

C.S.O.

CONFIDENTIAL.

To be kept in A.C.S.'s safe. (Formerly)

SUBJECT :

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FALKLAND ISLANDS DEFENCE FORCE.

Explosion in 3-pdr. Hotchkiss Gun.

CONNECTED FILES.

23pg

NUMBER AND YEAR.

Accident to Hoopkin Saluting
Gun on Nov 9th.

Under Sec 41 (c) of Defence
Force Ordinance 1920, I
hereby convene a Court of
Enquiry composed of

Mr J. Bond - Chairman
Mr W. Grierson } members
Mr Ikin }

to

- a) Enquire ~~into~~ into and ascertain as far as possible the reason ^{why} for the saluting gun exploded & burst.
- b) To advise whether negligence is attributable to any person or persons.
- c) To make recommendations for preventing a recurrence of the accident.
- d) To report generally.

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10/11

CONFIDENTIAL.

No. _____

MEMORANDUM.

It is requested that, in any reference to this memorandum the above number and the date may be quoted.

24th November, 19 52.

From Chairman, _____

Court of Enquiry, _____

To The Hon. Colonial Secretary, _____

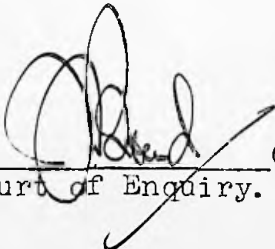
STANLEY. _____

Stanley, Falkland Islands.

SUBJECT:- Enquiry - Explosion in 3 prd. Hotchiss Gun.

In accordance with instructions received (His Honour's Memo. of 10th November, 1952, refers), I have the honour to forward herewith a report of the enquiry into an explosion in a 3 prd. Hotchiss Gun at Victory Green, Stanley, on the 9th November, 1952.

*Y.H. Submitted
24/11*


Chairman,
Court of Enquiry.

3

STANLEY,
Falkland Islands,
21st November, 1952.

REPORT OF COURT OF ENQUIRY INTO EXPLOSION IN 3 PDR.

HOTCHISS GUN ON 9TH NOVEMBER, 1952.

Formation of Court of Enquiry.

On Monday the 10th November, 1952, His Honour the Officer Administering the Government, under Section 41 (1) of the Defence Force Ordinance, 1920, convened a Court of Enquiry composed of :

Mr. J. Bound - Chairman
Mr. D.E.J. Ikkint } Members
Mr. W.J. Grierson }

to

- (a) enquire into and ascertain as far as possible the reason why the gun exploded and burst
- (b) advise whether negligence is attributable to any person or persons
- (c) to make recommendations for preventing a recurrence of the accident
- (d) report generally.

Witnesses heard by the Court.

The Court met immediately in the office of the Assistant Colonial Secretary and commenced their investigations. The following witnesses were heard between the 10th and 12th November, 1952 :

Capt. D.W. O'Sullivan, Adjutant, F.I.D.F.
Lieut. D. Fleuret, Officer in Charge of Gun's Crew
Mr. D.J. Clark
Mr. C.W. Henricksen, B.E.M., Armourer, F.I.D.F.
Hon. Mr. A.L. Hardy, B.E.M., J.P.
Pte. A. Middleton }
Pte. J. Blyth } Members of Gun's Crew.
Pte. J.K. Biggs }

After statements had been sifted, the following were called a second time in an endeavour to clear up discrepancies in evidence :

Capt. O'Sullivan
Mr. Henricksen
Pte. Middleton
Pte. Biggs

Proceedings were however held up owing to Pte. Biggs being absent from Stanley as a member of the crew of s.s. "Fitzroy" and the last witness was not heard until the evening of 19th November.

/ Exhibits

Exhibits.

Two 3 pdr. Hotchiss guns on Victory Green
One tampion
Two pieces of metal (from barrel of left hand gun?)
Two photographs of left hand gun firing.

Events leading up to enquiry.

The Court consider the following to be a chain of events leading up to the Enquiry :

On Thursday the 6th November, 1952, both 3 pdr. Hotchiss Guns on Victory Green were fired by Capt. O'Sullivan and Mr. Henricksen to test the gun bases. High explosive ammunition (two rounds through each barrel) was used. Following the shoot both guns were cleaned, oiled and tampions and covers replaced.

On Sunday the 9th November, 1952, Lieut. Fleuret with Ptes. Middleton, Blyth and Biggs were detailed by the Adjutant (Capt. O'Sullivan) to fire a gun signal from Victory Green to mark the "two minutes silence" in connection with the Remembrance Day Ceremony. The Gun's Crew as detailed then collected the necessary gun stores, including three rounds of high explosive ammunition, and proceeded to Victory Green.

On arrival at the gun site, Lieut. Fleuret ordered both guns to be "cleared" in readiness for firing and warned the crew to be careful with the ammunition as it was high explosive. There is no clear evidence, except a doubtful statement from Pte. Middleton (see "A" in his statement) that at this stage, the usual gunnery report, i.e. "No. --- gun cleared away, bore clear", was made.

Lieut. Fleuret then decided that the left hand gun should be used as it had the least oil in it, or to quote Fleuret "the gun being practically dry". The oil was not removed from this gun - nor was a dummy run made, i.e. no gun drill took place prior to actually loading the gun.

At 10.59 hours, Lieut. Fleuret gave the order to load and at 1100 hours the first round was fired; according to the gun's crew nothing abnormal happened.

The fall of the shot was not observed, except allegedly by Pte. Biggs (see "B" in his statement). However both Mr. Hardy and Mr. Clark observed splashes in the harbour which appeared to Mr. Clark to be falling shrapnel - please see statements of Messrs. Hardy and Clark.

After the first shot was fired, the second round was loaded and fired at 1102 hours. The fall of this shot was not observed. The report and flash of the second round appeared -

To Lieut. Fleuret "the sound was much duller and a greater flash"

To Pte. Biggs "a great burst of flame at the muzzle"

To Pte. Middleton "a terrible report"

To Pte. Blyth "appeared to be far louder than the first one".

Shortly after the second round had been fired, the gun's crew observed a portion of the muzzle end of the

left hand gun's barrel to be missing, the cement base damaged and several small craters in front and to the left and right of the gun's muzzle, and evidence of "something" having blasted chips of stone and cement off the sea wall for several yards to the front and either side of the barrel.

The left hand gun was then cleaned out and the covers replaced on both guns. Before departing from the gun site a tampion was observed on the ground to the west of the left hand gun, and this (the tampion) was placed under the cover of the damaged gun.

Lieut. Fleuret and the gun's crew then made their way to the F.I.D.F. Drill Hall and reported the incident to the Adjutant, who in turn reported to his Commanding Officer.

Capt. O'Sullivan accompanied by Lieuts. J. Bound and D. Fleuret then proceeded to Victory Green to examine the damaged gun. After examination of the gun, Lieut. Fleuret handed Capt. O'Sullivan a tampion which he placed underneath the tarpaulin covering the damaged gun.

Capt. O'Sullivan (unaccompanied) visited the gun site again on the afternoon of the 9th November and at 0900 hours (approx.) the following morning, Capt O'Sullivan asked Lieut. Bound and Mr. Henricksen to be present on the gun site while the cover of the right hand gun was removed. This they did and observed that the tampion was missing from this gun, but a tampion was found under the tarpaulin covering the left hand gun.

Findings of the Court of Enquiry.

- (a) the Court are of the opinion that as their knowledge of high explosive ammunition is limited and their gunnery experience is but of an elementary nature, they are not competent to advance a considered opinion of the cause of the explosion in the left hand saluting gun on Victory Green on the morning of Sunday the 9th November, 1952.

In the circumstances and if it is desired to pursue this matter further, the Court advise that a Board of Naval Officers with gunnery and ordnance experience, be appointed to report generally on the incident.

- (b) the Court are of the opinion that a certain amount of negligence is apparent, inasmuch as :
- (i) the gun was not dried out before use
 - (ii) there is evidence that no (repeat no) gun drill was carried out prior to or during the actual firing of the gun.
 - (iii) no bore gauge was passed through the barrel before or after the guns were tested on 6th November, 1952.
- (c) as a precautionary measure the Court recommend that blank saluting ammunition only be used in these guns on future occasions.

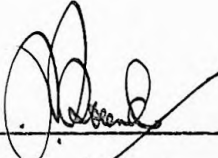
In the interests of public safety the Court strongly advises against the use of high explosive ammunition

/ in any


in any artillery pieces in the Falkland Islands, unless and until the services of a professional gunnery expert are available. Also that on all future occasions when live ammunition is used, a public warning be broadcast at least 24 hours before it is proposed to use it. No such warning was given on 9th November, 1952, and what is more serious, in the Court's opinion, is the fact that the Caretaker at the Camber (in which vicinity the fall of shot was expected) was not informed.

(d) in view of the foregoing, the Court feel that there would be little object in reporting generally, lest they be accused of repetition. They however consider the following observations noteworthy :

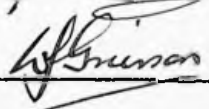
- (i) Capt. O'Sullivan, on being questioned, was positive that a canvas covered tampion was the one inserted in the left hand gun after the test shoot on 6th November. Why did O'Sullivan not query or recognise the tampion (not canvas covered) handed to him by Lieut. Fleuret after the shoot on 9th November, as the tampion from the right hand gun?
- (ii) the tampion of the left hand gun cannot be produced, but the possibility cannot be overlooked of this tampion having been removed by some unauthorised person(s) between the time that the gun's crew left the gun site (1110 hours approx.) on 9th November and 0900 hours (approx.) on 10th November, 1952, when the matter was reported to the Assistant Colonial Secretary by the Adjutant.
- (iii) no conclusive oral evidence is available regarding the removal or replacement of the tampion in the right hand gun on 9th November, but photograph No. 1 proves that it was not in position. Evidence from the gun's crew who looked through the barrels of both guns also confirms this.



(Chairman)



(Member)



(Member)

Court of Enquiry.

Enclosures :

1. Statement by Capt. D.W. O'Sullivan, F.I.D.F.
2. " " Lieut. D. Fleuret, F.I.D.F.
3. " " Pte. J. Blyth, F.I.D.F.
4. " " Pte. J.K. Biggs, F.I.D.F.
5. " " Pte. A. Middleton, F.I.D.F.
6. " " Mr. C.W. Henricksen
7. " " Mr. D.J. Clark
8. " " Hon. Mr. A.L. Hardy
9. Photograph No. 1 of gun firing.

Dominic William O'Sullivan states:-

I am 48 years of age and adjutant of the Falkland Islands Defence Force, having been appointed to my present rank of Captain/Adjutant in 1948.

In the first instance, after the guns were mounted on the new bases, I fired 4 H.E. rounds (H.E.A.P.), two rounds through each gun, to test the guns and bases for their safety. This took place at about 11.0 a.m. on the 6th. of November 1952. We examined both guns and cases, that is to say Mr. Henricksen and myself. Everything was found to be satisfactory. The guns were then lightly oiled, both tankins being placed in proper position, both breech-blocks being left ready complete with sights. The guns were then covered over with tarpaulins. I had instructed Lieut. D. Fleuret and crew made up of Pte's Middleton- Blyth and James Biggs, that they would fire the gun on the occasion of the "two minutes silence", on Sunday the 9th. of November 1952. They were supplied with 3 rounds of H.E.A.P. one round of which was returned. The round was a surplus round in case of a hang-fire. They were supplied with these 3 rounds at about 10.20 a.m. on Sunday the 9th. of November, and the surplus round was returned to me personally at the Drill Hall at about 11.20 to 11.25 a.m. by Lieut. D. Fleuret. When the parade was dismissed, then Lieut. Fleuret told me of the occurrence. Lieut. Fleuret said " We have had an accident on the gun and that part of the muzzle had blown away." I asked him what had happened and he replied "that he thought it was a premature." I said no more, but telephoned the Governor and reported the matter as far as I knew. I then proceeded to the gun site with Lieut.'s Bound and Fleuret. We made an examination of the area surrounding the gun and uprooted two pieces of metal, which I considered to be parts of a gun barrel. We then uncovered the gun, made examination of same and found that about 10/12 inches of the muzzle end of the left hand gun was shattered and missing. I examined the gun further and found that most of the holding down bolts were loose. We then covered the gun over again and Lieut. Fleuret handed me a tampion. I placed this tampion underneath the tarpaulin of the gun previously mentioned. At this point the right hand gun had not been uncovered by us. I told both Lieut.'s Bound and Fleuret that I was confident that no live ammunition was lying buried in the ground so as to be a danger to the general public. At this stage we decided to leave the gun site. As we were crossing over to the road, Mr. Les Hardy, owner of Stanley Cottage, came across his lawn to his fence and spoke to us. I asked him if he had seen the fall of the first shot. He replied "No, although I was standing on the lawn looking for it. What I did see was a splash in the water in the harbour somewhere between the edge of the kelp and the hulk Pennia, as if something had dropped, and I ~~remarked~~ remarked Gee, that's low." I asked him if he had seen the second shot and he replied "No." I searched the ground in the vicinity of the guns again in the afternoon. ~~As~~ I had suspicion at that moment, having felt around the right hand gun without uncovering same that the tampion was missing. I was unable to find any trace of the tampion or any other part of the muzzle. I did nothing further on this day. On Monday the 10th. of November 1952 at about 9.10 a.m. I telephoned Lieut. Bound and asked him to come down to Victory Green, as I wanted to uncover the right hand gun. I also contacted Mr. Henrickson, the armourer, and together we went down to the gun to await Lieut. Bound. When Lieut. Bound arrived I informed him and Mr. Henricksen that I did not expect to find the second tampion. When we uncovered the gun and again searched part of the area, we were unable to find any trace of the tampion. We then covered up both guns. Lieut. Bound proceeded on his way and Mr. Henricksen returned to H.Q. I proceeded to the police station, where I met Lieut. Fleuret. I asked him in the presence of Police Sergeant Norris, first if he had the photograph of the gun firing taken by Mr. Wallace. He informed me that he had the film. Secondly, I asked him if the gun's crew had sponged the gun out before firing. He, Lieut. Fleuret replied " No, as the armourer C.W. Henricksen had informed him that the gun was ready. I then asked Lieut. Fleuret where was the tampion ? He replied "I gave it to you yesterday." I replied " You have given me one tampion and the second tampion cannot be found anywhere." He replied " Well that must be it." I do not know what he meant by that reply. I then left the police station and visited the gun site again with the Honourary Commandant. The film of the gun which I have referred to previously has been shewn to the Court of Enquiry and returned to me for the purpose of obtaining enlargements of the negatives in order to bring out any detail that may be required. That is my evidence.

"I am positive that the tampion which was inserted in the left ar hand gun after the practise shoot on the 6th. of November 1952, was canvass covered, that is to say that the shaft of the tampion had canvass wrapped around it.

I am a first lieutenant in the Falkland Islands Defence Force, and was promoted to my present rank shortly after the last war. A few days prior to Sunday the 9th. of November 1952, I was asked by Captain O'Sullivan if I would take the gun on Victory Green on Sunday the 9th. of November 1952 for the Remembrance Day Service. I informed him that I would. He then asked me whether I wished to use "Live" or "Blank" ammunition, as he was desirous of reserving his blank ammunition for Coronation Day. I replied that I ~~was~~ was prepared to use the "live" ammunition, provided that he warned the public about the area in which we were going to shoot. On Sunday morning, the 9th. of November 1952, I arrived at the Drill Hall at about 10.25 a.m. where I collected the following gun stores:- cotton waste-soda-oil- a ramrod and 3 rounds of High Explosive Anti Personnel. I also collected 3 men, private's A. Middleton, J. Biggs and J. Blyth and we went to the gun site on Victory Green, arriving there at about 10.40 a.m. As soon as I got there, I ordered the gunlayer, Pte. Middleton to clean the guns and prepare them ready for the shoot. This was completed. I ordered the gun layer to use the left hand gun, but prepare the other in the event of a misfire. Middleton asked me if he should put the ramrod with a piece of cotton waste on it, through the left hand gun. I replied "No, unless there is a lot of oil in it". I put my fingers just inside the breech of the left hand gun to see if there was much oil in the barrel. The gun being practically dry, I told Middleton that there was no need to put the ramrod through. I also had a look at the right hand gun and found that there was quite a bit of oil in the bore. I told Middleton that it was not my wish to clean that gun out, but if we did need it, it would not take long to clean it out. The left hand gun, which we were going to use, was trained onto it's target which is the date on a rock above the stones forming the word "Barracouta". I gave Middleton the range 1200 and deflection 15 left. I checked the range and deflection and found it to be correct. I then instructed the guns crew to take every precaution whilst handling this H.E. ammunition and not to remove the safety pin and cap until I gave the order. This procedure was carried out. At 10.59 a.m. the first round was placed in the gun and the breech closed. I warned the gun's crew that if the gun misfired, it was on no account to be opened. Exactly 11.0 a.m. the first round was fired by lanyard by Pte. Middleton. When the shot was fired, nothing unusual occurred to me to be out of the ordinary. I asked the loader Pte. Biggs if he had seen the shot land and he replied "Yes, I did see it land". I said "Where?". Biggs replied "On the aiming mark". The other two members of the gun's crew said that they did not see it land, neither did I myself or anything of the shot at all. At 11.01 a.m. the second round was placed in the left hand gun and the breech closed. Dead on 11.02 a.m. the second shot was fired by the same means and by the same person as the first. The same range and deflection was used as for the first shot. I told the gun's crew to keep a thorough look out to see where the second round landed. After the gun went off, we could see nothing of the fall of shot. I noticed that the second salvo had a much duller sound than the first one and a greater flash. I was concerned at not seeing the shot fall especially after the second one had not been observed. I then saw a small projection on the muzzle of the gun and on further investigation I found that a portion of the muzzle had disappeared. It was then I noticed the concrete base shattered to the North of the gun and there were holes in the ground in front of the gun. We then searched for pieces of the gun barrel or shell fragments with negative results. I asked Middleton "Where is the tamper of the left hand gun?". He replied "It is under the tarpaulin." and then went over to the tarpaulin which was on the ground to the West of the left hand gun, picked it up and showed it to me. I then ordered them to cover the two guns. I asked Middleton "Who took the tampers out of the guns?". He replied "I took the tamper out of the left hand gun." Pte. Biggs said "I took the one out of the right hand gun." The third member of the crew was not present when I asked about the tampers. I then told the gun's crew to proceed to the Drill Hall with the gun stores, and I followed a little later carrying the spare round of H.E. ammunition which we had taken in case of a misfire, and reported the incident to Capt. O'Sullivan at about 11.40 a.m. I am of the opinion that the first shell exploded prematurely but that the barrel of the gun did not disintegrate until the second round was fired.

John Blythe states:-

3.

I am 29 years of age and a Government employee. I was detailed as a member of the gun's crew which was firing on Victory Green on Sunday the 9th. of November 1952. Acting upon instructions, I paraded at the Drill Hall at about 10.15 a.m. I/c with Lt. Fleuret and Pte's Biggs and Middleton. I was issued with a cleaning rod. Lt. Fleuret was issued with 3 rounds of ammunition. I do not know what sort it was. All four of us then proceeded to Victory Green and I took a bucket containing soda across to Stanley Cottage to collect hot water after the shoot was over. I uncovered one of the guns upon my return from the tea rooms. This was No. 2 gun (right hand gun). I think the other one had been uncovered by that time. Pte. Middleton had untied the rope on No. 2 gun and I completed it. The tarpaulin was placed on the grass together with the ~~TARP~~ tarpaulin of No. 1 gun, about 5 yards to the left of both guns. Lt. Fleuret asked the gun's crew to examine both guns with a view of seeing which was the driest. I examined the breech of No. 1 gun and looked down the barrel from both ends. I was able to do so as the tampion had been removed, but I cannot say by whom. I did not see the tampion at all. After examining No. 1 gun I looked down the barrel of No. 2 gun from which the tampion had also already been removed. Again I cannot say who removed it, and I did not see that tampion either. It was decided by Lt. Fleuret to use No. 1 gun because it was the driest of the two guns. There was oil in the barrel of No. 2 gun. It was a small amount, but slightly more than in No. 1 gun. The guns were checked by Pte. Middleton and I think that he told Lt. Fleuret that everything was in order. There were no customary reports by any of the gun's crew. There was no dummy run made. Lt. Fleuret told us to be very careful with the ammunition. I am not sure, but I fancy that he told us that it was High Explosive ammunition. I do not think the gun was given a rub through before it was fired, or that the rod was passed through the barrel. At 10.59 a.m. the gun was loaded upon instructions of Lt. Fleuret and I operated the breech mechanism. As a safety measure, I had told Biggs to be sure that he had removed the pin and capcover on the shell. The first shot was fired at 11.0 a.m. by lanyard and everything appeared to be normal. I did not hear Lt. Fleuret ask whether we had seen the fall of shot and I did not reply that I had not seen it. The gun was then reloaded ready for the second shot. At 11.02 a.m. the gun was fired again but no order was given by Lt. Fleuret to fire, Pte. Middleton took the time by his own watch. The report of the 2nd. shot appeared to me to be far louder than the first one. On glancing down I saw that the edge of the concrete gunbase had been shattered, and upon looking up saw that the end of the muzzle had been blown off. I said to Lt. Fleuret "The f..... barrel has gone" to which he replied "No, it can't be." He then examined the barrel himself. He did not say "Yes, I noticed that." I had not noticed anything wrong with the gun or the concrete base after the first shot. Had there been, I would have seen it. After the 2nd. shot, Lt. Fleuret said "Where is the tampion of this gun?", and I saw Pte. Middleton or Pte. Biggs stoop down and pick something up from the ground near the tarpaulin. Whatever Pte. Middleton or Biggs picked up, was placed on a seat at the rear of the gun. I covered up No. 2 gun myself, but had nothing to do with the covering of No. 1 gun. I did not put the tampion back into No. 2 gun, and cannot say if it was in the muzzle when I covered the gun up. I did not see any of the gun's crew or Lt. Fleuret insert his hand into either of the guns to see how much oil was in them. Neither guns were dried out before the shoot, No. 1 was afterwards. I have been a gunner since 1941 till 1944, having experience with 4" and 12 pounders, and I have had no practice since. On the 4" guns I was either loading or carrying ammunition, on the 12 pounders I always carried ammunition. I was familiar with the gun mechanism. I knew far more about the 4" guns than the 12 pounders. Before we left the gun-site Lt. Fleuret expressed his opinion that the accident had been caused by a premature. Upon our arrival at the Drill Hall, we were dismissed. Since the accident I have not discussed the matter with anybody at all. In my own opinion the only cause of the accident was a premature.

I am 29 years of age and employed by the Falkland Islands Co. Ltd. I was detailed as a member of the gun's crew which was firing on Victory Green on Sunday the 9th. November 1952. Acting upon instructions I fell in at about 10.15 a.m. on that date with Lt. Fleuret and Pte's Middleton and Blyth. We collected ammunition, ramrod, waste etc. all that was required for a shoot. The ammunition which was issued was High Explosive Anti Personnel, and was issued to Lt. Fleuret. We proceeded to the Green and I hoisted the flag which I had collected from Lt. Fleuret. Pte. Blyth took the soda bucket over to Stanley Cottage and Pte. Middleton uncovered the No. 1 (left hand side) gun. Lt. Fleuret gave instructions to train the gun, elevation etc. We uncovered No. 1 gun (left hand gun). I took the rope lashing off, the tarpaulin was removed by Pte. Middleton. This was done while Pte. Blyth was up at the tea rooms. After No. 1 gun was uncovered we uncovered No. 2 gun (right hand). All I did there was to help to remove the tarpaulin. Both guns were examined and it was decided to use No. 1 gun because it was the dryest. No. 2 still had a slight layer of oil in it, and as No. 1 was the dryest it was decided by Lieut. Fleuret to use that one. The guns were ~~checked~~ checked, by that I mean that the tampion had been removed and that there was nothing to interfere with the firing. I did not remove either of the tampions, I saw Pte. Middleton remove both of them. At any rate, I saw Pte. Middleton take the tampion out of No. 1 gun and place it on the grass to the Westward of the gun. I am not sure who removed the tampion out of No. 2 gun, but I am sure that it was removed because I looked through both barrels of the guns before the shoot took place. I heard Lt. Fleuret give instructions regarding sights and deflection, but as I was working on the ammunition, I cannot say what they were. By working on the ammunition I mean, that I was removing the cap which protects the fuse and the and the cover that protects the cap. Lt. Fleuret instructed me to be very careful with the ammunition as it was H.E. also not to pull out any pin before time. As far as my knowledge goes, the gun was not given a rub through because it was absolutely dry. At about 10.59 a.m. I loaded the gun upon the instructions of Lt. Fleuret and Pte. Blyth operated the breech. The ammunition was in perfect condition when I placed it in the gun. The first shot was fired at 11.0 a.m. by lanyard operated by Pte. Middleton, and everything appeared to be normal. Lt. Fleuret said to me "Did you see that one land?" I replied "Yes Sir, the shot landed at the base of the rock above the last A in the word Barracouta". He also asked the other members of the gun's crew and they said that they had not seen it. I then reloaded the gun for the second shot. At 11.02 a.m. Lt. Fleuret gave the order to fire, and the second shot was fired again by lanyard by Pte. Middleton. On the firing of the second shot there was a great burst of flame at the muzzle end. When the flash and smoke had disappeared, I saw something at the end of the muzzle which appeared all black and jagged. I heard somebody say "The end is off the barrel" but who said it I cannot say, but I think it was Pte. Middleton. I did not hear Lt. Fleuret say "Yes, I noticed that." I had not noticed anything wrong with the gun after the first shot. If there had been, I would definitely have seen it. After the second shot had been fired, the tampion belonging to No. 1 gun was still on the grass. I heard Lt. Fleuret ask Pte. Middleton where the tampion was belonging to No. 1 gun. Middleton picked it up, showed it to Lt. Fleuret and passed it to me. I put it under the fold of the tarpaulin on top of the barrel of No. 1 gun after covering the gun with it's tarpaulin. I definitely did not remove either of the tampions from No. 1 and No. 2 guns. I cannot say whether the tampion was replaced in No. 2 gun, + am also unable to say where the tampion of No. 2 gun was placed when it was taken out. I had nothing to do with the covering up of No. 2 gun. I did not see Lt. Fleuret insert his hand into either of the guns to inspect the amount of oil adhering to same. The decision to use No. 1 gun, because it was dryest was made by Lt. Fleuret. To my knowledge neither No. 1 and No. 2 guns were not dried out. When the shoot was over I returned to the Drill Hall with Lt. Fleuret, Pte's Middleton and Blyth. On the way to the Drill Hall we discussed the matter and Lt. Fleuret said that he was of the opinion that it was a premature. We were then dismissed. At about 9.30 a.m. on Tuesday the 11th. of November, Lt. Fleuret came aboard the "Fitzroy" and saw me on the fore deck. He told me that he had attended a Court of Enquiry regarding what had happened on Sunday. He said that he did not know whether I would have to attend, but that he thought Middleton would have to go this afternoon. If I did have to attend, to give a clear statement of all what I had seen and what had happened. There were no formalities carried out in respect of reporting back to the Officer in Charge i.e. "Gun cleared away and bore clean". The tampion which had been

removed from No. 1 gun definitely did not have a cotton waste or oakum collar when it was handed to me.

I deny the statement made by Lt. Fleuret that I told him that I had removed the tampion from the right hand gun.

As far as I can remember the tampion which I saw did not have any canvass on it, only oil.

Arthur Middleton states:-

I am a mason's labourer with the F.I.C. and a private in the F.I.D. Force. I was detailed as a member of the gun's crew which was firing on Victory Green on Sunday the 9th. of November 1952. Acting upon instructions I fell in at the Drill Hall at 10.30 a.m. that date, with Lt. Fleuret and Pte's Blyth and Biggs. We collected a ramrod- bucket for water- extractor and cotton waste. Lt. Fleuret was issued with 3 rounds of High Explosive Anti Personnel ammunition. We proceeded to Victory Green. Lt. Fleuret gave us orders to clear the gun and I took off the tarpaulin covering the left hand gun. I removed the tampion from that gun and laid it on the grass on the left hand side of the gun. I opened the breech and set the sights to 1400, deflection 15 left, upon the instructions of Lt. Fleuret. I asked Lt. Fleuret if the gun would require a rub through with the ramrod. He had a look through the barrel and replied "No, there is no need for that, the barrel is quite dry." Lt. Fleuret and Pte's Biggs and Blyth then gave me a hand to train the gun and elevate it. At about 10.59 a.m. Lt. Fleuret gave orders to load. Pte. Biggs loaded the gun and Pte. Blyth operated the breech. At 11.0 a.m. the first shot was fired by means of a lanyard by me. The shot appeared to me to be normal. Lt. Fleuret asked the gun's crew if any of us had observed the fall of shot and Pte. Biggs said that he did. He said that he saw it strike the target. I made no reply whatever. The gun was then reloaded by Pte. Biggs, Blyth again operating the breech mechanism. At 11.02 a.m. Lt. Fleuret gave the order to fire and the second shot was made again by means of the lanyard. There seemed to be a terrible report and somebody, I do not know who, said "The end is off the barrel". Lt. Fleuret said "I noticed that". I had not seen anything wrong with the gun after the first shot. If there had been, I as gun-layer would definitely have seen it. The gun was not re-laid for the second shot. After the second shot, before we did any cleaning, Lt. Fleuret asked me where the tampion was belonging to that gun. I picked it up from the spot where I had put it and handed it to him. I do not know what he did with it. The gun was then covered over by a tarpaulin by me, but I am unable to say if the tampion was replaced or not. As soon as we got the left hand gun ready we prepared the other gun. I do not know who took the tarpaulin off it, or whether the tampion was removed. I do know it was removed as I looked through the barrel later on. I set the sights which were the same as for the left hand gun. The right hand gun was not used. I cannot say whether the tampion was replaced or who covered that gun up at the conclusion of the shoot. On the completion of clearing the left hand gun away, I reported to Lt. Fleuret "Bore clear". It was after that, that I asked him if he wanted it rubbed out. When I looked through the barrel of both guns, both were lightly oiled, but the right hand gun barrel appeared to me to be more oily than the left. I did not notice any small fragments of cotton waste adhering to either barrels. I am unable to advance any opinion as to the cause of the accident.

I did not hear Pte. Biggs say to Lt. Fleuret "I took the one out of the right hand gun."

I am now not sure who I gave the tampion to, but I thought it was Lt. Fleuret.

12

6.

Cyril William Henricksen t
staes:-

I am 48 years of age and the official armourer for the Falkland Islands Defence Force, at Port Stanley. At about 11.20 a.m. on Thursday the 6th. of November 1952, I was with Capt. O'Sullivan. We were at the Victory Green gun-site for the purpose of testing the two 3 lb. Hotchkiss guns. The test was being made to test the second gun which had recently been placed there and the gun beds. I fired two rounds of High Explosive Anti Personnel through each gun. They were fired by lanyard. Nothing untoward occurred and as far as I was concerned everything was satisfactory. Both guns were cleaned by me at the cessation of the shoot, the following method being employed. They were both cleaned with hot water and soda, and dried out. Later, after lunch they were given another rub out and oiled. Breech blocks etc. were also oiled and tampions replaced. I am certain they were both replaced in a proper manner as I felt to make sure that they were there. The guns were then covered by means of a separate tarpaulin over each gun. That concluded my duties for the test. On Monday the 10th. of November 1952 I went to the gun-site with Capt. O'Sullivan and Lieut. J. Bound about 9.50 a.m. The guns were uncovered and the first thing I saw was that there was about 9/10 inches missing off the barrel of the left hand gun. We also found that one of the tampions was missing. The other tampion was under a tarpaulin, but I am not able to state whether it was the tarpaulin of the left or right hand gun. Before the practice shot on the 6th. no bore gauge was used or after. I believe there is a gauge in my store, but I have never used it. When I oiled the guns at the conclusion of the shoot, they were liberally oiled with a light oil. Both guns were given the same treatment. The tampions were not a very tight fit, but one was tighter than the other. I cannot say which was the tightest fit. The stem of both tampions was about five inches long. If I had been firing, the guns on Sunday my first job would have been to dry both my barrels out and tried my mechanism, firstly having removed the tampions. After having seen the damaged gun I was instructed not to touch it.

Don John Clarke states:-

I reside at "Hambledon" Ross Road, Port Stanley. On Sunday the 9th. of November 1952, I was working in my garden at the front of my house, and at 11.0 a.m. I heard a gun being fired on Victory Green. I glanced up to see the fall of shot and saw a number of splashes on the water just on the East side of the West Store Jetty, which appeared to me to be shrapnel falling into the water. I am sure that this was the first shot. When the second salvo was fired, I did not observe any fall of shot.

1.

Arthur Leslie Hardy states:-

I am the proprietor of the Stanley Cottage Tea Rooms. At about 10.55 a.m. on Sunday the 9th. of November 1952 I was in my conservatory. I was there for the purpose of watching the guns on Victory Green being fired on Remembrance Day. I was watching for the fall of shot from the first gun to be fired, when I observed two splashes on the water slightly West and North of the "Fennia". I did not see any other splashes than those. The first salvo was fired from the left hand gun. I also watched for the second fall of shot, but saw nothing. Sometime afterwards, on the same day and date I was approached by Capt. O'Sullivan who asked me if I had seen anything. I told him the same as I have already stated.

2.

CP

I am indebted to the Board for a comprehensive & conscientious report - please advise members accordingly.

Done - see
(15)

2) I would like the pp. to be brought up when the warship arrives & we will consult expert primary opinion -

3) Assuming that the Vampires was left in, it would be interesting to know whether what would have been the effect if blank had been fired.

Done - see
(16)

4) I agree that in fact future blank rounds only should be used & Adjutant should be informed accordingly. I wd also like Adjutant to advise

a) Why live ammunition was used on Armistice Day & the previous practice

b) When was live ammunition last used.

c) Has the live ammunition ever been surveyed & pronounced unserviceable or dangerous.

d) ~~Has the adjutant~~ (Have any previous instructions been issued about use of live ammunition.

5) Ad. It seems obvious that Lieut Hurrell was guilty of gross negligence - Adjutant to discuss with me what disciplinary action if any, can be taken against him in view of the fact that he has recently been posted to the Retired list.

Acc. informed
accy. S.
29.11

25/11

0838/1

15

2nd December, 1952 xx

To: The Chairman,

From: The Colonial Secretary,

Court of Enquiry.

Enquiry - Explosion in 3-pdr. Hotchkiss Gun.

I am directed to refer to your memo. of the 24th of November, 1952, submitting the Board's Report on the above subject and to express His Honour's appreciation for a comprehensive and conscientious Report.

2. I am to ask you to inform the Members of the Board accordingly.

(Sgd.) J. E. Briscoe
Acting Colonial Secretary.

H.

0838/I

16

2nd December, 52.

To: The Adjutant,

From: The Colonial Secretary,

Falkland Islands Defence Force

STANLEY.

Explosion in 3-pdr. Hotchkiss Gun.

I am directed to refer to the explosion which occurred in the 3-pdr. Hotchkiss Gun on Victory Green on the 9th November, 1952, and to inform you that in future blank ammunition only should be used. The damaged gun should however not be used until further notice.

2. I am also to ask you to advise:

- (a) Why live ammunition was used on Armistice Day and the previous practice;
- (b) when was live ammunition last used;
- (c) has the live ammunition ever been surveyed and pronounced unserviceable or dangerous;

(d)/

Rep. at 18

16A

(d) have any previous instructions been issued about the use of live ammunition.

(Sgd.) J. E. Briscoe

Acting Colonial Secretary.

WH.

Bo. 12/12

15th December,

52.

CONFIDENTIAL

Sir,

Explosion in 5 Pdr. Hotchkiss Gun.

I am directed by His Honour the Officer Administering the Government to forward for your perusal the report of a Committee of Enquiry convened to investigate the explosion in one of the Victory Green Saluting Guns.

2. It would be very much appreciated if your Gunnery Officer could study the papers and see if he can throw any further light on the accident.

3. Where necessary he should contact the Chairman of the Board, Mr. J. Bound of the Secretariat, who can supply him with further information and who could, if required, again convene the Board and summon the witnesses for further questioning.

I am,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

(Sgd) J. E. Briscoe

Commanding Officer,
H. M. S. Snipe.

Acting Colonial Secretary.

Reply at 20

No.

It is requested that in any reference to this memorandum the above number and the date may be quoted.

MEMORANDUM.

0838/I

12th December, 1952.

To: The Colonial Secretary,

STANLEY.

From: The Adjutant,
F. I. D. F.,
Stanley, Falkland Islands.

SUBJECT:- Explosion in 3-pdr. Hotchkiss Gun.

I have the honour to refer to your memo. No. 0838/I of 2nd December, 1952, on the above subject, and to inform you that your instruction in paragraph 1 is noted.

2. Regarding your paragraph 2 I offer the following replies:-

(a) Live ammunition was used on Armistice Day, 1952,

(i) in the interests of economy in that 23 rounds of blank will be required on His Excellency the Governor's return to the Colony and it is assumed that at least 103 rounds will be used for the Coronation Salute.

(ii) an opportunity was afforded to use ammunition which must be deteriorating on account of age.

(iii) remaining 2 rounds of practice and sub-calibre were used as part of the testing rounds, 1952.

pp pl. gk. | Disc. is in
oc. Super
17.12

(b)/

(b) 1951 - 23 rounds

(c) not to my knowledge.

(d) again, not to my knowledge.

W. Sullivan
Captain,
Adjutant.

H.M.S. "SMILE"
at STANLEY,
FALKLAND ISLANDS.
6th. January, 1953.

Explosion in 3 Ldr. Hotchkiss Gun.

Sir.

I have the honour to report that I have examined the gun, ammunition and photographs and in my opinion the cause of the explosion was an obstruction in the barrel.

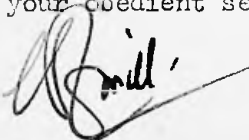
Only one tampon is now available, the length of which, combined with the length of the projectile, indicates that the fuze could be operated at the point at which the explosion occurred.

Photographic evidence indicates that the explosion occurred with the FIRST round, the damaged barrel being visible in each photograph. The presence of two types of smoke, white from the H.E. projectile, and black from the propellant confirms this.

As there is now only one tampon, I suspect that the missing tampon was the obstruction.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
your obedient servant,

The Commanding Officer
H.M.S. "SMILE".



(L.S.Fowill)
Commissioned Gunner R.N.

H.M.S. "SMILE",
at Stanley.

6th January, 1953.

Sir,

17
19

With reference to your letter No. 0835/1 dated 15th December 1952 concerning the explosion in a 3 pdr Hotchkiss Gun, I enclose a report by my Ordnance Officer giving his views on the incident.

2. Whilst it is always possible to err when interpreting photographs, it seems probable that, in this case, the cause of the damage was the failure to remove the Tampion.

D.D. Hall W.S.

(D.C.D. HALL - WRIGHT).
COMMANDER - IN - COMMAND.

The Acting Colonial Secretary,
Colonial Secretary's Office,
Stanley.

Spoke Hqs - B.O. 7m
Hall's return on 20/1/52
file / a. to B.O. as instructed
Sidd

21

G.A. / go see from 18 pl.

[Signature]
28/1

Done
&

CS. Jan. The responsibility must rest with Mr. Hunt but as he was posted to the retired list a few days before the incident all we that can be done is to advise Adjutant that he should never again be employed in that capacity.

2) A.C.S. to explore possibility of cutting & leveling the barrel for use with blank ammo only. With an extra long Vampiron it will look symmetrical under the coverings.

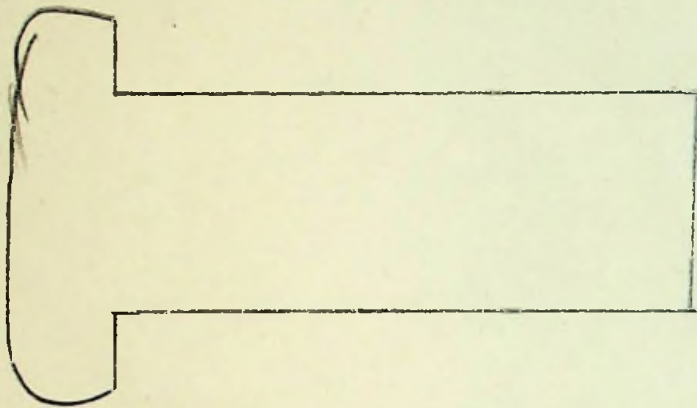
ACS
only p1
[Signature]
9/20/42

[Signature]
28/1

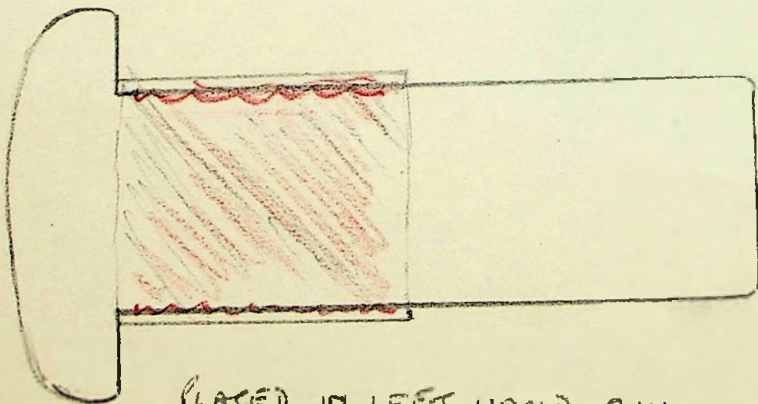
Jagged ~~in~~ muzzle and removed by Mr. Ballini of P.W.D. & gun tested

[Signature]

A



B



PLACED IN LEFT HAND GUN
ON THURSDAY 6.11.52 BY O'SULLIVAN
ACCORDING TO O'SULLIVAN & HENRICKSEN