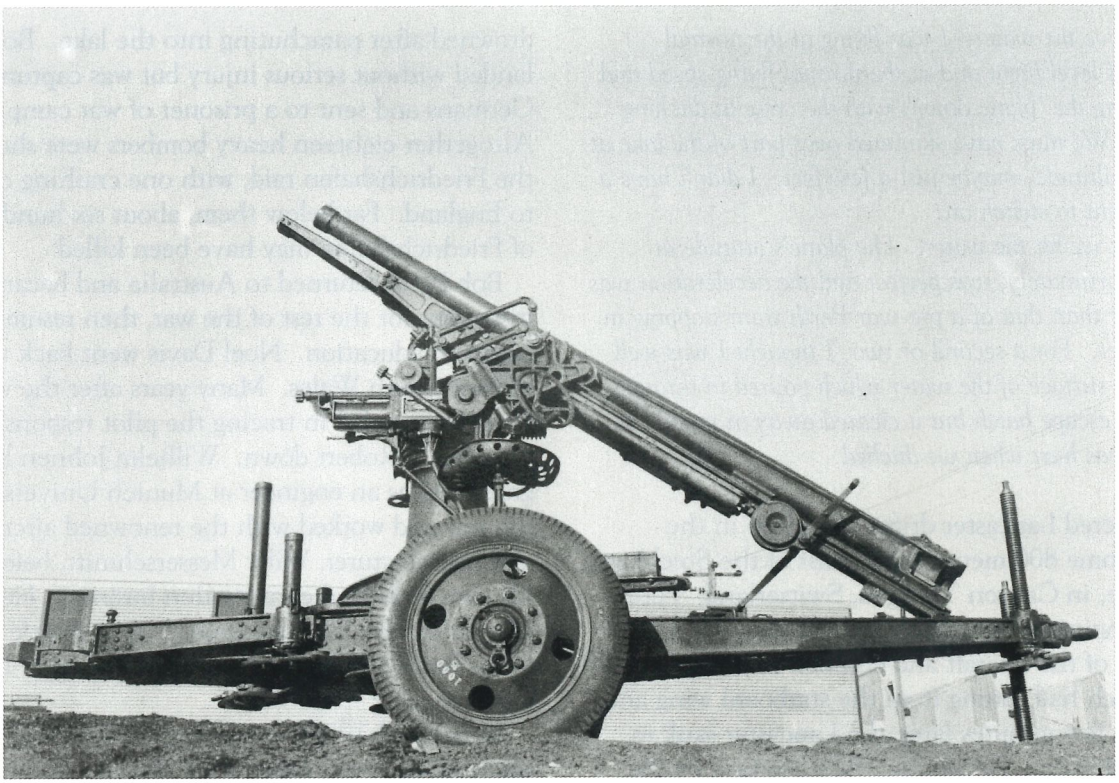


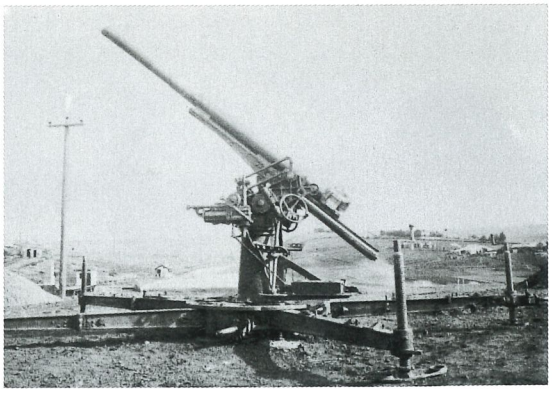
Trash for TREASURE

The chance recovery of a Japanese 75 mm type 88 anti-aircraft gun from Holsworthy

During 1998 staff from the Memorial visited the Army's Holsworthy Military Area in search of the remains of a Second World War German 8.8 cm anti-aircraft gun, believed to have been used as a target on the firing range in 1972. While the search failed to locate the German "88", we were surprised to find in the same area the rusted and incomplete remains of a Second World War Japanese 75 mm type 88 anti-aircraft gun.

The remains of the type 88 included a platform, five folding arms and a range of other components. Much of the weapon's superstructure, including the barrel, cradle and top carriage, were missing; yet extensive debris, believed to be associated with the gun, was scattered within a one hundred-metre radius.

The discovery of these remnants presented the Memorial with the opportunity to acquire original parts



ABOVE: **An intact Japanese 75 mm type 88 anti-aircraft gun.** This gun was recovered south of Buna in January 1943 by the United States Army's 32nd Division and brought back to Australia for intelligence and technical examination. The gun is in the travelling position, the legs and trails are folded and the barrel is in the full recoil position. (AWM P02823.001)
LEFT: **The same gun** in the firing position. This is how the gun recovered from Holsworthy would have looked in action. (AWM P02823.003)



LEFT: **The gun carriage** after being loaded onto an Army truck for transport to the Memorial. (David Pearson)

BELOW: **The remains of a Japanese 75 mm type 88 anti-aircraft gun** found at grid reference 09702 34044 (1:50,000 Holsworthy Special). The gun was used for target practice on the Holsworthy Army Range before being recovered for spare parts and sent to the Memorial. (David Pearson)



to replace those missing from a gun already in the collection. Thus began a salvage operation to recover the remnants from Holsworthy. The difficulties associated with recovering material from a live range made this a complex undertaking – we were joined in this task by members of the Army's Range Control and the Engineer Transport Section, Morebank, who made available a Mack 6 x 6 truck fitted with a crane.

The type 88 already held in the Memorial's collection is missing three screw legs and some travelling wheel suspension components, all of which were present on the salvaged platform. Exposed for years on the firing range, the salvaged parts of the gun were damaged and corroded. These parts have since undergone conservation treatment, soaking in citric acid to remove corrosion. They will then be painted to match the colours on the Memorial's gun.

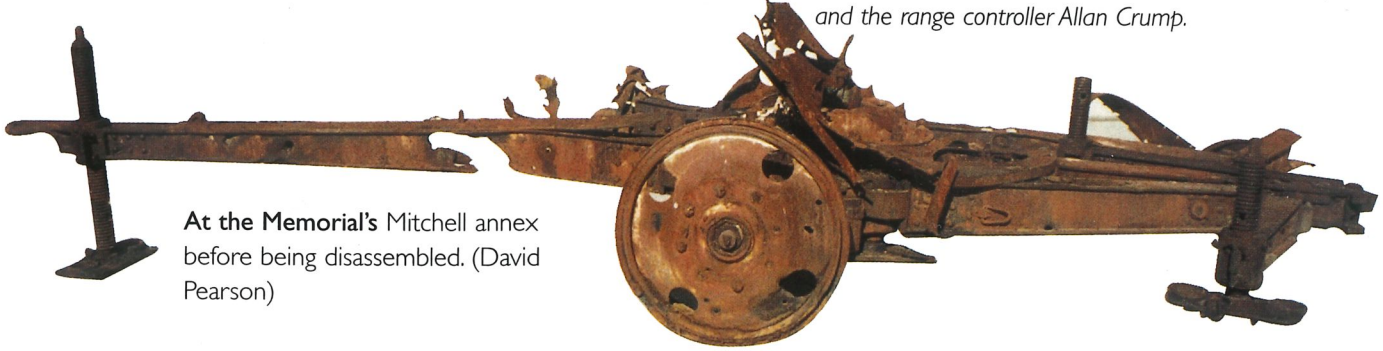
Were it not for this fortunate discovery, the Memorial would have had to reproduce and machine cast-iron parts at a cost of several thousand dollars. The exact shape and dimensions of these parts would have been based largely on guesswork. The opportunity now exists to fit components that were probably made in the same factory as the Memorial's gun, from the same materials and to the same specifications. This will make the gun a more valuable reference piece than it otherwise would have been.

Other remains of the salvaged platform will be kept for metallurgical analysis while the gun is restored. The conserved type 88 will be displayed in the refurbished Bradbury Aircraft Hall, due to reopen later this year.

AUTHORS

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At the Memorial's Mitchell annex before being disassembled. (David Pearson)