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10 June, 2019

**Major-General Seán Clancy**

**Deputy Chief of Staff (Support)**

## **RESTORATION OF 18-pounder MARK II QF FIELD GUN SERIAL NUMBER - 9168**

*Dear General,*

### **Introduction**

The Artillery Club supports the preservation of the Defence Forces Artillery Corps unique legacy and distinctive traditions, promotes professional excellence, provides a focal point for remembrance and camaraderie, in order to encourage and foster the Artillery Corps admirable Esprit de Corps.

The Club's membership consists of serving and retired commissioned officers of the Permanent Defence Force, the Army Reserve and An Fórsa Cosanta Áitiúil who are, or were, commissioned officers of the Artillery Corps at any time during their service with the Defence Forces.

Information on the Club's activities can be viewed on the Web Site, [www.artilleryclub.ie](http://www.artilleryclub.ie).

### **Artillery Heritage**

In advancing the Club's active support of the preservation of Artillery heritage for future generations, the Home Page of the Club's Website contains a Heritage Section, providing information, photographs and links, to Irish historical sites and museums such as the Curragh Military Museum, Fort Dunree, Fort Mitchel on Spike Island and Fort Meagher in Camden.

### **Support for Military Museums**

One of the Artillery Club's prescribed objectives is to support military and regimental museums, in the acquisition, preservation, maintenance and display of Artillery weapons, equipment, material and artefacts.

In this regard, the Club remains proactive in its support to the Artillery School and Artillery Regiments for outdoor Weapon Displays throughout the Defence Forces, and for weapon displays and galleries of an Artillery nature in the National Museum, the Curragh Military Museum, and museums in Collins Barracks Cork, and the former Columb Barracks Mullingar (relocated to Custume Barracks Athlone).



## **Artillery Display - Curragh Military Museum**

During 2018, the Artillery Club's Committee advanced a framework with HQ DFTC whereby the Club, is undertaking, within its competencies, an appropriate role in enhancing the Artillery Display in the Curragh Military Museum, which is affiliated to the National Museum of Ireland. The Artillery Club has established a Working Group, under the leadership of Col Brian O'Connor (Retd), which engages with the museum's curator, providing technical and historical advice, and coordinates the required work to achieve identified objectives within the domain of the Artillery Display, including weapons and equipment.

Enhancing the reputation and attractiveness of the Curragh Military Museum, hopefully, this framework will include the eventual transfer of the Artillery Display to a refurbished permanent, and, perhaps, dedicated building, within the confines of the museum.

During 2017, under the auspices of the Artillery Club, the restored main gates of Magee Barracks were placed on permanent display in the museum. Likewise, the Artillery Club secured the loan of one of the surviving Morris Commercial CDSW Quad 6x6 Gun Towers, from the 19 original tractors which went into service in 1938, and paid for its transportation from England, for display in the museum, with its original registration plate ZC 5835.

Although with restricted access to resources, the provision of limited and indirect financial sponsorship for the Artillery Display, by the Artillery Club, is a viable proposition.

In the interim, with the curator's guidance, and support from the Artillery School, the Club continues to focus on the enhancement of the current Artillery Display, in the context of organisation, conservation, maintenance, description and history.

## **Recovery of 18-pounder Mark II Quick Fire Field Gun**

Pursuant to its objectives, the Artillery Club wishes to formally convey its appreciation to the Defence Forces for the acquisition, recovery, storage and the initial preservation of the 18-pounder Mark II QF Field Gun, Serial Number 9168, with its distinctive type of recoil system, currently located in Ordnance Base Workshops, Defence Forces Training Centre, The Curragh.

In particular, the Artillery Club acknowledges the keen interest displayed by Brig Gen Dave Dignam, GOC Defence Forces Training Centre, in this challenging project. Likewise, the Artillery Club commends the significant work undertaken in the Ordnance Base Workshops, by Capt Daithí O'Flynn, and artificers Sgt Delaney, Sgt Cregan and Sgt Sexton, under the guidance of Comdt Stephan Mac Eoin, Defence Forces Heritage Officer, and assisted by Mr Sven Habermann.

This particular Field Gun was on display for many years in at the *Lazy Susan Dinner Theatre*, Woodbridge, Virginia, USA. In 2015, Mr Ken Smith-Christmas of the US Army Museum, discovered that the gun was for sale, and subsequently facilitated an valuable interface between the gun's owner Mr Glenn Gates and Comdt Lar Joye (AR), Military Curator, the



National Museum of Ireland, and Director of the Military Heritage of Ireland Trust CLG, resulting in the owner kindly donating the gun to the Irish Defence Forces.

During the period February through August 2016, the acquisition and recovery of the Field Gun to Ireland was successfully conducted by Col Conor Fitzsimons Military Advisor Irish Permanent Representation UN New York, Lt Col Paul Carey J4 Branch DFHQ, Comdt Stephen MacEoin OIC Military Archives, and Comdt Lar Joye (AR). See Annex A.

### **Historical Background**

This particular 18-pounder Mark II QF Field Gun, Serial Number 9168, was manufactured in England and Scotland during the First World War for the Royal Artillery. In the context of the Decade of Centenaries, this Field Gun, currently located in Ordnance Base Workshops, played a significant role during the Civil War. Ralph Riccio's *The Irish Artillery Corps since 1922*, published in 2012, was one of the sources used to compile this background.

Provided by the Royal Artillery, six 18-pounder Field Guns (two Mark Is and four Mark IIs), were deployed by the National Army during the initial phase of the Civil War. From 28 June through 30 June 1922, four 18-pounder Field Guns were deployed in action at the Four Courts, in Dublin. The first artillery round was fired at 0400hrs on Wednesday, 28 June, marking the start of the Civil War. From an historical perspective, this engagement was the first occasion that the Irish Army fired an Artillery Field Gun.

Through contemporary research, efforts are being made to identify the actual Serial Numbers of all of the four Field Guns which were deployed at the Four Courts. Apparently, the Mark II 18-pounder that fired the first round on 28 June had the Serial Number 10756. It is highly likely that the irreplaceable Field Gun, Serial Number 9168 was one of the four Field Guns deployed at the Four Courts.

From an analysis of National Army engagements during 1922, six deployed 18-pounder Field Guns can be identified, either by the name of the gun (e.g. *Four Courts*, *Rose of Tralee*, *Drogheda*), or by the field (e.g. Gen Sean MacEoin, Comdt Dinny Galvin). It is generally understood that the National Army received a total of nine Field Guns from the British Army in 1922.

An 18-pounder Field Gun was deployed as the gun carriage for the funeral of General Michael Collins on 28 August, 1922.

Between 1926 and 1941, the Artillery Corps acquired additional Mark I and Mark II 18-pounder Field Guns, as well as the more modern Mark IV version.

In February 1959, the *SS Finnmerchant* docked in Alexandria, Virginia. Its shipment of weapons, purchased by an American arms trader Interarmco, included:

- seventeen 18-pounder Field Guns with limbers,
- twenty-two 4.5inch Howitzers with limbers,
- six 60-pounder guns with limbers,



- five 12-pounder guns, and
- four 3-inch Anti-Aircraft guns and mounts.

The serial numbers of the five Mark I 18-pounder guns were: 6460; 7209; 7470; and 10392. The serial numbers of the twelve Mark II 18-pounder guns were: 2819; 2908; 3484; 4254; 4770; 5605; 7554; 7765; 8577; 8976; 9168 and 10756.

As previously mentioned, it is understood that the Mark II 18-pounder that fired the first round on 28 June had the Serial Number 10756. Likewise, the Mark II 18-pounder Field Gun located in the Ordnance Base Workshops has the Serial number 9168.

The Field Gun located in the Ordnance Base Workshops is the last known remaining Mark II used in the Civil War. Apparently, there is no record of any remaining Mark I Field Guns.

Despite the introduction of the Ordnance QF 25-pounder in 1949, the 18-pounder Mark IV continued in service in the Artillery Corps, and the last round was fired in Glen Imaal by the 14 Battery, 2 Field Artillery Regiment on 28 April, 1974.

Preserved 18-pounder Mark IVs are on display throughout Ireland, and one can be viewed in the Curragh Military Museum.

In 2006, a private firm in Portsmouth, England, refurbished an 18-pounder Field Gun Mark IV for the National Museum. This Field Gun is currently on display in the *Soldiers and Chiefs Exhibition* in Collins Barracks, Dublin.

### **Restoration Project**

Based on the Condition Report kindly provided by The Royal Armouries, and the adverse condition of the Field Gun, the Ordnance Base Workshops initiated urgent conservation treatment. On account of the condition of the Field Gun, a realistic level of ambition would be of restoration rather than of conservation. Nevertheless, it is understood that the project is now entering a new phase of development, requiring technical expertise and experience, appropriate resources, and best practice. Should the decision be made to avail of organic Defence Forces competencies, rather than use an external contractor, and having engaged with some of the key stakeholders, I would like to advance the following issues for appropriate consideration:

- **Steering Group.** Under the leadership of the Defence Forces, the project would benefit from a Steering Group, consisting of appropriate advisors, experts, historians and stakeholders. It is envisaged that this Group would provide ownership for the project, culminating with the eventual display of the Field Gun in an appropriate location.

In the context of external membership of a Steering Group, I understand that Ms Brenda Malone, Military History Curator, National Museum of Ireland and Comdt Lar Joye (AR) a former Military Curator of the National Museum, and a



Director of the Military Heritage of Ireland Trust, both of whom have a direct interest in the project, are available to be members of the Group.

As a valuable stakeholder, the Artillery Club would like to be associated with the Steering Group. If this is considered appropriate, the Club nominates Col Brian O'Connor (Retd) to fill this role as a member of the Group.

- **Conservation Expert.** It is highly desirable that the Defence Forces formally engages a conservation expert, who would provide the necessary expertise and advice in the restoration of the Field Gun. Favourable consideration should be made to formalise the significant support already provided by Mr Sven Habermann. Mr Habermann, is based in Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology - Letterfrack campus and is in charge of the Conservation Department. He designed the Curragh Military Museum and conserved the Chester Beatty Collection which is on display in the museum. The informal contact with the Royal Armouries in Fort Nelson, Portsmouth is commendable. The interface with Royal Armouries should be put on an official basis, facilitating direct access to artificers with additional expertise.
- **Recording the Restoration Process.** In order to adhere to best practice regarding restoration ethics, the process undertaken by Ordnance Base Workshops to accurately record the material evidence, identified during the dismantling stage, is commendable. This recording process will facilitate the identification of original and replacement components of the Field Gun, thus enhancing the Field Gun's provenance.
- **Skill Sets – Restoration and Replacement.** Where possible, all restoration and replica work should conform with international standards. Replacement of corroded parts should be kept to a minimum. Should it be the case that Ordnance Base Workshops does not have the unique skill sets to restore, or replace a particular component of the Field Gun, it is desirable that the Defence Forces avail of external contractors to fulfil a particular need. For example, the pneumatic tyres are of the Martin Parrey nature and are not original – hopefully, the skill set to replace them with replica cart wheels used in the Civil War is available.
- **Historical Narrative.** Whereas the provenance of this Field Gun is supported by the engravings on various parts of the gun, including the breach, (War Department Mark, FF Mark, Serial Number, Maker and Date), this provenance would be further enhanced with the discovery of its gun history sheet(s). In the context of the Decade of Centenaries, the historical narrative associative with this Field Gun has to be meaningfully, proportionately and sensitively presented, in an inclusive manner, in order to broaden the parameters of our nation's analysis of the Civil War.



- **Time Scale.** Given the condition of the Field Gun, an inordinate amount of time will be needed to restore it to the required standards for display. The target date should be NLT 31 December 2021, providing sufficient time for its “unveiling” on the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the commencement of the Civil War.
- **National Cultural Institutions Act 1997.** Because of its significant historical and heritage value, it is likely that the Field Gun would be considered for inclusion on the Register of Cultural Objects. Such a posting would prohibit the movement of the Field Gun outside of Ireland. An example is the posting of the recent acquired Pearse surrender document.
- **Display of the Field Gun.** The museum in which the Field Gun is eventually displayed should be determined in the medium term. The display will include interpretive panels, gun accessories and the Martin-Perry carriage. Maximum exposure of the Field Gun would accrue with its display in the *Soldiers and Chiefs Exhibition* in the National Museum Collins Barracks.

**Summary.** The Artillery Club commends the Defence Forces for the acquisition, recovery and initial conservation of the irreplaceable and unique 18-pounder Mark II Field Gun, currently located in the Ordnance Base Workshops in The Curragh. The Club welcomes the opportunity to advance the recommendations contained in this submission, concerning the next phase of the restoration process.

*Bair Bun,*

*Pt A. Pakenham*

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**Annex A:** Associated Photographs

**Distribution – For Information**

Brig Gen David Dignam: GOC DFTC

Brig Gen Paul Fry (Retd): President, Military Heritage of Ireland Trust CLG

Col Ger Buckley: Director of Combat Support and ISTAR

Comdt Stephen Mac Eoin, DF Heritage Officer

Comdt Lar Joye AR: Board Member, Military Heritage of Ireland Trust CLG

Ms Brenda Malone: Military History Curator, National Museum of Ireland & Board Member of the Military Heritage of Ireland Trust CLG





## Annex A

### Deployment - Acquisition – Recovery - Challenge - Target



*18pdr Civil War*



*Acquisition February 2016*



*Recovery August 2016*



*Ord Coy 2 Bde June 2017 & 18pdr Mark IV Soldiers and Chiefs Exhibition*