The outbreak of the Crimean War in 1854 had provided the stimulus for the formation of Volunteer units in the Colony of New South Wales to supplement the British garrison troops stationed there but by the time of Separation in 1859 this Volunteer activity had considerably diminished. It needed the threat of a war between France and Britain at the end of the decade to bring about its revival.

For some time prior to the Crimean War it had been the policy of the British Government to exert pressure on the self-governing Colonies to undertake a greater share in home defence, leaving extra territorial defence and foreign policy to the mother country.¹

In his Letter of Appointment as Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief in and over the Colony of Queensland, Sir George Ferguson Bowen was instructed by the Secretary of State for Colonies, Edward Bulwer Lytton, to raise a Volunteer Force there without delay.² The urgency for this was now increased by the presence of a potential enemy Naval base in Noumea, less than 1200 kilometres, and less than a week's sailing, from Brisbane. This in brief was the situation as Separation approached.

Dr. Drury Clarke is Senior Vice-President of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland.
Arrival of Governor Bowen

Her Majesty's Sloop *Cordelia* carrying the Governor Designate of the newly created Colony of Queensland entered Moreton Bay on the evening of 9 December 1859. On the following morning she crossed the Bay, fired a signal gun, and proceeded to the mouth of the Brisbane River and dropped anchor.

No fortification challenged her entry into the river but a rock bar which crossed it at Lytton effectively prevented her passage as it would that of any other ship of war of sufficient size to pose a threat to the Capital.

Brisbane lay some 20 km upstream and out of range of the Naval guns of the period. It was probably for this reason that it possessed no Artillery for its own defence nor until this day any for Ceremonial purposes.

Sir George and Lady Bowen with their children transferred to the river steamer *Breadalbane* and, escorted by other small steamers, passed through the welcoming flotilla of boats to a landing at the Botanic Gardens, where he was received with a 21 gun salute fired from guns which had been purchased by public subscription for the occasion.

In his first Despatch after taking office, sent to the Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State for Colonies, Bowen described his landing and reception in Brisbane and went on to add: 'These expressions of love and loyalty to the Queen and the cordial welcome given to Her Majesty's first Representative are far from being mere phrases and empty compliments'.

The Saluting Battery in Queen's Park on the river bank opposite Kangaroo Point. Note positions of the gun crew and the extent to which smoke from the gun obscured objects in front of the muzzle.
The reception of a new Governor in other Colonies is, generally speaking, simply an affair of ordinary Military display on the part of the Garrison, and entails neither expense nor trouble on the inhabitants. But there is not a single soldier in Queensland. Here all preparations were made by the "Reception Committee" appointed at a public meeting of the inhabitants; and the whole cost including the hire of several steamers engaged to escort me up the River Brisbane from Moreton Bay to the seat of Government, and the purchase of Cannon, was defrayed by public subscription."

Organisation of Defence

Bowen almost immediately set about to carry out the instructions given in his Letter of Appointment. On 9 February 1860 he announced that he proposed to raise a Volunteer force of Mounted Rifles and Infantry. He also asked for a detachment of Regular troops comprising two officers and fifty men from the 12th Regiment then stationed in Sydney.\(^5\) Times were against him however, and the Maori Wars were claiming all available military manpower. It was not until 13 February 1861 that he received a detachment of Regular troops comprising a lieutenant and twenty-five other ranks. These were certainly needed for the training of the Volunteers but there was another aspect to Bowen's request. He was an imperialist of the old school who firmly believed that Britain's hold over her self-governing Colonies would be prejudiced if they were allowed to take over their own defence.\(^6\)

Bowen further considered that he needed Artillery and in his Despatch of 12 February 1861 to the Secretary of State for Colonies he stated his reasons and outlined his requirements.\(^7\)

4. '.... My Council deemed it not unreasonable to apply to Her Majesty's Government for a few pieces of Cannon for the defence of Brisbane. This City, the Capital of the Colony, is situated about twenty miles from Moreton Bay and competent military authorities are of the opinion that the erection of a couple of batteries would place it in a state of tolerable security against external attack.'

'I beg to submit these applications of my Responsible Advisers for the favourable consideration of Your Grace, viz — that one Company of the Line be the Imperial Contingent for Queensland to form the nucleus of our Rifle Volunteers and that from twelve to twenty pieces of cannon be supplied to this Colony for the Corps of Volunteer Artillery which it is proposed to form. I would suggest that it will be probably sufficient for the defence of our rivers if 24-pounders be sent such ordnance in short as is now superseded on the fortresses of the United Kingdom by guns of greater calibre and
improved construction. I would recommend also that a few light field-pieces be supplied; and that (if the request of my Council be granted) the cannon with their carriages could be shipped on board one of the vessels which Her Majesty’s Emigration Board will charter for Moreton Bay in the course of the present year.

‘In conclusion I will only add that the Executive Council of the Colony remark with perfect truth that Queensland is probably the only Colony where there are no guns wherewith even to fire a salute on the birthday of the Sovereign.’

What Bowen asked for he eventually got — twelve smooth bore, muzzle loading, twenty-four pounder guns, which were relics of the wars of the Napoleonic era.

**The Guns Arrive**

The immigrant ship *Clifton* sailed into Moreton Bay on 7 April 1862 and a notice in the *Courier* advised that she was discharging general cargo. Then on Wednesday 21 May the paper published this information:

‘THE NEWLY ARRIVED BATTERY — yesterday the whole of the pieces of ordnance presented by Her Majesty towards the defence of the Colony were brought up from the *Clifton* in the ketch *Tabby*. The carriages and shot had been landed on Harris’ Wharf previously. The guns are twelve in number and are 24-pounders in calibre. The whole stock including carriages, etc., weighs something over 100 tons. We do not know where the guns are to be stored, or how they are to be applied, but they are now to be seen, together with the shot, carriages, etc. in the yard adjacent to Messrs. J.G. Harris Stores’.

By 31 May these guns, carriages, shot and other associated items had been moved to the Commissariat Stores in Queen’s Wharf road.

The guns were next heard of when a short paragraph appeared in the *Courier* of 2 April 1863 conveying the information that ‘The Volunteer Artillery Company have been busy at gun drill for the past week in the barrack yard, where two of the ancient pieces from the Commissariat Store have been mounted. Unfortunately, however, for their invigorating exercise in “ramming home” and “sponging”, one of the cannons (was) obstructed by a ball which was stuck fast in the region of the trunnions; the obstruction was not discovered until after the gun had been removed to its present berth.’

This drill was evidently in preparation for the Queen’s Birthday Celebrations in May.
Most of the guns were deployed to form the Saluting Battery in Queen's Park at the lower end of Edward Street. Platforms were prepared at regular intervals in a line along the river bank. On these the 24 pounder-guns on their carriages were installed, with their muzzles directed towards Kangaroo Point.

The guns were fired for the first time in Queensland on Sunday 24 May 1863 and on Monday the Courier reported — 'Yesterday morning at eight o'clock, the Queensland Volunteer Artillery Corps fired a Royal Salute in honour of the day, it being the forty-fifth anniversary of the birth of her Majesty. Considering that this is the first time the Volunteers ever actually fired the "great guns" they acquitted themselves very creditably, and Captain Pitt commended them very highly for the manner in which the Salute was fired...'

We may mention that about twenty men of the Volunteer Artillery Corps met for great gun drill on Saturday afternoon. They evidently required it; but to their credit be it said that, before being dismissed by Sergeant Hawkes, the instructor, they showed considerable improvement.13

Public reaction to these outmoded weapons was predictable. On 10 May 1865 in a debate in Parliament on the Queensland Volunteers R.R. Mackenzie (Member for Burnett) is reported as saying....

'....The Artillery Corps appears to be better organised and in a more efficient state; in fact they appear to be a very nice and respectable company. They fire the salutes very well, and in other respects appear to be up to the mark. Admitting this, however, what use would they be if an enemy came in sight? It is true that the Government have made them a present of several old, battered, honeycombed pieces of ordnance, made in the good old days of Queen Bess, and utterly useless in repelling any mobile force. If the artillery force is to be maintained for the sole purpose of firing salutes, the expense might be done away with, as the Military now in barracks could perform that duty quite as well...'14

Hyperbole apart it probably represented what most people thought.

From the time of their deployment in Queen's Park, and until their dispersal after the fatal accident in 1879, the guns were mainly used for drill purposes and the firing of Salutes of Ceremonial occasions such as the birthday of the Sovereign, deaths of Royal personages, and the opening of Parliament.

In May 1866 one of the Clifton 24-pounders was sent to the Observatory on Wickham Terrace where it was used for firing the time signal at 1.00 p.m. daily.15 In 1867 another was sent as a signal gun
to the new Penal Establishment on St. Helena Island in Moreton Bay where it was used to supplement the visual signalling system. It served that purpose until the Prison was linked to the mainland by telephone. It was left behind when the establishment was closed in 1933 and the oak carriage rotted away.

In a Despatch to the Secretary of State for Colonies, Earl Granville in September 1870 the Governor, Colonel Samuel Wensley Blackall wrote:

‘....We have a Volunteer Force of Artillery and Riflemen of about five hundred men. These could be easily increased to one thousand, but with the exception of one hundred and twenty Old English Rifles, and a little ammunition, three Field Guns without any ammunition and twelve very old and worn Battery Guns, also without ammunition, this Force may be said to be unarmed’.

In August 1877 the Preliminary Report on Queensland Defences by Sir William Drummond Jervois R.E. was tabled in Parliament. Apart from the more modern field pieces itemised therein the Report stated —

‘There are also —
10 24-pounder S.B. Guns (cast iron) mounted in Queen’s Park, Brisbane; these, although they are serviceable, are of too small calibre to be utilised for any purpose except training the Artillery to gun drill’.

Despite Jervois’ assessment of the value of the Clifton guns, in the Russian War scare of early 1878 the defences upstream of Lytton included a Battery of four twenty-four pounders in an earthworks at Doughboy Creek. By July however, the state of emergency having passed, the defence works at Doughboy Creek were abandoned after 1885 pounds had been spent in their preparation.

Then in 1879, whilst the Battery was engaged in firing a Salute for the opening of Parliament by the Governor, Sir Arthur Kennedy, an accident occurred in which two Gunners were killed and the Sergeant in Charge of the gun was injured.

This led to a consideration of the justification for continuing to use these weapons of another age.

Before proceeding to trace the Clifton guns through the next hundred years of their history I would like to interpose an account of the accident.
The Fatal Accident

In a Brigade Order issued by E.R. Drury as Major Commanding the Volunteer Artillery Brigade, No.3 Garrison Battery was detailed to fire the customary seventeen gun Salute for the opening of the first session of the Eighth Parliament. Accordingly, shortly after 1100 hours on Wednesday 15 January 1879, the officers and men appointed for that duty assembled in the Queen's Park just inside the Edward Street entrance where the Battery of 24-pounders was set up. Three guns, the second, third and fourth from the right had been allocated for the day’s firing. Their platforms stood on the edge of the bank which sloped down to the river.

The day was fine, a light breeze blew from the right of the guns, and the flagpole at Government House was visible across the Gardens. Twenty-two men were on parade and six were allotted to each gun. The normal complement for a 24-pounder when firing shot was nine exclusive of NCOs, but for firing blank ammunition a crew of six was regarded as adequate.

The men were fallen in and Captain Frederick Robinson Bernard commanding No.3 Battery proceeded to select them for their various positions. The Nos.1 in charge of the guns were non-commissioned officers with long experience in gunnery. Sergeant Robert William Craft of No.1 gun was an old soldier who had seen service overseas and had taken his discharge. For several years past he had been a Sergeant in No.1 Battery Q.V.A. and had often taken part in the firing of Salutes. Sergeant Charles William Adams of No.2 gun had been a Petty Officer, R.N. and was an experienced artillerist. Sergeant Major John Sankey in charge of No.3 gun had been Garrison Sergeant Major at the Cape of Good Hope and was Sergeant Major of the 12th Regiment of Foot when he took his discharge. The remaining men were selected for other positions on the basis of previous experience.

To understand the sequence of events culminating in the tragedy it is necessary to know the duties of the various members of a gun of this type when used for firing a Salute using blank ammunition. Gun drill is designed to ensure the efficient working of the gun and the safety of those firing it. No.1 is responsible for the supervision of the work on his gun and for checking that the weapon is in all respects ready for action. With guns left in the open where children used them for play and the public had ready access to them, it was vitally necessary to check that the bore was clean, the vent patent, and the gun and carriage intact. This was carried out.

No.1 was also responsible that the firing mechanism functioned well and all gun stores including sponge and rammer were in sound
condition, and finally that ammunition was correct and the water
bucket filled. As No.1 Sergeant Craft would, with a full guncrew,
have been standing to the rear of the gun, upwind and in a position
to check the drill procedures and give any necessary orders during the
shoot. On this occasion he also doubled as No.5 whose task was to
serve the vent and fire the gun. This necessitated his standing to the
left rear of the barrel opposite the breech where he could, inter alia,
keep his thumb on the vent whilst the charge was being inserted, so
preventing air movement from re-igniting any smouldering material
that had escaped the sponge. He also inserted the firing tube into the
vent and using a lanyard fired the gun.

Patrick Walsh as No.2 stood to the right of the muzzle. His duty
was to search the gun before loading and to sponge out the barrel
after firing. This involved running a wetted sponge, a mop-like
device, down the bore into the breech where it was given two full
turns before being withdrawn hand over hand in stages. The purpose
of this operation was to extinguish any smouldering remnants of the
serge or silk bag which had held the propellant. It normally occupied
five to six seconds. This manoeuvre completed, he exchanged the
sponge for a wooden rammer and after No.3 had placed the new
cartridge in the muzzle both now rammed it down into the breech. In
a live shoot the projectile was also similarly inserted and rammed.

No.3 Gunner Henry Wilkie stood to the left of the muzzle. His job
was to receive the cartridge, place it in the muzzle having uncapped
the fuse, and assist No.2 to ram it home. If 2 and 3 followed the
correct drill and stood in the correct position whilst ramming home
the charge, their bodies would not be exposed to injury although in the case of a premature explosion they would suffer limb damage.

No.4 Gunner Daniel Devlin was stationed to the rear of Gunner Walsh, his task being to supply the latter with the wetted sponge and to exchange it for the rammer, an operation taking about three seconds to perform. No.6 Gunner Bernard Lowry was an ammunition number who handed the cartridges to No.3 and maintained a supply of fresh cartridges from the magazine at the gun-site.

It is possible that Robert Henry Scott, the Trumpeter, who was standing about two paces to the left of Sergeant Craft during the shoot was the displaced No.5. By one of those quirks of fate wherein truth is made to appear stranger than fiction, Gunner Walsh had fallen in as No.2 and he stoutly maintained his claim to the position against the wishes of Sergeant Major Sankey to replace him.

In his evidence at the Inquest Sankey said:

‘On telling off the detachment on that morning Gunner Walsh being No.2 of No.1 detachment objected to being replaced by another man of the detachment as No.2 whom I desired to place in his stead. Walsh stated “I feel myself as good a Number 2 as any other man in the Battery”.’

‘The man whom I intended to put in Walsh’s place was a man whom I knew.....It is regarded by the men as a place of honour to hold the position of No.2 at the gun....I considered Walsh perfectly competent to perform the duties of No.2 and left him in his place....’

What follows is extracted from the evidence given at the Inquest which followed the accident.

The crews having been selected and briefed were next ordered to ‘take post in the guns’. Here they went through the sequence of checking the gun and on completion of this the order ‘as with blank cartridge — load’ was carried out, the tube was fired in the vent, and the men proceeded to rehearse their drill.

Sergeant Craft stressed the need to remain calm and also the need for care in sponging out and ramming home. He told his Nos.2 and 3 to watch his thumb and if they saw it off the vent to jump clear.

After drill had continued for some minutes the men were ordered to load with blank cartridge and were stood at ease.

Major Drury then arrived at the Battery which was brought to attention. Having received reports he addressed the detachment stressing that not less than fifteen seconds should elapse between the firing of each gun. He then left for Parliament House.

The Gunners took post and awaited orders to fire.
Salute Ends Abruptly

Some six minutes later the flag at Government House was lowered as a signal that His Excellency was leaving for Parliament House and Captain Bernard gave the order to fire. Number 1 gun fired and fifteen seconds later Number 2 but before Number 3 could fire Number 1 had fired again out of its turn. Number 3 was then ordered to fire, did so and re-loaded. Number 2 gun was then fired a second time. It was realised that someone at Number 1 was injured but it was thought that Sergeant Craft’s thumb was all that was involved. When it was seen that Numbers 2 and 3 from Number 1 gun were missing the order to cease fire was given and, as Number 3 gun had been re-loaded, the charge was ordered to be withdrawn.

Sergeant Craft had not had time to move clear when his gun fired prematurely and the recoil had run the left rear truck onto his foot, immobilising him. The gun was run up to release him and he was given first aid.

By now the smoke had cleared and Gunners Walsh and Wilkie were seen to have been blown some mfres down the bank and were lying, horribly mutilated, to the right and left of the muzzle. Their clothing was on fire and this was quickly extinguished with water from the sponge buckets. Portions of uniform and helmet were scattered in front of the gun. Walsh with extensive blast injuries to head and chest was dead and Wilkie, whose left arm had been avulsed at the shoulder was unconscious but still breathing. His arm was found in the bushes by the River.

Captain Bernard sent Lieutenant Douglas for medical assistance. He then told off some of the men to act as sentries at the gate to control the spectators. Sergeant Major Sankey told off others to look after the injured.

One of the men was sent for Dr. Purcell who was on a boat in the river nearby and he was first Brigade Surgeon to arrive at the gun position.

The evidence of Major Drury at the Inquest provides an interesting picture of the medical response.

'...About six minutes after I left, the first gun of the Salute was fired. I was then in Alice Street near George Street on my way to the Parliamentary Buildings. I noticed that the Salute was not proceeded with and turned round to return to the Battery when Lieutenant Douglas Acting Adjutant of the Volunteer Artillery Brigade rode up to me and reported an accident at the Battery. I told him to go at once for a Surgeon and I hastened back to the Parliamentary Building in search of Dr. O’Doherty, Surgeon of the Medical Staff of the Volunteer Brigade. I found
him quickly and we ran together to the top of Alice Street and jumped into a cab. I was then told that one of the men who had been wounded by the accident had been taken to Dr. Cannan's. We drove to Dr. Cannan's and found Sergeant Craft there receiving surgical treatment from Dr. Cannan. Dr. O'Doherty enquired if he could render assistance but Dr. Cannan said it was not a case of great danger and Dr. O'Doherty and I then went to the Battery. On arriving there I saw Gunner Walsh lying dead and Gunner Wilkie terribly injured — unconscious but still living. We had Gunner Wilkie conveyed to the nearest house; he was there attended to by Doctors O'Doherty (and) Purcell (who is also a Surgeon on the Medical Staff of the Volunteer Brigade) and Dr. Thomson also a Surgeon of the Volunteer Medical Staff. These gentlemen decided to remove him to the Hospital, which was done. He died in the hospital.'

Dr. John Thomson's examination at the Inquest produced further medical evidence:

'I was in the Houses of Parliament about noon on that day and I heard that two men had been killed at the Saluting Battery in Queen's Park and one wounded. I drove down to a yard attached to a house in Edward Street where I found a man who was being attended by Doctors O'Doherty and Purcell. This man was afterwards removed to the Hospital where he arrived about one o'clock — he lived in an unconscious state till a little after four o'clock on that afternoon. I examined him when I first saw him in Edward Street and again more carefully when he was brought to the Hospital. I found that his left arm had been torn off close to the shoulder joint and the right arm almost torn asunder near the wrist. The right eye was destroyed and the face considerably burnt. The whole of the front of the body was blackened and burned with gunpowder. There were four or five lacerated wounds in front of the chest. These wounds were evidently caused by splinters of wood as I removed portions of wood from some of them. There was a perforating wound in the abdomen externally about an inch and a half long internally not larger than would admit the tip of the finger to pass. The lower extremities were not injured. After death I made an examination of the body and I discovered that four of the ribs of the left side were broken, that the liver was ruptured in two places and that a fold of the intestine was torn opposite the abdominal wound already mentioned. Death was caused by the explosion of gunpowder. On Thursday the sixteenth I examined a wound on Sergeant Craft's thumb. From the last joint of the thumb to the tip was split to the bone the nail also being split in two different directions in a T form. The
side of the thumb was burned and evidently with gunpowder. No other portion of his hand was injured.'

Dr. William Hobbs in his evidence stated that he had seen the body of Gunner Walsh who had massive discolouration over the region of his heart. He concluded that death had been caused by the explosion of gunpowder.

Dr. Hobbs had also visited the Hospital and had seen the dead body of Gunner Wilkie. Dr. Thomson the Resident Surgeon had already made a post mortem examination and he did not think it necessary to make any further investigations.

At the Inquiry into the cause of death of Henry Wilkie and Patrick Walsh conducted by Police Magistrate Philip Pinnock and held on three days between the 18th and 21st of January in the Police Court, Brisbane, sixteen witnesses were examined.

Caused by Human Error

Much technical evidence was given but in summary the cause of the accident was shown to be human error. Casts made of the barrel and breech of the gun by Colin McLennan, a surgical instrument maker who made casts of the cylinders of steam engines, failed to show any honeycombing which had been suggested as a possible cause. The cartridge extracted from Number 3 gun at the ceasefire was shown to be encased in a silk bag, less likely to leave smouldering remnants than serge. The sponges were adequately large to fit snugly in the bore and were shown to have been properly soaked before use.

Sergeant Craft’s thumb had been severely injured but the rest of his hand was undamaged. This indicated that he had held his thumb firmly on the vent whilst the charge was being rammed. Trumpeter Robert Scott had seen Craft’s thumb on the vent when the gun fired prematurely.

Gunner Devlin, having handed the sponge to Gunner Walsh, turned round and picked up the rammer. When he came back with it to Gunner Walsh the sponging was completed. Getting the rammer took about the three seconds. Sergeant Major Sankey testified that minimum time for sponging out was about six seconds. Other witnesses estimated that Gunner Walsh had only swabbed from half to three quarters of the distance down the barrel. Trumpeter Scott said that the rammer was only halfway down the barrel when the charge exploded.

By doing the work of No.5 as well as that of No.1, Sergeant Craft was disadvantaged in his primary role of observing the drill of his crew.
Gunner Walsh’s failure adequately to sponge the gun had led to his death and that of Gunner Wilkie and to injury to Sergeant Craft’s hand.

**Military Funeral**

A Military Funeral was arranged for the day after the accident. The Volunteers taking part formed up before 4.00 p.m. and marched to a rendezvous in George Street where the cortege was to be marshalled.

Lieutenant A.E. Douglas was Procession Marshal. Two hearses had earlier brought the remains of Walsh and Wilkie to the Artillery Drill Yard where the coffins had been transferred to a gun carriage. At 4.15 p.m. the procession moved off, the route being via Queen Street, George Street and North Quay to Toowong and the Cemetery. A very large crowd lined the route to pay its last respects and in George Street the great bell from the tower was tolled as the cortege passed. A firing party with arms reversed headed the procession followed by bands of the Artillery and Metropolitan Rifle Brigades playing the ‘Dead March’ from *Saul*. Next came the gun carriage drawn by six horses and carrying the coffins of the two men draped with a Union Jack, followed by two mourning coaches.

A detachment of over twenty men from No.3 Garrison Battery marched behind the coaches and with them marched Sergeant Craft. Members of the Loyal Prince of Wales Lodge of Oddfellows, to which Wilkie belonged, followed.

Then came more Military — nearly two hundred men from the Volunteers followed by Officers of the various Corps with the Commandant and Surgeons bringing up the rear.

The burial service for Wilkie was conducted by the Rev. J. Sutton and that for Walsh by the Rev. Father Capra. As the coffins were lowered into the graves the firing party fired a volley over them.

Patrick Walsh, who was an employee of Anderson & Ryan, was a married man with two small children. He was twenty-seven years of age and had been able to make little provision for his family. Henry Wilkie, a migrant from Germany, was about forty years of age. He was a boarding-house keeper and ran the European Boarding House in Elizabeth Street. He left a wife and seven children. The Volunteer Act made some provision for the families of soldiers in the Volunteer Force who were killed whilst on duty. It by no means matched the wages of the deceased and Walsh’s family was reduced to penury. Various benefit functions were held for the Walsh family and a contribution from the Volunteers gave immediate support. Their subsequent history is unrecorded.
Battery Dispersed

Following the accident there was renewed argument regarding the serviceability of the guns.

The inspection carried out before the inquest had shown that the 'killer' gun was structurally sound and the inquest had demonstrated that human error was the root cause of the accident.

The inquest had however demonstrated that there were dangers inherent in the method of loading the propellant charge and projectile by way of the muzzle. The modern gun was now a breech-loading weapon, it had a rifled bore and fired an elongated projectile. In serving the gun the projectile was inserted into the barrel from the breech end and rammed home and the propellant charge was placed in the chamber behind it and the breech closed. In the heavier guns charge and propellant were separate, as with the older weapons.

The smooth bore gun was inefficient, the round shot was generally a loose fit in the bore and a significant amount of the propellant gas escaped around it. Moreover the ball shot 'bounced' in the barrel and its direction as it left the muzzle was influenced by the last bounce.

Jervois in 1877 had summed up against their use except for drill purposes. Now the wisdom of their use for ceremonial purposes was also in question.

In the Brisbane Courier, 'Observer' wrote:

'Sir, — Will you allow me to suggest to the Government, and to the Commandant of the Volunteer Brigade, the absolute necessity for discontinuing the use of all the old guns in the Queen's Park and elsewhere in the Colony?

Whether the cause of the accident has arisen from a defect in the gun produced by old age and corrosion in the interior of the antiquated weapon or otherwise, it is plainly the duty of the authorities to 'spike' all the guns.

It would be an easy matter to take a couple of field-pieces to the Queen's Park, or to the Government Domain, on Saluting days and fire the necessary salute from one of those pieces, without much risk to the lives and limbs of the Volunteers or spectators. Such a course would also add very materially to the efficiency of the men in the use of field-pieces besides adding to the "military" display on fete days.'

Eventually the old muzzle loading guns were replaced for Ceremonial purposes by the breech loading guns of the Field Battery but the Clifton guns were still not withdrawn from service.
Queensland periodically experienced feelings of insecurity. There were recurring Russian War scares and France was expanding its influence in the Pacific. Germany under Bismarck, with its interest in New Guinea and the Pacific Islands, also posed a threat. Raids on the coastal ports of the Colony were anticipated.

In 1882 when war between Britain and Russia over Afghanistan seemed imminent, there was an outburst of Naval activity. The newly arrived gunboat *Gayundah* was put on a war footing. The small steamship *Otter* was purchased and armed, and the steam launch *Pippo*, a vessel of twenty-five tons and capable of eight knots, was armed as a patrol launch with two 24-pounders.26

Then in 1885 Cooktown Town Council decided that Cooktown needed to be defended against the threat of Russian invasion. A wire was sent to the Premier requesting him to supply arms, ammunition and a competent officer to take charge of same, as the town was entirely unprotected.27

The response was one 24-pounder gun cast in Scotland in 1803 and two rifles. This gun, with its carriage still in a fair state of preservation, stands in a park overlooking the Endeavour River, close by the James Cook Monument.

The Garrison Battery in Townsville was formed in February 1885 and three months later, in May, it received its gun. In the *Queenslander* this event was reported somewhat laconically — 'The 24-pounder gun was taken to Kissing Point to-day.'28 For some years past two of these 24-pounders stood in Anzac Park on the Strand,
one of these was probably the missing gun from Bowen. Both have recently been transferred to the 4th Field Regiment Headquarters at Lavarack Barracks.

In 1886 a report from Bowen read: 'A 24-pounder gun with its stores arrived for the use of the Garrison Battery, which appears to get supplied with requirements tardily. It wants another Russian scare to galvanise the people at headquarters into activity. A gun without a drill instructor is of no service to the Volunteers. It's arrival however, is a guarantee that we shall get the rest in time.'

The Bowen Garrison Battery, formed in October 1886, was disbanded in 1894 and the Clifton gun is no longer there.

The Cairns Garrison Battery was also formed in October 1886 and Cairns received its gun early in 1887. Under 'Country News' in the Brisbane Courier appeared the item:

'Matters in connection with the local Defence Force have been slightly turbulent during the past week. On Monday night, when the members of the Corps under command of Captain Draper were marched down to the wharf with a view to placing the newly arrived big gun in safety, Gunner Bustard refused to work at the gun. He was instantly placed under suspension pending the arrival of notification of his dismissal from Brisbane....

A big gun (a 24-pounder) has been landed from Brisbane for use of the Cairns Garrison Battery. The gun was formerly in position in the Botanic Gardens, Brisbane, where it was used for Saluting purposes.'

Initially it appears that the gun was set up on the Esplanade but it was transferred to the Drill Shed in October 1888 where it was maintained by the Garrison Battery until disbandment of that Unit in 1894.

The unofficial history of this gun is worth recounting.

For many years it stood in front of the Drill Hall in Luke Street. Local tradition was that the gun had been brought dismantled from Sebastopol. At a later period the piece was buried under the Officer's Mess. Later it was exhumed. Then for a prank it was spirited away but was eventually returned to the Drill Hall. Finally it became a problem what to do with some two tons of gun without its carriage and it was sold to a local scrap metal dealer and general opinion is that it ended up in Japan.

Individual guns have been difficult to identify through their various changes of location. Only once has an Ordnance number been officially quoted.
In his evidence at the Inquest, Colin McLennan stated:

'I produce the cast of a gun in the Battery in the Queen's Park No. 57972. I took the cast by directions received from Colonel McDonnell. One cast is made in five pieces, four sections and one of the end. I discovered no flaws in the gun. The gun is not honeycombed.'

From the end of the century until the period between the two World Wars most of the guns not in North Queensland stood in Parks, some overlooking the river or on the foreshores as at Wynnum.

E.V. Stevens writing in the Bulletin of the Historical Society of Queensland under the heading 'Brisbane First Battery' records their locations in 1950 as:

1 dated 1797 at Lytton Fort
1 dated 1805 in Bowen Terrace
1 dated 1802 at St. Helena
2 dated 1800 and 1806 respectively at Cameron's Rocks — Hamilton
1 dated 1810 in Wickham Park
1 dated 1797 at Crosby Park — Albion
1 was sent to Kissing Point, Townsville
1 was sent to Bowen
1 was sent to Cairns
1 said to have been buried at Crosby Park, but there is no evidence of this

1 dated 1798 exploded prematurely 15.1.79, was probably condemned though no defect was found in it.33

There was curiously no mention of the Cooktown gun and the story of the gun buried in Crosby Park could not be substantiated.

Stevens really only accounted for ten of the original twelve guns.

Now in 1982 as a result of a survey started in 1979, the centenary year of the accident, the present locations of the surviving eleven guns have been found and recorded. There are still gaps in the records covering the movement of individual guns. What is known with certainty at this date is tabulated in an appendix to this paper.

The Guns and Sir Thomas Brisbane

One final word needs to be said about the guns. They were relics of the Napoleonic Wars when many of the muzzle loaders that we still have were made. They were equally adaptable to sea or land use. The armament of Nelson’s Victory included 28 of these guns in the middle deck. The carriages of these guns were of English Oak and were basically of the same design whether for service at sea of for land service.34
With the fortress guns the trucks were of cast iron, whilst those of the naval guns were of elm wood to preserve the decks from damage during recoil and run out.\footnote{35}

The twelve guns that formed the Saluting Battery were fortress guns which had been replaced by breech loading guns of greater calibre.

All these guns had been cast by the Carron Ironworks near Falkirk in Scotland.\footnote{36} The earliest, No. 50000 bears the date 1797, the latest No. 70539 is dated 1810. The Carron iron smelting works, the oldest and largest in Scotland, is still in business. The land on which the ironworks was established belonged to the family of Bruce of Stenhouse, descendants of Robert Bruce, King of Scotland. Eleanor Bruce, mother of Sir Thomas Brisbane, was of this family and her fortunes enabled him to maintain his position and clear his debts. It was Bruce money that made his Military career financially possible.\footnote{37}

**Conclusion**

As an old gunner I have found it a very satisfying exercise tracing the guns of Queensland's first Battery of Artillery.

It is remarkable that eleven out of the twelve smooth bore, muzzle loading cannon still exist and are in reasonable condition.

One hundred and twenty years have passed since they were brought to Queensland in the ship *Clifton* and were landed in Brisbane and taken into these same Commissariat Stores where we are gathered tonight.

These Clifton guns, the gift of Queen Victoria to the new Colony to which she had given her name, are a very valuable part of Queensland’s heritage.

All twelve came from the Carron Ironworks whose association with Governor Brisbane we have noted.

At the Battle of Trafalgar, Nelson’s *Victory* carried twenty-eight of these Carron twenty-four pounders as her middle deck armament, and guns of this type helped Wellington defeat Napoleon.

Our remaining eleven guns should be fully and accurately restored, carefully preserved, and retained in Queensland in perpetuity.
REFERENCES

4. Q.S.A. Gov. 22 Despatches, Series 1, No. 1/59 19 December 1859.
5. Q.S.A. Gov. 22 Despatches, Series 1, No.
7. Q.S.A. Gov. 22 Despatches, Series 1, No. 9/61 10 February 1861 p.400.
15. E.V. Stevens Miscellanea — JOL. OM 71 — 44 undated.
17. Q.S.A. Gov. 25 Vol.IV 1867 — 71 3 September 1870 p.405.
20. *The Fatal Accident*, Narrative compiled from sources indicated below:
   (a) Q.S.A. JUS/N63, Inquest 79/134 covering 18, 20, 21 January 1879.
   (b) *Brisbane Courier* 16 January — 21 January 1879.
   (c) *The Week*, 18 January — 15 February 1879.
   (d) *Queenslander*, 25 January 1879 — General News Artillery Accident.
   (e) E. R. Drury — Cutting Book.
31. Personal Communication — anonymous by request.
32. Q.S.A. JUS/N63 Inquest 134 — Colin McLennan.
34. 
## APPENDIX
### The ‘Clifton’ Guns — 1862-1982

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE OF CASTING</th>
<th>ORDNANCE NUMBER</th>
<th>MOUNTING — 1982</th>
<th>PRESENT LOCATION AND CONDITION</th>
<th>HISTORY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1797</td>
<td>50000</td>
<td>Original Oak Carriage decayed and destroyed. Trucks were lost, and the piece is now mounted on a very crude concrete base.</td>
<td>Gona Barracks, Kelvin Grove. Set up in front of flagstaff outside H.Q. 9 Bn. R.O.R. Barsel recently painted. Markings still readable, bore very rusty and muzzle flaking internally.</td>
<td>1862 Ex Ship ‘Clifton’ to Harris’ Wharf and thence to Commissariat Stores.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1797</td>
<td>56719</td>
<td>Brick and Concrete Model of Carriage. Trucks appear to have been lost.</td>
<td>Gibson Island. Riverside Park in grounds of Q.E.G.B. Power House. 2nd Gun from right. Externally sound, markings distinct. Bore rusted and scaling.</td>
<td>1862 Ex Ship ‘Clifton’ to Harris’ Wharf and thence to Commissariat Stores.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1798</td>
<td>57972</td>
<td>Original Oak Carriage destroyed but the 4 trucks appear original. Streets collected by members of the Arms Collectors Guild of Queensland and The Military Historical Society of Australia - Queensland Branch.</td>
<td>City Hall — Brisbane, Adelaide St Foyer. Markings distinct. Muzzle plug prevents inspection of bore. There is deep pitting and extensive erosion of the under part of the barrel seen beneath the black paint.</td>
<td>1862 Ex Ship ‘Clifton’ to Harris’ Wharf and thence to Commissariat Stores.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>63856</td>
<td>Wooden Carriage — Original had decayed. The wood in the reconstruction has started to rot. It is not an authentic replica. The 4 cast iron trucks are in good condition.</td>
<td>Vic Lucas Park, Belimba Point, adjoining Brisbane Yacht Club H.Q. in Quay Street. Piece shows rusting consistent with age and exposure.</td>
<td>1862 Ex Ship ‘Clifton’ to Harris’ Wharf and thence to Commissariat Stores.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>63911</td>
<td>Wooden Carriage — Reconstructed or extensively renovated. 4 Cast Iron Trucks intact.</td>
<td>Cooktown — In Parker alongside the Endeavour River, and in close proximity to the James Cook Monument — Not inspected.</td>
<td>1862 Ex Ship ‘Clifton’ to Harris’ Wharf and thence to Commissariat Stores.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>63941</td>
<td>Brick and Concrete Replica of wooden Carriage. The 4 Trucks have been lost.</td>
<td>Gibson Island — Riverside Park, in grounds of Q.E.G.B. Power House. 4th Gun — Left of line. Piece pitted with rust. Markings hard to decipher. Bore flaking.</td>
<td>1862 Ex Ship ‘Clifton’ to Harris’ Wharf and thence to Commissariat Stores.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Details</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>1802</td>
<td>63107</td>
<td>Not seen since Transfer.</td>
<td>H.Q. 4th Field Regiment, R.A.A. Lavarack Barracks, Townsville.</td>
<td>1862 Ex Ship ‘Clifton’ to Harris’ Wharf and thence to Commissariat Stores. 1863 Queen’s Park — Saluting Battery. 1885 Sent to Townsville (Queenslander, 23 May 1885) Kissing Point. 1886 Sent to Bowen (Brisbane Courier, 23 February 1886). For many years these guns stood on the strand — Anzac Park. 19— Removed to Lavarack Barracks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1807</td>
<td>71242</td>
<td>Not seen since Transfer.</td>
<td>H.Q. 4th Field Regiment, R.A.A. Lavarack Barracks, Townsville.</td>
<td>1862 Ex Ship ‘Clifton’ to Harris’ Wharf and thence to Commissariat Stores. 1863 Queen’s Park — Saluting Battery. 1885 Sent to Townsville (Queenslander, 23 May 1885) Kissing Point. 1886 Sent to Bowen (Brisbane Courier, 23 Feb 1886). For many years on the strand — Anzac Park. 19— Removed to Lavarack Barracks. There is no record of which cannon is Townsville’s original weapon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>76359</td>
<td>Brick and Concrete replica of Wooden Carriage. The 4 Trucks have been lost.</td>
<td>Gibson Island — Riverside Park, in grounds of Q.E.G.B. Power House. No. 1 Gun on right rear of the line. Good condition externally. Markings bold and clear. Bore rusted.</td>
<td>1862 Ex Ship ‘Clifton’ to Harris’ Wharf and thence to Commissariat Stores. 1863 Not known. 1866 Probably the gun sent to the Observatory on Wickham Terrace, for use as a time signal gun. 1950 In Wickham Park (Stevens). 1954 Removed to Gibson Island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNKNOWN</td>
<td>UNKNOWN</td>
<td>Wooden Carriage rotted away and for years only the piece remained at the Drill Hall in Luke Street.</td>
<td>This Gun no longer exists.</td>
<td>1862 Ex Ship ‘Clifton’ to Harris’ Wharf and thence to Commissariat Stores. 1863 Queen’s Park — Saluting Battery. 1887 Sent to Cairns for use of the Garrison Battery (Brisbane Courier, 22 Feb. 1887). Carriage became unserviceable. Gun buried and later exhumed. 19— Pre W.W. I sold as scrap metal and is thought to have ended up in Japan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only one Cannon — 57972 — has ever been referred to by its Ordnance Number. For this reason there are periods when it is not possible to identify a particular gun. This applies to the two 1797 guns and to the Townsville and Bowen guns. The Clifton Gun, at various times reported as being buried in Crosby Park, was probably an old tractor which is buried there. The 4 x 24 pounders in the earthworks down river on Doughboy Creek are unidentified as are the 2 x 24 pounders on the Steam Launch ‘Pippa’.