

Report on the identification and provenance of guns located in Alexandra Park, Bundaberg



Photo: J Ford, 2008

FINAL



Prepared by Brian Rough, Historian

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NOTE:

This Report has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time. The statements of significance are a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the items based on this evidence, and may be re-assessed should further information become available.

This Report is one of two documents prepared by Brian Rough to assist in the identification and conservation of the guns located in Alexandra Park, Bundaberg. It should be used in conjunction with "Alexandra Park Guns - Heritage Management Protocol."

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Scope of the Report

The primary focus of this study has been the identification of the guns located in Alexandra Park, Bundaberg, research into their provenance, and their significance to the City. This report also deals with their wider social context in Queensland and Australia.

The guns are **not** the World War I trophy guns provided to the city in 1922 by the War Trophy Committee, and no attempt has been made in this report to determine the whereabouts of those pieces (believed to be two field guns and two machine guns).

Authorship

This Report was prepared by historian Brian Rough for the Bundaberg Regional Council.

Acknowledgments

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Highlights

- The three guns located in Alexandra Park, Bundaberg are not the World War I trophy guns allocated to the city in 1922.
- These guns were originally acquired by the Queensland Government in the 1880s to be used on ships of the colony's navy, and as training guns for the Bundaberg naval contingent.
- Once declared obsolete by the Royal Australian Navy, the three guns were offered to the Bundaberg Town Council in 1913. The offer was accepted by Council and the guns were taken for display in Alexandra Park.

Understanding gun placements

It was not uncommon in late 19th century Australia, and much of the western world, for large obsolete guns to be prominently mounted in public settings. In some cases guns were placed around memorials, often as much for their perceived aesthetic values as their overt symbolism. These memorials were usually landmark structures that suggested ideas of celebration, patriotism or commemoration.

Guns were also often placed in public gardens. Because of their nature as a weapon of war, often dominating their surroundings, the juxtaposition of a silent gun in a peaceful park was believed to provide a level of aesthetics. In other cases, placed guard-like outside public buildings they also emphasised a perceived strength of that particular institution, colony or nation. In many ways the placement of obsolete weapons in parks just prior to WWI no doubt contributed to the continuation of the process when war trophies were distributed during the 1920s.

Statements of significance

The Alexandra Park guns are considered to be of cultural heritage significance:

For their association with the Bundaberg Naval Brigade and the Royal Australian Navy Reserve, the guns provide valuable evidence of Bundaberg's contribution towards colonial and national defence;

As a collection of colonial-era weapons, gathered by the municipality to decorate a public park, the guns are important markers in demonstrating the developing cultural and social landscape of pre-World War I Bundaberg;

For their association with the colonial naval vessels *HMQS Paluma*, *HMQS Gayundah* and *HMQS Midge* of the Queensland Marine Defence Force, an integral element of Queensland's colonial defences scheme;

As rare surviving examples of 19th century naval technology produced in Britain by the armament manufacturers Sir William Armstrong and Thorsten Nordenfelt;

As rare examples of guns used by the Queensland Marine Defence Force during the late 19th to early 20th century;

History and context

1 Defending the colony

From its Separation from New South Wales in late 1859, to the Federation of the Australian colonies in 1901, the colony of Queensland was largely responsible for its own defence. In a time of rapidly expanding European empires in the Pacific, and other largely European based international tensions, the ability to defend the colony against a foreign aggressor was believed a necessity.

The Moreton Bay penal settlement, from which the town of Brisbane developed, was formed to house second-offence convicts. It remained a penal station of the colony of New South Wales until 1842 when the district was opened up for free settlement. A succession of small detachments from Sydney-based British Army regiments took their post at Moreton Bay from 1824 to 1850 before they were withdrawn.

The colony of Queensland ceremoniously separated from New South Wales in December 1859. As an independent colony of the British Empire it was expected to maintain self-government and provide security for its inhabitants. At the time of Separation in 1859 there was no military force of any type stationed within the boundaries of the new colony of Queensland. Self-defence had never received a high priority with any of the Australian colonies to this date. However, the threat of an escalated Franco-Austrian war in Europe in 1859 resulted in most of the colonies embracing the British volunteer military system as a means of providing a partially trained military body to counter any foreign threat.

The first Governor of Queensland, Sir George Bowen, was appointed Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief of the Colony of Queensland and its Dependencies, and Vice-Admiral of the same. Bowen was initially given two options in providing for the defence of the colony. One was to pay for the stationing of a detachment of an Imperial Regiment in Brisbane, or to create a permanent local military force headed by Imperial Officers. The Executive Council were *firmly in favour of the first proposal, and firmly opposed to the second*. Application was made for a small detachment from an Imperial Regiment in Sydney, (which ultimately served in Brisbane until 1869) and Bowen then set about to raise a purely voluntary defence force *to protect the seat of Government from any attack which is likely to be brought against them*.

Prospective members of the Queensland Volunteers were to take an oath of allegiance to the Crown and declare their intention to serve in the ranks for at least twelve months. The Queensland government was prepared to equip the volunteer corps with arms, accoutrements and ammunition, though it was initially limited to providing for only 125 Volunteers in Brisbane and for the same number in Ipswich. Throughout the 1860s volunteers formed infantry companies and artillery batteries in Brisbane, Ipswich, Rockhampton, Port Curtis, and Maryborough. The movement almost collapsed during the economic crisis of 1866 but lurched on despite little financial or moral support from the government.

A decade later little had changed in the way of government support, although new corps had been formed at Warwick, Toowoomba, and Bundaberg. The perceived military impotence of the volunteer movement prompted Queensland, along with the colonial governments of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, to request British Army assistance in defence matters. General Sir William Jervois of the Royal Engineers, assisted by Lieutenant-Colonel Peter Scratchley inspected the colonial defences during mid-1877. Although Jervois returned to England after making his report, Scratchley stayed to implement the defence scheme. The implications for the Queensland Volunteers were a numerically expanded and re-organised force, which unfortunately still suffered from poor political and logistical support.

Regulations under a new Volunteer Act of 1878, were gazetted in 1879. They allowed for the establishment of a Permanent Staff of Officers and NCOs whose specific role was the instruction of the Volunteers. A volunteer Artillery Brigade, including field and garrison batteries, and Engineers, was also established. The British Army regimental system was also introduced as far as was practical, and two infantry regiments were formed, the 1st in Brisbane and the 2nd Regiment from companies in Ipswich, Warwick and Toowoomba. A Consolidated Corps was established from two companies in Rockhampton, while the companies at Maryborough and Bundaberg remained separate corps.

These changes paved the way for more complex re-organisation. In 1883 the Queensland Government, following the ideas of the defence scheme, employed an Imperial officer to lead the local defences. This was George French, Major of the Royal Artillery with the local rank of Colonel. He was a professional soldier with extensive colonial service and exhibited a distinct confidence in his ability to carry out the tasks he determined were necessary. He overcame many of the problems besetting the Volunteers force, and thus increased its morale and established a sound basis on which to build a new military system, to be known as the Queensland Defence Force.

The *Defence Act*, 1884 which was not gazetted until February 1885, provided Colonel French with an entirely new administrative system for Queensland's volunteer soldiers. The nightmare of providing adequate logistical support to the Force was not over, but it had definitely entered a new phase. The introduction of the new Defence Act was not received with great public acclaim, however the war scare of April-May 1885 (when it was feared Britain and Russia might go to war over Afghanistan) rapidly changed the perspective in which local defence matters were viewed.

Land defence was not the only consideration under the Jervois-Scratchley defence scheme, who recommended the acquisition of gunboats, torpedo boats and the formation of a Naval Brigade to man port defences outside the capital. In 1882 the Queensland Government authorised construction of two Alpha class gunboats for the colony, as well as a torpedo boat. The torpedo boat, named the *Mosquito*, was also ordered and was the first to arrive as deck cargo in October 1884. The gunboats, *Gayundah* and *Paluma*, were launched in late 1884 and steamed to Brisbane, arriving in early 1885. The Queensland Marine Defence Force (QMDF) was formed under the *Defence Act*, 1884 to meet the requirement of

manning these vessels and providing for the defence of regional ports. Captain Townley-Wright, RN of the newly arrived *Gayundah*, was appointed Senior Naval Officer with responsibility for the colony's marine defences.

The *Paluma* arrived in May 1885 crewed and equipped by the Royal Navy to act as a survey vessel along the Queensland coast. Most years the *Paluma* halted its survey work and joined the *Gayundah* and other vessels as a training vessel for seamen of the QMDF. Queensland also acquired the piquet boat *Midge* in 1887, for the use of its naval force. In 1887 a stores depot with wharves were constructed on the former stone quarry site beneath the Kangaroo Point cliffs. This became the main base for Queensland's naval force, and contained workshops, boatsheds and a gun deck on which heavy naval guns were mounted for training the Naval Brigade.

As part of the scheme, naval brigade companies were established across the colony at major ports under the command of the Senior Naval Officer. These were at Rockhampton (1885), Townsville (1885), Cooktown (1889), Bundaberg (1892), Thursday Island (1892), Cairns (1898), Maryborough (1898) and Mackay (1900). The Brisbane-based naval vessels kept up regular visits to northern ports and the local brigades received more specific training when they were in these ports.

Although a permanent staff for HMOS *Gayundah* was finally established in February 1892, most of its fulltime crew were paid off in 1893 as the economic depression hit the colonial treasury. The *Paluma*'s crew were also paid off after completing the Admiralty survey work in 1895. The vessels were generally operated thereafter by naval brigade crews solely for training purposes. By 1896, despite some reduction in expenditure the naval brigade spent four days continuous training in man-o-war routine, general and fire quarters, boat practice, and heavy and machine gun practice on board the *Gayundah*.

The turn of the new century marked a further expansion of the naval brigade, though no new ships were added to Queensland's aging fleet. Naval Volunteer Cadet Corps were also established in towns that already had Naval Brigade companies.

The naval and military forces of the former colony of Queensland were officially transferred to the control of the Commonwealth of Australia on 1 March, 1901, though it took some time for it to take effect. Two bodies, the Commonwealth Military Force (CMF) and the Commonwealth Naval Force (CNF) emerged. It was not until 1911 that the CNF became the Royal Australian Navy.

2. Colonial military units in Bundaberg

The Bundaberg Rifles, a company of the Queensland Volunteer Rifle Brigade, was formed in mid-1876 and gazetted in August of that year. It was a small company with just three officers and 39 other ranks and its members undertook military drill without pay. A highlight for the company, which became 'M' Company after a reorganisation of the Queensland Volunteers, was a training camp held on Barolin Plains over Easter 1879. There the company were also able to live-fire their weapons for the first time. This prompted the

formation of a rifle range later that year. Although active in 1881, interest in the company waned and it was disbanded in December 1883.

At the height of the 1885 war-scare the citizens of Bundaberg offered to form a mounted infantry corps. Known as the Bundaberg Volunteer Mounted Rifle Corps it was gazetted in April 1885 and within a few months had enrolled 37 men. It converted to a militia company, the Bundaberg Mounted Infantry, in 1886. Banded together with mounted infantry companies in Gympie and Maryborough, the company formed the Wide Bay Mounted Infantry in 1890, and some saw service during the Shearers Strike. The company was finally disbanded in 1893 as a result of financial cutbacks.

The new *Defence Act* of 1884 prompted further interest in military service and a militia infantry company was formed in May 1886. Known as 'E' Company it later formed part of the 2nd Queensland (or Wide Bay and Burnett) Regiment. Drill instruction and rifle shooting, and the occasional trip south to a military encampment were the part of the militia's focus, though some Bundaberg men were sent west to Barcaldine from March to July 1891, during the Shearer's Strike. The Company progressed well in the early 1890s, however the rapidly deteriorating financial situation saw the Queensland Government disband four companies of the Wide Bay and Burnett Regiment, of which Bundaberg was one.

Five years later 'D' Company, 2nd Queensland (or Wide Bay and Burnett) Regiment was established in November 1898. The colony's involvement in the South African war in the following year popularised military service and by 1900 'D' Company numbered three officers and 77 other ranks.

'D' Company remained active through changes in 1903, 1908, 1912 and 1913 that saw variations to its Regimental name. From 1912 it was known as 4th Infantry (Wide Bay Battalion) and in 1913 the 4th (Wide Bay) Infantry.

One of the officers of 'D' Company, 4th Infantry at this time was John Redmond, Alderman and twice Mayor of Bundaberg. He had been appointed a provisional 2nd Lieutenant in the Company in August 1910, and his appointment was confirmed in September 1911. In February 1912 he passed for Lieutenant, and by early 1916 was Captain and Officer Commanding 'D' Company.

3. Colonial naval units in Bundaberg

The services of a Naval Brigade Corps at Bundaberg, with an establishment consisting of one lieutenant, two sub-lieutenants, and 50 seamen was accepted and gazetted in February 1892. Its proper title was the Bundaberg Company, Queensland Defence Force (Marine) but was always known by its popular title of 'the Naval Brigade'. Most of the men who served were involved in one way or another with the shipping industry. Customs officer George Bennett had been appointed Acting Sub-Lieutenant from 4 December 1891, and recruitment had commenced. Despite best efforts the Bundaberg company never reached its allowed limit of 50 men.

The Brigade's training was largely on land and included drill, ceremonial parades and musketry competitions. Although its strength was only 34 by June 1893, the Bundaberg

Naval Brigade was not one of the Queensland Marine Defence Force companies disbanded in mid-1893 to reduce Government expenditure. In August of that year the Naval Brigade, being the only surviving defence force unit in the town, paraded as the guard of honour for the Queensland Governor when he came to open the Bundaberg Show. Unfortunately that may have been the highpoint in the company's life and it appears to have collapsed soon after. It was disbanded around July 1894.



A later plan showing the original boat shed and a proposed expanded Reserve.

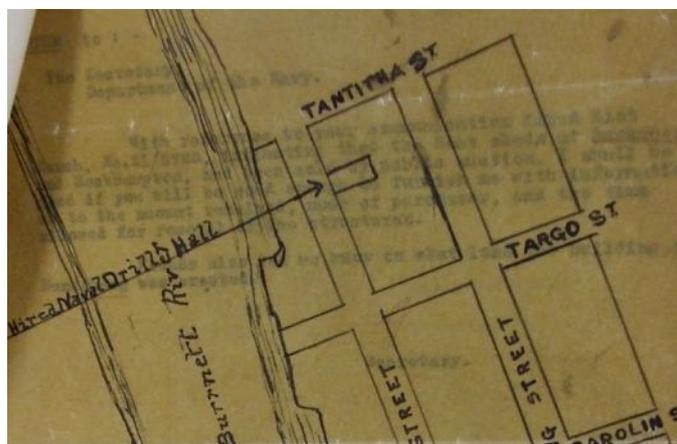
along Burrum Street to Quay Street, across to the Railway Reserve and down to the highwater mark on the Burnett River. A small boatshed, with staging and a pontoon was erected for the Brigade.

The Bundaberg Naval Brigade Corps (BNBC) was established in the town on 17 March 1900. Acting-Lieutenant Edward Manwell was initially in charge of organising it. Curiously less than half of the 48 men enlisted in the company as at June 1900, had prior sea service. This is likely to have been as a result of the on-going war in South Africa, and men of all classes and occupations were induced to a patriotic duty to serve in the ranks. A Marine Defence Reserve was gazetted on the riverbank in August 1900. Containing an area of 1 rood and 10 perches, it stretched

along Burrum Street to Quay Street, across to the Railway Reserve and down to the

As part of a reorganisation of the Naval Brigades across the colony, the Corps became 'I' Company, Bundaberg Naval Brigade Corps from 17 November 1900. The naval forces in Queensland effectively came under the control of the Commonwealth Naval Forces (CNF) in 1904, though it had officially become a Commonwealth agency after Federation in 1901. In 1911 the CNF became the Royal Australian Navy.

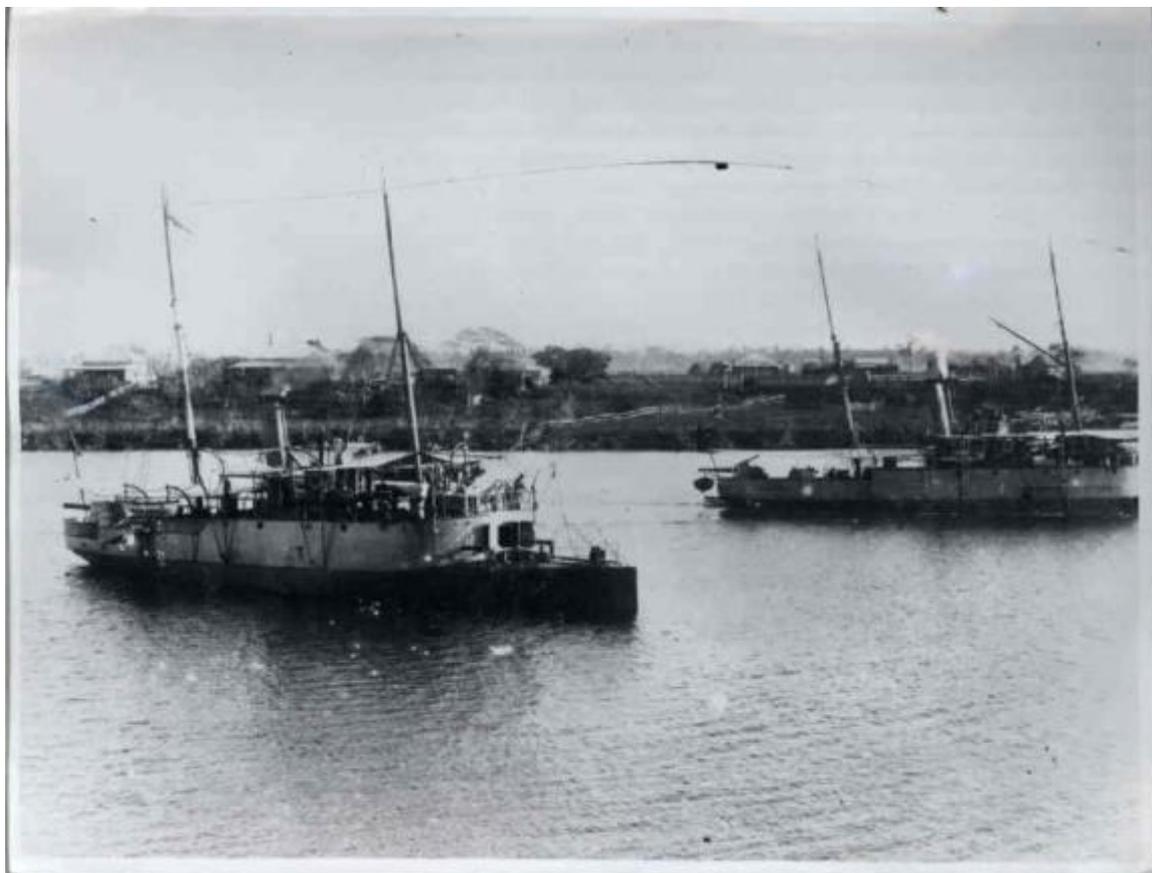
Although the Bundaberg Naval Brigade and its descendant units used the boat shed on the riverbank, they leased other premises from CW Buss as their drill hall. Located in Quay Street, between Tantitha and Targo Streets, the building is likely to have been used from 1900 to 1921. An attempt to build a naval drill hall on the corner of Quay and Burrum Streets in 1912, was frustrated by the Town Council's refusal to grant additional land to the Commonwealth as it would have



Location of premises leased as the Naval Drill Hall

impeded public access to a beach on the riverbank.

The militia Naval Brigade training unit at Bundaberg was disbanded in February 1921, and the boatshed was sold at public auction.



Paluma and Gayundah in the Burnett River, Bundaberg c 1903.

Source: NAA J3109 3/361

4. The Queensland gunboats *Paluma* and *Gayundah*

4.1 Overview

In 1882, in line with the Jervois-Scratchley scheme of defence, and its own inquiry into the Volunteer force, the Queensland Parliament approved the expenditure of over £60,000 to acquire two gunboats.

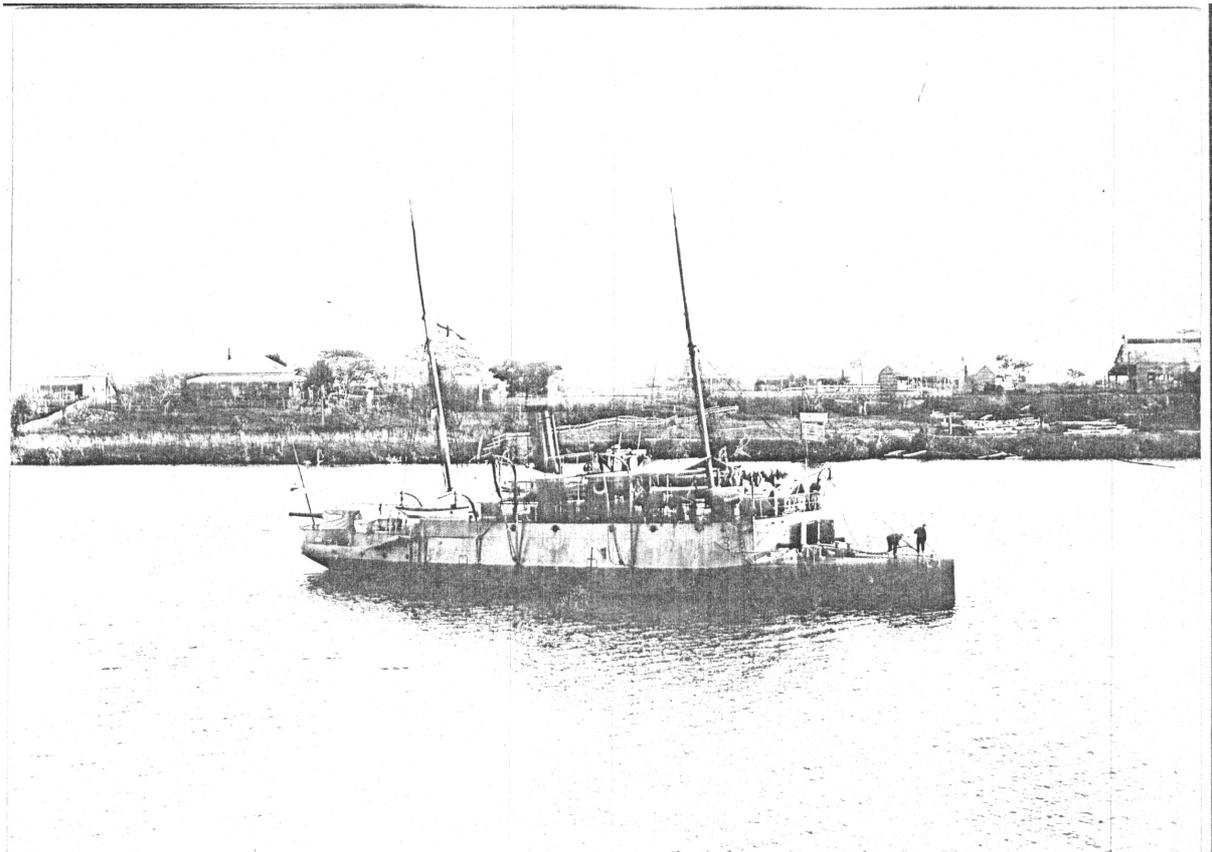
Two identical third-class gunboats of 360 tons were ordered from the firm of Sir W.G. Armstrong, Mitchell and Company, Newcastle-on-Tyne. The gunboats were 120 feet long and 26 feet in the beam, with a draught of just 9 feet 6 inches. They were powered by two 400 horsepower horizontal direct action compound twin screw steam engines. Fully loaded with 75 tons of coal, the gunboats had an estimated range of 7-800 miles. Trials on both vessels were undertaken on 26 September 1884, and the *Gayundah* and *Paluma* reached a speed of 10.5 knots at full power.

Each boat was armed with one Armstrong manufactured 8-inch breech-loading bow gun and one 6-inch breech-loading Armstrong gun for the stern. They also had mounting points for two 1½-inch Nordenfelt guns, one five-barrel .45 calibre Nordenfelt machine-gun, and one four barrel 1-inch Nordenfelt machine gun.

The vessels were given Indigenous names: '*Paluma*' - meaning thunder – and '*Gayundah*' - meaning lightning. Though the shallow draft of these defence vessels was most suitable for coastal or riverine conditions, both were sailed under their own steam to Queensland.

4.2 The gunboat *Paluma*

Launched on 6 May 1884, the *Paluma* was destined to quite a different service life to its sister-ship *Gayundah*. During the course of 1884 the colonial government resumed negotiations with the British Admiralty regarding Queensland's earlier offer of the *Paluma* to the Admiralty as a survey vessel. The Admiralty accepted the offer, a charthouse was built in the position normally occupied by the 6-inch stern gun and gunboat was fitted out and crewed by the Royal Navy at Chatham. She sailed from Plymouth England on 3 January 1885 as the HMS *Paluma* under the command of Lieutenant GE Richards RN and arrived in Moreton Bay on 6 May 1885.



Paluma in the Burnett River

Source: SLQ

Between 1885 and 1895 the Royal Navy manned *Paluma* charted the waters of north Queensland, particularly the Great Barrier Reef. On occasion she was available to work alongside the *Gayundah* in naval exercises and providing ship-board training for the shore-based naval brigades. At these times her 8-inch gun might be mounted. Despite her prodigious work in charting Queensland waters, the *Paluma* is best remembered as being left grounded in the Brisbane Botanical Gardens in the disastrous floods of 1893. She was refloated in subsequent flood, and was remarkably undamaged.

HMS *Paluma*'s term as an Admiralty survey vessel came to an end in March 1895, and she became a Queensland government vessel as HMOS *Paluma*, only to be laid up. She was then manned only when required for the annual training cruises. Around the turn of the century the *Paluma* was refitted to carry two 5-inch breech-loaders in place of her forward 8-inch gun. Her 6-inch stern gun was also replaced in August 1905 with a 4.7-inch quick-firer.

Paluma was despatched to Melbourne in November 1909 to act as a training ship for naval personnel. In 1911 the vessel was dismantled and a new hull bottom and boilers were eventually installed. She was assigned as a tender vessel and a Naval Reserve Training Ship at Williamstown in 1912, but was noted as 'lying in the mud' at Williamstown in 1913. The *Paluma* was stripped of her armaments circa 1914, and sold to the Victorian Government. Re-named the 'Rip', the former gunboat was refitted and performed various tasks as a harbour vessel and lighthouse tender. She was retired after WWII and scrapped circa 1950.

4.3 The gunboat *Gayundah*

The *Gayundah* was launched a week after the *Paluma* on 13 May 1884. With a Royal Navy (RN) crew aboard under the command of Captain Henry Townley-Wright, RN, the gunboat sailed for Queensland on 13 November 1884 from Newcastle-on-Tyne. A little over four months later, on 28 March 1885, she arrived in the Brisbane River. Almost immediately the threat of war between the British and Russian Empires put the colonies on high alert and the *Gayundah* was quickly involved in the type of work for which she was purchased patrolling parts of Moreton Bay and exercising with the defence forces in the Brisbane River.

The *Gayundah* performed the bulk of all work undertaken by the naval forces in Queensland prior to, and for the decade after Federation. She travelled back and forth along the Queensland coast providing a reliable and welcome training platform for the naval forces from Thursday Island to Brisbane. She also exercised with the military forces in all the ports visited. At times financial constraints caused her full-time crew to be paid off and the *Gayundah* laid up, only to be revived for the annual training programs.

Following Federation in 1901 *Gayundah* was absorbed into the Commonwealth Naval Forces, although administrative control was not immediate. *Gayundah* remained in Queensland waters still carrying out its role as a training ship along the length of the Queensland coast. On 9 April 1903 the vessel won some claim to fame when she carried out

the first ship to shore wireless telegraphy experiments in Australia. She continued with the reserve training program in Brisbane and along the coastal ports for the next seven years.

In 1911 *Gayundah* spent several months on a border defence and customs protection voyage to Western Australia via Thursday Island and Darwin. On that trip she fired her first shot in anger, by way of a warning to two Dutch-flagged ships poaching in Australian waters off Broome. The *Gayundah* effected an arrest of the boats, the first such action by an Australian warship, and escorted them back to Broome for trial.

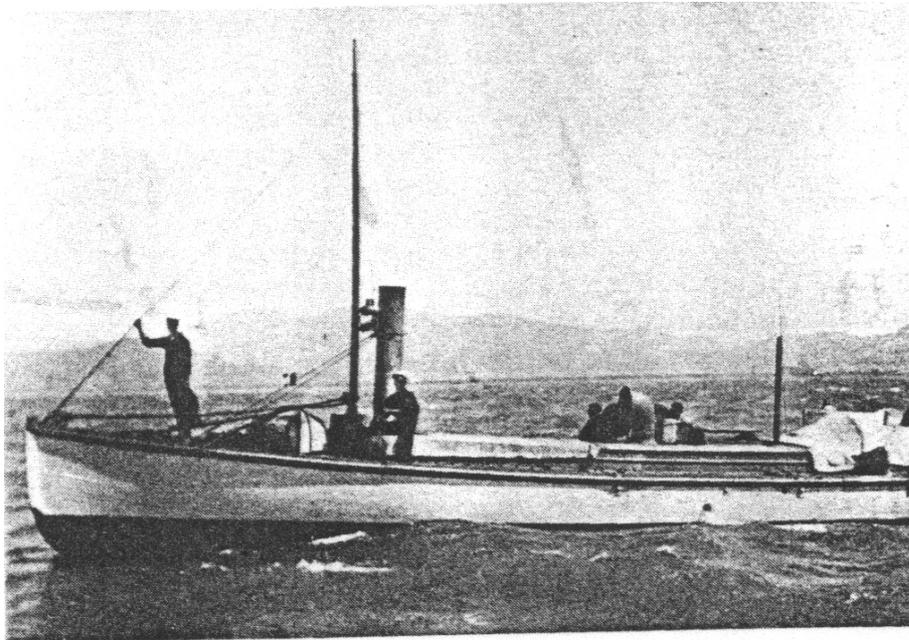


Sent to Sydney for repairs around 1913-14 the *Gayundah's* forecastle was raised to make it more seaworthy, and its 6-inch gun, which had replaced the original 8-inch forward gun circa 1910, was also removed.

When war broke out in 1914 the *Gayundah* returned to patrols of the Brisbane river and Moreton Bay. She returned to Sydney in 1915 and remained there for the most of the war. In August 1918, just prior to the war's end, she was paid off in Melbourne. The former gunboat was purchased by a Queensland firm and for the next 40 years was used as a sand and gravel carrier on the Brisbane River. Finally in 1958 the *Gayundah* was stripped to the hull and beached at Woody Point as a breakwater.

5. Her Majesty's Queensland Ship *Midge*

The Queensland Government ordered a timber hull piquet boat in 1887 to compliment its small fleet. A piquet boat was usually a small fast that performed a sentry duty on larger naval vessels. The manufacturer was J Samuel White of Cowes on the Isle of Wight, who had recently built a similar boat – the design of which was termed a turnabout-boat - for the Colony of Victoria. The Queensland boat had her hull sheathed in Muntz metal and strengthened decks to allow Whitehead torpedo gear to be mounted on it. It was armed with two 2-barrel 1-inch Nordenfelt guns, and could be fitted with a 6-pounder quick firing gun. The *Midge* was 56 feet long, and a little over 9 feet in breadth. It was powered by two inverted direct action condensing steam engines and could achieve a speed of approximately 18 knots. Not an ocean-going vessel the *Midge* was shipped to Brisbane as deck cargo, arriving in June 1888. Beyond a trip to Maryborough when it first arrived, it generally served in the Moreton Bay region, often as the Senior Naval Officer's preferred mode of transport.



HMQS Midge in 1901.

As a small fast vessel the *Midge* was also suitable as a torpedo vessel and was fitted for spar or out-rigger torpedos. Much practice was given to the use of this weapon system. It was updated in 1900 to allow it to be fitted with the latest Whitehead torpedo dropping gear. By mid-1900 the *Midge*, while considered to be a

most serviceable boat with excellent engine required an overhaul. Its role from this time was generally as a torpedo vessel and it is likely it was rarely fitted out with the Nordenfelt machine-guns which were usually mounted in the Naval Stores at Kangaroo Point, and used for training naval Brigade personnel. The *Midge* remained in service with the Commonwealth Naval Force but was decommissioned in 1912, the engines removed by the Royal Australian Navy and the hull sold privately.



The Midge in service.

Source: SLO

6. The Alexander Park guns

Armstrong 6-inch, 4 ton, 80-pounder gun, serial number 4194



Manufactured by Sir William Armstrong and Co at the Elswick factory, this gun was ordered as the stern gun of the Queensland gunboat '*Paluma*' in 1884. While the vessel undertook Admiralty surveys the gun was not mounted, a purpose built cabin being in place where the gun would normally sit. Shipped separately to the *Paluma* in arrived much later and in May 1886 was placed in merchant DL Brown's store in Short St Brisbane. This Store was leased by the QMDF as there was no naval store in Brisbane at that time. There has been some confusion as to which ship this gun belonged, however it was identified by serial number in August 1887 as on HMQS *Paluma*.

Because of the Admiralty survey work *Paluma's* gun was usually mounted at the Naval Stores, Kangaroo Point after their construction in 1887. The Naval Stores had a large two-story building that was used as a gun deck, and a considerable number of light and heavy guns were mounted there for training. Annual training camps for the land and marine defence force along the coast saw guns mounted on the gunboat. When the colony was experiencing financial difficulties in 1893 the *Paluma* was laid up. The opportunity was taken to send both its six-inch and eight-inch guns to England for them to be chase-hooped. They were returned in 1894 and again mounted on the Naval Stores gun deck, used on the *Paluma* when necessary. This gun bears War Department markings confirming it was returned to England in 1893.

The 6-inch Armstrong gun on the stern of the *Paluma* was replaced with a 4.7-inch quick-firing gun in August 1905. The six-inch gun was returned to the Naval Stores where it remained until at least 1906.

Nordenfelt 4 barrel, 1-inch gun, serial number 3348



This multiple-barrel manually-activated machine-gun was one of three such guns ordered by the Queensland Government for its land and marine defences in 1884. Its role as defined by its manufacturer was as an anti-torpedo boat weapon. Although the original Nordenfelt factory invoices suggest this particular gun was to be mounted at Fort Lytton, the serial number for the one recorded at Lytton in 1901 does not match. Only one gun was used by the land defence force, and one each by the Queensland Marine Defence Force on the gunboats *Paluma* and *Gayundah*. It is extremely unlikely that the guns were exchanged between the gunboats and the fort after arrival in Queensland. All stores and equipment were kept very separate by the naval and military forces, and authority over particular armaments were jealously guarded.

Two of the guns were despatched from Nordenfelt's factory direct to Armstrong's ship yard where the gunboats were being built, and one was shipped direct to the colony. This provides the most likely scenario to explain the differences between the invoices and physical evidence. It is unlikely to have mattered which two guns were sent as they were all identical, and serial numbers are unlikely to have been checked. In any case the gun presently located in Alexander Park is known to have been a naval one, and was not supplied by the military at Fort Lytton.

There is no evidence yet to hand however, that shows on which gunboat this particular Nordenfelt gun saw service. It could have been mounted on either the *Paluma* or *Gayundah*.

Nordenfelt 2-barrel, 1-inch gun, serial number 6673



The 2-barrel Nordenfelt gun was originally purchased as armament for picquet boat *Midge* in 1887. The *Midge* mounted two such guns, and the other is located in Queen's Park in Maryborough. Like many of the guns carried by Queensland's naval fleet, the Nordenfelt guns were often located on the gundeck at the Naval Stores in Kangaroo Point. The gun is known to have been on the *Midge* as late as 1904 and was likely taken permanently into the Stores around 1911.

7 Arrival of the guns in Bundaberg

All three guns were located at the Naval Drill Shed in Bundaberg by June 1911, and were being used for instructional purposes. No evidence has come to light to determine exactly when the guns were transferred. Prior

to their arrival in Bundaberg they were last recorded in the Naval Stores at Kangaroo Point in 1906. In the interim, although obsolete, they were despatched to Bundaberg as training weapons for the local naval forces. They were kept in operational order and were still being actively used just prior to the handover to the Bundaberg Council.

8 Obsolescence and disposal of naval weapons

From 1911 the Department of Defence's Navy Office and the Commonwealth Navy Board were involved in processing requests, usually from municipal authorities, for the use of obsolete naval guns. Lists were compiled of guns across Australia, and tables for their proposed distribution. The 6-inch Armstrong gun in Bundaberg was not on the list, while the Nordenfelts were. They were allocated, but not sent to, Penhurst and Seven Hills municipalities.

The decision to accept the recommendations for disposal of the guns rested with the Minister of Defence who in 1912 further deferred making up his mind. Consequently most of the guns remained where they were. The Minister approved the disposal of two guns at Williamstown in early 1913 and this must have allowed further disposals to occur. In Queensland at least the Navy gave first options for acquiring the guns to the town councils covering the area in which the naval units were based. This was case not only in Bundaberg, but also Maryborough, Townsville, and Cairns.

9 Bundaberg Town Council and Alexandra Park

It is difficult to ascertain whether Alderman John Redmond approached the Navy in 1913 with an offer to take the obsolete guns, or whether the approach was made by the Navy. As an officer of the local military company he was likely to have been in contact with the naval unit, and presumably knew of the intent to dispose of the guns.

Alderman Redmond was chair of the Parks Committee that was to report on the guns in July, 1913. While no record of that report has been located it is obvious that an agreement was reached between the Council and the Commonwealth. Within a week, Warrant Officer Pember, who was the local naval gunnery instructor at Bundaberg, had been advised by the District Naval Officer in Brisbane that the three guns were to be made available to the Bundaberg Council. Pember began dismantling the 12-ton Armstrong gun straight away. The *Bundaberg Mail* hearing of the news noted 'The gun not only will be a fine ornament to the gardens, but they can also be used if required, for salute firing.'

By mid-August 1913 the Parks Committee were able to report that the concrete foundations for the guns in Alexandra Park had been completed, and local contractor Mr T Keys was hired to move them from the drill hall to the Park. It was expected the larger gun would be in place within days. The *Bundaberg Daily News* suggested that the residents were looking forward to the installation of the guns in the Park where they would "stand as sentinels overlooking the Burnett". It went one step further, acknowledging the public debt owed to the Parks Committee "for the commendable activity displayed in securing these trophies which will doubtless attract attention for many years to come."

Warrant Officer Pember took the opportunity to provide a lecture at the Drill Shed on the workings of the six-inch Armstrong gun and the Nordenfelt guns prior to their removal. It was at this lecture that Pember apparently revealed, or at least the information was recorded by a newspaper reporter, that the gun had been on the *Gayundah* for a number of years. Evidence presented in this report does not support that suggestion.

As it happens, the *Gayundah* was in Rockhampton in August 1913, where the local naval reservists and cadets were conducting target practice using that vessel's 6-inch breech loading gun. It was dismounted from that vessel around 1914 in Sydney. Curiously, the *Gayundah*'s 6-inch gun was later installed in the Rockhampton Botanic Gardens where it remained until 1984 before being acquired by the Australian War Memorial.

In 1914 Woongarra Shire Council applied to the Bundaberg Town Council for 'one of the obsolete naval guns' to be placed in Neilson Park. Bundaberg Council did not agree to the proposal, and the guns have remained on site.

Pember and Redmond appear to have been the two main participants in having the guns allocated to Bundaberg. Pember was a former Royal Navy officer who served with the Queensland navy and transferred to the Commonwealth Naval Forces after Federation as a gunnery-instructor. At the outbreak of World War I he was appointed Sub-district Naval Officer at Rockhampton, and then Townsville, and Thursday Island. He was promoted to the

rank of Lieutenant-Commander on the Retired List in 1928, and died in Sydney in August 1930.

John (Jack) Redmond was born in Bundaberg, the son of a businessman and former Alderman of the town. He was actively involved in community activities and was elected to the Town Council where he served from 1903 to 1905, and again from 1907 to 1914. He served as Mayor in 1909 and again in 1914. It is known he was the chairman of the Parks Committee in 1913.

An active Militia officer in Bundaberg, Redmond also used his position as Mayor to encourage patriotic fund-raising events once war was declared in 1914. In 1915 he was called to active service and shipped overseas with the 41st Battalion, AIF, as Officer Commanding 'C' Company.

By all accounts a popular officer, Captain Jack Redmond was tragically killed during an artillery barrage after the Battle of Broodseinde, in France on 5 October 1917.



Captain John (Jack) Redmond, 41st Battalion AIF. Killed in action 1917.

The guns have remained in Alexander Park under the care of the local council. They were provided with the present concrete mounts in 1965. Subsequent planting nearby of a stand of bamboo has taken lessened the impact of the guns on the riverbank, and also contributed to damage caused by a build-up of debris.

General recommendations

- Based on the evidence provided in this report it would seem appropriate that the Alexandra Park guns be formally identified as a commemorative place, and interpretive signage be erected nearby.
- As significant items of cultural heritage the guns should be added to a local heritage register and consideration be given to their nomination to the Queensland Heritage Register.
- That a Heritage Management Protocol be prepared for the long-term conservation and preservation of the Alexandra Park guns.

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