History & Heritage

Neglecting the Past: First World War 150-mm German Trophy Gun 505

David Pearson & Kevin Browning

Introduction

Currently people in a number of countries are remembering the outbreak of the First World War a century ago, a war in which some of the parents, grandparents and other relatives of our forebears died. Our memories can no longer be fed by contact with those who participated; they now mainly come to us through documents, films and other records. However, there is one form of record that is sometimes given less attention than it deserves. This is the physical evidence that has survived from that conflict, the sort of material remains that archaeologists study irrespective of age, often objects preserved in museums only as stage props of history, that nevertheless can be a rich source of information about the people who were associated with them and the events in which they participated. These items need to be given just as much care as the documents that we preserve, so that they can also tell their story to those who are prepared to listen. One such item is the German 150-mm First World War trophy gun, serial number 505, that is the subject of this article.

When the Australian Army Artillery Museum (AAAM) closed at North Head, Sydney, in December 2010, the Australian Army History Unit (AAHU) recommended that consideration be given to transferring the 150-mm trophy gun, that had long been on display there in the open air, to the Infantry Centre, Singleton (Figure 1). This was based on the understanding that the 45th Battalion, Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.), had captured the gun at the Battle of Amiens, in France, on 8 August 1918. It was subsequently decided to retain the gun in the collection and move it to storage at Army facilities at Bandiana, VIC, where the AAHU indicated it could provide better opportunity for restoration, pending the construction of the Australian Army Artillery Museum at Puckapunyal.

Subsequent research has shown that the gun has greater significance than previously thought. Its existence results from the development of allied artillery processes during the First World War that led to the end of the war. These processes included command and control, intelligence, counter battery and predicted fire. The application of these on the 8 August allowed the gun to be over-run by the infantry. Furthermore, the gun's significance extends beyond its capture. It can be seen as a stop-gap solution for the German's long range artillery in 1915, and later a significant trophy for the citizens of Woollahra and for the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company (RAAHC). Approximately 800 trophy guns returned to Australia after the First World War but it is the only example of this type of gun in this country and also one of two remaining complete examples of the type known to survive in the world.

Capture at the Battle of Amiens

Prior to this battle a number of events took place that are relevant. In March 1918, after the release of over a million men and 3000 guns following the end of the war on the Russian Front, the German Army began a series of attacks against the Allies on the Western Front, to force them to agree to peace terms before the United States became fully involved in the war. The *Kaiserschlacht* (Kaiser's Battle) was a



Figure 1. The 150-mm First World War Trophy Gun, serial number 505 at Australian Army Artillery Museum, North Head, Manly, NSW in May 2008 near the entrance to the Engine Room of the 9.2-inch coastal gun installation (Photograph taken 22 May 2008 by Kevin Browning - RAAHC Collection).

series of four attacks against the Allies that began on 21 March 1918 and abandoned after mid-June. The Germans had not achieved victory and had been left severely depleted and in exposed positions. In response, Lieutenant General John Monash (Commander of the Australian Corps) proposed the capture of Hamel and Vaire Wood, near Amiens. The attack, commencing at 3.10am, 4 July 1918, by the Australian 4th Division 'was a complete surprise' for the enemy. Importantly, although the Battle of Hamel was a small operation, the tactics employed became the model for future operations, including the Battle of Amiens. Surprise had been a key element but it was the combined use of all arms that is noteworthy. As at the Battle of Cambrai, the artillery barrage was fully predicted and commenced at Zero Hour, when the infantry with supporting tanks crossed the start line. Enemy artillery positions were engaged to prevent their interfering with the attack. The tanks were used to deal with enemy machine gun posts and barbed wire. Plans were soon put in place for much larger offensive actions against a very wide area of the German Front, alternating between locations to prevent the Germans from re-enforcing a particular sector.

The Fourth British Army front of between 19,000 to 22,000 yards (approx. 17,000-20,000 m) was selected as the initial point of attack and became known as the Battle of Amiens. The British III Corps was on the left, the Australian Corps was in the centre, and the Canadian Corps was transferred to the Fourth Army to take up position on the right flank of the Australian Corps and adjacent with the French First Army to the south. Preparations commenced under the greatest secrecy.

Fire planning for the attack was prepared in advance and the barrage would be fully predicted. Predicted fire had been made possible by improved maps, the ability to provide each gun with accurate survey and orientation, advances in determining muzzle velocity of each gun, and provision of meteorological data. Advancements in locating-techniques, especially sound-ranging and flash-spotting, supported by aerial observation, meant that by mid-1918 the location of the majority of German artillery would be known once it had

fired. Other enemy targets were identified from aerial photography and their location determined from the map.

The Command and Control aspects had also been improved, so that the plans of the overall force were taken into account. Guns were made available where they were most needed and unforeseen problems could be countered at the appropriate level. Approximately 2000 guns were allocated to the Fourth Army attack. Overall, the field artillery was to provide the initial creeping barrage (for the first stage) in front of the advancing tanks and infantry, whilst one third of the heavy artillery was used to bombard tactical targets and two thirds were employed in silencing known enemy batteries. According to the plans drawn up before the battle, the Australian sector was to be supported by British and Australian Artillery consisting of 'eighteen field artillery brigades, nine heavy brigades, four batteries of 6-inch guns and one 12-inch howitzer battery'. The heavy gun's bombardment sector was divided into two lanes, 'Y Group' consisting of 102 heavy guns to the north, and 'Z Group' consisting of 122 heavy guns to the south. There was also a separate long-range brigade of 19 guns that covered both lanes.

The Australian attack on a frontage of 7000-7500 yards (approx. 6400-6900 m), extending from the Somme River to the Amiens-Chaulnes railway, was carried out in three successive phases (Figure 2 on page 59). The first phase commenced at 4.20am with a massive artillery barrage, as the infantry and tanks stepped off. Serendipitously, a heavy fog shrouded the area and visibility was further affected by smoke rounds fired as a part of the barrage.

The Australian advance involved an attack on the enemy's front line on a two Division front, with the 3rd Australian Division on the left (north) and the 2nd on the right (south). This advance of some 3500 yards (approx. 3200 m) to the 'Green Line', supported by tanks under a creeping barrage, was to pass beyond the enemy main line of field artillery, an objective that was reached by 6.20am.

At 8.20am the second phase commenced with 4th and 5th Divisions passing through the 3rd and 2nd Divisions respectively. This phase was an advance of between 2500 yards (approx. 2300 m) on the left and 5000 yards (approx. 4570 m) on the right to the 'Red Line', supported by tanks, six Horse and Field Artillery Brigades, and a 60-pdr battery which had been moved forward. The remaining artillery reverted to Corps command. The objective was reached by the 5th Division at 9.00am and by the 4th Division by 10.20am. Although there was some resistance, enemy artillery fire was light and most enemy artillery battery positions were over-run. It was during this phase that Gun 505 was captured during the advance by the 45th (Infantry) Battalion A.I.F. of the 4th Division.

Phase 3 involved exploitation by a Brigade each of the 4th and 5th Divisions to the old Amiens defence line or 'Blue Line', which was reached by 11.00am by the 5th Division and 12.00 noon by the 4th Division. The Australian attack penetrated to a depth of 8000-10,000 yards (approx. 7300-9150 m). A total of between 448,918 and 448,953 artillery rounds were fired by the Fourth Army during the battle.

The effectiveness of the counter battery barrage is documented by Major General Budworth, G.O.C.R.A. Fourth Army, who stated after the battle:

> An examination of the [German] gun positions was of great interest. The positions generally were well concealed and natural cover was made good use of, but very little artificial protection against shell fire was afforded … Some guns had been hit and some dumps of ammunition blown up, but generally the damage caused to equipment and ammunition was comparatively small, in spite of the evident accuracy of the fire.

He went on to say:

> In the majority of cases, the [German] detachments had evidently either been driven from their guns or had failed to man them. Some guns were captured with camouflage material over them, and muzzle and breech covers still on. Where attempts had been made to keep the guns in action or to limber up, the havoc wrought amongst personnel and horses was generally great, and afforded excellent testimony to the accuracy of the fire and the destructive effect of the shells.

The result of the counter battery and fog was that the enemy artillery had generally been neutralised, although there were some instances of artillery fire on tanks and infantry. Overall, between 374 and 450 guns were captured by the Fourth Army on 8 August 1918. The Australian Corps captured 173 (including Gun 505), Canadian Corps 161 and British III Corps about 40 worthy of recovery. As the German Official History concludes:

> As night fell on 8 August over the battle field of the 2nd Army, the German Army's worst defeat since the beginning of the War had become an accomplished fact. Those front-line divisions located between the

> [river] *Somme* and the [river] *Avre* that had been hit by enemy attacks were nearly completely destroyed.

General Ludendorf, Chief of Staff of the German Army, called 8 August 'the black day for the German Army'. He went further to say 'The 8th of August put the decline of that fighting power beyond all doubt …. The war must be ended'. It can thus be seen that Gun 505 played a part in what was arguably the deciding battle of the First World War and therefore has considerable historical significance.

Typology of Gun 505

Soon after the stalemate commenced on the Western Front in 1915 both sides realised that there was a shortage of heavy long-range guns. As part of a stop-gap solution, the German Navy made available superfluous heavy guns for the defence of land and coastal forts. The Krupps armaments firm were also contracted to mount a number of lighter guns on improvised wheeled carriages and the heavier guns on quickly manufactured firing frames and platforms, including mounting on barges and railway carriages. In particular, in 1915, 150 heavy 150-mm naval barrels were made available to the German Army and were mounted on improvised carriages in a number of configurations. Gun 505 is one of these guns. The barrel markings indicate that it was manufactured in 1900; presumably the barrel and carriage were brought into land service in or after 1915 and survived in service until capture on 8 August 1918.

The gun and carriage are known in the original German 1916 Krupp manual as '15 cm *Schnellade-Kanone L/40 in Räderlafette mit Bettung*'. That is 15-cm (the inside barrel diameter is nominally 149.1 mm) quick-firing cannon of barrel-length 40 calibres on wheeled road-carriage with bedding. Later German documents abbreviate this to '15 cm S.K. L/40', with the additional abbreviation 'i.R' (or i.R.L for *in Räderlafette*). It was also known in German service as 's.15 cm K.' or 's.15 cm Kanone' (15-cm *schwere* [heavy] *Kanone*) (Figure 3 and Figure 4). It was developed from the turret or central pivot mounted C/97 of the German Navy. This type of weapon formed the secondary armament on a number of pre-dreadnought battleship and large cruiser types in the late 1890s and early 1900.

Barrel. As an older component of this weapon, the barrel's original nomenclature was different. In a

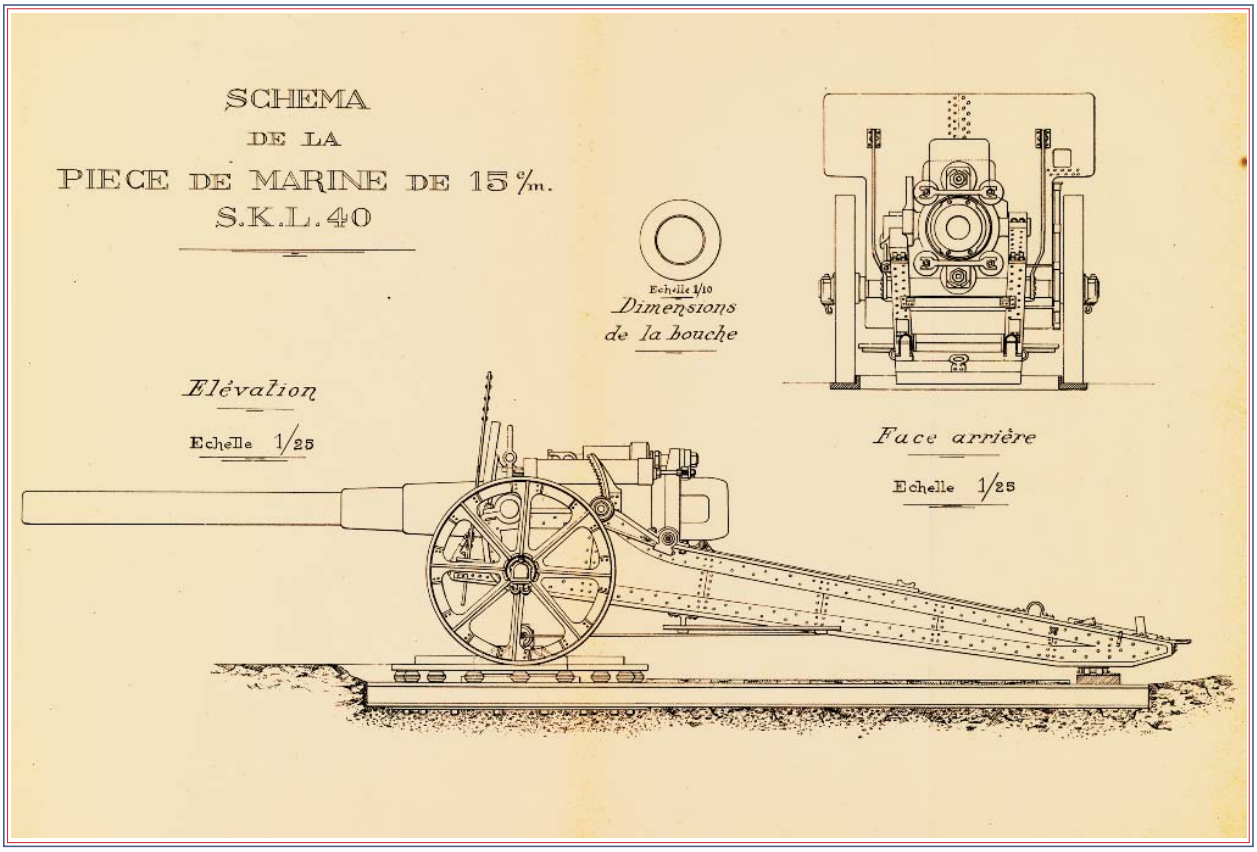


Figure 3. A detailed scale drawing of a 15-cm S.K. L/40 i.R with bedding/platform from a contemporary French Intelligence Manual on German Heavy Artillery (R.G.A.L. 2ème Bureau, 1917: foldout 1 between pp.12-13). Note the upper and lower recoil cylinders on the top right image and the stepped construction of the barrel on the bottom image.

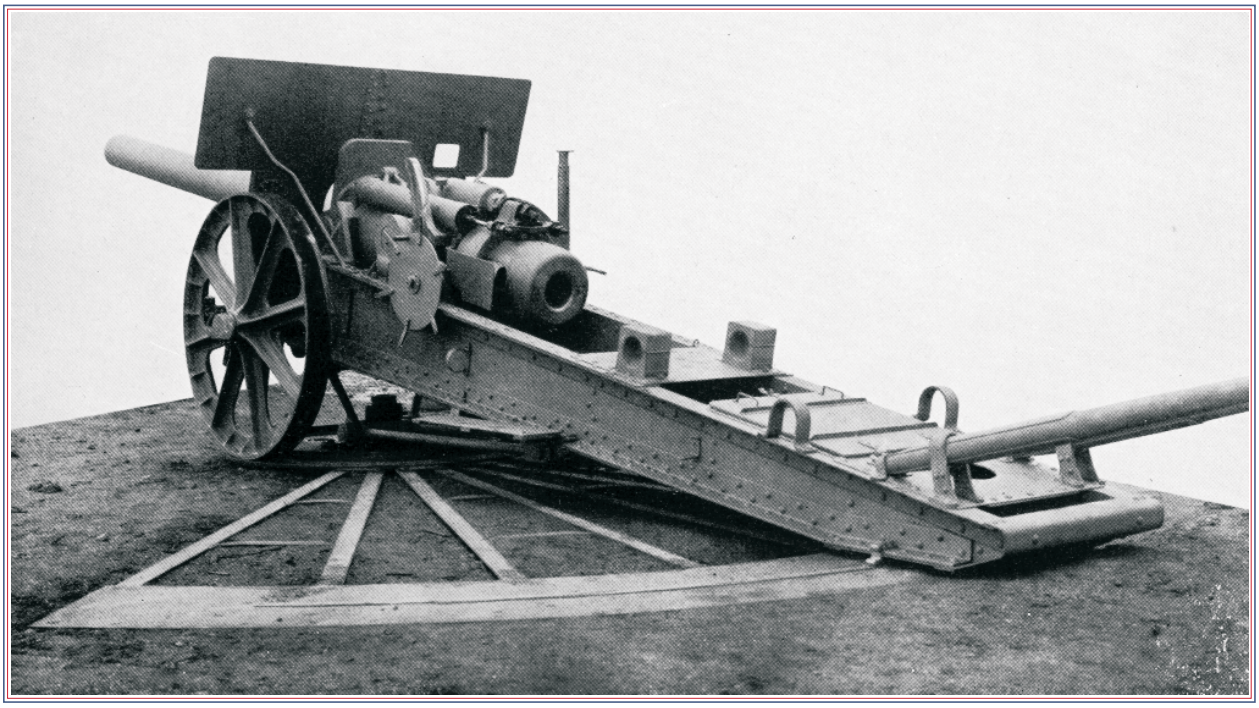


Figure 4. A 15-cm S.K. L/40 i.R with bedding/platform. Note the top recoil cylinders, large elevation hand-wheel and the handspikes which were used to manually traverse the gun. This photograph is an enhancement of an 'original' that appears in a German manual produced by Krupp in 1916 (Fried Krupp, 1916: *Blatt 1*., this image from Kaiser 1931: 78).

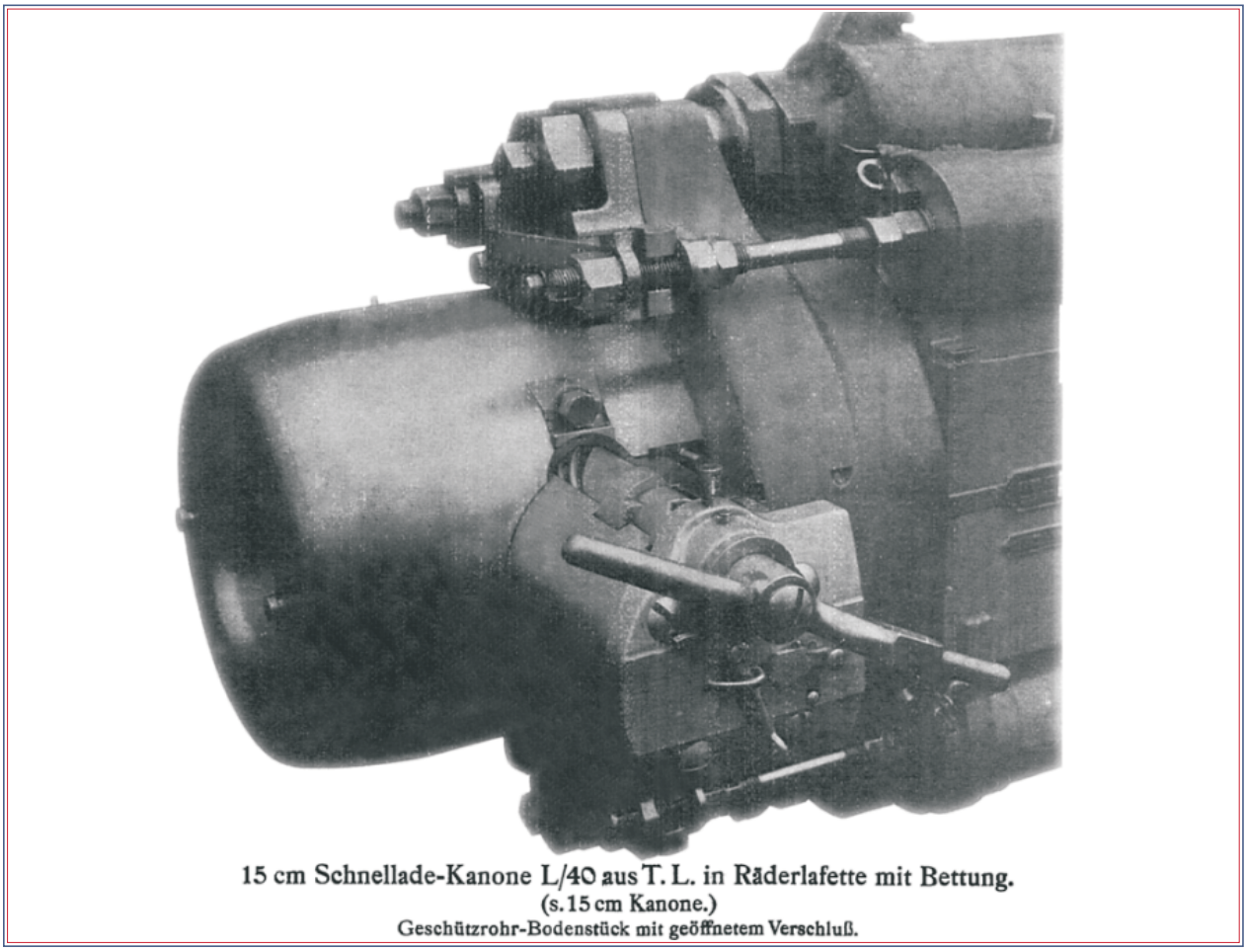


Figure 5. Close up of a breech of a 15-cm S.K. L/40 i.R gun. Note the horizontal sliding breech block, with worm screw and double armed crank of the type used on Gun 505 that also appears in a German manual produced by Krupp in 1916 (Fried Krupp, 1916: *Blatt 2*). This detail is currently unobtainable on the gun as the barrel is elevated so that the breech cannot be opened.

1901 Krupp Manual it appears to be expressed as '15 cm C/00 L/40 *Leichte* [light]'. However, in later documents it is recorded as '15 cm *Schnellade-Kanone* L/40', '15 cm S.K. L/40' or '15 cm SK L/40 C/97'. Indicative of its period of construction, the barrel consists of an 'A' tube and two layers of hoops. Similarly, the breech ring is of closed construction with a horizontal sliding breechblock, with worm screw and double armed crank (Figure 5). The length of the barrel is recorded as 5960 mm, the bore length 5546 mm and its nominal weight 4820 kg, although markings on the breech ring indicate that it weighs 4824 kg. The maximum muzzle velocity of a projectile fired from this type of barrel was 750 m/sec. The projectile weighed between 40-44 kg depending on the filling and fuse type.

Unusual for a land service artillery piece, the recoil mechanism, which was applicable to its naval configuration, was located on the top and bottom rear of the barrel behind the gun shield. This mechanism consists of 'two oil buffers' located above and below the barrel, and 'four spring recuperators' each located either side of the buffers (Figure 3 and Figure 6A and Figure 6B). The buffers and recuperators are located on the cradle and attached to the breech ring via the pistons, allowing a short recoil of 285-300 mm. The barrel with its breech block, cradle, recoil and elevation mechanism were mounted on the improvised wheeled road carriage. A collapsible platform (or turntable) was also provided.

Carriage. The 5.9-m-long improvised steel riveted box-trail carriage that terminates without a spade, was attached to an axle with two metal eight-spoked wheels of 1.6 m diameter. The gun in firing position is approximately 9.57 m long, weighed 11,760 kg and the carriage itself weighed 5266 kg. The barrel was attached to the carriage via two trunnions located above the wheels, allowing an elevation of -2 to +30°. This allowed for a maximum range of 10,500-18,700 m, depending on the charge and ammunition type. The carriage did not allow for traverse. At the front of the carriage is a system of brakes and a variable 6 to 7 mm-thick and 2.35-m wide dismountable gun shield. Also fixed to the front of the cradle is a small gun shield which is 54 mm thick and 0.56 m wide that moves with the elevation of the barrel.

Being an improvised gun, it had limitations. Because the short naval recoil system could not absorb all the recoil, a relatively heavy carriage was required. To overcome the lack of traverse, a 7450-kg steel platform with cover-plate was attached under the chassis of the carriage (Figure 3 and Figure 4). Whilst anchored to this platform via a vertical pivot, the gun could transverse 30° either side of 0° and some of the recoil was absorbed. Presumably this took some time to assemble and dismantle and limited the guns deployment. However, when necessary the gun could be deployed without this platform using wedges, wheel flanges, planks and sheet metal. It was '…reported by the battery leaders, that the guns had a good

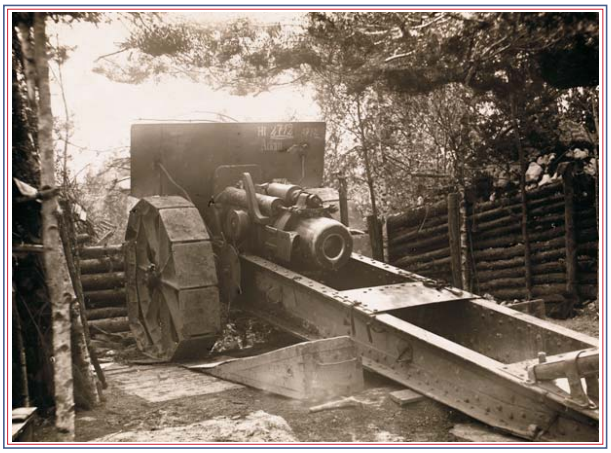


Figure 6A. A 15-cm S.K. L/40 i.R in firing position without the bedding/platform. This gun is emplaced in a timbered revetment with 'Ped-Rails' (*Radgürtel*) over the gun wheels and ramps to arrest the rearward recoil of the carriage.



Figure 6B. A close up of the same image which shows the details of the top recoil cylinders and annotations on the rear of the shield including gun name or position in the battery (Place and date unknown, postcard dated 17 June 1916, Postcard in David Pearson's Collection).



Figure 7. A 15 cm S.K. L/40 i.R. being towed by a Podeus 4 x 2 Heavy Artillery Tractor. Note the special two wheeled limber under the rear of the trail and 'Ped-Rails' (Radgürtel) over the gun wheels (Place and date unknown, Postcard in David Pearson's Collection).

accuracy even on auxiliary bedding using tree trunks' (Figure 6A).

Movement. Due to the weight of the gun, it was originally towed by a large horse team and later in the war by mechanical means. It could be transported in three loads; barrel, carriage and platform. There was also a special two-wheeled limber, which could be fitted under the rear of the trail to assist in transportation (Figure 7).

Gun 505 Physical Evidence

We do not know the gun's history prior to capture. However, there is unique physical evidence that can inform about its history before, during and after the battle of Amiens. Battle and non-battle damage, paint and markings have been used to confirm the identity of Gun 505 in several photographs and historical documentation.

Battle Damage. Gun 505 has at least 67 obvious damage points. Most appear superficial, apparently caused by shell splinters, shrapnel bullets and a number by small-arms fire. However, there are several damage events that are more severe. For example, there is a 100 x 30-mm perforation to the right side edge of the 6 to 7-mm thick gun shield (looking from behind) (Figure 8A). There is also a 25 x 25-mm-deep penetration on the lower right side of the barrel (Figure 8B). When this event occurred, the barrel would have been parallel with the ground and not in its present position. There are also two armoured patches riveted onto the shield components which indicate earlier damage to the shield. One larger 'sandwich' patch is on the front and back of the right shield, the other smaller square 'sandwich' patch is on the front and back of the left shield (Figure 8C and Figure 8D). In addition, there is a large modern patch added to the bottom of the shield sometime between 1972 and October 1987. This conceals further unrepaired battle damage to the bottom left of the shield. The general trajectory of the projectiles striking the gun indicates that this

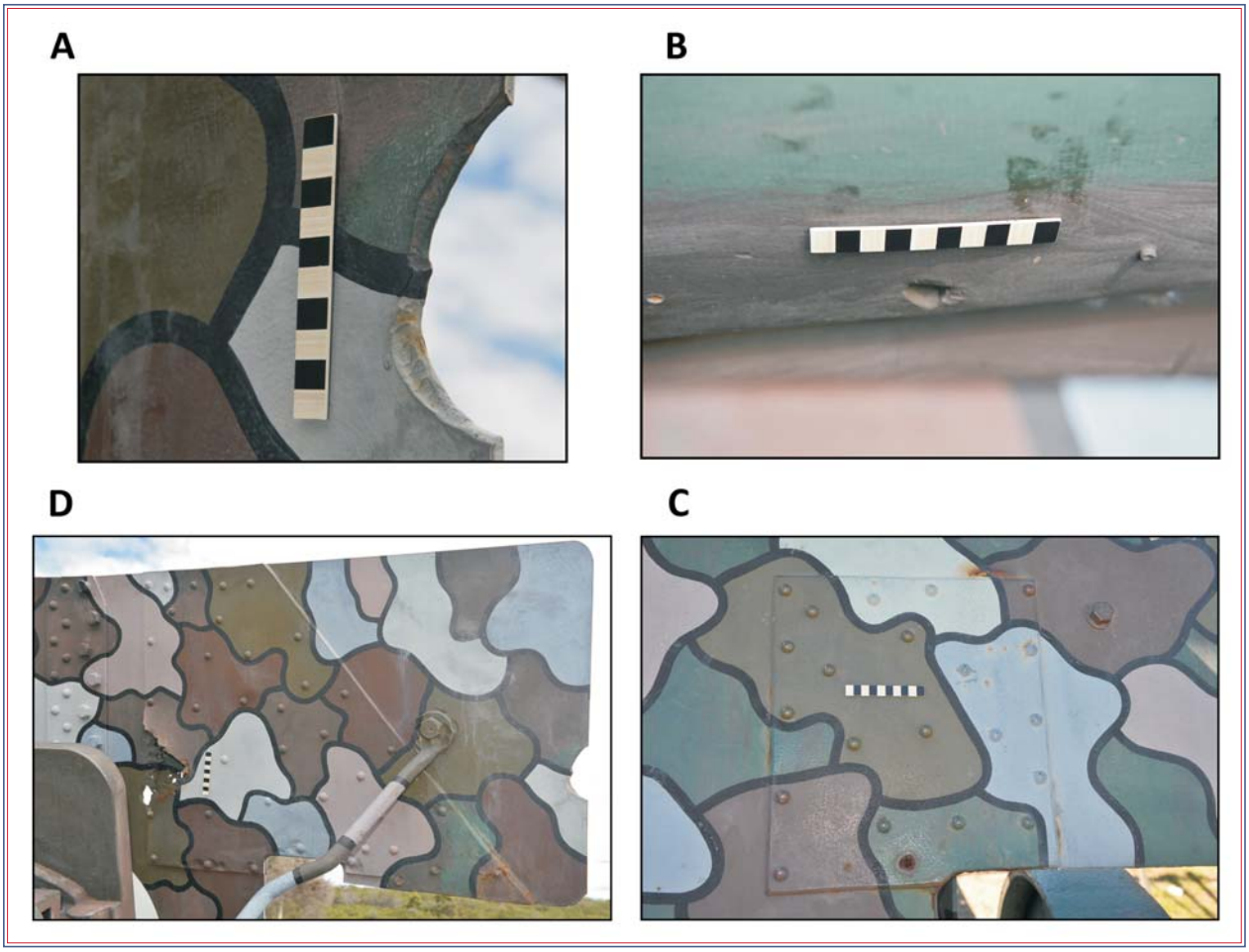


Figure 8A. Close up shot of the 100 x 30 mm perforation to the right hand edge of the front shield of Gun 505 (looking forward). This particularly distinctive damage pattern can be found on many of the photographs of Gun 505. Figure 8B. A 25 x 25-mm-deep penetration to right lower side of the barrel in front of the breech ring. Figure 8C. Front view of the smaller sandwich patch (on the left side, looking forward). There is a corresponding plate riveted on the rear of the shield, which along with the front plate probably conceals additional damage. Figure 8D. Close up of damage to the larger sandwich plate on the rear right hand side of the gun (looking forward). Note the corrosion to the rear plate which appears to conceal further damage underneath. The smaller and larger sandwich plates are also particularly distinctive in identifying Gun 505 in photographs (Photographs taken 25 March 2011 by Peter Bannigan, Scale in cm).

damage originated from the front, right and left rear of the gun. However, it is not ascertainable when the unrepaired damage occurred.

Other Damage. The gun also has damage that occurred after it was brought to Australia. At the front of the shield, the gun is missing the brake handles and two reinforcement brackets and the elevation hand-wheel and brackets for hand-spikes on the rear top carriage. Apart from one brake handle and possibly the elevation hand-wheel, these were removed between May 1972 and October 1986, at which time the aforementioned patch at the bottom of the shield was added. This was probably undertaken by the Woollahra Council, presumably for safety reasons (Figure 9). The gun is also missing its limber, that was shown in photographs of March-April 1919 in London (Figure 10) and September 1919 in Australia. There is much damage to the carriage and some to the shield caused by corrosion, which is visible under the paint. Beneath the carriage severe corrosion is evident, apparently caused by exposure whilst being displayed in an open environment (Figure 9 and Figure 11A and Figure 11B). In more recent times, direct contact between the wheels and newly laid concrete resulted in corrosion to portions of the metal tyres.

Paint. The gun has been repainted a number of times. A dapple camouflage pattern (at capture) was present in photographs in 1919, 1920-21 and 1926 (Figure 10, Figure 12 and Figure 13A and Figure 13B). However, it might have had several paint schemes previously. Also, in Australia it appears that it was first repainted sometime between 1926 and 1939 in a single colour (Figure 14). It might



Figure 9. Gun 505 at Lyne Park, Rose Bay taken in May 1972 prior to the removal of the remaining brake handle, reinforcement brackets, hand-spike brackets and the attachment of a steel plate below the barrel. Also of note the corrosion damage to the lower front part of the shield (Photograph taken May 1972 by Geoff Green - RAAHC Collection).

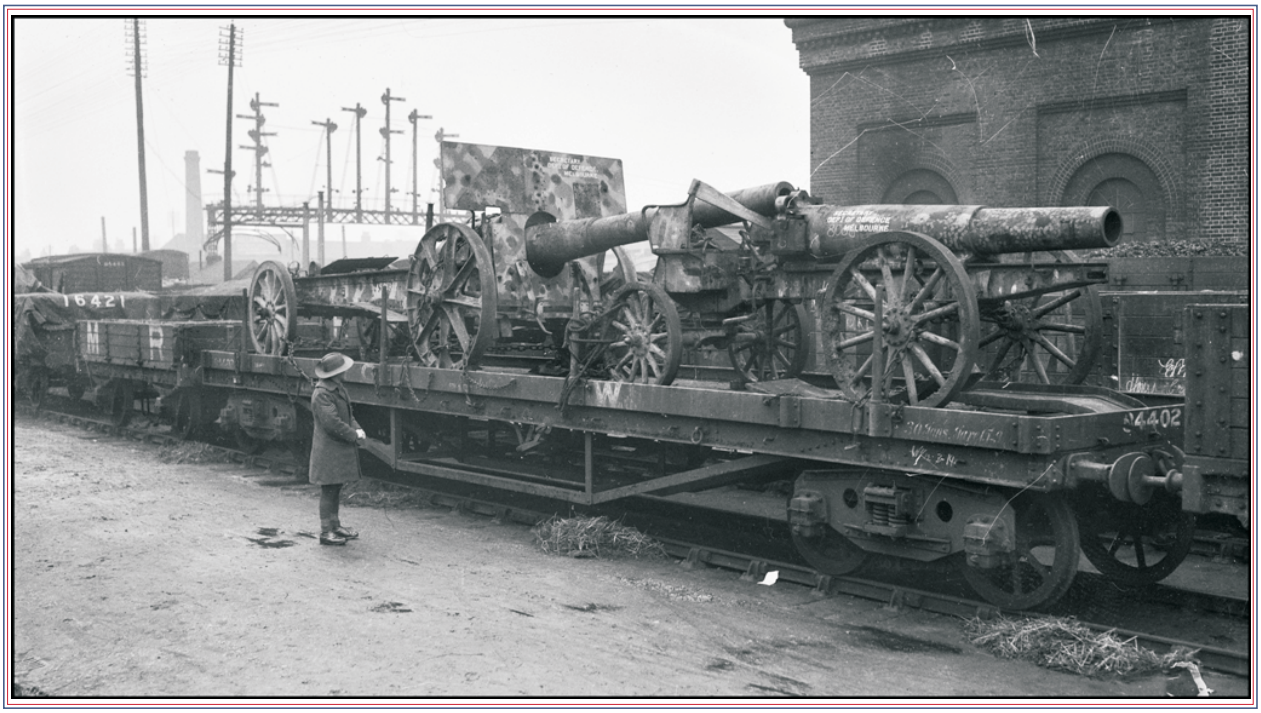


Figure 10. Gun 505 with limber being entrained at Croydon Ordnance Depot, London, March-April 1919, prior to movement to Royal Albert Docks, London for loading onto the SS *Bulla* for dispatch to Australia. The gun is marked '45th BN A·I·F·' on the right carriage and 'SECRETARY DEPT OF DEFENCE, MELBOURNE' on the left front shield (AWM Negative No. D00519). Also shown on the front of the same railway wagon is the barrel of Gun 707, a 21-cm Mörser 16 which has been dismounted from its carriage onto its barrel transport wagon. This gun is currently at the AWM Treloar Annex in Canberra.



Figure 11A. Corrosion on Gun 505 is typical of damage caused by exposure to the elements. Areas where water can pool such as joins and the storage box (as seen above) are the area's most prone to corrosion. Despite stabilisation during restoration in 1996 the lack of due maintenance in the period following resulted in continued deterioration (Photograph taken 29 September 2010 by Kevin Browning - RAAHC Collection).



Figure 11B. Continued lack of maintenance has resulted in further deterioration as evidenced in this photo taken in July 2014 (Photograph taken 28 July 2014 by Kevin Browning - RAAHC Collection.

have also been repainted in a single colour a number of times after this, before being donated to the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society (RAAHS, now RAAHC) in 1994. The gun was restored in 1996 by Transfield Holdings and Croda Paints, using a single-colour paint scheme (Figure 15). In 1998 volunteer Laurie Reid applied its current multiple dapple pattern (Figure 1).

Markings. Additional information about the history of this weapon is also provided by an examination of its markings. These are located on many surfaces of the barrel and carriage. Most informative are those stamped into the breech-ring of the gun. On the upper half of the breech-ring face appear the gun's serial number: 'Nr. 505.L.', manufacturer's name and symbols: 'FRIED. KRUPP.', and the date of manufacture: '1900.' (Figure 16A). On the lower face is the barrel weight: '4824 kg.'. The serial number: '505' is also stamped into some of the components of the breechblock (Figure 16B). Many of the components of the cradle are marked similarly with a different serial number: '418' (Figure 16C). The carriage is marked at the rear with: '18' (Figure 16D). From the markings it can be ascertained that the barrel and breechblock appear to be contemporary. This also appears to be true for many of the cradle components but the markings do not indicate when the carriage was constructed.

There are no longer any visible painted markings on Gun 505. Australian Corps Routine Orders required that captured guns were marked with the claiming unit, date and or place of capture. However, Figure 10 and Figure 12 show a number of painted markings that were formerly painted on the gun, in particular: '45th BN A·I·F·' on the right carriage and: 'SECRETARY DEPT OF DEFENCE, MELBOURNE' on the left front shield. Historical documents also record that: '45th. Battn.' and/or '45th Battalion.' was painted on this gun.

There are also two metal plates that were formerly attached to the gun. One is of contemporary German origin, which is now damaged and says '*Rohrstütze vor Schüsse aus Lafette entferner* [Before firing barrel support to be removed from gun carriage]'. Another, which gives the details of its capture and presentation to the Woollahra Council says 'MUNICIPALITY OF WOOLLAHRA NAVAL GUN. Captured by 45th Battalion Australian Imperial Force at Caroline Wood, South of Morcourt in France DURING THE OPENING PHASE OF THE AUSTRALIAN ADVANCE IN THE GREAT OFFENSIVE OF AUGUST 8TH 1918. *PRESENTED* TO THE CITIZENS OF WOOLLAHRA *BY THE* GOVERNMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA AND OFFICIALLY UNVEILED ON 29TH MAY 1921 BY J. P. BRADLEY, J. P. *MAYOR*.'. This was presumably attached to the gun around or after May 1921 (Figure 17).

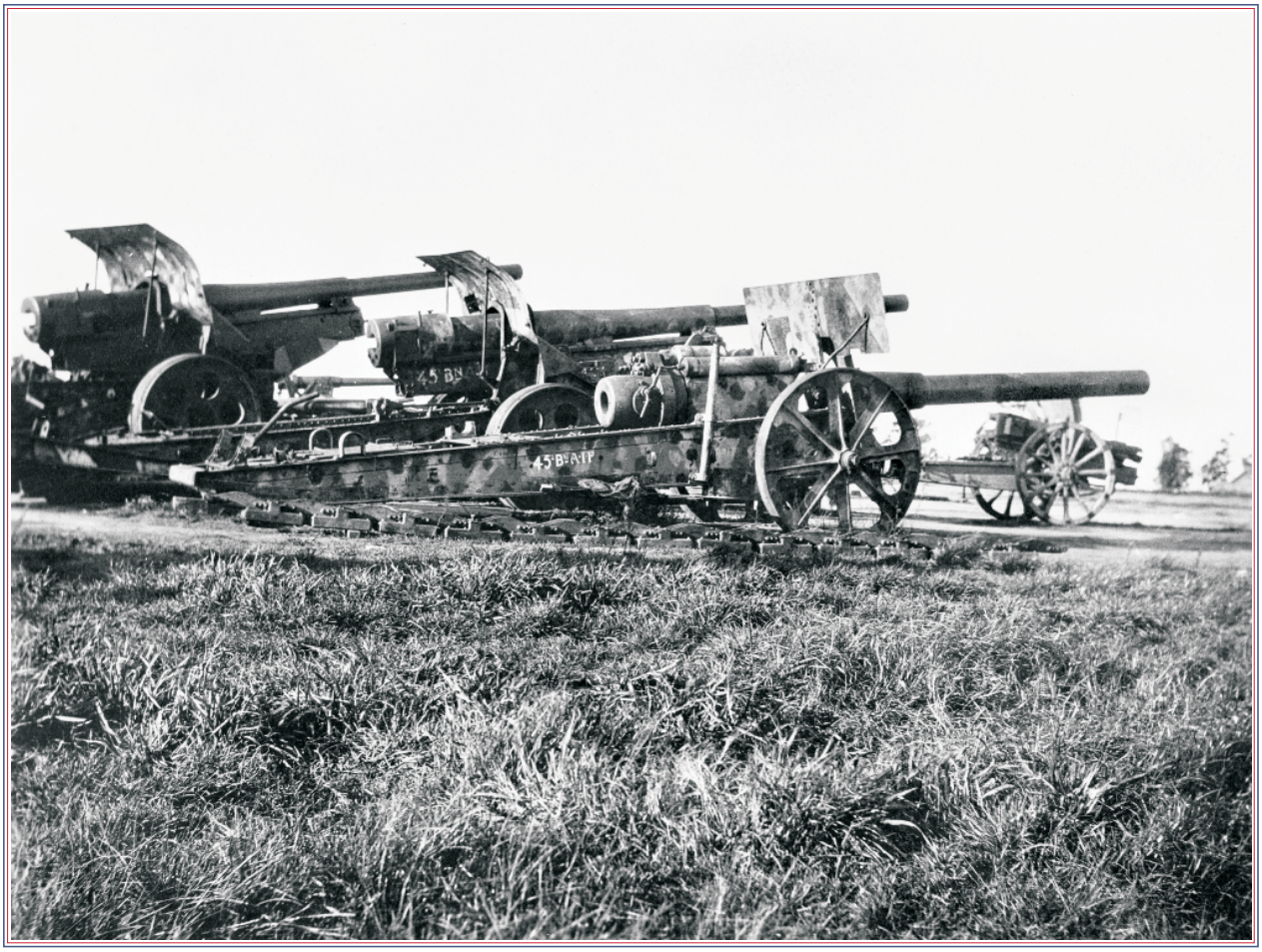


Figure 12. Gun 505 (in foreground) at the Domain in Melbourne c. 1920-21. The guns dapple camouflage pattern (at capture) is clearly visible as well as '45th BN A·I·F.' on the right carriage. It is of interest that the two wheeled limber is not present and may have been sold by this time by the AWM as a part of the auction of 165 wagons, limbers, cookers etc. on 20-21 June 1921 or as part of the further auction of 12 wagons, limbers, field carriages and other items on 10-11 May 1922 (AWM Negative No. P02729.040, see also P02729.041). The two guns beside 505 are 150-mm K16 (*Kanone* model 16) numbers 4 and 135 that were allotted to Bexley NSW and the Australian War Memorial. The gun in the background is a Turkish (Krupp) 150-mm Field Howitzer allotted to Goulburn, NSW (Gun 14).

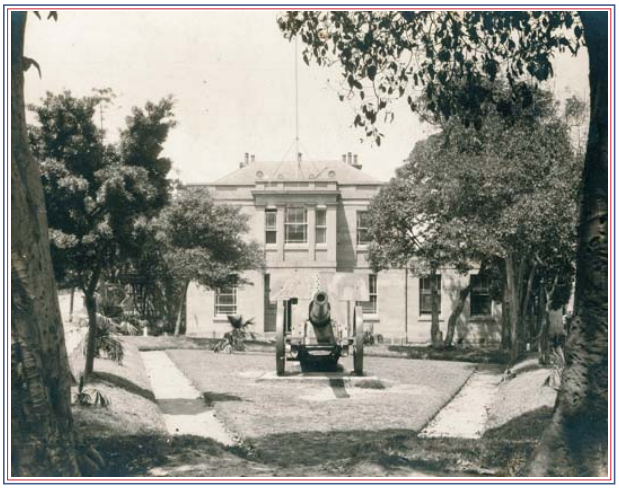


Figure 13A. Gun 505 at Woollahra c.1926 in its dapple camouflage pattern (at capture). At this time the gun is located in the front garden of the first Woollahra Council chambers at the junction of Ocean Street and Jersey Road Woollahra (today this garden area is known as Euroka Reserve and the original chambers, remodelled in the 1920s, is the home of the *Goethe-Institut*).



Figure 13B. Close up of the gun (Woollahra Council Local History Collection PF000780).



Figure 14. Lieutenant A.K.C. Harper standing in front of Gun 505 at the School of Artillery, South Head c.1939. On or before this time the gun had been painted in a single colour (Burch, 1996: 34; RAAHC, Whitelaw Gunner Collection).



Figure 15. Gun 505 on display at National Artillery Museum, North Head (between May 1996 -1998), after restoration by Transfield Holdings and Croda Paints near the entrance to Engine Room of the 9.2-inch coastal gun installation (RAAHC Collection, Photo Album 36).



Figure 16A. A view of the rear of the breech showing the serial number 'Nr. 505.L., [Krupp symbol of three intersecting rings] FRIED. KRUPP. [Krupp symbol repeated] 1900.'



Figure 16B. A close up of the right side of the breech block with the serial number '505' on the bolt face.



Figure 16C. Serial number '418' on the elevation mechanism. This is one of the many parts with this serial number.



Figure 16D. Impressed into the rear top of the rear trail is the carriage serial number '18' (Photographs taken 25 March 2011 by Peter Bannigan, Scale in cm).

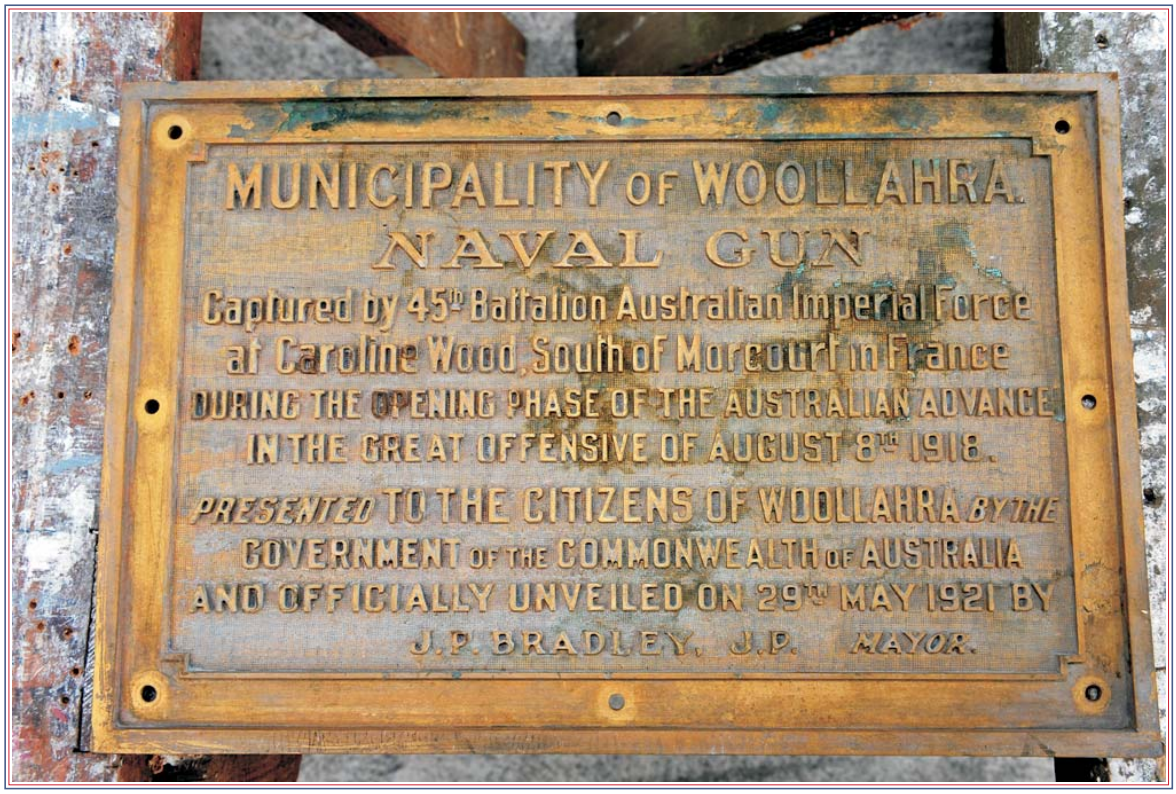


Figure 17. Bronze presentation plate which gives basic details of Guns capture and presentation to the Woollahra Council (Photograph taken 25 March 2011 by Peter Bannigan).

Gun 505 at the Battle of Amiens

Prior to this research it was known that the gun had been captured/over-run by the 45th Battalion at Caroline Wood on 8 August 1918 but the authors could not locate Caroline Wood on any available map. However, further documentation has allowed us to be more precise. The 45th Battalion was a part of the Australian 4th Division attack. The 4th Division Captured Gun Claim for the 8 August 1918 lists Gun 505 as one of five 6-inch long-range guns captured by the Division on that day. Four of these guns, including Gun 505, are recorded as being located at grid square Q23.b on 8 August 1918, the other at Q22.d (Map Sheet 62D SE 1:20,000; France 3B Local) (Figure 2 on page 59). These five guns were part of 47 guns captured by the 4th Australian Division on that day and part of the '173 guns capable of being hauled away, not counting those which had been blown to pieces', captured by the Australian Corps. The recovery of a number of guns including five 6-inch (actually 5.9-inch or 150-mm) Long Range guns somewhere in either grid squares Q21, 22, 23 or 27 by Nos. 2 or 3 section of the 4th Australian Division Ammunition Column is mentioned in a circular dated 17 August 1918. It was recorded by the 4th Aust. DAC that most of these guns, including the 6-inch Long Range guns were recovered before or on the 18 August 1918. These guns may have been recovered by Nos. 3 or 4 section of the Special Gun Salvage Party attached to the Australian Corps which was set up to cope with the recovery of the unprecedented number of captured German guns. The areas of responsibility for these two sections intersected near the probable capture location of Gun 505.

There is however some doubt about the location of the four guns located at Q23.b. Other research indicates that two of the five guns, which were 15-cm K16 Kp (15-cm *Kanone* 16 Krupp, Gun Nos. 4 and 135) were probably located further south in Q23.d, not Q23.b. The same can be said for Gun 505. An annotated map in the 45th Battalion Diary for August 1918 has the location of six 6-inch [not five] Naval Guns circled around Caroline Wood at Q23.c (Figure 18A on page 60). An entry in the 37th Battery, 10th Australian Field Artillery Brigade A.I.F. for the 7-10 August 1918 might provide further evidence of the location of Gun 505 and probably Gun 1038. It says, 'Our last position was occupied at 3 PM and was situated at Q22 d 5 5. This was a German HV [high velocity] 5-9 [inch/150-mm] and HV 4-2 [inch/105-mm] Battery position and had been under occupation by him early that morning'. According to a German Map in the German Official History, this battery seems to be located in the western ravine of the Morcourt Valley (also called Dudgeon Wood Valley and, by the Germans, the Römer Valley), as indicated by a gun symbol indicating a two-gun battery. However, unlike other symbols marked on this map there are no unit details for this particular symbol (Figure 18B on page 60).

As mentioned earlier, flash-spotting, sound-ranging and aerial reconnaissance efforts before the battle located many of the guns on the battlefield in the Australian zone. The known guns were recorded in a Counter Battery - Australian Corps H.A. [Heavy Artillery] No.15 - Weekly Intelligence Summary 31/7/18-7/8/18 and Appendix 7/8/18. This report notes 68 guns in the Cérisy area; of relevance are a number of heavy guns in Q22.d.1.5 and 8.2, and Q23.c.4.5. Importantly, the report indicates that guns were being moved into this area. However, the exact location of Gun 505 is difficult to ascertain, although it appears to be located in the western ravine of the Morcourt Valley. These grid squares were located in the lane assigned to Y Group. This approximate position was known to be subject to fire from a number of sources:

- One 8-inch Howitzer section from 25 Siege Battery (68 Brigade), RGA, targeted Q23.c.10.60.
- One 9.2-inch Howitzer from 124 Siege Battery (93 Brigade), RGA, targeted Q22.d.60.50.
- One 60-pdr section from 150 Heavy Battery (9 Brigade), RGA, targeted Q22.d.60.30.
- One 60-pdr section from 150 Heavy Battery (9 Brigade), RGA, targeted Q23.c.90.20.
- Sixteen 6-inch guns of the separate long-range brigade (77 Brigade), RGA, assigned special targets such as the Morcourt Valley from Q22.d.11-Q29.a.89-Q23.a.00.

Records indicate that both the 60-pounder and 6-inch guns were to use 50 percent high explosive and 50 percent shrapnel ammunition during the bombardment. This is consistent with the damage pattern on Gun 505, although some of the damage might have been caused in previous actions or, less likely, some damage might have been caused by German batteries shelling grid square Q23 in the days after its capture by the Allies.

There is little information in the 45th Battalion unit history, except that 29 guns were captured including five 6-inch guns. Subsequent unit histories have revised the total number to 25 and the 4th Division Captured Gun Claim to 24. A Military Medal citation to 641 Sergeant (later Lieutenant) Ernest

Edward Lind of the 45th Battalion on the 8 August 1918 might provide some additional detail about the capture of this gun. The citation says:

> During the operations East of HAMEL, East of CORBIE, on 8th August 1918 this N.C.O. showed great ability and courage. He was on the left flank of his Company and was responsible for keeping [in] touch with the neighbouring units. This he very ably did. While passing through CAROLINE WOOD his platoon was fired on by machine guns that were protecting a 6 inch naval gun. These he engaged with rifle grenades, and working round their flanks, rushed them. Crews and guns were captured intact.

Additionally, a description in *The Argus* on the 18 June 1920 by Charles Bean, who was commenting on the guns in the Melbourne Domain, apparently in describing Gun 505 mentions:

> 5.9-inch Gun. - The only large naval gun in the collection. This was captured about 9 a.m. on August 9 [*sic* 8], 1918, by the 45th Battalion, in a gully near Morcourt. It belonged to a battery which had just been brought into position by the Germans for bombarding Villers-Bretonneux and, possibly, the nearer suburbs of Amiens.

The 45th Battalion reached the second objective, the 'Red Line', at 10.19 am which was on the far side of the Morcourt Valley (Figure 2 on page 59) and Figure 18A on page 60). Although this would have been a difficult gun to move given its platform and size, the fact it was captured virtually intact, less than 6 hours after the battle commenced, might mean that there were other factors which prevented its removal by the German gun detachment. It is recorded that the Morcourt Valley was still under fire by the 'heavies' when elements of the 4th Division were approaching the Valley.

There are two photographs in the Australian War Memorial of 15-cm S.K. L/40 i.R. guns attributed to this date and action. Unfortunately the clearer of the two photographs (Figure 19) is definitely not Gun 505, although it is located in a valley and painted '45TH BN ' and 'A·I·F·' in a number of places. We know this because the damage recorded on Gun 505 in 2011 is not present on the gun in the photograph. It might therefore be Gun 1038, another of the five



Figure 19. A 15-cm S.K. L/40 i.R. captured by the 45th Battalion on the 8 August 1918 in the Morcourt Valley. The platform has not been fully emplaced as earth has not been used to fill the gaps between the beams. This probably indicates that prior to capture the gun had only recently been deployed and was not ready for action. The troops in the photograph are British Gunners (AWM Negative No. E02891).

captured guns mentioned earlier and recorded as being in this part of the Morcourt Valley. The other photograph of this type of gun, also located in a Valley and likely to be Gun 505, is not clear enough to match any damage details or markings but it is probable that it is Gun 505 (Figure 20). In both photographs the platforms have not been fully prepared and, as indicated in *The Argus* in June 1920 (above), it is probable that these guns were being moved into position and the gun detachments were prevented from completing their tasks due to the bombardment.

Gun 505 in Europe after the battle

Records indicate Gun 505, after capture, moved to a number of gun parks in France and England before being transported to Australia. It was transported from the *La Flaque* railhead, east of its capture position, on the 10 November 1918 in Truck No. 62. It was then transported to England. The condition of the trophy guns was important. Whilst they were located in a number of dumps in France, 'German prisoners were employed for many weeks in cleaning and oiling them for transport to Australia as trophies of war'.

On 5 February 1919 the gun is shown to be at the Croydon Ordnance Depot, London, where hundreds of German guns captured by the Australians were stored. Later, Gun 505 was photographed being entrained from the Croydon Ordnance Depot in March 1919 on Great Western flat car No. 84402 (Figure 10). Its destination was No. 4 Dock, Royal Albert Docks, London, the berthing location of the SS *Bulla* (war prize captured from the Germans and now part of the Australia Commonwealth Shipping Line). The manifest for this movement described Gun 505 as 'Truck No. G.W. Ry 84402, Gun No.: 505L, Carriage No.: 418, Calibre: 205mm. [*sic*, actually 150-mm], Marks: 45th. Battn.'. The gun was one of 192 guns intended for transport on the SS *Bulla*, which left for Australia on or around 1 April 1919. However, only 184 guns were loaded on the ship, the remaining 8 guns were later shipped on the SS *Boonah*. The entry on the cargo manifest for the SS *Bulla* titled 'List of Guns Captured by A.I.F. shipped on SS *Bulla* April 1919' has for Gun 505 'No.: 505, Type: 5.9" Howr., Captor: 45th Battalion, Date of Capture: 8.8.18.'. Before their long voyage to Australia, the guns were prepared for transport by the Australian War Records Section by coating them in grease and particular parts were removed for safekeeping.



Figure 20. Another 15-cm S.K. L/40 i.R. captured by the 45th Battalion on the 8 August 1918 in the Morcourt Valley with detachment shelters in the background. Whilst it is not possible to clearly identify the gun by damage it is probable that this is Gun 505. Like the gun in Figure 19, the lack of soil between the beams of the platform indicate that the gun was not ready for action at the time of its capture (AWM Negative No. E03015).

Gun 505 in Australia

The history of Gun 505 since its arrival in Australia is varied and surprisingly complex, adding considerably to its significance. The gun arrived in Melbourne on 27 May 1919 as ballast aboard the SS *Bulla* and was presumably unloaded 'by the "big crane" ' at No.18 North Wharf on 30-31 May. It was then transported to the Temporary Gun Park in the Melbourne Domain Camp where the following details relating to Gun 505 are noted in an inventory of guns at the Domain sometime in 1919 'Trail: good, Shield: good, Barrel: good, Condition of gun: good, Camouflaged: Yes, Marks: 45th Battalion'. A photograph of Gun 505 was taken at the Domain around September 1919 without its front shield, which appears to be lying next to the gun. There are also two other photographs of Gun 505 taken in the Domain c.1920-21 (Figure 12). Before being despatched from the Domain to their place of allocation, the trophy guns were overhauled, so that they were 'in good condition and suitable for exhibition'.

A document dated 3 December 1920, published by the N.S.W. State Trophy Committee, shows Gun 505 being allocated to the Woollahra Municipal Council with the following description:

> No. 505. 6 inch Naval Gun captured by 45th Battalion A.I.F. at Caroline Wood south of Morcourt in France during the opening phase of the Australian advance in the great offensive of August 8th 1918.

On 14 February 1921 it was reported to Woollahra Council that the Municipality of Woollahra had been allocated Gun 505. Two weeks later the Council appointed His Worship the Mayor (Alderman J. P. Bradley), Aldermen W. F. Latimer and L. W. Robinson (late A.I.F.) as the trustees for the gun. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported on the 6 April 1921 that the council had approved the gun was to be placed 'in the reserve in front of the Woollahra Council chambers …'. The gun was shipped from Melbourne aboard the SS *Araluen* (another war prize captured from the Germans and now part of the Australia Commonwealth Shipping Line) on 19 April 1921 and arrived in Sydney on 24 April having been addressed to the Senior Ordnance Officer 2nd Military District (NSW). On 30 April 1921, the Works Committee Minutes stated that the gun would be positioned in the grounds outside the Council Chambers in the Garden at the corner of Ocean Street and Jersey Road, Woollahra. It would be placed in a position about 40 feet (approx. 12 m) from the corner on a suitable concrete base.

The gun was delivered to Council on 6 May 1921, but the concrete base had not yet been prepared. It was officially unveiled on 29 May 1921 by the Mayor in the grounds surrounding the council chambers. Several thousand people attended the unveiling. A photograph taken *c.*1926 shows the gun painted in its dappled camouflage pattern (at capture) standing in front of the Council Chambers (Figure 13A and Figure 13B). It was announced on 1 April 1930 that a tender was being sought for the removal of the gun from its current position to either Lyne Park, Rose Bay, or Woollahra Park. The preferred location appeared to be Lyne Park at the corner of Vickery Avenue and New South Head Road. Whilst its actual site of relocation is not documented, its movement seems to be confirmed by an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 29 April 1933 which states 'Only three years ago the plantation harboured a huge and ugly cannon, which was removed to a more suitable area; …'. This location was temporary, for in 1934 a quote was accepted from Sutton Rudder Carrying Co. for the removal of Gun 505 to the north end of Lyne Park. Whether this move occurred is not recorded, but on the 25 February 1935 the council minutes noted a request by Major J. S. Whitelaw, Chief Instructor School of Artillery, expressing an interest in the German gun displayed at Lyne Park and asking if the gun could be transferred to the School of Artillery at South Head (Sydney). Whitelaw noted:

> that this is a very good example of a German heavy gun from a technical point of view, … [and is] not only … a relic of the Great War but as a technical exhibit of considerable instructive value to the School which is responsible for the higher technical training of gunners from all over Australia, and stating that if the Council consents to the transfer, the Department will undertake the transport necessary and take every care of the gun in the future.

This request was noted as being granted. A photograph of the gun located at South Head, painted in a single colour was taken sometime in 1939 behind Lieutenant A.K.C. Harper (Figure 14).

The Second World War. In January 1942 the Master General of the Ordnance compiled a list of captured German First World War Trophy Guns of 150-mm held in Australia. It appears consideration was being given to reconditioning these guns for the war effort. Gun 505 is included in the list. It soon became

evident that this option was not taken, as evidence indicates that a number of these guns were melted down for the war effort. Thankfully Gun 505 survived intact.

A Second Chance. With the outbreak of the Second World War, the lack of facilities at South Head for training the increased number of students resulted in the School of Artillery being relocated to a number of other locations. It would appear only essential equipments were relocated from South Head. In 1945 all the Schools of Artillery were amalgamated at North Head Barracks, Manly (Sydney). Gun 505 appears to have remained behind at South Head, as the Woollahra Municipal Council minutes for the 20 September 1957 meeting notes that the Commanding Officer of the Military establishment at South Head asked if the Council would reclaim their large field gun. Based on this request the Woollahra Municipal Council resolved that the gun be returned and placed at a site back in Lyne Park:

> east of the playground on the top of the bank behind the flower beds. There it would be in full view of the passing public and close to the war memorial. On a lighter vein, it would be a wonderful plaything for small children attending the adjoining playground.

The gun was returned on 17 October 1957. In May 1972 two photographs were taken of it by Geoff Green (Figure 9 and Figure 21). These images show the gun painted in a single colour and, as mentioned earlier, it appears that some parts from the front of the carriage have been removed. Corrosion is also evident on various elements of the carriage. This is also mentioned by Bruce Crosson in his (1987) book *Monuments and Memorials in Woollahra*. Under the survey notes in this book is the description 'the carriage of the gun is subject to severe corrosion' (Figures 11A and 11B).

A Third Chance. By 1990 Woollahra Council appeared to be concerned about the risk that the deteriorating condition of the gun posed to the public and it considered donating the gun to a military museum to restore it. One of the authors (KB) was asked on behalf of the RAAHS to examine the gun *in situ* and advise on future possible actions. The poor condition of the object was also noted. A letter offering to provide advice on the preservation of the gun or a permanent home at the Museum at North Head was sent to the Woollahra Council. Facing an expensive repair bill, prompted the Council to find a new home for the gun. The council offered it to the Australian War Memorial (AWM) who declined the gun, stating that due to 'present

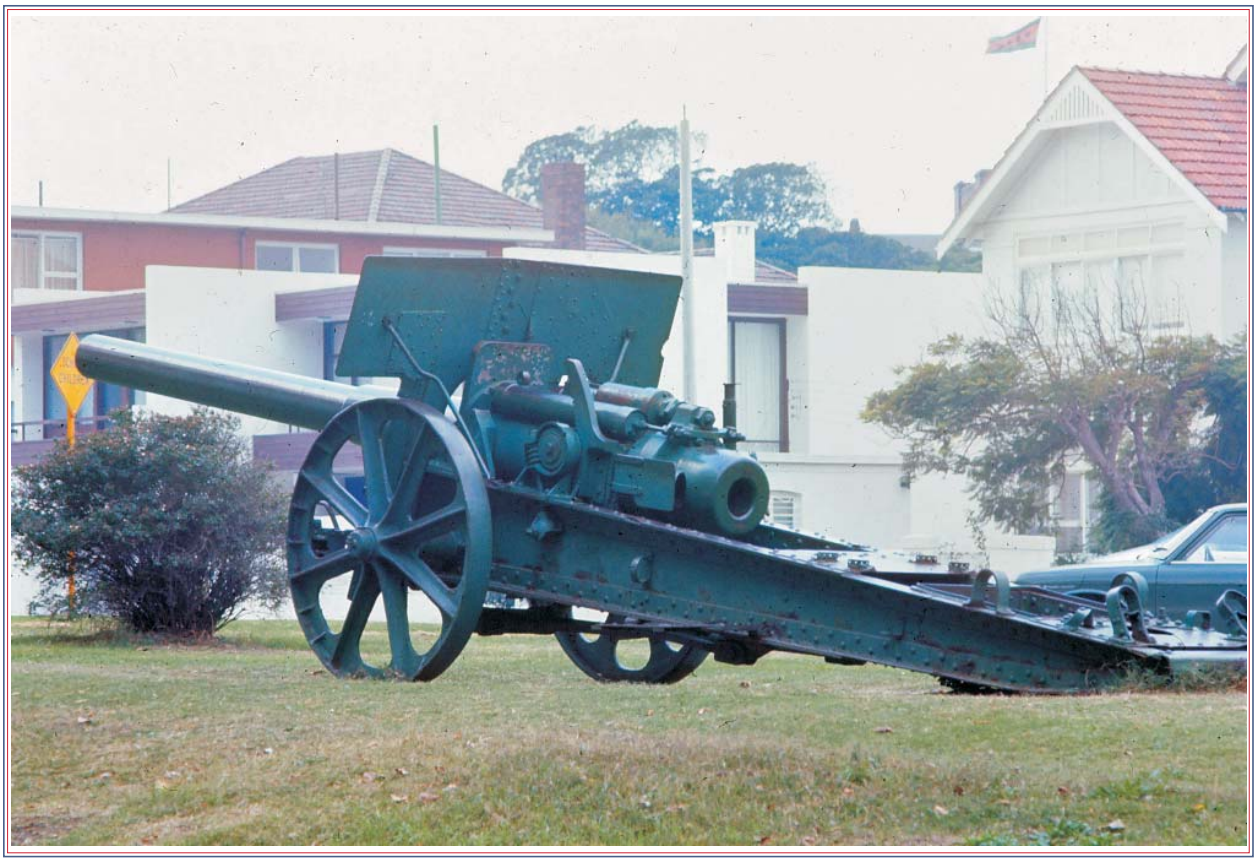


Figure 21. Another view Gun 505 at Lyne Park, Rose Bay taken in May 1972 (Photograph taken by Geoff Green - RAAHC Collection).

storage and monetary restriction … [and that they held] 80 guns of various sizes and the majority require extensive work. Another would only compound [their] difficult situation'. Once informed that the AWM could not accept the gun the RAAHS offer was accepted. In 1994 the gun arrived at the National Artillery Museum in a corroded condition (Figure 22). In 1995 Wolfgang Stiller, a volunteer at the Museum, arranged with his employer Transfield Holdings to restore the gun. With the assistance of Croda paints, the gun was stabilised and partly restored for $30,000. It was returned to the Museum in May 1996 and placed on display at North Head near the entrance to the Engine Room of the 9.2-inch coastal gun installation (Figure 15).

Responsibility for the Museum was taken over by the AAHU in late 1997. The gun received further attention in 1998 when volunteer Laurie Reid painted it in a new dapple camouflage pattern (Figure 1). Unfortunately, due maintenance was not properly maintained and the gun commenced to fall into disrepair. In December 2010 the Army closed the Museum at North Head and plans were made to move the collection to Bandiana for short-term storage pending the construction of a purpose-built Museum at Puckapunyal. In March 2011 the gun was subsequently moved to Bandiana, VIC, where in October 2012 it was located on hard standing in the open where it remains to this day notably deteriorating further from exposure to the elements (Figure 23).

Conclusion: A Fourth Chance?

The significance of this gun is clear for the Australian Army, both the Artillery and Infantry. Its capture is a tangible example of the successful use of combined arms tactics as employed by the Australian Corps near the end of the First World War. It is not only a relic of the First World War but is a technical exhibit of '… considerable instructive value to the School of Artillery'. It was a part of the cultural landscape of Woollahra for 73 years, and of the RAAHS/RAAHC from 1994 to the present day. It is also historically significant as a stop-gap measure for the Imperial German Army, being one of only a few assembled at the time of its use and of few surviving today. Without doubt, this gun is of primary significance: militarily, technically, historically, and culturally, yet it is being left to rust, unprotected from the weather as has now been the case for almost a hundred years.



Figure 22. Gun 505 being lifted off an Army low-loader at North Head in 1994 following its transfer from the Woollahra Council and before restoration (RAAHC Collection, Photo Album 30).



Figure 23. Gun 505 located at Bandiana, July 2014, on hard standing exposed to the elements. The background has been deliberately blurred (Photograph taken 28 July 2014 by Kevin Browning - RAAHC Collection).

The question now remains what does the future hold for Gun 505? The RAAHS/RAAHC restored the gun to a high standard and when responsibility for its upkeep was assumed by the AAHU it once again fell into disrepair. As one of the very few remaining examples of this type of gun known to survive in the world and the only example in Australia, its destruction would be culturally negligent. Presently covered storage and stabilisation is essential and in the short-term full restoration and an appropriate display environment is required for its continued existence. The authors believe that if the *status quo* remains, then the integrity of this military heritage artefact will not survive intact for much longer. By neglecting it, we neglect the past, at the very time that we seek to remember the outbreak of the First World War and to honour those of so many nations who were drawn into it. Gun 505 is not merely a rusting artefact, it is a symbol of great significance and deserves to be treated as such. Symbols also matter.

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Readers interested in any of the sources used in this article can contact the authors for more information. Contact David Pearson at dapearso@nla.gov.au and or Kevin Browning at kb@artilleryguns.org.au.

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David holds an honours degree in archaeology from the Australian National University, Canberra. He has worked in various cultural institutions for the last 20 years and is currently the Manager of the Digital Preservation Section at the National Library of Australia. David has written a number of articles in academic journals on both archaeological and digital preservation issues. He has a keen interest in the technological and social contexts of conflict archaeology and is a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London. David has written a number of other articles on artillery relevant to Australian Military History.

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- Decode QR Code – QR code is decoded and translated into a URL.
- View Landing Page – URL is opened in a browser to display a mobile landing page.

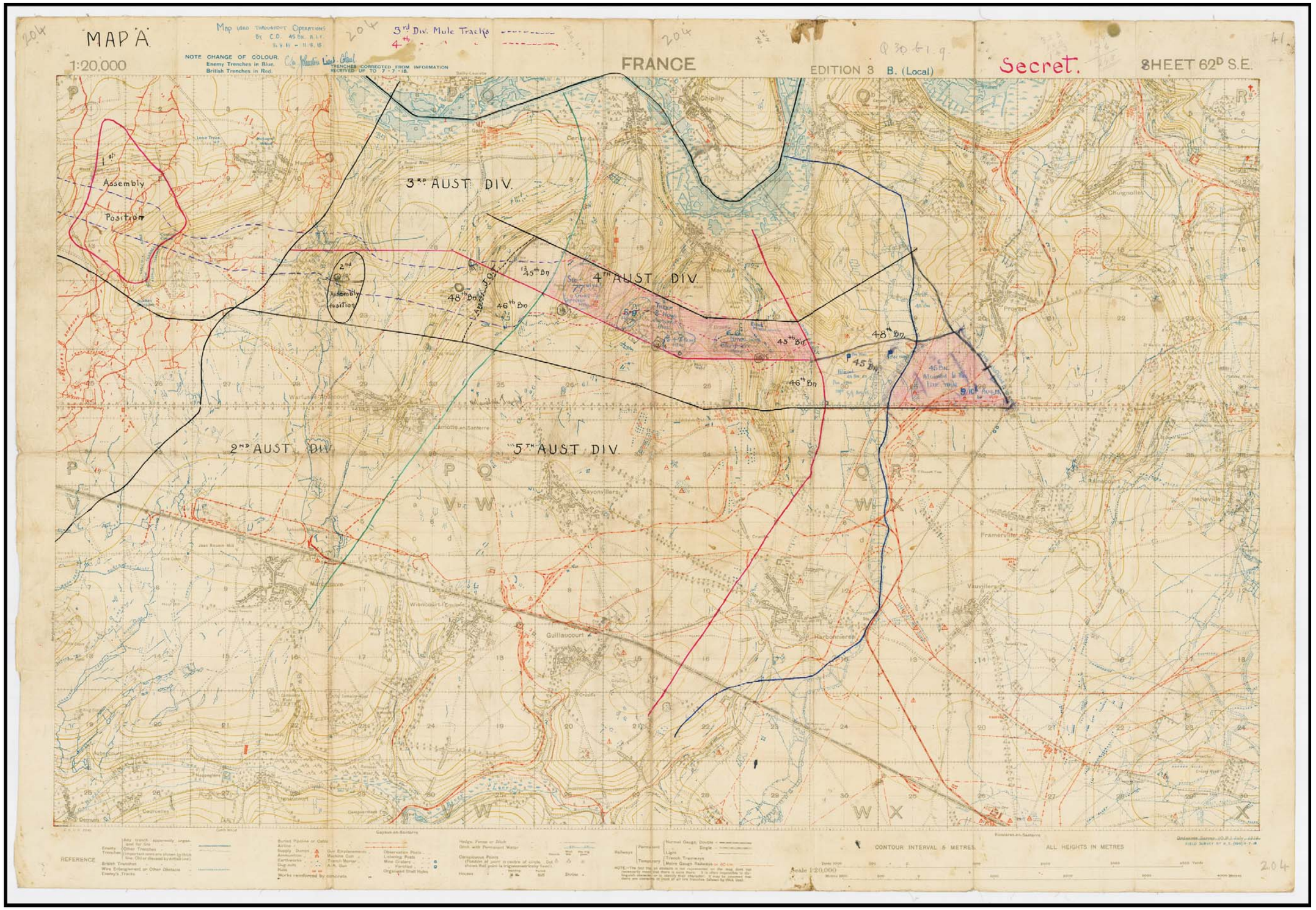


Figure 2. An original map (Map sheet 62D SE 1:20,000; France 3B Local) annotated with details of the attack by the Australian Corps on 8 August 1918. The area shaped in red shows the lane of advance of the 45th Battalion A.I.F. This map is contained in the 45th Battalion War Diary (AWM4 23/62/30).

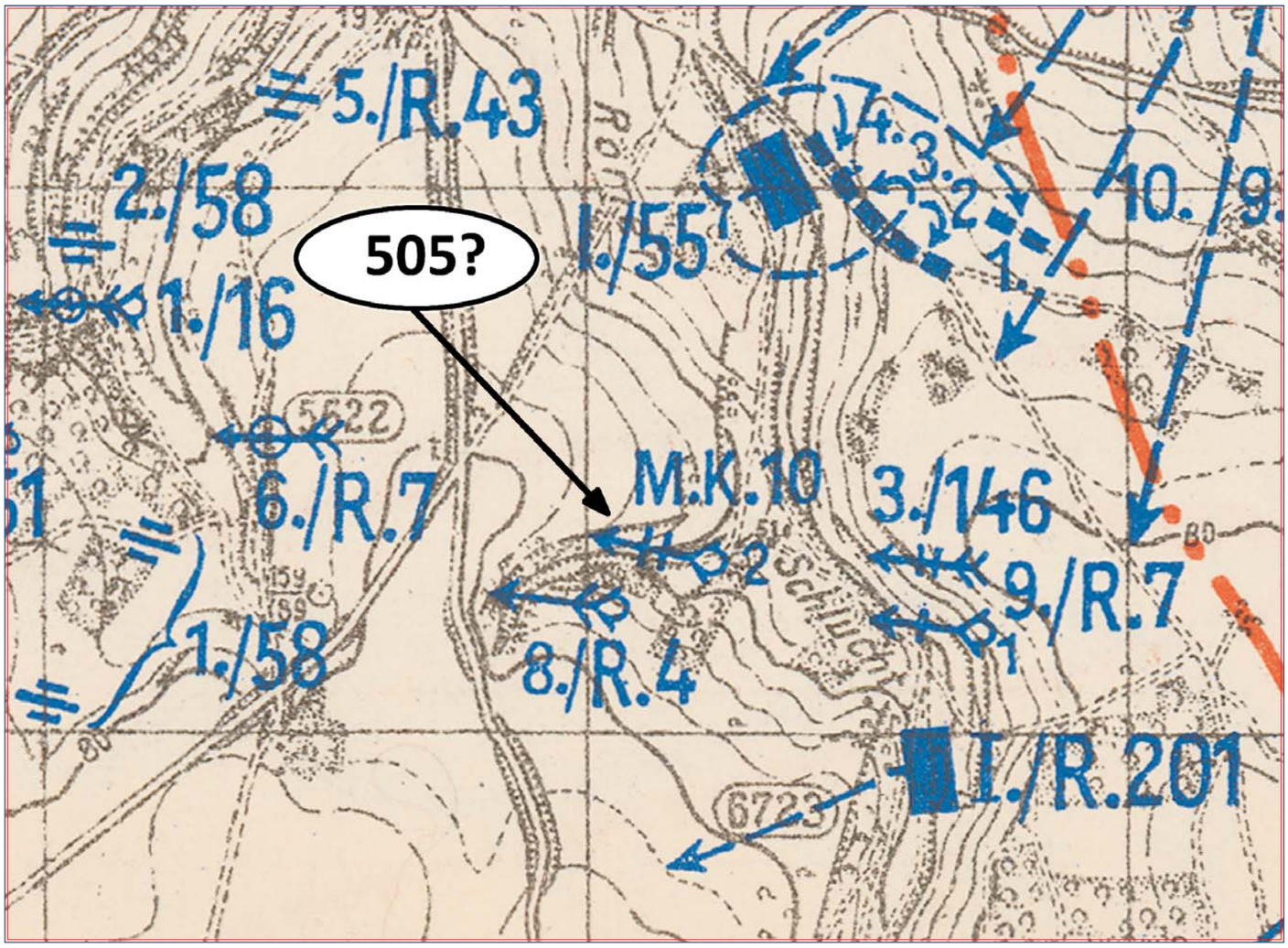


Figure 18B. Close up of the German map that appears in the German Official History (Von Bose, 1930: Map 2). The two gun symbols in the middle (one annotated 505? with a 2 at the back of the symbol) are the tactical symbols for s.15 cm-K. (15-cm S.K. L/40 i.R.) and 10-cm K14 High Velocity batteries mentioned in the Diary Entry for the 37th Battery, 10th Australian Field Artillery Brigade A.I.F. for the 7-10 August 1918 (AWM4 13/37/25 Part 1, August 1918). The '505?' probably indicates the location of Gun 505. 'M.K.10' is apparently a machine gun unit.

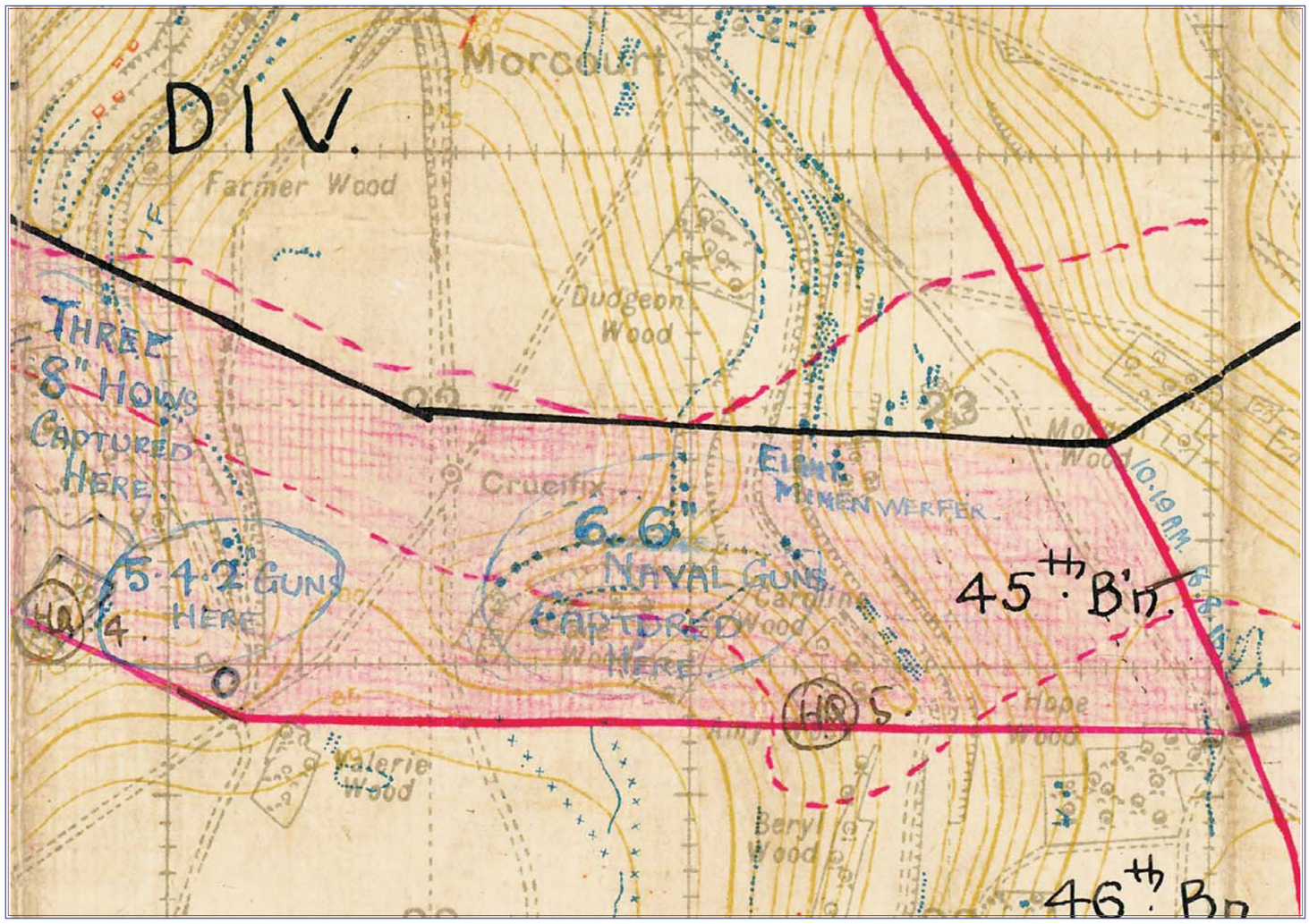


Figure 18A. This and the map shown as Figure 18B show the same area. Close up of details from the annotated British Map (Map Sheet 62D SE 1:20,000; France 3B Local) from Figure 2. The area shaped in red shows part of the lane of advance of the 45th Battalion. A.I.F. and highlights the general area near Caroline Wood where they claimed to have captured 150-mm guns including Gun 505 and is annotated '6. 6" Naval Guns Captured Here' (AWM4 23/62/30).