

The Godley Beacon

The Godley Head Heritage Trust Newsletter no 5 March 2004

Gun returns to Godley Head

Late in January this year, the 3.7 heavy AA (Anti-Aircraft) gun mentioned in the previous newsletter, made its ponderous journey from Ferrymead Historic Park, to Godley Head.

During compulsory military training (CMT) days, this Heavy Anti-Aircraft gun was used for practice at Godley Head.

The gun is 3.7 inch calibre and could punch a 63 lb (28kg) shell to 28 000 feet (8000m) in 14 seconds. It was designed to fire a barrage of shells to keep enemy planes above accurate bombing height, and break up their formations.

Before it could be shifted, Trust member Bill Moor and his mate Rob Stowell, took off the wheels (no easy feat, as they were

pretty rusted up), had them sandblasted, painted them, fitted 2nd hand tyres donated by the army, and reassembled them, so it could be rolled out and onto a transporter. Selwyn Frewin assisted with fitting the wheels back on.

The army used the shift as a training exercise for their heavy transport division, and proved their skill in manoeuvring large, heavy, unwieldy objects.

The event received good coverage in the newspapers, but although TV1 and TV3 spent hours taking footage, it did not air due to Golden Global awards that night (Thanks, Lord of the Rings!)

Gun gets blasted off

The armed services tradition of "If it moves salute it, if it doesn't paint it" resulted in the anti-aircraft gun receiving many slatherings of paint over its long career.

As part of the restoration program the Trust was faced with removing every layer. The members blanched at the thought.

From publicity generated by the gun's return, Graeme Mathieson of Soda Blast Systems contacted the Trust.

"My dad was a cook at Godley Head during the war" says Graeme, "and in his memory

I'd like to help you out. I'm the agent for Soda Blast and we'll clean your gun to bare metal in a day. Oh, and we won't charge you for it!"

Soda Blast is an environmentally friendly system for

blasting an object with soda, which does not pit the object the way sand blasting does.

True to his word, Graeme arrived with a team from Works Infrastructure and blasted away.



Army Unimog at Ferrymead, pushing the AA gun

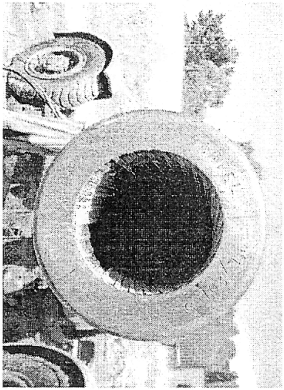
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Gun gets Soda blasted.

From under the many layers of green paint and rust appeared the gun as only its mother, Vickers Armstrong of Canada, knew it.



Brass, bronze and copper fittings appeared and Oh joy! - all the gun's registration markings. Included among these was the 'sovereigns mark' - a crown and G VI RI (George the 6th Rex Imperial).

The long and detailed restoration now begins in earnest. We hope to display the gun to the public on open days so they may follow its progress.

One thing learned, is while getting a large piece of metal down a ramp is relatively easy, getting it back up again is a whole different matter. After many frantic attempts, a Trust member who owns a large four-wheeled drive vehicle was rung and dutifully turned up.

After many a tussock-singeing curse, the gun is safely back in the old Quartermaster's Store.

Awaroa/Godley Head Coastal Park Concept Plan

The Christchurch City Council and Department of Conservation have put out a draft plan for the entire headland area. Submissions close 12 March 2004.

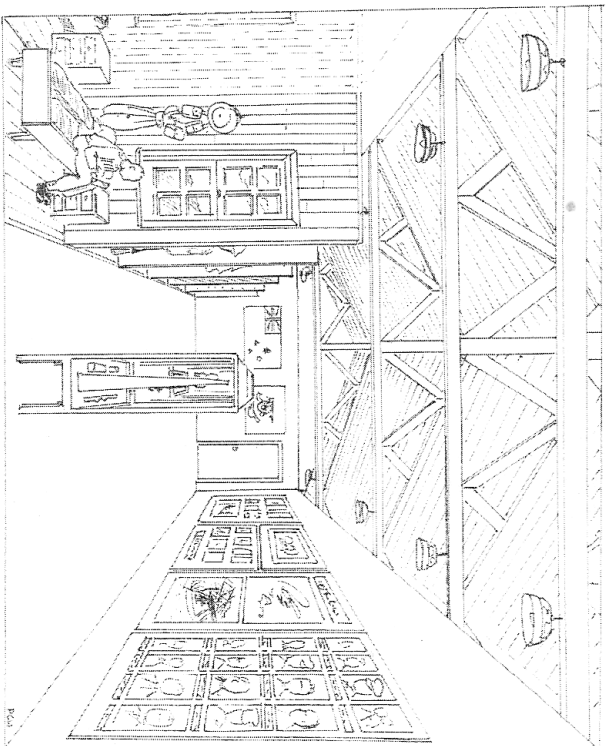
It is the desire of the Trust that Godley Head provides enjoyment for the greatest number of Christchurch's residents and visitors; that it provides a memorable and educational experience of its natural environment and its human history.

To this end, your Trust has closely perused the plan and put in a submission.

One of the most importance aspects for us, is security of tenure. We want to stay based in the RHQ building, develop it and establish a military museum.

To the right, is an artist's impression of what the main room of the museum could look like.

We are steadily accumulating items that Graeme Hines, our custodian, is carefully cataloguing and storing. We hope to be able to start work on painting and cleaning up the space in the near future.



Concept View of Proposed Godley Head Museum

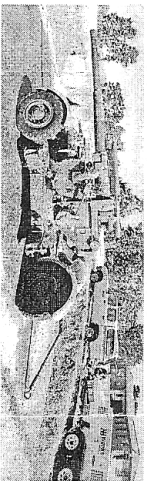
Work Day

Your Trust Needs YOU

Another working bee at Godley Head is planned for Sunday 28 March at 10.00am. We hope to work on cleaning up the Taylor Battery 60 pounder site.

A BBQ lunch will be provided.

Ring Graeme Hines 384 3866, or Gnome phone 3713761 (day) 3323466 evenings, if you are free to help with work - or cooking the BBQ!



3.7 In all its bare glory, out in front of the RHQ. Sergeants' Mess in the background.

Obituary



It is with regret that we record the passing of Warwick John Richard Peers. RNZA Coastal Div, Lieut # 814765.

13 June 1932 - 25 December 2003.

As mentioned in a previous newsletter, Warwick was instrumental in the formation of the Godley Head Heritage Trust.