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Conservator of Objects

Report – Howitzer 150mm Field Gun
ABN no 47 581 549 094

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Client City of Yarra
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This German Howitzer 150mm Field Gun is currently stored outdoors and directly on the ground adjacent to a council depot in Burnley. It sits on a driveway between commuter vehicles, under trees and is partially covered with a deteriorating blue poly tarp. It was initially moved from a public park in 2013 and at that time was examined by this conservator to assess condition and provide parameters that needed to be met in order to safely move it. Its removal was deemed necessary after a member of the public was injured whilst climbing /playing upon it.

The current location of the gun is poor with respect to its long term preservation, in addition, access to the public remains a liability. I understand it is no longer on council owned property.

2018 site



Condition:

As with the previous inspection elements of the gun are in poor condition but overall the gun remains structurally robust. Plate elements overall show losses, deformation and sharp edges. When compared to images taken in 2013 the condition does not immediately appear different but this may be deceptive. In its previous location the gun was in the open air well supported off the ground on steel struts, now it is directly on the ground subject to the accumulation of organic matter and has restricted air flow. The deteriorated poly tarp is doing little more that directing water into voids on and around the gun and as well as restricting any airflow that may aid it in drying out.

At present all crevices, cracks and voids are full of fine organic debris that have fallen from the melaleuca directly above. This is not only harbouring moisture, but provides an acidic environment that will accelerate all corrosion rates. Moisture was apparent in all areas where the organic debris was observed and along all contact points to the ground.

The above conditions are creating a prime environment that will accelerate any and all existing corrosion sites and will assist in creating new ones. If this historic item is to remain a viable artefact steps must be taken to ensure corrosion is halted.

Immediate Action Required *Relocate the gun to a more suitable and stable storage environment.*

Parameters that need to be met are as follows:

ACTION	COMMENT
Remove all debris from all crevices as soon as is practical and cover with a waterproof tarpaulin, ensure there is airflow to enable it to thoroughly dry out.	This does not need to be done by a conservator, however it does need to be thorough with attention to detail uppermost. Every last crumb of organic matter and soiling needs to be removed.
Remove to new dry location	Undercover would be ideal though an open site that

	has unrestricted airflow around the gun would suffice. If this is the case the site needs to be well away from trees so as to avoid the same problems currently observed. Covering it then is not necessary.
Ensure there is at least a 10cm gap between the gun and the ground.	This can be achieved by blocking beneath with hardwood 'sleepers'. Ensure the timber and the gun are separated by an intermediary layer such as black plastic or Ethafoam to avoid corrosion sites developing between the timber and the metal.
Consider conservation / restoration.	Decisions need to be made regarding the long term future of this gun. It is not currently in a state that would allow it to be relocated into a permanent public site ie park. So if it is placed in appropriate long term storage.....what then? Restoration is generally undertaken by military enthusiasts so this could be a realistic option to consider.



2013



2013



2018



2018

Relocation:

As before....Establish access and departure routes prior to commencement. The gun can be lifted directly onto a flat bed crane truck. The original weight of the gun was around 2.25 tonne and this needs to be conveyed to contractors to ensure the weight is well catered for. 'Rated' synthetic slings are preferred to chains. All heavy lift contractors should have them.

The lifting point will either be the axles themselves (the pivot point of the overall weight) or from around the body of the gun in front and behind the 'shield'. Again lifting contractors should and will test for the right balance before commencing the lift. Secure the gun to the flat bed with synthetic tie downs. Once at the storage facility ensure the gun is supported off the ground on wooden blocks.

The relocation of this gun appears to be straightforward – I do not anticipate problems if all processes are approached logically and with care.

Completed 31st January 2018