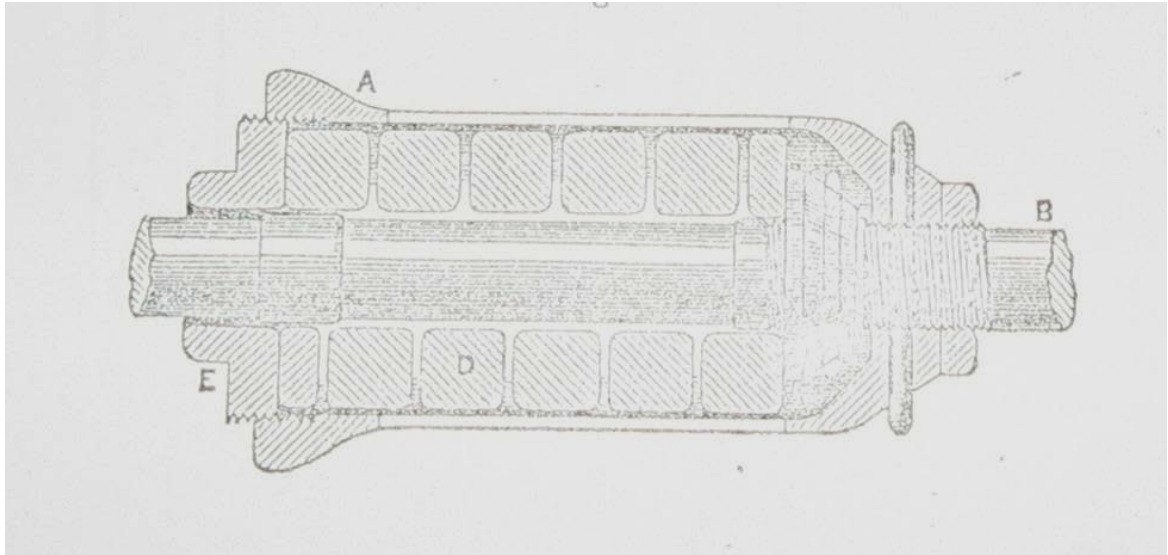


Fig.4 Cross section of the socket⁷

- A; Socket
- B; Rear section tensile stay which screws into socket
- C; Front section of tensile stay which screws into a nut
- D; Spring
- E; Nut through which front section of tensile stay slides and which secures the spring in the socket



detail of Socket and tensile stay

⁷ Treatise on military carriages and other manufactures of the Royal Carriage Department, HMSO 1888